A COORIENTATIONAL APPROACH FOR MEASURING ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS

By

TRENT SELTZER

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A COORIENTATIONAL APPROACH FOR MEASURING ORGANIZATION-PUBLIC RELATIONSHIPS

By

Trent Seltzer

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Chair: Michael A. Mitrook
Cochair: Marilyn S. Roberts
Major: Mass Communication

My study details the development of a new methodology for measuring and diagnosing organization-public relationships. Using a coorientational framework, the Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship scales were adapted to measure not only the direct perspective of a stakeholder public, but also the direct perspective of the organization in the relationship. This represents a departure from current methods of measuring an organization-public relationship that typically only include the opinions of the public. My study goes a step further by including the meta-perspectives of each party as well (i.e., what one party believes the other party thinks about the relationship). By looking at the interaction between these four perspectives (public’s direct perspective, public’s meta-perspective, organization’s direct perspective, and organization’s meta-perspective), it is possible to determine what type of coorientational state best describes the relationship. Possible outcomes include true consensus (accurate perceptions of agreement between the parties), true dissensus (accurate perceptions of disagreement between the parties), false consensus (inaccurate perception of agreement between the parties) and false dissensus (inaccurate perception of disagreement between the parties).
In my study, the organization-public relationship between the university police department and students living on campus at a major southwestern university is examined. The resulting coorientational measures indicated that while students were well aware that there was disagreement between them and the campus police, the police themselves were unaware of this disagreement and thought that students rated the relationship as strongly as the police. From the organization’s viewpoint, the relationship was in a state of false consensus.

The effect of additional variables, including interpersonal interaction, time in the relationship, exposure to relationship maintenance strategies, and media exposure, were also examined. While neither one-way nor two-way relationship maintenance strategies demonstrated any influence, the students’ perception of their interpersonal interactions with the campus police was a significant predictor of their ratings of the relationship.

The study extends relationship management theory by developing a process for generating a comprehensive relationship construct. The findings suggest that two-way symmetrical strategies may not always be the ideal means for maintaining organization-public relationships and stress the important role that interpersonal interaction plays in maintaining organization-public relationships.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Previous public relations research has stressed that the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics is an indication of public relations effectiveness (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). While it seems intuitive that public relations should demonstrate its greatest impact on the organization-public relationship, early perspectives on the role of public relations within an organization did not always recognize this, focusing instead on one-way models of public relations. Perhaps due to the practitioner-focused research generated while the discipline was in its infancy (Ferguson, 1984), evaluating the effectiveness of public relations activities consisted primarily of measuring the short-term, immediate results of a public relations program (“outputs”) or assessing the impact that the program had on a target audience (“outcomes”). While it is necessary for public relations professionals to monitor these outputs and outcomes, focusing on these factors will only yield information about the success of an individual public relations program (Hon & Grunig, 1999). To gauge the true effectiveness of public relations over time, a long-term perspective needed to be taken, requiring not only a new way of measuring the effect of public relations efforts, but a complete shift in the focus of public relations research and a new way of thinking about organizations and their publics.

Purpose and Importance of Study

My study details the development of a relationship-centered method for measuring public relations effectiveness. It focuses on the impact of public relations programming, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication between members of an organization and its stakeholders on the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics by using established relationship measures within a coorientational framework. Unlike previous approaches, this proposal outlines a method that will attempt to include the perspectives and
meta-perspectives of both parties (the organization and the public) in an assessment of the organization-public relationship (OPR) by combining the coorientational approach advocated by Broom (1977) and Broom and Dozier (1990) with the relationship measures proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999). Applying these relationship measures within the coorientational framework will indicate the degree of agreement, accurate perception, and perception of perceived agreement (congruency) between organizations and their publics when assessing important relationship dimensions. This should provide more information about the shared perception of the state of the OPR that moves beyond measurement of perceptions of any one party in the relationship. Therefore, this study addresses the need to develop the conceptualization of organization-public relationship measurement from a theoretical standpoint to advance relationship management theory. The study also addresses the practical needs of public relations practitioners by refining measurement tools that focus on long-term measures of relationships rather than the short-term outputs and outcomes as a means of demonstrating the value of managed organizational communication programs.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Relationship Perspective

The development of the relationship perspective in public relations research is in many ways tied to the efforts of public relations practitioners and scholars to distinguish public relations as a profession and a theoretical paradigm separate from similar disciplines such as marketing and advertising. One of the more recent and commonly accepted definitions of public relations defines the practice as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, p. 6), where “publics” refers to “people who are somehow mutually involved or interdependent with these organizations” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000, p. 2).

Using this definition, public relations can be differentiated somewhat from marketing and advertising. According to Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2000), whereas marketing typically focuses on a specific type of relationship that a business maintains with its customers (a very specific public) in which the focus is on the exchange of resources, public relations is broader and includes the management of a wide variety of possible relationships with a wide variety of stakeholder publics that can affect the organization – not just customers, but also the government, members of the community, activists, donors, etc. The function also differs from advertising, which from a public relations perspective, is but one tool that can be used for facilitating communication. Whereas marketing would use advertising efforts to reach potential or current customers, public relations practitioners frequently use advertising as a form of controlled media to complement other forms of communication (e.g., press releases, press conferences, media tours, etc.).
In an effort to further explicate the academic study of public relations from other fields, Ferguson (1984) proposed that public relations research should focus on finding a dominant paradigm, as well as a new unit of analysis, which public relations could call its own. She felt that the most promising candidate was the relationship that exists between an organization and its publics - an “organization-public relationship,” or “OPR” for short. Ferguson’s content analysis of the journal articles in Public Relations Review over a nine-year period led her to propose that there was not only a need for further development of unique public relations theory, but that the study of relationships themselves should be the primary focus in public relations research.

Ferguson states:

If I were to want to put my public relations theory development eggs in one basket, this would be it. It is difficult to think of any other field where the primary emphasis is on the relationships between organizations, between organizations and one or more groupings in society, or, more generally, with society itself (p.16).

Ferguson (1984) felt that focusing on relationships as a paradigm for public relations would have several benefits. First, it would make the relationships themselves the focus of public relations research rather than the study of the parties involved in the relationship. Second, making relationships a primary unit of analysis for studying public relations would lead to the development of new methodologies that would be necessary to measure those relationships. Third, focusing on relationships would create a niche for public relations researchers and help legitimize the academic study of the practice. Additionally, the investigation of relationships would allow research from other fields, such as organizational communication and interpersonal communication, to be applied within a public relations context.

This relationship-focused perspective also fit naturally with the development of the two-way symmetrical communication model for public relations. Grunig (1984) and Grunig and Hunt (1984) proposed four models for the practice of public relations: press agentry, public
information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. While the press agentry (or pure publicity) and public information (or journalistic) approaches to the practice of public relations are seen as one-way models in which the practitioner communicates to a target public without feedback, the two-way models incorporate a feedback loop, but for different purposes. The two-way asymmetrical model, or scientific persuasion model, uses feedback to refine persuasive efforts; however, these efforts to persuade are made with organizational interests in mind that do not necessarily represent the best interests of the target audience. On the other hand, the two-way symmetrical model also uses feedback, but does so in an effort to increase understanding between an organization and a public to develop relationships that lead to mutual benefit (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The two-way model has been proposed as being an ethical model of public relations (Grunig, 2001) in that it sees communication as the end and not the means and that the interests of the public are balanced with those of the organization. While originally viewed as a model in which practitioners may have to sacrifice the interest of their organization in order to gain the cooperation of a stakeholder public and vice versa, the model has since been refined somewhat to acknowledge that it is a “mixed-motive” model in which both sides try to advance their interests and achieve their desired goals, but do so through compromise and negotiation so that a solution is reached that satisfies all the parties involved and leads to a mutually beneficial relationship (Grunig, 2001; Murphy, 1991). Therefore, from the two-way symmetrical viewpoint, the purpose of public relations is to develop and manage relationships, not control public opinion through persuasion (Ehling, 1992).

Two-way symmetrical communication has been identified as one of the ways in which organizations can practice “excellent” public relations (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). In 1985, the International Association of Business Communicators
Research Foundation funded what has come to be known as the Excellence Study. The study qualitatively analyzed 327 organizations from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom to determine how the public relations function can make an organization more effective, what that contribution is worth, and what characteristics of the public relations function lead to more effective communication management, which in turn leads to organizational effectiveness (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995). The researchers determined that public relations leads to increased organizational effectiveness when public relations identifies strategic publics that can affect the organization and then helps establish, build, and maintain long-term relationships with those publics. These relationships should be based on trust and understanding, and employing the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is the best way to facilitate the development of these relationships. By building healthy relationships with these strategic publics through effectively managed communication programs, public relations helps to manage, minimize, or avoid conflict with those publics and thus allows the organization to pursue its objectives.

Ferguson’s (1984) call to focus on relationships as a unit of analysis for public relations coupled with Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig’s (1995) acknowledgement of the importance of two-way communication in managing organization-public relationships that lead to organizational effectiveness provides the groundwork for the relationship management perspective. Ledingham and Bruning (2000a) elaborated on the importance of such a perspective:

The emergence of relationship management as a paradigm for public relations scholarship and practice calls into question the essence of public relations - what it is and what it does or should do, its function and value within the organizational structure and the greater society, and the benefits generated not only for sponsoring organizations but also for the publics those organizations serve and the communities and societies in which they exist. The relationship paradigm also provides a framework in which to explore the linkage between public relations objectives and organizational goals, for constructing platforms for
strategic planning and tactical implementation, and approaching programmatic evaluation in ways understood and appreciated by the ruling management group (p. xiii).

While the relationship management perspective has been advocated as an attractive paradigm for public relations theory development, it has yet to become the dominant paradigm. Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, and Jones (2003) extended Ferguson’s (1984) research by conducting a content analysis of 748 articles in the three major public relations journals since their founding through 2000. While their results indicated that the total amount of work contributing to public relations theory development had increased significantly from 4% to 20% since Ferguson’s study, not only had a dominant paradigm failed to emerge, but only 10% of the theory development articles focused on organization-public relationships, indicating the need for more research in this area.

This is not to say that the call for further development of the relational perspective has been abandoned; several scholars have pursued the investigation of public relationships and attempted to tie it to other areas such as measuring public relations effectiveness (Sallot et al., 2003).

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) addressed one of the major obstacles to the development of the relationship perspective when they stressed the need for a common definition of the term “relationship.” Their review of relationship theory in the fields of public relations, interpersonal relations, family relations, group dynamics, organizational relations, psychotherapy, and international relations found a lack of a common definition of what exactly is meant by the term “relationship.” In their opinion, this presented a barrier that would prevent scholars from studying the actual relationship between an organization and its publics; this would result in a continued focus on indirect means of measurement that would only allow inferences about the relationship to be made (i.e., outputs and outcomes). Among their
conclusions and suggestions for further study of relationships, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) made two important observations:

The formation of relationships occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, and when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate…Relationships are the dynamic results of the exchanges and reciprocity that manifest themselves as the relationships develop and evolve, but they can be described at a given point in time (p. 95).

Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) also proposed a model that could be used by those seeking to further develop the relationship perspective. Their three-stage model acknowledged that there was a need to identify the antecedents, relationship state, and consequences of organization-public relationships. Antecedents of relationships included perceptions, motives, needs, and behaviors of parties within the relationship. Consequences included the outputs of relationships that could affect the organization or the environment it which it operates; Broom, Casey, and Ritchey identified these as “goal achievement, dependency/loss of autonomy, and routine and institutionalized behavior” (p. 94). In their model, the relationship itself could act as an independent variable, a moderating variable, or a dependent variable as had been previously acknowledged by Ferguson (1984). For example, Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) used relationship state as an intervening variable with time in the relationship acting as an antecedent condition and behavioral predispositions towards an organization as a consequence of relationship state. Perceptions of organization-public relationships have been used to differentiate between members of a stakeholder public in terms of loyalty (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998) and satisfaction (Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham and Bruning, 1998). Ki and Hon (2007) tested a model of organization-public relationships in which they identified the effects of a stakeholder public’s perceptions of an organization-public relationship on their attitudes and
behavioral intentions toward the organization; stronger evaluations of the relationship were demonstrated to lead to more positive attitudes which in turn led to more positive behaviors.

Grunig and Huang (2000) also proposed a three-stage model of organization-public relationships that parallels the Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) model. Grunig and Huang’s (2000) model includes situational antecedents, maintenance strategies, and relationship outcomes. Here, situational antecedents describe the types of behavioral and situational factors that link publics and organizations to one another. Maintenance strategies include the efforts of the organization to develop and nurture its relationship with the public through symmetrical and asymmetrical communication efforts. Symmetrical strategies benefit both parties in the relationship and include positivity, disclosure, assurances of legitimacy, networking, integrative negotiation, cooperation, and sharing of tasks. Asymmetrical strategies cater to the organization’s interests over those of the publics and include distributive negotiation, avoiding, contending, compromising, and accommodating. Relationship outcomes include goal attainment and perceptions of relationship state.

In his review of the literature on organization-public relationships, Ledingham (2003) summarized the relationship perspective by suggesting a theory of relationship management that states “effectively managing organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals, over time, results in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organizations and publics [emphasis added]” (p. 190). Ledingham believed that relationship management could serve as a useful framework for organizing academic and applied endeavors in public relations. This perspective acknowledges that public relations is not solely a communication function, but uses communication strategically in an effort to manage relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).
Ledingham (2003) also summarized the major findings of the research on the relational perspective by proposing a list of axioms of organization-public relationships. These axioms include:

1. Organization-public relationships are transactional.
2. The relationships are dynamic; they change over time.
3. They are goal oriented.
4. Organization-public relationships have antecedents and consequences and can be analyzed in terms of relationship quality, maintenance strategies, relationship type, and actors in the relationship.
5. These relationships are driven by the perceived needs and wants of interacting organizations and publics.
6. The continuation of organization-public relationships is dependent on the degree to which expectations are met.
7. Those expectations are expressed in interactions between organizations and publics.
8. Such relationships involve communication, but communication is not the sole instrument of relationship building.
9. These relationships are impacted by relational history, the nature of the transaction, the frequency of exchange, and reciprocity.
10. Organization-public relationships can be described by type (personal, professional community, symbolic, and behavioral) independent of the perceptions of those relationships.
11. The proper focus of the domain of public relations is relationships, not communication.
12. Communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of supportive organizational behavior.
13. Effective management of organization-public relationships supports mutual understanding and benefit.
14. The relationship perspective is applicable throughout the public relations process and with regard to all public relations techniques (p.195).
Most of the research on organization-public relationships to date has focused on identifying dimensions that measure relationship state and the consequences of relationship state (such as attitude and behavior), creating a need for further exploration of the antecedents of relationships and the role of maintenance strategies in managing relationships. While various antecedent states of relationships have been proposed (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000), only the influence of time in the relationship appears to have been empirically tested (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Additionally, while relationship maintenance strategies have been suggested (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Plowman, 1995), they have not been operationalized and tested. Ledingham’s (2003) list of axioms suggests that organization-public relationships can be driven by communication, the frequency of communication exchanges, the nature of those exchanges, and the behaviors of parties in OPR; what is unclear is whether these factors should be classified as antecedents to a relationship or maintenance strategies. What constitutes an antecedent, what constitutes a relationship state, and what constitutes an outcome varies depending on which OPR model one uses. For the purposes of my study, the Grunig and Huang (2000) model is used in which communication activities in the form of public relations efforts and interpersonal communication are treated as maintenance strategies that precede formation of perceptions of the organization-public relationship and the consequences of those relationships.

**Defining and Measuring Relationships**

If the purpose of public relations is to manage communications effectively in order to build mutually beneficial relationships, then one way of evaluating the effectiveness of organizational communication is to look at the effect it has on the relationship itself. This raises the question of how to evaluate the quality of an organization-public relationship and highlights the need for appropriate measures of an organization-public relationship. Public relations researchers have
sought to explicate the defining dimensions of relationships within the literature in order to facilitate measurement of the relationship construct. When Ferguson (1984) proposed that relationships should be the primary unit of analysis in public relations, she also suggested that there are several dichotomous dimensions that would help categorize relationships, including: dynamic/static, open/closed, and satisfactory/unsatisfactory. Ferguson also indicated that there are numerous other variables that would be useful in describing relationships, including the degree to which each party feels it has control over the relationship, the amount of power possessed by each party in the relationship, perception of shared goals, as well as understanding, agreement and consensus.

Many studies have sought to explicate the relationship concept further through the identification of various dimensions of relationships and testing of scales to measure these dimensions. To date, these efforts have developed in two directions.

The first group of studies has moved toward the development of relationship measures that classify the types of relationship that exists between an organization and a public. This stream of research begins with Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko (1997) that reviewed the literature from other disciplines and identified 17 dimensions including openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment. These five dimensions were later operationalized by Ledingham and Bruning (1998) who conducted a survey of local telephone subscribers in territories newly opened to competition from other phone service providers as a testing ground for several proposed relationship dimensions. They utilized Wood’s (1995) relational dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. Wood had previously identified these dimensions as essential for successful interpersonal relationships. Ledingham and Bruning concluded that an organization-public relationship positively evaluated using these
variables illustrated the value of a quality relationship to an organization’s bottom-line and could be used to illustrate the effectiveness of public relations. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) then proposed that organization-public relationships could be grouped into three categories: interpersonal relationships, community relationships, and professional relationships. These categories were then used to develop a multi-item, multi-dimensional scale to measure organization-public relationship state (Bruning and Ledingham, 1999).

Ledingham (2001) used the Bruning-Ledingham Relationship Scale to assess the public’s perceptions of relationship quality between community leaders and citizens in a suburb of a major Midwest metropolitan center. The Relationship Scale is a multi-item, multi-dimensional scale that measures three types of relationships (personal, professional and community) across eight different dimensions (trust, openness, involvement, investment, commitment, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, and mutual understanding). Ledingham provided additional support for the relational perspective and offered several observations for managing organization-public relationships, including the need for identifying common points of interest between organizations and publics, as well as the conducting of longitudinal studies that examine how organization-public relationships change over time. Bruning and Galloway (2003) later expanded the Bruning-Ledingham Scale to include measures of two additional dimensions of personal relationships commitment (personal and structural).

This fits into the Broom, Casey, and Ritchie (1997) model of organization-public relationships which identifies perceptions of relationships as an antecedent and posits relationship state as an intervening variable prior to relationship outcomes. They believed that the concept of a relationship should be separate from the perceptions of parties within the relationship. However, there is some disagreement as to whether a relationship can (or should) be
understood outside the framework created by the perspectives of the parties involved in the relationship (Anderson, 1993; Duck, 1986; Laing, 1969; Thomlison, 2000).

The second group of studies that focus on the development of organization-public relationship measures can be conceptualized within the Grunig and Huang (2000) model as the consequences or outcomes of maintenance strategies. Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) proposed reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding as possible dimensions of an organization-public relationship. Huang (1997) reviewed the interpersonal communication literature and identified trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction as positive relationship outcomes. Hon and Grunig (1999) later developed quantitative measurement scales for these proposed dimensions of an organization-public relationship and included two more dimensions: exchange relationships and communal relationships. They found the scales to be “good measures of perceptions of relationships, strong enough to be used in evaluating relationships” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 5). Since then, these measures have been found to be reliable in other studies (e.g., Hon & Brunner, 2002; Huang, 2001; Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004; Ki & Hon, 2007; Kim, 2001b).

The six Hon and Grunig (1999) relationship dimensions are described below, each accompanied by a sample Hon and Grunig measurement item:

**Control Mutuality**

Control mutuality encompasses the extent to which the parties in the relationship agree as to who is authorized to exert power and control over one another. This construct recognizes that in many organization-public relationships, the organization typically has a more extensive pool of resources that will grant it a larger measure of control; however, a positive, healthy organization-public relationship will not be controlled purely by one party or the other – each party will be allowed to exercise some measure of power in the relationship. A sample item
from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure control mutuality reads, “This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say” (p. 4).

**Trust**

The trust dimension is actually made up of several other concepts which include integrity, dependability, and competence. Integrity is defined as the perception by one party that the other party in the relationship is “fair and just.” Dependability is the perception that a party will follow through on its promises and do what it claims it will do. Competence is the perception that a party in the relationship has the resources necessary to do what it claims it will do. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure trust reads, “This organization treats people like me fairly and justly” (p. 4).

**Satisfaction**

Parties perceive a relationship as satisfying when the expected benefits of being in the relationship exceed the costs of being in the relationship. Satisfaction can also be achieved when the parties in the relationship feel that the other party is putting an adequate amount of effort into maintaining a positive relationship. A sample item from the Hon & Grunig (1999) scale used to measure satisfaction reads, “I am happy with this organization” (p. 4).

**Commitment**

The commitment dimension can be conceptualized in two ways. Continuance commitment refers to the belief that a party feels the relationship is worth maintaining through policy or action, while affective commitment refers more to the emotional energy that is expended in maintaining the relationship. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure commitment reads, “I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me” (p. 4).
Exchange Relationships

In exchange relationships, each party interacts with the other for the purpose of receiving something in return. Effort is expended on the relationship because benefits are either immediately realized or there is an expectation that the other party will reciprocate at a later date. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure exchange relationships reads, “Whenever this organization gives or offers something to people like me, it generally expects something in return” (p. 5). This type of relationship is more descriptive of the superficial relationships fostered by advertising and marketing, not the long-term, meaningful relationships sought through symmetric public relations channels.

Communal Relationships

Public relations efforts, specifically those that place a premium on developing healthy organization-public relationships, should be more concerned with fostering communal relationships. The parties in communal relationships provide benefits to one another just as in exchange relationships. The difference lies in the expectations that are associated with the granting of benefits. In an exchange relationship, reciprocation is expected – not so in communal relationships. Benefits are granted because the parties in the relationship truly care about each other, not because they are expecting something in return. Relationships that are communal in nature should exhibit higher levels of trust, control mutability, continuance, and satisfaction than demonstrated by exchange relationships. A sample item from the Hon and Grunig (1999) scale used to measure communal relationships reads, “This organization does not especially enjoy giving others aid” (p. 5).

Recognizing a Western orientation in the selection of the dimensions used to define relationships, Huang (2001) developed an OPRA scale which used four of these dimensions (control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment) while adding a fifth dimension that
reflected Eastern culture (face and favor). Favor (or *renqing*) is a mode of conduct in which individuals stay in contact with influential parties, while face (or *mianzi*) is more of a resource (somewhat similar to the Western concepts of ‘pride’ or ‘respect’) which can be exchanged between individuals as a means of securing favors. This resulted in a multi-item scale that could reliably be used to understand perceptions of relationship quality.

While studies have applied these relational dimensions in a variety of contexts (e.g., Cameron & McCollum, 1993; Huang, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007) they are typically limited to measurement of the public’s perception of the OPR while ignoring the other party in the relationship – the organization. Despite many researchers advocating its inclusion (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2001, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), the organization’s perceptions remain strangely absent from OPR research. One strategy for integrating both the public’s and the organization’s perceptions of the relationship has been suggested numerous times in the literature, but seldom applied in measuring organization-public relationships. This method is the coorientational approach.

**Coorientation**

Again, Ferguson (1984) proved to be forward thinking in this regard. Among the dimensions that she suggested could be helpful in quantifying the nature of organization-public relationships, she listed mutuality of understanding, agreement, and consensus, and noted that the “coorientational measurement model should prove quite useful in conceptualizing relationship variables for this type of paradigm focus” (p. 17). The use of a coorientational approach has been proposed repeatedly in the public relations literature, however it was originally conceived of as being used to assess how two groups, for example, an organization and a stakeholder public, perceive an issue of mutual concern and not the relationship itself (Broom, 1977; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Grunig & Stamm, 1973; McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).
Measuring relationships between two or more parties has been attempted previously in the interpersonal and mass communications fields. Laing, Phillipson, and Lee (1966) developed an Interpersonal Perception Method for assessing the perceptions of husband-wife dyads. Their measurement items focused on the relationship between the couple, not on perceptions of the spouses themselves. Their model “operates under the assumption that paired individuals sharing experiences over time come to develop ‘reciprocal perspectives’” (O’Keefe, 1973). This seems to indicate that one way of defining a relationship is through assessment of how the parties involved in the relationship perceive the relationship itself.

Laing’s (1969) Relational Perception Theory proposes that individuals within a relationship continuously influence one another through their interactions and that those interactions draw on three different perspectives. The first is the direct perspective that is what an individual in the relationship (Person A) thinks. The second perspective is the meta-perspective and is what the individual (Person A) thinks the other individual in the relationship (Person B) thinks. The third perspective is the meta-meta-perspective and is what an individual (Person A) thinks the other individual (Person B) thinks that Person A thinks; that is, the meta-meta-perspective is how a person thinks their direct perspective is perceived by another. Laing proposed that the greater the degree of matching (i.e., accuracy) between these various perspectives of the parties in the relationship, the better those individuals would understand each other and feel that they were being understood. This in turn would lead to more positive, healthy relationships.

With theoretical roots in Newcomb’s (1953) Symmetry Theory, coorientation proposes that the attitudes of two parties (A & B) toward an object (X) are influenced in large part by how they perceive each other’s attitudes toward the object. Symmetry theory posits that individuals
will seek balance in their interactions, therefore “enabling two or more individuals to maintain simultaneous orientation toward one another and toward an object of communication” (Newcomb, 1953, p. 394). This is based on the idea that individuals seek consistency, or a tendency towards symmetry, in order to maintain an internal equilibrium and achieve balance. In order to achieve this balance, an individual may use communicative acts to change another individual’s attitudes or behaviors, or failing that, the individual may adjust their own attitudes and behaviors.

For example, consider two individuals in an interpersonal relationship (A & B) and their attitudes towards the President (X). Albert (A) likes Betty (B), but dislikes the President (X). Betty likes Albert, but does not agree with him regarding the President. Albert is then faced with an internal inconsistency: how can he like someone who disagrees with him regarding the President? Albert has several options. He can try to sway Betty to change her mind. This will result in a balanced equation where Albert and Betty like each other and they both dislike the President. However, suppose Betty refuses to change her mind. In order to obtain symmetry, Albert must either change his attitude towards Betty (disliking her because she doesn’t agree with him) or change his attitude towards the President so that it is now acceptable to like Betty because they agree on their attitudes towards the President.

Previous work attempted to extend this interpersonal approach to communication between collectives (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Grunig & Stamm, 1973). McLeod & Chaffee reviewed interpersonal approaches to communication research including the coorientational model. Grunig & Stamm (1973) advocated a coorientation paradigm for communication between an organization and another social collective (i.e., public). Particularly striking is Grunig and Stamm’s observation that “if a researcher uses a coorientation paradigm…he can focus his
attention on the *relationship* of sender to receiver in the communication system [emphasis added]” (p. 567).

Again, these studies suggest important conclusions about the relationship between two entities; most notably that the relationship is a construct separate from measures of attitudes towards issues, people, and other objects external to the relationship. For instance, in our previous example of Albert and Betty, the state of their relationship, as defined by levels of accuracy, agreement, and congruency between viewpoints, can be viewed as a construct independent of their assessments of the President. This is an important distinction for public relations researchers and practitioners to keep in mind because it suggests that two entities (e.g., an organization and stakeholder public) can hold similar attitudes about an issue of common concern, and yet the relationship between them can still be considered a “poor” relationship (and vice versa). Also, the model again stresses the point that it’s not enough to consider what one party in the relationship thinks, but that both parties have a say in defining the true nature of the relationship; the nature of the relationship rests on shared meaning. Using our simple interpersonal example above, Albert may like Betty, he may think that she likes him, and he may think that they have a healthy relationship, but if Betty doesn’t like Albert, then their relationship is not healthy, regardless of Albert’s perceptions. Simply put, the saying that it takes two to tango is directly applicable to organization-public relationship measurement. Using a coorientational approach to measure organization-public relationships directly addresses this problem of shared meaning and perception.

**Coorientational Approach**

A coorientational approach to measuring the OPR includes four points of analysis: (1) the organization’s view of the relationship (the organization’s perspective), (2) the public’s view of the relationship (the public’s perspective), (3) the organization’s estimate of the public’s view of
the relationship (the organization’s meta-perspective), and (4) the public’s estimate of the organization’s view of the relationship (the public’s meta-perspective). The interaction between these perspectives and meta-perspectives creates three measures of coorientation. “Agreement” indicates the degree to which the organization’s view matches the public’s view of the OPR. “Accuracy” indicates the degree to which the organization correctly estimates the public’s viewpoint, and vice versa. “Perceived agreement” (or “congruency”) is the degree to which the organization’s view matches its perception of the public’s viewpoint, and vice versa. The coorientational model presented in Figure 2-1 is adapted from Broom (1977) and Broom and Dozier (1990) and helps to clarify the linkages among these concepts.

The coorientational model has been used in other fields such as interpersonal communication (e.g., O’Keefe, 1973; Purnine & Carey, 1999), employee communications (e.g. Jo & Shim, 2005), political science (e.g., Hesse, 1976), journalism (e.g., Jones, 1993) and environmental policy (e.g., Connelly & Knuth, 2002), but even in these instances it is usually limited to assessments of one side’s perceptions of the relationship or evaluations of an issue common to both parties.

The model has also been applied to some degree within a public relations context, but its application has been either piecemeal (by ignoring the organizational perspective) or focused on issue or attitude assessment rather than relationships (e.g., Bowes & Stamm, 1975; Broom, 1977; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Grunig, 1972; Stegall & Sanders, 1986, Stamm & Bowes, 1972). In their content analysis of published research on organization-public relationships from 1985-2004, Ki and Shin (2006) found that only one of the 38 studies included in their analysis used coorientation as a theoretical framework.
Cameron and McCollum (1993) used part of the coorientational approach to investigate internal corporate cultures and perceptions of the relationship between employees and their company. However, Cameron and McCollum only used employee perceptions of the relationship. They did not look at upper management (i.e., the organization’s dominant coalition) perceptions of the relationship between themselves and their employees (i.e., an internal public). This is typical of the current state of incorporating the coorientational model into public relationship research. Study after study tiptoes around the coorientational approach without utilizing the direct perspectives of both the organization and its publics in measuring the relationship between them, much less assessing the meta-perspectives of each party.

Hon and Brunner (2002) used the Hon and Grunig relationship measures in a survey to measure the perceptions of college students toward their university. Following a partial coorientational approach, Hon and Brunner conducted qualitative interviews with college administrators to obtain their direct perspectives on the university-student relationship. The researchers found that satisfaction was the best indicator of relationship quality while control mutuality was the weakest. Notably, the meta-perspectives of the respective parties in the relationships were not measured; therefore, measures of accuracy, agreement, and congruency could not be assessed.

Perhaps the closest that recent research has come to using relationship measures in a full coorientational framework are studies by Shin & Cameron (2005) and Christen (2005). In Shin & Cameron (2005) the source-reporter relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists was analyzed using some of the Hon-Grunig (1999) measures in addition to other measures of conflict. However, my study looks at two distinct publics, the members of which are not unified in any sense beyond their choice of profession (e.g., the public relations
practitioners didn’t all work for the same firm). Evaluations were based on one profession’s assessment of the other profession. The coorientational approach of relationship measurement still has yet to be fully utilized within the context of an organization-public relationship in which the public in question is a stakeholder in the organization and where the organization actively uses relationship maintenance strategies to manage the relationship. Christen (2005) considered the use of measures of power and trustworthiness in moderating willingness to negotiate between groups; however, her study did not use the Hon-Grunig (1999) scales for measuring relationship quality. Additionally, the study used students in an experimental design in which they were to assume the identities of various groups and did not assess the perceptions of the organizations and their stakeholders directly.

The Value of the Coorientational Approach

Using a coorientational relationship measurement approach could have several benefits for the public relations profession. Not only can it be used as a measure of public relations effectiveness, but it can also help support academics and practitioners in their effort to prove the value of public relations to their organization’s management or to their clients. Heath (2001) notes that there are “cost-reduction paradigms” and “revenue-generation paradigms” that are used to justify the value of public relations. That is to say, one way of looking at the value of public relations is that it is not necessarily tied to the bottom-line, that there is not always an immediate financial benefit. Grunig et al. (1992) state that effective public relations helps an organization by reducing the costs, stress, and strains experienced by the organization due to conflict, legislation, and litigation. For instance, good crisis management programs may not generate revenue for an organization, but they can certainly help the organization prevent the loss of revenue by avoiding litigation. Public relations programs can also help an organization weather tough times by building strong relationships with publics prior to a crisis occurring. In
the relationship perspective, the bottom-line isn’t the end all be all indicator of the value of public relations – other units of analysis, such as outputs and outcomes are more often relied on, but as was noted earlier, these measures may not be the best barometers of the long-term relationship building goals of public relations. However, despite ongoing calls for better measures of public relations effectiveness, the predominant means of assessing public relations impact continue to center on outcomes and outputs (see Xavier, Johnston, Patel, Watson, & Simmons, 2005 for a concise review of the literature on program evaluation).

In this regard, the coorientational method may provide a better measure of effectiveness by going beyond simple outputs and outcomes and yielding information about the relationship between the organization and the public itself, not only by evaluating the parties’ direct perceptions of the relationship, but by utilizing the meta-perspectives of both parties to determine degrees of accuracy, agreement, and congruency. As has been noted in previous literature, outputs, although popular measures among practitioners, can be weak indicators of effectiveness. Just because a program obtained a lot of media placements doesn’t mean the placements had the desired effect. The coorientational relationship measures also go beyond simple outcomes. Commonly utilized outcomes (such as awareness of an organizational offering) focus more on the results of a particular public relations program, while the coorientational relationship measures are a gauge of more long-term and stable results. Put another way, consistently positive program outcomes should eventually lead to positive relationships. But even this fails to capture the dual-sided nature of the relationship by focusing on the effects of program outcomes on the target audience’s perception of the relationship. The coorientational relationship measures provide a snapshot of the whole organization-public relationship in the form of shared perceptions and gaps in perception between the organization’s and public’s perspectives and
meta-perspectives, thereby facilitating a more thorough diagnosis of the relationship and suggesting possible prescriptive actions to improve the relationship if need be.

By making comparisons between the four coorientational elements, it will be possible to gauge the state of the three coorientational variables: accuracy, agreement, and perceived agreement (congruency) (Broom & Dozier, 1990) between the organization’s and the public’s views of the relationship. Based on these comparisons, one can determine the type of coorientational relationship state that exists between the organization and the public. The possible coorientational states are true consensus (accurate perception of strong agreement between views), dissensus (accurate perception of strong disagreement between views), false consensus (inaccurate perception of agreement), or false conflict (inaccurate perception of disagreement) (Broom, 1977; Broom & Dozier, 1990).

Being able to assess the coorientational variables of accuracy, agreement, and congruency, as well as the resulting coorientational relationship states of dissensus, consensus, false conflict, and false consensus, could be especially valuable to public relations practitioners; possibly even more valuable than outcome measures of attitude or relational perception. This is particularly true for relationships that are found to be in a state of false consensus or false conflict in that it may be easier for public relations practitioners to increase perceptual accuracy between the parties in the relationship by correcting these misperceptions than it is to achieve more traditional public relations objectives such as attitude change (Broom, 1977).

For example, use of the coorientational method of relationship measurement might reveal that there is strong agreement between the true viewpoints of the organization and the public, but due to poor articulation of the organization’s viewpoint, the public inaccurately perceives that the organization’s views are incongruent with its own. In that case, a state of false conflict exists
between the organization and its public. Armed with this information, public relations programs targeted at this public might highlight the areas of true agreement between the organization and the public in an effort to strengthen the accuracy and congruency dimensions of the relationship.

Looking at the relationship between the OPR measures and public relations activities will indicate the effectiveness of these activities in actually changing the relationship that exists between the organization and the public. By looking at individual dimensions, it will be possible to identify exactly which aspects of the relationship were affected by public relations efforts. For example, the public relations campaign may have increased trust between the organization and the public but failed to affect commitment.

Again, this information can be used to evaluate and refine ongoing and future public relations efforts. It would also be a means of demonstrating the return on investment in public relations to a client by illustrating that public relations activities influence not only the amount of earned media, etc., but more importantly, the impact that public relations has on the actual relationship between an organization and its publics.

Of course, this may not satisfy clients and managers who adopt the “revenue generating paradigm” and continue to define public relations effectiveness in terms of dollars. In this perspective, public relations should have an impact on the bottom-line business results of an organization, such as increasing sales. Even if the client or organizational management insist on adopting this viewpoint, then the coorientational approach to measuring relationships still has value, especially if it is integrated into other methods of determining return on investment. For example, Kim (2001a) developed a two-stage model that illustrated the impact of public relations expenditures on corporate reputation, which in turn was correlated with market share. Coorientational relationship measures could be utilized in a similar fashion by determining the
amount of money budgeted for public relations program at T₁, T₂, T₃, etc., linking expenditures to the coorientational relationship measures over time, and then in turn connecting this to market share at T₁, T₂, T₃, etc.

The relationship measures could also be utilized in market mix models. For example, Proctor & Gamble is using marketing mix tools to illustrate the value of public relations versus advertising (Neff, 2005). The coorientational relationship measures between an organization and publics segmented by geographic region and time could be incorporated into these models along with expenditures on public relations, advertising, direct marketing, and other marketing communication expenditures as well as sales data. Along similar lines, overall metrics representing the strength of the relationship or mean score differences of the individual measures could be incorporated into an organization or firm’s existing return on investment tools, such as Ketchum’s ROI Lab (Rockland, 2005), in order to clarify the link between public relations expenditure, the effectiveness of public relations, and bottom-line business results.

**Research Questions**

The preceding discussion highlighted the value of integrating established relationship measures within a coorientational framework. Measuring organization-public relationships in this manner would move beyond commonly used measures of outputs and outcomes. Additionally, it would move beyond assessments of a public’s direct perceptions of the relationship by including the direct perspectives and meta-perspectives of both parties involved in the relationship. This would allow practitioners and researchers to measure public relationships in terms of the coorientational variables of accuracy, agreement, and perceived agreement (i.e., congruency). This in turn would allow the organization-public relationship to be evaluated in terms of its coorientational relationship state and determine whether the relationship is in a state of false consensus, false conflict, consensus, or dissensus.
Therefore, the first objective of my study is to test a methodology for measuring an organization-public relationship in such a manner. As noted in the literature review, a methodology for qualitative measurement of a real-world organization-public relationship within a fully coorientational framework has not been implemented to date. Thus, the following research questions drive stage one of the study:

RQ1: Can the coorientational framework be used in conjunction with existing organization-public relationship measures to measure an organization-public relationship?

RQ2: Can the resulting coorientational measures of accuracy, agreement, and congruency be used to evaluate the state of the organization-public relationship?

**Hypotheses**

Organization-public relationships do not form in a vacuum; as previous models have noted, antecedents (e.g., need, motivation, etc.) and relationship maintenance efforts can act to influence relationship states and outcomes (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Time in the relationship has also been identified as a factor in perceptions of the relationship (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999). Therefore, measurement and evaluation of the direct and meta-perspectives of the parties within the organization-public relationship should be considered in light of the effect of these factors.

Hon and Grunig (1999) acknowledged that one of the benefits of using relationship measurement to evaluate public relations effectiveness is that these measures provide an indication of public relations programming effectiveness over the long-term and are a better indicator than short-term outputs and outcomes that measure the impact of a specific, short-term program. Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that time in a relationship influenced perceptions of the dimensions of an organization-public relationship, concluding that building
the long-term relationships that are desired by public relations practitioners demands a long-term commitment. Therefore:

**H1a**: Longer time in the organization-public relationship will lead to more favorable ratings of the organization-public relation dimensions.

While Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson (1999) looked at the effects of time on the direct perspectives of a relationship, my study will go a step further and look at the impact of time on the coorientational variables of agreement, accuracy, and congruency. Since longer time in the relationship provides more opportunities to interact and communicate with the other party in the relationship, individuals who have spent more time in the relationship have more experience with one another and should have a more accurate perception of the other party’s perspective. Therefore:

**H1b**: Longer time in the organization-public relationship will lead to a greater degree of accuracy between the meta-perspectives of one party in the organization-public relationship and the direct perspective of the other party.

Ledingham and Bruning (2000b) acknowledged that “research supports the notion that management communication programs can influence perceptions of the organization-public relationship” (p.65). The relationship management perspective repeatedly focuses on the use of organizational communication to establish, maintain, and nurture relationships between an organization and its strategic publics (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). The effective use of relationship maintenance strategies should improve perceptions of the organization-public relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Therefore:

**H2a**: Exposure to relationship maintenance strategies will lead to more favorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions.

Not only should the effective use of managed communication improve direct perceptions of the relationship, but it should also improve the degree of cooperation, reduce conflict, and
help organizations and their publics understand each other better (Broom, 1977; Ehling, 1992; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003). Therefore:

H2b: Exposure to relationship maintenance strategies will lead to a greater degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency between the perspectives of the parties in the organization-public relationship.

Furthermore, excellence theory and relationship management theory both propose that two-way symmetrical communication is the best way for public relations practitioners to improve organizational effectiveness and build mutually beneficial relationships (Dozier, 1995; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). Therefore:

H2c: Exposure to relationship maintenance strategies that utilize two-way symmetrical communication will lead to more favorable evaluations of the organization-public relationship dimensions than exposure to relationship maintenance strategies that utilize one-way channels of communication.

H2d: Exposure to relationship maintenance strategies that utilize two-way symmetrical communication will lead to a greater degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency than exposure to relationship maintenance strategies that utilize one-way channels of communication.

Maintenance strategies stemming from management communication programs are not the only interaction that parties in the organization-public relationship will have with each other. Members of each party in the relationship could have direct experience with each other in the form of interpersonal communication as part of their behavior, actions, and interactions. Relationships are based in part on expectations for behavior and whether the parties in the relationship meet those expectations or not (Littlejohn, 1995; Thomlison, 2000). The relationship management perspective also acknowledges that managed communication alone cannot maintain a relationship between the organization and its publics; those messages have to be reinforced by behavior (Ledingham, 2003).
H3a: Positive interpersonal interaction with the other party in the organization-public relationship will lead to favorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions while negative interpersonal interaction will lead to unfavorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions.

H3b: Positive interpersonal interaction will lead to a greater degree of accuracy, agreement, and congruency between the perspectives of the parties in the organization-public relationship while negative interpersonal interaction will lead to a lower degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency between the perspectives of the parties in the organization-public relationship.

The next chapter discusses how a coorientational methodology for measuring organization-public relationships (including both direct- and meta-perspectives) would be designed. The method and results for a pilot study are discussed, followed by a review of the final methodology utilized in the main study.
Figure 2-1. The coorientational model of organization-public relationships (adapted from Broom (1977) and Broom & Dozier (1990)).
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines a methodology for including both parties (the organization and the public) in an evaluation of the organization-public relationship by combining the coorientational methodology advocated by Broom (1977), Broom and Dozier (1990), and others (e.g., Hon & Grunig, 1999) with the relational dimension measures established by Hon and Grunig (1999). Applying these measures within the coorientational model will yield assessments of accuracy, agreement, and congruency that can be used to assess the state of the relationship. The results of a pilot study investigating the use of a proposed coorientational methodology and measurement instrument are also discussed prior to a description of the final methodology employed in the main study.

Integrating the Coorientational Approach with Relationship Measurement

The following section presents an overview of how the measurement of relationship dimensions can be integrated methodologically with the coorientational framework. It includes a discussion of modifications to existing relationship measurement items so that they are appropriate for application within a coorientational approach. This is followed by a discussion of considerations that will need to be made regarding sample selection, survey administration, and initial data analysis. This broader discussion addresses how the coorientational procedure differs methodologically from current approaches for relationship measurement and provides the basis for a more detailed description of the pilot study and main study methodologies presented later in the chapter.

Adapting the Relational Dimensions for the Coorientational Approach

The first step in integrating the relationship measures into the coorientational framework is adapting Hon and Grunig’s (1999) relationship dimensions measurement scale so that the
same items can be used when surveying both the public and the organization. This is achieved by restructuring the questions so that they are more objectively worded. For instance, the first “trust” measure reads, “This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.” While this is appropriate wording for a respondent from a public sample (the sample frequently used in current research), it would be inappropriate when presented to a member of an organization. For example, if one was interested in the relationship between Organization A and Public B, the new objectively reworded trust measure should read, “Organization A treats Public B fairly and justly.” This statement would be appropriate for use with respondents from both the organization sample and the public sample. A list of the modified scale items representing the four relationship dimensions is presented in Appendix A.

Such objective wording would not only be consistent with the theory behind the coorientational approach, but also with the goal of explicating the relationship as a construct independent of the parties in the relationship. First, both symmetry theory and coorientation conceive of the interested parties (A and B) evaluating another object (X), not necessarily each other. By rewording the statements, we make them objective statements about the relationship between A and B, not about A and B themselves – the “relationship” essentially becomes the “X” within the A-B-X framework. Secondly, by having the organization and the public evaluate objectively worded statements about the nature of the relationship, perceptions about the individual parties are explicaded somewhat from the perceptions about the relationship between the parties. The reworded statements don’t ask a respondent how the organization or public treats the respondent per se, but now focuses on the dynamic between the organization and the public.
The final survey will utilize the Hon and Grunig (1999) short scale of relationship measures for trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment. In the interest of parsimony, the final two dimensions, exchange relationships and communal relationships, will be dropped. These two constructs are really types of relationships and are therefore reflective of the other dimensions rather dimensions in and of themselves. Also, given that each respondent will rate every statement twice (once to report their direct perspective and once to report their meta-perspective), dropping the nine items making up these two dimensions actually shortens the survey by 18 questions. Their removal should reduce the respondents’ perceived burden for completing the survey (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, & Tourangeau, 2004).

Sample

Defining, identifying, and recruiting representative samples for this procedure depends on the nature of the organization and the public(s) to be studied. In every application of the method, two sets of perspectives and meta-perspectives need to be represented: the organization and the public of interest. Depending on the size and structure of the organization, either a representative sample of the organization should be drawn or a full census. In most situations, a random sample of the public of interest would be drawn.

To illustrate how the sampling process would be governed by the situation, two examples are provided. In the first example, suppose an organization was interested in the relationship between management and an internal public such as its employees. The organizational sample could be composed of upper-level managers while the public sample could be composed of either all employees (in the case of a small company) or a random sample of employees (in the case of a large company). The sample could also be stratified to focus on different types of employees such as full-time, part-time, new hires, etc. In the second example, suppose an organization was interested in the relationship between the organization as a whole and an
external public, such as constituents. The organizational sample could be constructed to represent both management and lower-level employees (or focus solely on the dominant, decision-making coalition) while the public sample could be a constructed from a random sample of constituents (again, with the option of stratifying the sample to isolate specific subgroups among the stakeholder public).

Survey Administration

Alternately worded versions of the questionnaire should be administered to respondents from the public and the organizational sample. While the same objectively worded relationship items would be presented in both the public and the organization versions of the survey, each survey should include directions that are worded with the appropriate respondent type (organizational or public) in mind. Also, there would be some variation in the type of demographic questions used. For example, asking members of the organization how long they had been with the organization while asking members of the public how long they had been customers, advocates, activists, etc.

In both the organizational and public version of the surveys, the 21 items representing the four relationship dimensions are presented twice. In the first presentation, each respondent should indicate their personal response to each item (i.e., their direct perspective). In the second presentation, the respondent would be instructed to estimate how a member of the other party (either organization or public) would respond to the same item (i.e., their meta-perspective). Following Hon and Grunig (1999), the questionnaire should ask respondents to use a seven-point Likert scale to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with statements that measure the four dimensions of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. While Hon and Grunig (1999) used a nine-point scale, studies of survey research response options have indicated that respondents find five- or seven-point scales easier to utilize (Groves et al., 2004).
This process would yield data for each of the four coorientational elements: (1) the public’s view of the relationship (i.e., the public’s direct perspective), (2) the organization’s view of the relationship (i.e., the organization’s direct perspective), (3) the public’s estimate of how the organization views the relationship (i.e., the public’s meta-perspective), and (4) the organization’s estimate of how the public views the relationship (i.e., the organization’s meta-perspective).

The surveys should include additional demographic measures and other items that gauge exposure to relationship maintenance strategies in the form of internal or external organizational communication and public relations activities. Again, the exact nature of these measures would depend on the specific relationship under study. For example, if the relationship being measured is between the organization’s management and its employees, then employees should be asked questions such as “how long have you worked for this organization?” and “how often do you read the company newsletter?” Researchers utilizing this method should work closely with the individual organization to craft appropriate items that answer the questions that are of interest to the organization and capture the nature of the specific relationship being evaluated.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis begins by calculating mean scores of the four relational dimensions for each coorientational perspective (i.e., what are the mean relationship scores for the two direct perspectives and the two meta-perspectives). Broom and Dozier (1990) recommended two methods for making comparisons between the coorientational perspectives. The first consists of calculating correlation coefficients between mean scores for the public and the organization. The other method requires the calculation of difference scores (“d-scores”) between means for the public and the organization. A large d-score indicates little agreement and low accuracy; a small d-score indicates greater agreement and higher accuracy. While a combined approach can be
utilized, Purnine and Carey (1999) felt that the correlational method produced superior results. However, Purnine and Carey’s study focuses on making comparisons between paired individuals who were married. Such an approach wouldn’t make sense within the context of a single organization-public relationship. Since most practical applications of this method will only be focusing on one organization and one public of interest (either internal or external), the best strategy would be to calculate mean scores for each relational dimension for both the organization and the public of interest and then compare the means for significant differences between the organization and the public. Aggregate level scores on the various relationship items could be used to determine trends in the measures over time.

By making these comparisons between the four coorientational elements, it will be possible to determine the degree of accuracy, agreement, and perceived agreement (congruency) between the organization’s and the public’s views of the relationship. This interaction of the perceptions of the relationship between the parties will yield a clearer picture of the relationship by indicating states of consensus, dissensus, false conflict, and false consensus that exist between an organization and the specific public in question.

**Pilot Study**

To begin an investigation into the use of the coorientational approach for measuring organization-public relationships, a pilot study was conducted in the spring of 2006. The study was conducted at a local health and fitness company that has 300 employees at two locations. The pilot study focused on measuring the relationship between the organization’s management (representing the organizational direct- and meta-perspectives) and organization’s staff (representing an internal public’s direct- and meta-perspectives).
Method

Two samples were utilized for this pilot study: (a) a sample of 17 members of the organization’s management, and (b) and sample of 22 staff members to represent the view of an internal public. Each group was administered one of two versions of a short survey that asked questions regarding their perception of the relationship between management (the organization) and staff (an internal public). Managers received the management version of the survey which asked for management’s perception (i.e., organization’s direct perspective) of the relationship. The survey then asked the managers to estimate how they thought staff members perceived the relationship (i.e., organization’s meta-perspective). Staff members received the staff version of the survey which asked for the staff members’ perception of the relationship (i.e., public’s direct perspective). The survey then asked the staff members to estimate how they thought management perceived the relationship (i.e., public’s meta-perspective).

Each survey included 21 attitudinal statements about the relationship between management and staff. These statements represented measures of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and influence and were drawn from previous studies on organization-public relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Respondents were asked to (a) indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement to capture their direct perspective, and (b) indicate how they thought the other party would respond to the same statements to capture their meta-perspective. Responses were made on a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“strongly agree”), with higher scores indicating stronger agreement. One question (the third control mutuality question) was reversed for scoring as in Hon and Grunig (1999).

The survey concluded by asking demographic questions (gender, age, position, years at the organization, etc.). It also asked respondents to estimate how many hours a week they spent
communicating with either staff members (on the management survey) or managers (on the staff survey) face-to-face, online, and by phone. Copies of the survey instruments are presented in Appendix B.

**Pilot Study Results**

After collecting the surveys, it was necessary to remove one manager and one staff survey because these two respondents had received the wrong version of the survey (i.e., the manager received a staff survey and vice versa). This resulted in the respondents wondering why they were being asked to respond to the same questions twice due to wording of the survey instructions (e.g., the manager was asked for their perception and then instructed to estimate how a manager would respond). Therefore, these two cases were removed from the analysis.

Four cases had missing data. Data was imputed using the mode; while one would normally use casewise deletion when using a larger sample, this particular sample was too small – dropping even four of the cases would result in a significant loss of data.

**Summing of scales.** Responses to questions comprising each of the four relationship dimensions were averaged to generate the four relationship measures. This produced four sets of data (one set for each perspective), with each set providing scores for each of the four relationship measures:

1. Staff’s perception of the relationship in terms of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (i.e., public’s direct perspective).

2. Staff’s estimate of management’s perception of the relationship in terms of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (i.e., public’s meta-perspective).

3. Management’s perception of the relationship in terms of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (i.e., organization’s direct perspective).

4. Management’s estimate of staff’s perception of the relationship in terms of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (i.e., organization’s meta-perspective).
Figure 3-1 clarifies the relationship between these four sets of data and presents a model of the management-staff relationship (i.e., the organization-public relationship).

**Scale Reliability.** Since the items composing the scales were reworded to make them more objective (and therefore, more appropriate for the coorientational approach) and because they are being applied outside of their usual context in which only the public’s direct perspective is measured, one of the purposes of the pilot study was to assess scale reliability. All scales had a Cronbach’s Alpha of .81 or better. Control mutuality was .81, the trust scale was .94, the commitment scale was .94, and the satisfaction scale was .96. This is similar to the scale reliability reported for the original Hon and Grunig (1999) study in which the trust scale had a Cronbach’s Alpha of .86, control mutuality was .87, commitment was .85, and satisfaction was .89.

**Demographics.** The average age for managers was 34.9 years (SD=12.16), while the average age for staff members was 27.2 years (SD=9.81). The overall average age for respondents was 30.5 years (SD=11.41). In terms of gender, 51.4% were male while 48.6% were female. Looking at managers only, 56.3% were male and 43.8% were female. 47.6% of the staff members were male and 52.4% were female. In terms of experience at the organization, 27% had spent less than one year at the organization, 39% had been there for 1-5 years, 19% had been there for 6-10 years, and 16% had been there for more than 10 years. 37.5% of managers had been at the organization for 1-5 years, 31.3% had been there for 6-10 years, and 31.3% had been there for more than 10 years. 47.6% of the staff members had been there for less than one year, 38.1% had been there for 1-5 years, and 14.3% had been at the organization for six years or more.
Communication. Overall, respondents spent 14.01 hours per week ($SD=13.16$) engaged in face-to-face communication with other employees. Respondents spent 2.28 hours a week ($SD=7.19$) communicating online and 1.57 hours a week ($SD=2.90$) communicating by phone. In total, employees spent 17.86 hours a week ($SD=20.12$) communicating with other employees. Looking at managers only, they spent 25.3 hours a week ($SD=12.2$) talking to staff face-to-face, 4.75 hours a week ($SD=10.58$) communicating online, and 2.63 hours a week ($SD=4.05$) communicating by phone. Looking at staff only, they spent 5.39 hours a week ($SD=4.5$) communicating with managers, 0.39 hours a week ($SD=.58$) communicating online, and 0.77 hours a week ($SD=1.13$) communicating by phone.

Agreement. A series of independent $t$-tests were conducted to compare management’s view of the OPR to staff’s view of the OPR (see Table 3-1). While management’s rating of each of the four relationship dimensions is always higher than the staff’s ratings, only management’s ratings of control mutuality and trust were significantly different. Management’s mean rating of control mutuality was significantly higher than staff’s mean rating of control mutuality. Management’s mean rating of trust was significantly higher than staff’s mean rating of trust.

Perceived Agreement. Paired samples $t$-tests were conducted to compare management’s view of the OPR to how management estimated the staff’s view of the OPR (see Table 3-2). While management’s rating of each relationship dimension is always higher than the perceived staff view, only control mutuality, trust, and commitment were significantly different. Management’s mean rating of control mutuality was significantly higher than management’s estimate of the staff’s rating of control mutuality. Management’s mean rating of trust was significantly higher than their estimate of the staff’s rating. Management’s mean rating of commitment was significantly higher than their estimate of the staff’s rating.
Next, paired samples \( t \)-tests were conducted to compare the staff’s view of the OPR with how staff estimated management’s view of the OPR (see Table 3-3). While staff consistently estimated that management would rate the OPR more favorably than staff would, only trust and commitment are significantly different. Staff’s mean rating of trust was significantly lower than their estimate of management’s rating. Staff’s mean rating of commitment was significantly lower than their estimate of management’s rating.

**Accuracy.** A series of independent \( t \)-tests were conducted to compare the staff’s estimate of management view to management’s actual view of the OPR; this indicated how accurate the staff’s prediction of the management view was (see Table 3-4). There were no significant differences between the staff’s estimate of the management view and the actual management view for three of the relationship dimensions; staff accurately predicted how management would rate the relationship in terms of trust, commitment, and satisfaction. However, staff’s estimate of control mutuality was significantly lower than management’s actual rating of control mutuality.

Next, a series of independent \( t \)-tests were conducted to compare management’s estimate of staff’s view of the OPR to staff’s actual view of the OPR; this indicated how accurate management’s prediction of the staff view was (see Table 3-5). There were no significant differences; thus management accurately predicted how staff would rate the relationship on the four relationship dimensions.

**Conclusions from Pilot Study**

To clarify the results of the pilot study, it helps to address the findings as they relate to each of the four relationship dimensions in turn. In regards to control mutuality, there was a lack of actual agreement between management and staff, with management scoring significantly higher on the control mutuality scale than staff. Management seemed to be aware of this; management estimated that staff would score lower. However, staff failed to recognize this
disagreement. This difference in perception is reinforced by the accuracy with which management predicted staff’s actual control mutuality score and staff’s inaccurate estimate of management’s score (staff’s estimate of management’s control mutuality score was lower than management’s actual score). In essence, management feels that the relationship has a greater degree of control mutuality than staff does, but only management seems to be aware of this; staff incorrectly perceived that the two parties agree that there is less control mutuality in the relationship (i.e., false consensus). Management could address this inaccurate perception by better communicating to staff that employees’ opinions and input are valued. Management should also seek to understand why staff is less likely to agree that management listens to their concerns.

There was a lack of agreement in regard to the dimension of trust, with management scoring significantly higher than staff. This time, both parties in the relationship were aware of this difference. Management accurately predicted that staff would score lower than management, while staff accurately estimated that management would rate the trust measures higher than staff. So, there appears to be a real disagreement (dissensus) between management and staff in terms of the level of trust in the relationship. If management isn’t already taking steps to communicate to employees that they can depend on management to treat them fairly, then steps need to be taken to do so.

When looking at the dimension of commitment, there is evidence of a false conflict. While there is actually agreement between management and staff in regards to the level of commitment in the relationship, management wrongly perceives that staff rates the relationship lower in terms of commitment while staff incorrectly perceives that management rates the relationship higher. However, while statistically significant, this perceived difference is slight. Regardless,
management should take action to not only increase the amount of actual commitment to the relationship, but also demonstrate to staff that the two parties are actually in agreement on this issue.

The satisfaction dimension of the OPR provides an example of a consensus – both sides agree on how satisfied they are with the relationship and they accurately understand each other’s viewpoint. Management’s communication and policy efforts don’t necessarily need to focus on clarifying misunderstanding regarding this dimension; efforts can focus instead on increasing actual satisfaction with the relationship.

In summary, the underlying relationship between the management and staff at this particular organization appears to be fairly healthy; all the means for the dimensions were above “5” indicating that on average, respondents at least “somewhat agreed” with the relationship measures. These relatively positive ratings should mitigate somewhat the findings of disagreement and false perceptions on some of the measures. While there were statistically significant differences in many cases, for practical purposes, many of the scores were still on the positive end of the rating scale. Nonetheless, future communication efforts between management and staff should address some of the areas of misperception regarding the organization-public relationship.

The results are interesting in that they provide examples of each of the four possible coorientational states: consensus, dissensus, false consensus, and false conflict. Control mutuality demonstrated a false consensus. Employees believe that management and staff are in agreement on the amount of control mutuality in the relationship even though they really disagree. A true dissensus was evident on the trust dimension with both sides accurately perceiving that management felt that the relationship was more trusting than staff did. A false
conflict existed between management and staff in regards to commitment. While both sides actually rated the commitment measures similarly, they each incorrectly perceived that they disagreed. Finally, the satisfaction dimension provides an example of true consensus. Both parties accurately perceived that they were in agreement as to how satisfied they were with the relationship.

It should be noted that there are distinct limitations on the conclusions drawn from this pilot study. Most notably, the sample used in the pilot study was a convenience sample and does not represent a random selection of managers and employees from the organization. Additionally, it was a relatively small sample. Another concern has to do with motivated misreporting on the part of staff respondents. It is possible that staff, due to fears of reprisals from management, might be motivated to give socially desirable responses and overstate the degree to which they agreed with the relationship measures. Due to these restrictions, generalizing these findings to the whole organization is not possible. However, the purpose of this pilot study was not to paint a detailed picture of the relationship at this specific organization, but rather to investigate the feasibility of using a coorientational approach to measuring an organization-public relationship using the Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship measures and to uncover any potential problems with the methodology prior to implementing a broader study. These observations will be addressed further in the following section.

**Evaluation of Pilot Study**

In moving forward with the main study, the mode of survey administration will need to be tailored to the organization that will participate in the main study. Due to concerns over motivated misreporting, it might be necessary to administer the instrument face-to-face if measuring the perceptions of an internal public. If not face-to-face, then mailing lists for these publics would need to be obtained so that the survey and a self-addressed return envelope
can be sent directly to these respondents; however, while this might reduce the issue of motivated misreporting, it would certainly affect response rates and increase the amount of time necessary for data collection. A happy medium might be to have the surveys distributed within the organization via the organizational contact person, but include an envelope that the completed surveys can be sealed in prior to returning them. Another option may be to develop an online version of the survey that can be taken anonymously.

The pilot study did demonstrate that measuring direct- and meta-perspectives of both a public and an organization within a coorientational framework is feasible as long as care is taken in the administration of the two separate survey instruments to ensure that the correct instrument is provided to the correct type of respondent. Also, the scales demonstrated good internal reliability despite the fact that the wording of the items was slightly modified to fit the circumstances of the particular application and that they were administered not only to a public sample, but also to a sample from the organization. Finally, the results of the pilot study were encouraging in that comparisons of the various perspectives made it possible to generate assessments of accuracy, agreement, and perceived agreement. Analysis of these coorientational measures made it possible to determine coorientational states that existed between the organization and the public in regards to the relationship dimensions of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality.

**Main Study**

Having pilot tested an instrument that used the modified Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship measures within a coorientational framework, the cooperation of a client organization and access to a relevant stakeholder public was secured for the main study that was conducted in the spring of 2007.
**Organization & Stakeholder Public**

The organization that agreed to participate in the main study is a university police department for a large southeastern university. The organization has approximately 130 employees including 90 sworn and 40 non-sworn officers and support staff. It serves a campus covering 2,000 acres with a student body of approximately 50,000 (average annual enrollment). This includes approximately 7,000 undergraduate students living on-campus in residence halls and 1,000 married and graduate students living on-campus in family-housing villages. These on-campus students represent the primary stakeholder public for the organization (J. Holcomb, personal communication, Jan. 26, 2007) and are the focus of the study. Access to these students was negotiated through the university’s housing and residence education office. The primary contact for the university police department was a captain in the community services division. The primary contact for the housing office was the coordinator of research programs and services operating out of the marketing and public relations department.

While the use of student samples is typically frowned upon, within the context of organization-public relationship research analyzing the relationship between an organization (here, the university police department) and its primary stakeholder public (here, on-campus students), the use of a student sample is justified and may be more telling than using a sample drawn from the general public. University police and students interact with each other on a regular basis; their decisions and behavior potentially have a direct effect on one another. Using a student sample that composes a stakeholder public that is involved in a direct relationship with an organization may represent an improvement over other organization-public relationship studies that examine the relationship between an organization and the general public who may only know the organization by their reputation and are not directly involved with the organization (Hung, 2006; Ki and Hon, 2007).
Mode of Survey Administration

The main study utilizes a Web-based survey instrument to measure perceptions of the organization-public relationship that exists between the university police department and the students living on-campus; these students are the organization’s primary stakeholder public. The mode used in my study, the Internet, warrants some discussion since the mode of survey administration can affect several aspects of the survey design, including the available sampling frame and sampling design, coverage of the target population, survey nonresponse, and data quality, as well as the cost and time required to administer the survey (Groves et al., 2004). Couper’s (2000) review of Web-based survey techniques addresses several of these concerns from a survey error perspective, specifically noting that Internet surveys are potentially problematic when it comes to coverage error, nonresponse error, and measurement error. Several of these issues are addressed in turn.

Regarding the sampling frame and target population coverage issues, Couper (2000) points out that one of the greatest drawbacks to the use of the Internet to survey the general population is under-coverage of target populations. Coverage issues arise when there is a mismatch between the available sampling frame from which potential respondents are selected and the target population of interest (Groves et al., 2004). Many members of the general population are not reached via Web-based surveys due to the lack of penetration of Internet availability. However, this drawback is minimized if the target population is known to have Internet access (Couper, 2000). Aoki and Elasman (2000) state that “though there are still limitations to be overcome if the Web is used for general population survey, the Web will present advantages over traditional modes of data collection if it is used for specific populations that are known to be Internet savvy” (p. 3).
Such is the case in my study where both populations of interest are known to have access to the Internet. All members of the university police department are assigned university e-mail accounts and have access to the Internet at headquarters. Likewise, all students enrolled at the university are assigned a university e-mail account which is either their primary e-mail address or which can be forwarded to another e-mail address. Students are encouraged to check their university e-mail regularly as this is the primary, official means through which the university communicates with them. Furthermore, the university requires that all students have a computer; even if they don’t have a personal computer at their place of residence, the university has numerous computer labs with Internet access available for student use.

An additional coverage issue related to Internet surveys is the availability of sampling frames (Groves et al., 2004). Even if the target population is known to have computer and Internet access, an adequate sampling frame may not be available from which to draw a sample. For my study, this is not a factor since list frames of e-mail addresses are available for both populations of interest. An e-mail distribution list of all sworn and non-sworn officers currently employed at the university police department was made available through the community services division (J. Leffert, personal communication, March 28, 2007). Similarly, the university’s office of housing and residence education maintains an e-mail distribution list of all undergraduate and graduate students currently living on campus that is updated every semester (Y. Zhang, personal communication, March 30, 2007).

Another issue of major concern for Web-based surveys is survey nonresponse and potential nonresponse bias. Nonresponse occurs when subjects do not participate in the survey because they are either unwilling or unable to complete the survey instrument. Consequently, nonresponse error results when respondents and nonrespondents differ significantly on survey
statistics (Couper, 2000; Groves et al., 2004). Mode can affect response and nonresponse rates due to the presence or absence of an interviewer who can assist with the administration of the survey either by helping to ensure that respondents receive the instrument, making sure the respondents understand the survey directions, and by encouraging respondents to complete the instrument (Groves et al.). Self-administered questionnaires completed by mail and the Web typically feature lower response rates than surveys that are administered by an interviewer. Studies on response rates have placed the average mail survey response rates between 40% (Kerlinger, 1986) and 56% (Baruch, 1999), although Dillman (2000) suggests that by utilizing strategic design features, response rates can be improved to approximately 70%.

While many studies have suggested ways to improve mail survey response rates, few have looked at methods for increasing Web survey response rates. Response rates for Web-based surveys are typically low, with various published studies reporting response rates ranging from 15% (Porter & Whitcomb, 2003) to 41% for completed surveys (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001). One meta-analysis reported an average response rate of 34% for Web surveys (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). While the conventional wisdom says that what works for mail should work for the Web, Couper (2000) disagrees, suggesting that Web surveys often cannot use these techniques due to the technical difficulties and confidentiality issues involved with Web use. In a meta-analysis of 68 Web surveys, Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000) identified number of contacts, personalized contacts, and precontacts as methods for boosting the response rates of online surveys. Porter and Whitcomb’s (2003) investigated recruitment e-mail features on response rates for Web surveys and found that a deadline for completing the survey along with stressing how the respondents were able to provide specialized information not available from the general public could improve response rates. It should be noted that in their study, other
design features that increased response rates in mail surveys, such as personalized salutations, did not have an effect on response rates for Web surveys.

Couper (2000) also identified measurement error as a potential problem with Web surveys. Measurement error occurs when responses to the survey questions do not reflect the true value of the answers (Groves et al., 2004). This can be due to several reasons, including satisficing (mental shortcuts that respondents engage in to simplify the survey response process), motivated misreporting (when the respondent deliberately provides an answer that does not reflect a true attitude or behavior for social desirability purposes), biased or confusing question and response option wording, the format of response options, and question order. This is related in part to the lack of a trained interviewer who can help the respondent by clarifying questions or providing motivation to complete the instrument. It should be noted that these problems are not unique to Web surveys, but can become an issue for other self-administered questionnaires as well.

Another issue related to mode selection is data quality; specifically the completeness of the data. Groves et al. (2004) acknowledge that one advantage that computer-assisted self-administered questionnaires have is that they have low missing data rates. In the present survey, the Internet survey was configured to prompt the respondent to complete all questions on any particular page of the survey before moving on to the next page.

The Web may present some advantages to survey research in regard to two other factors – cost and time. Groves et al. (2004) state that the fixed cost of a Web-based survey can be close to zero; this was certainly the case in my study where the online survey service that was used cost only $20 for one month and allowed up to 1,000 responses per month (charging $0.05 for every
Another advantage provided by the use of a Web-based survey was the speed with which recruitment and data collection could take place. Couper (2000) observes:

“Web surveys offer the research community enormous opportunities for low-cost self administered surveys using a wide variety of stimulus material (sound, image, video, etc.) that has heretofore simply not been available for it has been too costly to implement widely in interviewer-administered surveys” (p. 477).

In selecting a mode of survey administration for my study, all of these considerations were weighed against one another along with considering the type of organization and public under investigation and the type of access to these populations that was available. In the end, the coverage issue related to Internet surveys was deemed not to be relevant since my study had access to list-based samples of high-coverage populations. In an attempt to increase response rate, steps were taken such as stressing organizational sponsorship in the recruitment e-mails; furthermore, if there was a low response rate, it did not necessarily mean that nonresponse bias was present. Additionally, the use of Internet surveys offered several advantages, such as ensuring completeness of the data, making a complex instrument easier to administer than it was when presented on paper, and reducing the time required to collect the data.

**Sampling and Recruitment**

My study features a probability sampling technique that utilizes two list-based samples of high coverage populations (Couper, 2000) – a sample of members of the university’s police department using a departmentally controlled list of employee e-mail addresses and a sample of currently enrolled students that live on campus drawn from a recently updated list of e-mail addresses maintained by the university housing office. Similar to Couper, Traugott, and Lamias (1999), samples were drawn by contacting individuals listed on the sampling frames with an invitation to participate in the survey sent via an e-mail that included a link to the survey Web site.
The recruitment e-mails stated that the participation of the respondent was desired in order to better understand the relationship that existed between the university police department and students living on campus. It incorporated several features that had been shown to improve response rates for Internet surveys as well as features that were known to increase response rates for mail surveys (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Couper, 2000; Porter & Whitcomb, 2003; Groves et al., 2004). These features included a deadline to complete the survey, acknowledgement of organizational sponsorship from the university, and an assurance that the data was not being collected for marketing purposes. Since the e-mail to members of the university police department was distributed internally via a listserv, a personalized contact could not be included. The e-mail that students received did include a personalized contact of sorts in that the e-mail was addressed to their individual university e-mail accounts and not to a university listserv. This could have been taken a step further by personalizing the actual salutation within the e-mail itself with the recipient’s name, but the technical difficulties involved with this precluded it from being done in a satisfactory manner; that is to say, there would have been the possibility that the automated survey software would incorrectly format the respondent’s name and make it appear an improperly addressed spam e-mail. Manually personalizing the recruitment e-mails would have been problematic as well due to the sheer number of e-mails that were being sent. Also, since the list I was working from was a computer generated database provided by the housing office, any incorrectly formatted names on the sampling frame list would have been carried over to the recruitment e-mails anyway, regardless of whether they were entered manually or by using the survey software.

Each survey also included an informed consent statement as required by the university’s institutional review board. This statement about the respondent’s rights and the risks involved
with participation in the study must be included whenever human respondents are used. The recruitment e-mail included an acknowledgment that clicking on the link to the survey Web site constituted consent. See Appendix D for copies of the initial and follow-up recruitment e-mails used with each sample.

On the morning that the surveys were opened up for online access, the first organizational recruitment e-mail was sent to all sworn and non-sworn officers ($N=130$) employed by the university police department. A similar recruitment email tailored for the public sample was sent to a random sample of 1,235 students living on campus. A systematic random sample with a random start point (determined by using a random number generator) was used to draw 1,235 student e-mails from the list provided by the university housing office including 1,035 undergraduate students living on campus in residence halls and 200 graduate students living in family housing villages. The initial sample size was determined in discussions with housing office officials who initially approved that number for contact. Estimating a response rate of approximately 30% (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000), it was believed that this sample would yield an adequate number of completed surveys to make the results generalizable to the population of 8,175 students living on campus (based on a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of +/- 5%, 367 completed surveys were needed (Austin & Pinkleton, 2006)).

For the organizational sample, multiple contacts were made over the two week data collection period to improve the response rate (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Couper, Traugott, & Lamais, 2001; Groves et al., 2004; Porter & Whitcomb 2003). Members of the university police department were contacted again three business days after the initial contact and again five business days following the second contact. This is similar to the strategy used by Couper, Traugott, and Lamais (2001), who acknowledged that one of the major advantages of
Web-based surveys was the speed with which follow-up contacts could be made in an effort to increase response rates.

The sampling strategy used with the student sample had to be adjusted during the course of the study. There was an incredibly poor response rate after the first attempt to recruit respondents from the initial approved sample of 1,235 students. Fearing that the low response rate would lead to a small sample size that would prove inadequate for statistical analysis, approval was sought and obtained from the university housing office to open up the survey to all students living on campus. Another recruitment email was sent to the remaining 6,940 students on the university housing office’s e-mail list.

Although longer data collection periods have been shown to increase response rate (Groves et al., 2004; Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978), the online surveys in my study were only kept open for two weeks. This was due in part because the survey needed to be administered to the organization and public simultaneously to ensure that all the respondents would be evaluating the organization-public relationship at the same point in time. It was also hoped that this would control for any artifacts created by real world events happening at different points in time. Additionally, due to the speed with which responses are received after contact, it was believed anyone that was going to respond to the survey would do so relatively soon after receiving the recruitment e-mail (Couper, Traugott, & Lamias, 2001).

At the end of the two week period, 56 members of the university police department had accessed the survey and completed the first section measuring direct perspectives of the relationship, yielding a “click-through rate” of 43.1% (typically, Internet surveys have reported click through rates anywhere from 1%-30% (Wimmer & Dominick, 2002)). Forty-four respondents completed the entire survey, resulting in a 33.8% response rate for the organization.
sample, which was similar to the average Web survey response rate reported by Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000).

For the student sample, 703 respondents accessed the survey and completed the first section, yielding a click-through rate of 8.6%. The final completion rate was 5.7% with 468 respondents completing the entire survey. While the final valid sample size exceeded the 367 responses that were deemed necessary for statistical analysis, the low response rate raised concerns about the potential for nonresponse bias among the student sample.

Survey Instrument Construction

After clicking on the link in the recruitment e-mail, respondents were directed to the survey Web site featuring one of two versions of the survey; students were directed to the public-version of the survey, while university police department members were directed to the organization-version of the survey. The basic structure of both surveys was similar, with the landing page featuring a greeting along with a short blurb stressing the importance of the study and the importance of the answers the respondents would provide. The remainder of the online survey was divided into four sections. Section 1 asked respondents to provide their direct perspective of the relationship. Section 2 asked respondents for their meta-perspective of the relationship. Section 3 included questions about exposure to relationship maintenance strategies and the type of interpersonal interaction the respondent had with the other party. Section 4 concluded the survey by request demographic information that included how long the respondent had been involved in the organization-public relationship. Copies of both survey instruments are included in Appendix C.

Each section of the survey was presented on one online page. Peytchev, Couper, McCabe, and Crawford (2006) had previously investigated the effects of using paging versus scrolling to view and complete online surveys; they determined that item nonresponse was slightly higher for
surveys that used scrolling arguing that one drawback to scrolling is that it is not possible to retain information from partially completed interviews. For my study, respondents were required to provide an answer to all the questions on the page before they could proceed to the next page; if they attempted to continue to the next page without answering a question, a pop-up dialogue box would appear and ask them to answer all the questions on the page before continuing. This was done in an effort to cut down on item-missing data and facilitate the retention of data from partial interviews.

Respondents were not prevented from returning to a previous page in order to change an answer. Previous research has shown that this helps to reduce social desirability effects (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). Additionally, since an actual list of student e-mails was provided by the housing office in a database format, it was possible to manage access for each individual respondent using the survey Web site’s list management tool. Thus, if a student was to stop working on the survey due to a timed-out Internet connection, they could return to the site and continue taking the survey from the point they left off; again, it was hoped that this would help increase the completion rate and reduce the amount of item-missing data. Since the police department surveys were distributed through a listserv, it was not possible to track those surveys individually; therefore, this function was not available for the respondents completing the organization-version of the survey.

Operationalization of Independent Variables

**Party Membership.** Each survey was coded for 1 if the person completing the survey was a member of the police department (i.e., the organization), or 2 if they were a student living on campus (i.e., the public).

**Relationship Maintenance Strategies.** Section 2 on the public survey included measures of exposure to organizational relationship maintenance strategies that relied on either one-way or
two-way communication. Students were asked about exposure to one-way strategies using a checklist item that asked whether they have visited the police department’s Web site, had read one of their brochures, read one of their newsletters, read a press release issued by the department, or listened to a speech by a member of the department. Each item was coded 0 if the respondent had not been exposed to it and 1 if they had.

Exposure to two-way relationship maintenance strategies that involved engagement in services or programs offered by the organization was also measured. Students were asked about their participation in these programs on a checklist item. These presentations, crime-prevention classes, educational seminars, and other programs are offered on a regular basis by the organization and exhibit many of the features of two-way symmetrical maintenance strategies including access, positivity, sharing of tasks, networking, and integration (Grunig & Huang, 2001; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

**Interpersonal Interaction.** The amount of interpersonal contact that the parties had with one another was measured with an item that asked how many hours in an average day that they spent communicating with a member of the other party face-to-face, online, and on the phone. Responses were indicated on a drop-down menu with response options that ranged from 0-24 hours. Students were also asked how many hours in a an average week that they communicated directly with police department members; again, responses were indicated on a drop-down menu with response options ranging from 0-24 hours and included a “more than 24 hours” option.

Interpersonal interaction was also included in a checklist item on the student survey and included whether or not a student had called the university police department, wrote an e-mail or letter to the organization, visited the police department’s offices, or talked face to face with a member of the department. These items were also coded 1 if present and 0 if absent.
Respondents were also asked to indicate how they would characterize these interpersonal interactions by indicating valence on a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (“very negative”) to 7 (“very positive”).

**Time.** Time in the relationship was assessed differently on each survey. Members of the police department were asked on the organization version of the survey to indicate how many years they had worked in their current position, how many years they had worked at the police department in all, and how many years that they had worked at the university. Each response was indicated on a drop-down menu with response options ranging from 1-20 and included “less than one year” and “more than 20 years” options.

Students were asked on the public version of the survey to indicate how many years they had been a student at the university and how many years they lived in their current location. Responses to both questions were indicated on a drop-down menu with response options ranging from 1-7 years and that included “less than one year” and “more than seven year” options.

**Media Exposure.** Students were also asked on the public version of the survey if they had ever seen or read stories about the university police department in the media. “Yes” responses were coded as 1 and “no” responses were coded as 0. They were also asked about how they thought the police department was portrayed in these stories. Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“very negative”) to 7 (“very positive”).

**Demographics.** Students were asked to indicate their gender (“male” coded as 0, “female” coded as 1), their age using a drop-down menu ranging from 18-64, and their class standing at the university (coded 1-5 for “freshman,” “sophomore,” “junior,” “senior,” and “graduate student” respectively). They were also asked whether they lived on or off campus, whether they had ever lived on campus, whether they drive or park a car on campus, and whether they had
ever been cited by the university police department for any reason. Responses to these questions were coded 1 for “yes” and 0 for “no.”

Members of the university police department were also asked to indicate their gender and their age using the same response options as above. They were also asked to indicate whether they were a sworn (coded as 1) or non-sworn officer (coded as 2). An open-ended response box was also included so that they could enter the title of their current position at the university police department.

**Operationalization of Dependent Variables.**

**Direct Perspective.** Each respondent’s direct perspective of the four relationship dimensions of trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment was measured using the 21-item Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship scale. Each item was slightly reworded as in the pilot study so that they were objective in nature and applicable to the specific organization-public relationship under investigation; the reworded items are presented in the survey instruments in Appendix C. As in the pilot study, the respondents indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with each item on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). One advantage of using the online survey to present the relationship scale items was that the survey software would randomize the order of the items for each respondent, thus controlling for question order effects.

**Meta-Perspective.** After responding to the relationship items measuring the respondent’s direct perspective, they were taken to the next page of the survey were they were asked to provide their estimates of the other party’s view of the relationship (i.e., the respondent’s meta-perspective). This was measured using the same 21-item relationship measures as before. Responses were measured using a seven-point Likert scale. For the organization version of the survey, the scale ranged from 1 (“a student would strongly disagree”) to 7 (“a student would
strongly agree”); for the student version of the survey, the scale ranged from 1 (“a member of the university police department would strongly disagree”) to 7 (“a member of the university police department would strongly agree”).

**One Final Variable – A Real World Event**

As mentioned previously, the data collection period was limited to two weeks in part to avoid the possibility of real world events occurring that could have an effect on the manner in which respondents perceived the organization-public relationship. Originally, the objective was to ensure that members of the organization and members of the public were evaluating the relationship simultaneously; for example, the researcher did not want to survey the organization at Time 1 and then later survey the public at Time 3 if some event that could affect the relationship occurred at Time 2.

Sadly, such an event did take place during the course of the study. Six days into the data collection period for my study, a gunman shot and killed 33 students and faculty on the campus of Virginia Tech University; the event received heavy media coverage for several weeks afterward. Obviously, this raised the issue of campus security at universities around the nation, and the university that was the site for data collection in my study was no exception. The day following the shootings, university administrators sent an e-mail via the campus listserv to every student, faculty member, and staff member at the university. In the e-mail, the university expressed their sorrow over the shooting, recognized the possible security concerns of the campus community, and stressed that the university police department was prepared to handle a similar event should it ever occur on their campus.

To account for this event, an additional independent variable related to the influence of real world events is included in the analysis. Surveys received prior to the distribution of the
university’s e-mailed statement regarding the shooting were coded as “0” and surveys received after the e-mail was sent were coded as “1.” Including this variable in the analysis may indicate the influence of this real world event on the salience of the relationship to respondents and whether it effected respondent’s perceptions of the organization-public relationship between students and the university police department.

It should also be noted that two weeks before data collection started, a city police officer was killed by a drunk driver during the celebration following a university sporting event. Since this event did not involve a university police officer, it was not included as a real world cue in my study. Even if students did not draw a distinction between city and university police officers, the incident still took place well before data collection started, so respondents would have prior knowledge of the event before taking the survey, unlike the school shooting incident, which could have affected perceptions of respondents during the course of the study.

Data Analysis Strategy

After the reversed control mutuality item was recoded, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for each relationship measure to ensure the scale items representing that dimension were reliable. The scale items representing each relationship measure were then averaged to obtain the mean trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, and commitment scores for each respondent’s direct perspective and meta-perspective. An overall relationship measure was also calculated by averaging all 21 scale items for each respondent’s direct perspective and meta-perspective.

D-scores were then calculated for each respondent by subtracting the average relationship ratings of their individual direct perspective and meta-perspectives from the average direct perspective ratings for the other party as a whole. This procedure generated two sets of d-scores: (a) one set of d-scores that indicated accuracy between the respondent’s individual meta-perspective and the other party’s overall direct perspective, and (b) one set of d-scores that
indicated agreement between the respondent’s direct perspective and the other party’s overall
direct perspective. Congruency was calculated by finding the difference between each
respondent’s own perspective and their own meta-perspective. The absolute value of all d-scores
was then calculated so that they were positive. Smaller d-score values indicate stronger levels of
agreement, accuracy, and congruency while larger d-score values indicate weaker levels of
agreement, accuracy, and congruency.

To address the research questions regarding the type of relationship states that exist
between the organization and the public, repeated measures multiple analysis of variance
(MANOVA) was used. Follow-up ANOVAs were also used to provide additional information
regarding the interaction of the various perspectives. To address the impact of the independent
variables (time, maintenance strategies, interpersonal interaction) on the dependent variables
(relationship measures, coorientation measures), multiple linear regression analysis was used.
Table 3-1. Management and staff direct perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dimension</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th></th>
<th>( t (df = 35) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>( SD )</td>
<td>( M )</td>
<td>( SD )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>3.17 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.31 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.671</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p \( \leq .05 \) ** \( p \leq .01 \) *** \( p \leq .001 \)
Table 3-2. Management direct and meta-perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dimension</th>
<th>Management direct perspective</th>
<th>Management meta-perspective</th>
<th>t (df =15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p <= .05  ** p <= .01  *** p <= .001
## Table 3-3. Staff direct and meta-perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dimension</th>
<th>Staff direct perspective</th>
<th>Staff meta-perspective</th>
<th>t (df = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>5.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>5.53</td>
</tr>
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</table>

$p <= .05$ ** $p <= .01$ *** $p <= .001$
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship dimension</th>
<th>Management direct perspective</th>
<th></th>
<th>Staff meta-perspective</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>t (df = 35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
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<td>.65</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>.97</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
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<td>1.10</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p <= .05 ** p <= .01 *** p <= .001
Table 3-5. Staff direct perspective to management meta-perspective.

<table>
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<th>Relationship dimension</th>
<th>Management meta-perspective</th>
<th>Staff direct perspective</th>
<th>t (df = 35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control mutuality</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p <= .05  ** p <= .01  *** p <= .001
Figure 3-1. Coorientation model of pilot study organization’s management-staff relationship.

Note: Values with the same superscripts indicate means that there are significantly different ($p < .05$). In the model, CM = control mutuality, T = trust, C = commitment, and S = satisfaction.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The following chapter details the findings of the multivariate procedures that were used to analyze the data for my study. First, I discuss the examination and cleaning of the data set, including checks for data entry errors, missing data, construction of the summated relationship scales, and assessments of scale reliability. I then present the demographics of the public and organization sub-samples. Then, I present the results of the multiple analysis of variance and analysis of variance procedures used to explore the research questions regarding the coorientational approach to measuring relationships. Finally, I detail the results of the multiple linear regression analyses used to test the hypotheses regarding the effect of the independent variables on the relationship and coorientation measures.

Preparing the Data for Analysis

Once access to the online surveys closed at the end of the data collection period, the data sets were downloaded into Excel for examination and cleaning. The responses on each variable were reviewed to ensure that no impossible values were entered (e.g., an “8” entered as a response to a seven-point Likert scale). For the question regarding exposure to two-way relationship maintenance strategies, when the “other program” checklist item was selected, the open-ended response was reviewed to see if it was categorizable into one of the other designated checklist items. For example, if a respondent did not indicate having attended a presentation on safety or crime prevention, and then checked “other” and indicated that they had attended a bicycle safety presentation, then the item was recoded from “other” to “attended an educational presentation on personal safety or crime prevention.”

Since the data set downloaded from the survey Web site did not have skipped and missing item codes included, they had to be entered into the data set. For items missing due to a skip
pattern within the survey, a code of “88” was entered. For items that were missing due to item nonresponse, a code of “99” was entered.

Next, the reversed control mutuality item on both the public and organization versions of survey had to be recoded. This was done for both relationship scales (direct perspective and meta-perspective scales). Once this was done, the public data set and the organization data set were combined and imported into SPSS. There, the variable attributes were assigned (e.g., name, scale, missing value designators, etc.).

**Item-Missing Data**

Item-missing data is when information is missing for some items on an observation that has provided data on other items; this happens when a respondent answers some questions and then fails to answer others, either due to skipping the item or terminating the survey (Groves et al., 2004; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Missing data is a common problem in survey research, with studies in some fields reporting that 50% or more of the respondents in their surveys have missing data (Acock, 2005). Examining the data set for my study, 29.9% of observations had item-missing data after completing the first section of the survey; that is to say, the respondent terminated the survey after completing the first “page” of the survey online. To assess the randomness of the occurrence of missing data in the data set, a new variable, “missing,” was created and coded 0 if the respondent did not terminate after the first section and coded 1 if the respondent did terminate after the first section. A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was calculated to examine whether the observations that had missing data or not had an effect on the direct perspective ratings of the relationship dimensions. No significant effect was found ($F(4, 752) = .959, p > .05$). None of the direct perspective ratings of the relationship dimensions were significantly influenced by whether or not the respondent terminated the survey (and thus had missing data on the rest of the survey).
Additionally, a chi-square test of independence was used to examine the difference in the proportion of respondents who had missing data before receiving the e-mail from the university administrators regarding the Virginia Tech shooting (.31) to the proportion of respondents who had missing data and completed the survey after the e-mail was distributed (.26). No significant difference was found (chi-square (1) = 1.543, $p > .05$).

A chi-square test of independence was also calculated to compare the frequency of students who had missing data to the frequency of university police department members who had missing data. In this case, a significant interaction was found (chi-square(1) = 4.213, $p < .05$). Students were more likely to have missing data (30.9%) than members of the organization (17.9%). Although significant, coupled with the results of the MANOVA and the other chi-square test, this would seem to indicate that there is not an underlying pattern to the item-missing data; it comes as no surprise that students would be more likely to terminate the survey process earlier than the university police department sample. It was assumed that the data was missing completely at random (MCAR); that is to say, that the observed ratings of the direct perspective relationship measures (from section 1 of the survey) were a truly random sample of all the direct perspective measures (observed and unobserved) with no systematic pattern present that would lead to classifying the missing data as missing at random (MAR) (Hair et al., 1998).

The next decision was how to handle the missing data. Although there are methods available for imputing data, it was felt that due to the high level of cases missing data, that imputation (especially imputation of mean values) would distort the sample statistics (Acock, 2005; Hair et al., 1998; Groves, 2004) which can create a serious problem if the data is being analyzed using multivariate techniques (Kalton & Kasprzyk, 1982). Other commonly used options include casewise (also referred to as listwise) deletion or pairwise deletion. Casewise
deletion removes observations from the data set that have item-missing data on any variable, while pairwise only omits observations that are missing data on the variables used in any given calculation. Thus, the advantage of pairwise deletion is that it uses all the data that is available in the data set and is thought to be acceptable when the data is assumed to be MCAR (Acock, 2005). Therefore, all the multivariate procedures used in data analysis for my study excluded missing data pairwise unless otherwise specified.

Normality

One of the assumptions for the use of MANOVA is that the dependent variables are normally distributed. First, an assessment of normality of the dependent variables using the Shapiro-Wilks test of normality was conducted, as this was the most appropriate test given the sample size (Hair et al., 1998). The student sample and the organization sample were evaluated separately since they would be compared to one another in MANOVA and had different sample sizes. The test was significant for all the direct perspective measures of the relationship, indicating that sample distribution of those dependent variables were different from that of the normal population distribution. For the meta-perspective measures, the test of the organization sample was not significant, but the test of the student sample was significant, again, indicating a non-normal distribution of those measures within that sample.

Next, histograms, box plots, and Q-Q plots of the distribution of the dependent variables within the public and organization samples were evaluated. The histograms and box plots for the public sample appeared acceptable with the exception of the meta-perspective dimensions, which were slightly skewed. The plots for the organization sample were also skewed with the exception of the plots for the meta-perspective dimensions. Next, the univariate P-P plots for each dependent measure were examined. The direct perspective measures were normally distributed while the meta-perspective plots were skewed.
Several data transformations, including square-root and log transformations, were attempted to improve the data, but after another review of the various plots, the transformation appeared to only make the data increasing abnormal. The next step was to look for outliers that could be acting as leverage points within the data. Box plots of each dependent variable were created for the organization and student samples. Visual examination identified a few outliers within the student sample, but they were not extreme cases and the same case did not generate outliers on multiple variables. On the other hand, examination of the box plots for the organization sample identified four cases that were extreme outliers on multiple variables. The decision was made to remove these cases from the analysis.

The normality assessment was run again; this time the Shapiro-Wilks test statistic was not significant for the dependent variables within the organization sample – a marked improvement over the previous test. It was important that the dependent variables were normally distributed within the organization sample as the cells that they would compose during the multiple analysis of variance calculations would be small and thus more susceptible to the violation of the normality assumption. Even though the student sample still demonstrated evidence of some violations of this assumption, this problem may be mitigated to some degree by the much larger sample size for students (Hair et al., 1998). P-P plots were generated once more for the distribution of the dependent variables within each sample. This time, the plots were deemed acceptable for the organization sample. Despite the significant Shapiro-Wilks test statistic, the P-P plots also looked fairly normal, although more so for the direct perspective relationship than the meta-perspective relationship measures.

Scale Reliability

Since the Hon-Grunig relationship scales have been repeatedly validated, several times within a university relationship setting, scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha, a
measure of internal consistency of the items that compose a summated scale (Hair et al., 1998). Using SPSS, scale reliability was assessed for each set of items composing the various dimensions on the Hon-Grunig relationship scale, plus an additional analysis that looked at the reliability of all 21-items as a whole to indicate total relationship perception. The lower limit for an acceptable Cronbach’s Alpha is .70 (.60 in exploratory studies is also acceptable) (Hair et al., 1998). In addition to Cronbach’s Alpha, the item total correlations were also examined to ensure that they were greater than .50, and the inter-item correlations were examined to ensure that they were greater than .30.

The Alpha for direct perspective of control mutuality was .858; removing the third control mutuality item improved reliability to .910. Since the third control mutuality item had inter-item and item-total correlations below the acceptable levels, it was dropped from the scale. The Alpha for the direct perspective of commitment was .897. The Alpha for the direct perspective of satisfaction was .94. The Alpha for the overall direct perspective relationship measure using all 21-items was .971 (.974 after removing the third control mutuality item). The Alpha for the meta-perspective of control mutuality was .84; removing the third control mutuality item improved this to .937. Again, since the inter-item and item total correlations were below the recommended levels, this item was removed. The Alpha for the meta-perspective of trust was .959, for the meta-perspective of commitment, it was .907, and for the meta-perspective of satisfaction, it was .939. The Alpha for the meta-perspective relationship measure using all 21-items was .974 (.979 after removing the third control mutuality item).

Based on the results of the reliability tests, the third control mutuality item was removed for both the direct perspective and meta-perspective scales. The remaining 20 items were used to create the summated scales for each direct and meta-perspective relationship dimension, as well
as the final direct and meta-perspective overall relationship measures. Suspecting that multicollinearity among the independent variables may become an issue, it was felt that having one overall measure of the direct and meta-perspective of the relationship might prove useful.

**Sample Demographics**

**Student Sample**

The average age of the students composing the “public” sample was 20.53 years old \( (SD = 4.54) \). The average respondent had been a student at the university 1.82 years \( (SD = 1.26) \). In terms of gender, 45.1% were male and 54.9% were female. For class standing, 35.9% indicated that they were freshman, 34.2% were sophomores, 13.2% were juniors, 7.3% were seniors, and 9.4% were graduate students. These demographics of the student sample are comparable to the demographic information regarding students living on campus that was available from the housing office and may help mitigate some of the concerns regarding the low response rate. Some other additional points of interest included how many students within the sample drove or parked a car on campus (73.5%) and how many had been cited by the university police (52.4%). According to the university police department, approximately 85-90% of the citations that are issued to students are for traffic tickets (J. Holcomb, personal communication, May 31, 2007), which will come as no surprise to anyone who has spent any amount of time on a large university campus. Also, 83.6% of the respondents indicated that they had not received the e-mail regarding the Virginia Tech shooting prior to taking the survey.

In regards to exposure to two-way relationship maintenance strategies, 8.9% indicated that they had attended the “SCOPE” program (a program designed to build the partnership between the university police, the housing office, and the students living on campus). The rape awareness and defense program (“RAD”) had been attended by 13.3% of the respondents. 21.4% indicated that they had attended some other educational presentation on crime prevention or
safety besides SCOPE or RAD, while 2.3% indicated that they had participated in some other program offered by the university police department. All together, 36.7% of the student respondents had been exposed to at least one of these two-way relationship maintenance strategies.

For one-way relationship maintenance strategy exposure, 50.6% said that they had visited the university police department’s Web site, 55.9% indicated that they had read a brochure distributed by the university police department, 20.6% said they had read one of the university police department’s newsletters, and 32% indicated that they had read a press release issued by the university police. Over 32.4% said that they had listened to a speech given by a member of the university police department. All together, 84.1% of the respondents in the student sample had been exposed to at least one of the one-way relationship maintenance strategies.

In terms of interpersonal interaction, the average amount of weekly interpersonal contact with the university police department was .43 hours a week ($SD=1.56$). 33.9% of the students surveyed indicated that they had called the university police, and 10.4% said that they had e-mailed the university police. Over 65.9% said that they had talked face-to-face with a member of the university police. All together, 75.6% of the respondents in the student sample indicated having had some form of interpersonal interaction with the university police department. On average, students indicated that the perceived valence of their interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department was 4.18 ($SD=1.30$) on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 ("very negative") to 7 ("very positive").

Finally, 78.3% of the sample indicated that they had seen or read a news story about the university police department in the media. The average valence of the portrayal of the university
police department in these stories was perceived to be 4.91 (SD = 1.30) on a seven-point scale where 1 indicated very negative and 7 indicated very positive.

**University Police Department Sample**

For the organization sample, the average age of the university police department respondents was 38.5 years old (SD=9.23). In terms of gender, 72.7% were male and 27.3% were female. Over 77.3% were sworn officers and 22.7% were non-sworn officers. Respondents indicated that they had spent an average of 4.7 years (SD=4.42) in their current position, 10.2 years (SD=6.35) with the university police department in all, and 10.8 years (SD=6.30) working at the university all together. University police department members reported that they had interpersonal contact with students for 3.37 hours (SD=2.53) a day on average, and indicated that the valence of this interpersonal interaction was an average of 5.5 (SD=1.09) on a seven-point scale where 1 indicated that the interaction was perceived as being very negative and 7 indicated that the interaction was perceived as being very positive.

**Results of the Statistical Analysis**

The reporting of the results from the statistical analyses is broken into two sections. The first section addresses statistical analyses that investigate the research questions regarding the efficacy of the coorientational approach and its use in evaluating an organization-public relationship. The analyses and results for this section focus on a macro-view of the overall organization-public relationship and utilize both the student (public) and university police (organization) samples. This addresses one of the primary goals of my study, which was to investigate the use of the coorientational approach for providing a snapshot of the overall organization-public relationship by looking at the interplay of the different perspectives involved in the relationship. MANOVA and ANOVA were the primary statistical procedures used in this regard. The second section addresses analyses and results related to the hypotheses regarding the
impact of relationship maintenance strategies, time in the relationship, and interpersonal interaction on individual assessments of the organization-public relationship. Therefore, that section focuses on a micro-view of the relationship and utilizes the student sample. Multiple linear regression analysis is the primary statistical procedure used for hypothesis testing.

**Results Related to the Research Questions**

To explore the research questions and begin an analysis of the organization-public relationship as a whole, means were generated for each of the relationship measures (control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and the overall relationship measure) for each of the four perspectives (public direct perspective, public meta-perspective, organization direct perspective, and organization meta-perspective). Table 4-1 presents the means and standard deviations of the relationship dimensions and the overall rating of the relationship for each perspective.

The primary statistical procedure used to investigate the research questions was multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). MANOVA is a “dependence technique that measures the differences for two or more metric dependent variables based on a set of categorical (non-metric) variables acting as independent variables” (Hair et al., p. 326) and is therefore appropriate for the present investigation since the relationship measures are metric and the independent measures (party membership and perspective) are categorical. Whereas independent and paired *t*-tests were used in the pilot study, MANOVA offers an advantage in that it not only accounts for the higher probability of making a Type I error due to multiple comparisons, but it is also more powerful than univariate tests at finding differences between dependent variables in instances where there is multicollinearity among them. The repeated measures version of MANOVA is utilized here due to the exploratory nature of the study and due to the treatment of the “perspective” factor; there may be some question as to whether individuals’ assessments of the direct perspective of
the relationship are independent of their assessment of the meta-perspective of the relationship. One of the main assumptions of MANOVA is that dependent measure observations are independent, but the use of repeated measures MANOVA can account for the possibility of dependence (Hair et al., 1998).

There are several considerations for the use of MANOVA. First, an adequate sample size is necessary; a minimum of 20 observations per cell (the groups created by the various factor interactions) is recommended. My study meets this requirement. Normality of the dependent variables is also important and has been addressed previously. Despite the fact that there was some evidence of non-normality for some of the dependent measures, the violation of this assumption has minimal impact if a large sample is used and if the differences are the result of skewness and not outliers, which is the case here. MANOVA is very sensitive to the presence of outliers; as was discussed earlier, the few outliers that were evident in the organization sample were identified and removed.

Another consideration for MANOVA is that there should be little multicollinearity among the dependent variables because the use of redundant dependent measures can reduce the ability of the procedure to identify significant differences. A Pearson correlation of all the dependent measures of the relationship dimensions was calculated. The direct perspective measures were all strongly correlated with each other, with correlations ranging from .846 to .949 ($p < .001$ for all the correlations). The meta-perspective measures were also strongly correlated with one another, with correlation coefficients ranging from .839 to .954 ($p < .001$ for all the correlations). There was moderate correlation between the direct perspective and meta-perspective measures, with coefficients ranging from .425 to .591 ($p < .001$ for all the correlations). Thus, there was further justification for combining all of the relationship measurement items together to create the
overall direct and meta-perspective relationship measures (“overall relationship”). Since there was still some interest in the differences between the various dimensions themselves for the purpose of relationship diagnosis, two groups of MANOVAs would be conducted, one that utilized the four relationship dimensions and one that used just the direct and meta-perspective overall relationship measures as dependent variables.

To assess the estimation and fit of the MANOVA models, Pillai’s Trace was selected as a test statistic since it is robust when violations of some of the assumptions of MANOVA are made and is recommended when there are unequal cell sizes; however, it still maintains adequate statistical power (Hair et al., 1998). Whereas this test statistic assesses the overall MANOVA model, it is still necessary to assess the differences between groups during post hoc analysis. For that purpose, the Scheffe method was used as it is the most conservative (Hair et al., 1998).

A repeated measures MANOVA was calculated comparing the effects of party membership (organization, public), the within-subjects repeated measure of perspective (direct perspective, meta-perspective), and whether the respondents received the e-mail from the administration regarding the school shooting (yes, no) on the relationship ratings of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. The main effect of receiving the e-mail \( F(4, 523) = .388, p > .05 \), the party membership by e-mail interaction \( F(4, 523) = .799, p > .05 \), the perspective by party membership by e-mail interaction \( F(4, 523) = .398, p > .05 \) and the perspective by e-mail interaction \( F(4, 523) = .339, p > .05 \) were all not significant. The perspective by party membership interaction was significant \( F(4, 523) = 18.71, p < .01 \), as were the main effects for perspective \( F(4, 523) = 4.75, p < .01 \) and party membership \( F(4, 523) = 7.22, p < .01 \).
The between-subject effects of party membership on control \((F(1,526)=9.737, p < .01)\), trust \((F(1,526)=15.35, p < .01)\), commitment \((F(1,526)=13.25, p < .01)\), and satisfaction \((F(1,526)=21.71, p < .01)\) were all significant. The public rated all four relationship dimensions significantly lower than the organization.

The within-subject effects of perspective on control mutuality \((F(1, 526)=1.46, p > .05)\), trust \((F(1, 526)=.180, p > .05)\), and commitment \((F(1, 526)=1.59, p > .05)\) were not significant, while the effect of perspective on satisfaction was significant \((F(1, 526)=4.93, p < .05)\). The direct perspective evaluation of satisfaction was significantly lower than the meta-perspective evaluation of satisfaction.

Within-subject effects of the interaction of perspective by party membership on control mutuality \((F(1,526)=55.08, p < .01)\), trust \((F(1,526)=63.45, p < .01)\), commitment \((F(1,526)=33.06, p < .01)\), and satisfaction \((F(1,526)=23.67, p < .01)\) were all significant. The meta-perspectives and direct perspectives of the public and the organization differed significantly on all four relationship dimensions.

Based on the results of these significance tests, the factor related to whether or not the respondents had received an e-mail from the administration regarding the Virginia Tech shooting was removed from further analysis so as not to include too many non-significant factors in the MANOVA (Hair et al., 1998).

A repeated measures MANOVA was calculated with party membership (organization or public) as the between-subjects factor and perspective (direct or meta-perspective) as the within-subjects factor to see their effect on the respondent ratings of the relationship dimensions of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. The main effects of party membership
(F(4, 525)=9.49, p < .01), the main effect of perspective (F(4, 525)=5.41, p < .01), and the interaction of party membership x perspective (F(4, 525)=22.75, p < .01) were all significant.

The between-subjects main effect of party membership on control mutuality (F(1, 528)=13.73, p < .01), trust (F(1, 528)=20.20, p < .01), commitment (F(1, 528)=17.85, p < .01), and satisfaction (F(1, 528)=29.55, p < .01) were all significant. The organization rated all four relationship dimensions higher than the public did.

The within-subjects main effects of perspective on control mutuality (F(1, 528)=2.39, p > .05), trust (F(1, 528)=.117, p > .05), and commitment (F(1, 528)=1.82, p > .05) were not significant. There was a significant main effect of perspective on satisfaction (F(1, 528)=5.70, p < .05). The direct perspective rating of satisfaction was lower than the meta-perspective rating.

The within-subjects effects of the interaction of perspective and party on control mutuality (F(1, 528)=68.79, p < .01), trust (F(1, 528)=77.75, p < .01), commitment (F(1, 528)=42.85, p < .01), and satisfaction (F(1, 528)=29.98, p < .01) were all significant. The direct- and meta-perspectives of the organization and the direct and meta-perspectives of the public differed significantly on the four relationship dimensions.

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted with party membership (organization, public) as the between-subjects factor and perspective as the within-subjects factor (direct perspective, meta-perspective) to see their effect on respondents’ ratings of the overall relationship (i.e., using the overall relationship measure that included all 20 items). Here, the main effect of party membership (F(1, 528)=22.69, p < .01) and the interaction of perspective with party membership (F(1, 528)=62.29, p < .01) were both significant. The main effect of perspective (F(1, 528)=1.51, p > .05) was not significant. The public rated the overall
relationship lower than the organization did. Furthermore, direct perspectives and meta-perspectives of the relationship differed among the parties.

To untangle the differences between groups that resulted from the within-subjects factor of perspective interacting with the between-subject factor of party membership, additional MANOVA and ANOVA tests needed to be conducted in such a manner so that the interaction of perspectives and parties and the resulting effect on ratings of the individual relationship dimensions and the overall relationship rating could be clarified through post hoc testing of the individual group means. To facilitate such an analysis, the data set had to be restructured so the direct perspectives and meta-perspectives of each party in the relationship would be separated into four groups. Whereas the preceding analysis treated the direct and meta-perspectives evaluation of each dependent variable as repeated measures, the following analysis treats them as independent measures. Using SPSS, the data set was restructured to create a new independent variable representing the perspective by party interaction. The new variable, “perspective,” could now be treated as a factor with four levels: (a) public’s direct perspective, (b) public’s meta-perspective, (c) organization’s direct perspective, and (d) organization’s meta-perspective.

A MANOVA was conducted to see the effects of the new perspective variable on the four relationship dimensions of control, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. The main effect of perspective \( (F(12,3837)=22.131, p < .01) \) was significant. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated that control mutuality \( (F(3, 1280)=73.99, p < .01) \), trust \( (F(3, 1280)=73.99, p < .01) \), commitment \( (F(3, 1280)=73.99, p < .01) \), and satisfaction \( (F(3, 1280)=73.99, p < .01) \) differed significantly between the four perspectives. Post hoc analysis using Scheffe’s test indicated that there were significant differences between the public’s direct perspective, the public’s meta-perspective, and the organization’s direct perspective in regards to control mutuality, trust,
commitment, and satisfaction. The organization’s meta-perspective was significantly different from the public’s direct perspective for all four relationship dimensions, and was only significantly different from the organization’s direct perspective in regards to trust. Table 4-1 clarifies the significant differences between the four perspectives.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the overall relationship rating within the four different perspectives. A significant difference was found among the perspectives ($F(3,1280)=62.88, p < .01$). Scheffe’s test was used for post hoc analysis to identify differences between the individual group perspectives. The public’s direct perspective ($M=3.96, SD=1.28$), the public’s meta-perspective ($M=4.83, SD=1.36$), and the organization’s direct perspective ($M=5.57, SD=.658$) were all significantly different from each other. The organization’s meta-perspective of the overall relationship ($M=4.96, SD=.990$) was only significantly different from the public’s direct perspective of the overall relationship. Figure 4-1 presents a model of the organization-public relationship that helps to clarify the interplay between these different perspectives and indicates the pattern of significant differences between each perspective’s ratings of the relationship measures.

**Analyses Related to the Hypotheses**

**Calculation of Additional Variables.** Prior to running the multiple linear regression analysis, new dependent and independent variables needed to be generated, including the creation of several dichotomous independent variables that could be included in the analysis along with the other metric independent variables. First, the dependent measures of coorientation needed to be generated. This included the calculation of d-scores for each individual student. This was accomplished by utilizing the mean relationship measures for the university police department direct and meta-perspectives of the overall relationship and finding the difference between the organization’s overall rating and the student’s individual rating. To obtain the d-
score for agreement, the organization’s mean direct perspective overall relationship rating was subtracted from the student’s individual direct perspective overall relationship rating. To calculate the d-score for accuracy, the organization’s mean direct perspective relationship rating was subtracted from the student’s individual meta-perspective relationship rating. To calculate the d-score for congruency, the student’s individual direct perspective relationship rating was subtracted from their own meta-perspective relationship rating. The absolute value of all three d-scores was used to remove negative values; recall that the smaller the d-score is (in absolute value), the greater the degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency of the various perspectives.

Next, interpersonal interaction valence was recoded so that “very negative” was -3, “negative” was -2, and so on, with “very positive” being coded as 3. Exposure to interpersonal interaction channels (i.e., whether the respondent had called, emailed, written, visited, or talked to a member of the university police department) was also coded as a dichotomous independent variable, “interpersonal interaction,” were 0 indicated no exposure to interpersonal interaction and 1 indicated that the respondent had been exposed to interpersonal interaction with the university police.

Exposure to one- and two-way relationship maintenance strategies were also coded as dichotomous independent variables where 0 indicated no exposure and 1 indicated exposure. If a respondent had visited the organization’s Web site, read a brochure, read a newsletter, read a press release, or attended a speech, then the one-way relationship maintenance strategy exposure variable was coded as 1. If the respondent had participated in any of the organization’s community relationship or educational programs, then the exposure to two-way relationship maintenance strategies variable was coded as 1.
Finally, the valence of the news story variable was recoded similar to the interpersonal interaction valence variable, where “very negative” was coded as -3, “negative” was coded as -2, and so on.

**Multiple Regression Analysis.** Multiple regression analysis is “a statistical technique that can be used to analyze the relationship between a single dependent (criterion) variable and several independent (predictor) variables” (Hair et al., p. 148). The procedure can also handle non-metric independent variables through the use of dichotomous dummy variable coding, as was done in this analysis (Hair et al., 1998). Thus, one of the advantages of using multiple linear regression to test the hypotheses in my study is that it can accommodate both the metric and non-metric independent variables that are of interest here. Multiple regression also allows the size and direction of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variables relative to one another to be assessed; this will allow several of the hypotheses to be addressed.

Several considerations need to be kept in mind for the use of multiple regression analysis. One consideration is sample size; it is recommended that 20 observations per dependent variable be included in the analysis. When employing stepwise regression, which is used here, the recommendation is that 50 cases per dependent variable be used (Hair et al., 1998). Since this analysis examines five dependent variables, a minimum sample of 250 observations is needed; this is one reason why this analysis focuses on the student sample only.

Another issue is multicollinearity of the independent variables. When using multiple linear regression, it is desirable that the dependent variables are correlated with the independent variables, but that the independent variables are not correlated with each other (Hair et al., 1998). While including additional individual variables can increase the overall amount of variance explained by the model (i.e., the coefficient of determination), as multicollinearity of the
independent variables increases, the unique variance in the dependent variable explained by an
individual independent variable is reduced. A correlation matrix of all independent variables was
generated to investigate the presence of multicollinearity among the independent variables. None
of the correlations were above .90, which is suggested as an indicator of high collinearity (Hair et
al., 1998). In fact, the highest correlation of one independent variable to another independent
variable was for interpersonal interaction valence and news story valence \((r(472) = .334, p < .01)\)
(See Table 4-2 for a correlation matrix of the independent and dependent variables included in
the analysis). Another way of assessing multicollinearity is to look at the tolerance values and
variance inflation factor (VIF) values generated by SPSS when conducting multiple regression
analyses. Small tolerance values (<.10) or large VIF values (> 10) indicate the presence of
collinearity. These values were examined for all the multiple linear regression models generated
in this analysis; in no instance did they indicate that collinearity was present.

Prior to running the multiple regression analyses examining the impact of the
independent variables on each dependent variable, the variable selection method had to be
picked. Although there are a variety of sequential search techniques that can be used, the
decision was made to use stepwise regression as the method for entering independent variables
into the model since the study is exploratory and there was no theory that suggested an order for
entering the variables into the model. One of the primary drawbacks of using stepwise regression
is that it is sensitive to multicollinearity, but as indicated by the previous analysis of the
independent variables, this did not appear to be a problem.

A series of multiple linear regression equations were calculated using the following
dependent variables: (a) direct perspective of the overall relationship, (b) meta-perspective of the
overall relationship, (c) agreement between subjects’ direct perspective and the organization’s
meta-perspective, (d) accuracy of the subjects’ meta-perspective in estimating the organization’s direct perspective, and (e) the congruency of the subjects’ direct perspective with their own meta-perspective. For each equation calculated, stepwise regression was used to enter the following independent variables: (a) years in the relationship, (b) issued a citation, (c) one-way relationship maintenance strategy exposure, (d) two-way maintenance strategy exposure, (e) interpersonal interaction, (f) interpersonal interaction valence, and (g) news story valence.

The stepwise multiple linear regression looking at the effects of the independent variables on subjects’ direct perspective of the overall relationship generated a significant regression equation \( F(3, 464) = 251.99, p < .01 \), with an adjusted \( R^2 \) of .617. Interpersonal interaction valence, news story valence, and interpersonal interaction were all significant predictors. Subjects’ predicted direct perspective rating of the relationship is equal to 3.98 + .545 (interpersonal interaction valence) + .255 (news story valence) - .403 (interpersonal interaction). Subjects’ direct perspective rating of the relationship increased .545 for each one unit increase in interpersonal interaction valence and increased .255 for each one unit increase in news story valence. Subjects who had interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department rated the relationship .403 lower than those who hadn’t had interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department. Years in the relationship, issued a citation, one-way maintenance strategy exposure, and two-way maintenance strategy exposure were excluded from the model and were not significant predictors. Plots of the regression standardized residuals using a histogram, the normal P-P plot, and a scatter plot were examined and revealed no violations of the assumptions for multiple regression analysis.

The stepwise multiple linear regression examining the effects of the independent variables on subjects’ meta-perspective of the overall relationship generated a significant regression
equation \( F(3, 464)=58.69, p < .01 \), with an adjusted \( R^2 \) of .270. Interpersonal interaction valence, news story valence, and years in the relationship were all significant predictors. Subjects’ predicted meta-perspective rating of the relationship is equal to 4.75 + .351 (interpersonal interaction valence) +.249 (news story valence) - .088 (years in the relationship). Subjects’ meta-perspective rating of the relationship increased .351 for each one unit increase in interpersonal interaction valence, increased .270 for each one unit increase in news story valence, and decreased .088 for each year they had been in the relationship. Issued a citation, one-way maintenance strategy exposure, two-way maintenance strategy exposure, and interpersonal interaction were excluded from the model and were not significant predictors. Plots of the regression standardized residuals using a histogram, the normal P-P plot, and a scatter plot were examined and revealed no violations of the assumptions for multiple regression analysis with the exception of some slight heteroscedasticity.

The stepwise multiple linear regression looking at the effects of the independent variables on agreement between subjects’ direct perspective of the overall relationship with the organization’s direct perspective of the overall relationship generated a significant regression equation \( F(3, 464)=218.19, p < .01 \), with an adjusted \( R^2 \) of .583. Interpersonal interaction valence, news story valence, and interpersonal interaction were all significant predictors. Subjects’ predicted agreement d-score for the overall relationship is equal to 1.61 - .496 (interpersonal interaction valence) - .172 (news story valence) + .414 (interpersonal interaction). Subjects’ agreement d-score regarding the relationship decreased .496 for each one unit increase in interpersonal interaction valence and decreased .172 for each one unit increase in news story valence. Subjects who had interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department had agreement d-scores that were .414 higher than those who hadn’t had
interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department. Keep in mind that for d-scores, smaller scores indicate greater agreement; therefore, a negative regression coefficient indicates that the independent variable actually had a “positive” effect and vice versa. Years in the relationship, having been issued a citation, one-way maintenance strategy exposure, and two-way maintenance strategy exposure were excluded from the model and were not significant predictors. Plots of the regression standardized residuals using a histogram, the normal P-P plot, and a scatter plot were examined and revealed no violations of the assumptions for multiple regression analysis.

The stepwise multiple linear regression looking at the effects of the independent variables on the accuracy of subjects’ meta-perspective of the overall relationship generated a significant regression equation ($F(3, 464)=54.82, p < .01$), with an adjusted $R^2$ of .257. Interpersonal interaction valence, news story valence, and interpersonal interaction were all significant predictors. Subjects’ predicted accuracy d-score for the overall relationship is equal to 1.08 - .292 (interpersonal interaction valence) - .136 (news story valence) + .254 (interpersonal interaction). Subjects’ accuracy d-score regarding the relationship decreased .292 for each one unit increase in interpersonal interaction valence and decreased .136 for each one unit increase in news story valence. Subjects who had interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department had accuracy d-scores that were .254 higher than those who had not had interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department. Years in the relationship, having been issued a citation, one-way maintenance strategy exposure, and two-way maintenance strategy exposure were excluded from the model and were not significant predictors. Plots of the regression standardized residuals using a histogram, the normal P-P plot, and a scatter plot were examined and revealed no violations of the assumptions for multiple regression analysis.
regression analysis with the exception of some slight heteroscedasticity as with the multiple linear regression looking at meta-perspective.

A stepwise multiple linear regression was calculated to examine the effects of the independent variables on the congruency of subjects’ direct perspective of the overall relationship with their own meta-perspective of the overall relationship. A significant regression equation was generated \((F(1,466)=52.63, p < .01)\), with an adjusted \(R^2\) of .10. Only interpersonal valence was found to be a significant predictor; all other independent variables were excluded from the model. Subjects’ predicted congruency d-score for the overall relationship is 1.05 - .229 (interpersonal interaction valence). Subjects’ congruency d-score regarding the overall relationship decreased .229 for each one unit increase in interpersonal interaction valence. Plots of the regression standardized residuals using a histogram, the normal P-P plot, and a scatter plot were examined. The histogram of the standardized regression residuals showed some very slight positive skew. The P-P is close to normal. Examination of the scatterplot of the residuals against the predicted dependent values for congruency showed some evidence of heteroscedasticity.

It should be noted that simple linear regressions were also computed to confirm the results of the stepwise linear regressions. Independent variables that were not significant in the stepwise models were also not significant when using simple linear regression.

In all of the models, exposure to one-way relationship maintenance strategies and exposure to two-way symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies were not retained as significant predictors of any of the dependent variables measuring relationship perception or coorientation of the subjects’ perspectives. A series of multiple linear regressions were calculated using specified models in which only the two relationship maintenance strategy variables were entered as independent variables – none of the models assessing the effect of these variables on the
dependent variables were significant. Also, the correlation matrix between the independent and dependent variables (see Table 4-2) showed that neither exposure to one-way strategies nor exposure to two-way strategies were significantly correlated with any of the relationship or coorientation measures. A partial correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among exposure to one-way strategies, exposure to two-way strategies, direct perspective of the relationship, meta-perspective of the relationship, agreement, accuracy, and congruency while controlling for interpersonal interaction, interpersonal interaction valence, and news story valence. Exposure to one-way strategies and exposure to two-way strategies were not significantly correlated with any of the relationship measures in the partial correlation model.

Finally, a MANOVA was calculated to see the effects of exposure to one-way strategies and exposure to two-way strategies on the direct perspective and meta-perspective of the relationship, as well as their effect on the three coorientation measures. The main effects of exposure to two-way strategies ($F(5, 464)=.836, p > .05$) and the interaction of exposure to one-way and exposure to two-way strategies ($F(5, 464)=.832, p > .05$) were not significant. The main effect of exposure to one-way strategies ($F(5, 464)=2.29, p < .05$) was significant. Looking at the univariate tests, the effect of one-way strategies on direct perspective of the relationship ($F(1, 468)=.948, p > .05$), meta-perspective of the relationship ($F(1, 468)=2.15, p > .05$), agreement ($F(1, 468)=.258, p > .05$), and congruency ($F(1, 468)=.181, p > .05$) were not significant. The effect of exposure to one-way strategies on accuracy ($F(1, 468)=4.360, p < .05$) was significant. Students who had been exposed to one-way strategies demonstrated a greater degree of accuracy between their meta-perspective and the university police department’s direct perspective.
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<th>Relationship dimension</th>
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<td>4.96$^c$</td>
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Note: Values with the same superscripts indicate means that there are significantly different on a given relationship measure ($p < .05$).
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<td>-.043</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Interpersonal interaction</td>
<td>.105*</td>
<td>.226**</td>
<td>.145**</td>
<td>.114*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interpersonal valence</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.118*</td>
<td>-.093*</td>
<td>.160**</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>7. News valence</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>.134**</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.334**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>8. Relationship (direct)</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-.162**</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>-.129**</td>
<td>.743**</td>
<td>.458**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>9. Relationship (meta)</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>-.116*</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>-.070</td>
<td>.475**</td>
<td>.353**</td>
<td>.579**</td>
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<td>10. Agreement</td>
<td>-.029</td>
<td>.177**</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.150**</td>
<td>-.731**</td>
<td>-.400*</td>
<td>-.962**</td>
<td>-.542**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Accuracy</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.152**</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>.099*</td>
<td>-.480**</td>
<td>-.295**</td>
<td>-.519**</td>
<td>-.856**</td>
<td>.558**</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Congruency</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>-.319**</td>
<td>-.114*</td>
<td>-.477**</td>
<td>.402**</td>
<td>.472**</td>
<td>-.308**</td>
</tr>
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* p < .05  ** p < .01
Figure 4-1. Coorientation model of main study organization-public relationship.

Note: Values with the same superscripts indicate means that are significantly different on a given relationship measure ($p < .05$). In the model, CM = control mutuality, T = trust, C = commitment, S = satisfaction, and R = overall relationship.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an interpretation of the findings from the main study and a discussion of the implications of these findings for public relations and organization-public relationship research. First, the integration of the relationship measures into the coorientational framework is discussed from a methodological and measurement perspective. This is followed by a discussion of the results of the hypothesis tests and the effectiveness of the various independent variables on the relationship and coorientation measures. Next, the theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research regarding organization-public relationships.

Evaluation of the Coorientational Approach

The first research question asked if the coorientational framework could be used in conjunction with the existing organization-public relationship measures to measure an organization-public relationship. The answer appears to be yes; it was fairly simple to integrate the Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship measures into the coorientational approach that has long been advocated by Broom (1977), Broom & Dozier (1990), and others (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Despite the fact that the relationship measurement scales were now being used with an organization (instead of just a public) to measure direct perspectives and were also being used to assess meta-perspectives, they still maintained good reliability and provided adequate measures of how the parties perceived the relationship. Even though the coorientation framework was originally suggested to measure organization and public attitudes about an issue, it appears to provide an ideal framework in which to examine how these parties perceive the organization-public relationship as well. From a methodological perspective, the scales were easy to administer and despite the fact that including the ratings of the meta-perspective in essence
doubles the length of the relationship measurement instrument, over 70% of the respondents managed to complete the assessments of both direct perspective and meta-perspective. The added complexity of requiring two samples (one from the organization and one from a stakeholder public) may be troublesome in practical applications, but can be achieved if the organization in question is cooperative and there is support for applying coorientational measurement within the organization’s dominant coalition.

The use of the coorientational approach not only made it possible to move beyond simple measurement of the public’s direct perspective to measurement of the organization’s direct perspective, but also facilitates measurement of the meta-perspectives that are necessary to understand the true state of the relationship that exists between an organization and a stakeholder public. In my study, having both the direct perspective of the students and the university police department, as well as their meta-perspectives of each other, not only made it possible to generate individual measures of agreement, accuracy, and congruency between a respondent and the other party in the relationship, but it also made it possible to examine the organization-public relationship at the macro-level in order to understand what coorientational state the relationship was in.

This relates to the second research question which asked if the resulting coorientational measures of accuracy, agreement, and congruency could be used to evaluate the state of the organization-public relationship. Again, the answer is yes; using coorientational measurement is a marked improvement over the one-way measures of the public’s direct perspective that are typically used because it reveals what the shared perspective of the relationship is between the organization and the public. In my study, the organization-public relationship that exists between the students and the university police department is more accurately portrayed by using the
coorientational approach than by simply relying on the one-way approach that measures public opinion.

In this case, the public’s direct perspective of the relationship was slightly negative, both overall and in regards to each of the four individual relationship dimensions with the exception of trust, which the public rated slightly favorable. From the organization’s direct perspective, the relationship is viewed somewhat positively, both overall and with respect to individual relationship dimensions, especially in regards to trust. Based on the results of the MANOVA tests, a true state of disagreement exists between the direct perspective of the university police department and the direct perspective of students living on campus, with the university police department viewing the relationship more positively than students.

Where the coorientational measurement really reveals its utility in diagnosing the organization-public relationship is in the next stage of analysis, where the meta-perspectives of both parties are examined. In this case, the meta-perspective of the students (i.e., how they thought the university police department views the relationship) was significantly different from the students’ own direct perspective, with the students believing that the university police department would rate the relationship higher than students, which was indeed the case. Therefore, there was a perceived disagreement between the students’ direct perspective and the students’ meta-perspective. Coupled with the measures from the direct perspective, it becomes clear that students are aware that there is a state of disagreement between the two groups. The university police perceive the relationship as being more positive than students and the students recognize this. In fact, the disagreement is even larger than students believe it to be. By looking at the accuracy dimension of the relationship, the student meta-perspective is significantly different from the organization’s direct perspective; students know that the university police rate
the relationship more positively than students, they just don’t understand how much more positively the university police department rates the relationship. To put it another way, there is a gap, and the students correctly see the gap, they just underestimate how large the gap is. Taken altogether, from the students’ viewpoint, a state of true disagreement exists between them and the university police department.

What becomes even more interesting is the disconnect between the public’s view and the organization’s view of the relationship. The meta-perspective of the university police department (i.e., how they think the students view the relationship) is not significantly different from their own direct perspective of the relationship. That is to say, the university police department perceives agreement between themselves and the students in how they all view the relationship. This is also reflected in the significant difference between the organization’s meta-perspective and the students’ direct perspective; the university police department overestimates how favorably students will view the relationship. So, from the university police department perspective, students and police both view the relationship favorably; however, there is actually disagreement between them regarding the state of the relationship. From the organization’s viewpoint, a state of false consensus exists.

So, the students rate the relationship more negatively than the organization, the students realize that the organization rates the relationship more positively (they just underestimate how much more positively), but the organization does not realize this. The organization believes the relationship is healthy and that students would agree; meanwhile, students are well aware of the difference of opinion. Therein lies the benefit of the coorientational approach – the relationship is not defined by one party’s view, but rather rests on the shared perceptions of all parties in the relationship. To use an interpersonal example, the situation that exists here would be analogous
to a husband and wife dyad in which one partner believes the marriage is healthy while the other partner thinks it is not and also is aware that their spouse has no idea that they are in disagreement. This situation could result in one partner feeling misunderstood while the other partner, blissfully unaware of the problem, could be in for a rude awakening.

It should be noted that these patterns of interaction are those observed for the particular organization-public relationship in question. The samples used in the study represent the members of a unique relationship between a specific university police department and the students living on campus at that university. The direct and meta-perspectives expressed by these individuals resulted in the types of interactions observed here and will not necessarily appear in other types of organization-public relationships.

**Factors Affecting the Relationship and Coorientation Measures**

The hypotheses proposed that several independent variables would have an effect on the way respondents evaluated their relationship with the organization and how they believed the organization perceived the relationship. Also, it was believed that these factors would have an effect on the degree of accuracy, agreement, and congruency between the respondents and the organization. Each group of hypotheses is discussed in turn.

Hypothesis 1a proposed that longer time in the organization-public relationship would lead to more favorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions, while hypothesis 1b proposed that longer time in the organization-public relationship would lead to a greater degree of accuracy between the meta-perspectives of one party in the organization-public relationship and the direct perspective of the other party. Based on the multiple regression models, time in the relationship was not a significant factor in predicting direct perspectives of the relationship, agreement, accuracy, or congruency. It did have a significant negative effect on the meta-perspective of the respondents. The longer that the student had been in the relationship, the more
negatively they believed that members of the university police department would rate the relationship. However, the weak regression coefficient suggests that the practical effect of time in the relationship is minor. Neither hypothesis was supported. It should be noted, however, that most of the respondents were first- and second-year students at the university; if more third- and fourth-year students had been included, time may have proved to be a significant factor.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that exposure to relationship maintenance strategies would lead to more favorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions, while hypothesis 2b proposed that these strategies would lead to a greater degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruence between the perspectives of the parties in the organization-public relationship. Based on the multiple regression models, neither one-way nor two-way relationship maintenance strategies were significant factors in predicting any of the relationship or coorientation measures. Additionally, in the MANOVA model, the main effects for both of these factors were not significant; students who had been exposed to one-way or two-way strategies did not rate the relationship significantly different than those who had not been exposed to those strategies, nor did students exposed to one or two-way strategies exhibit a greater degree of agreement or congruency. As for accuracy, two-way maintenance strategy exposure had no effect; however, one-way strategy exposure did have an effect – students who had been exposed to one-way strategies exhibited a greater degree of accuracy in estimating the organization’s direct perspective. These findings also address hypothesis 2c and 2d which proposed that two-way maintenance strategies would be more effective than one-way strategies in regards to having a positive effect on the relationship and coorientation measures. Again, it would appear that neither was a significant factor, with the exception of the positive effect on accuracy generated by one-way strategies. In summary, none of these hypotheses were supported.
This outcome is surprising given the literature that suggests that effectively managed, two-way symmetrical communication should lead to mutual understanding and more positive relationships between the organization and its stakeholders; however, this is not the case in the organization-public relationship in my study. The lack of effectiveness of two-way strategies could be explained as a result of either a methodological problem relating to the operationalization of the relationship maintenance strategy measures or it could be a result of the way that these purportedly two-way strategies are actually implemented in practice. The operationalization issue will be addressed during the discussion of the study’s limitations, so for now the focus will be on the implementation issue.

The community services unit within the university police department is responsible for many of the two-way relationship maintenance strategies that the department utilizes. Its mission is to facilitate the relationship with the community the police department serves. The unit organizes, maintains, and promotes crime prevention and community-oriented programs to achieve this goal. The question then becomes whether these programs actually meet this goal in their execution. For example, one of the two-way strategies, SCOPE, focuses on developing a crime prevention partnership between students, housing officials, and the university police department and as it is conceived, displays many of the features of a two-way maintenance strategy. However, in its implementation, it could be doing more to provide students with information about crime and safety issues rather than actually focusing on relationship building between the students and the university police department.

Meanwhile, the one-way relationship maintenance strategies (e.g., using brochures, newsletters, etc. to communicate with stakeholders) also focus on providing information on crime prevention and safety, not information necessarily about the organization’s relationship
with students. The tactics that implement one-way relationship maintenance strategies seem to provide information to students that they can use in correctly aligning their meta-perspective with the organizational perspective; these tools help students understand how the organization views their relationship, and also may explain one reason why they realize that the university police department perceives the relationship more favorably than students. However, these one-way tactics do nothing to provide feedback to the organization about the students’ more negative views of the relationship. Additionally, they do not improve the relationship so as to bring the student direct perspective in alignment with the organization’s direct perspective.

The ineffectiveness of two-way relationship building strategies is reflected at the macro-level when one considers the lack of accuracy between the university police department’s meta-perspective with the students’ direct perspective and vice versa. Also, based on the congruency between their direct and meta-perspectives, the university police department does not see that there is disagreement about the nature of the relationship between them and the students, perhaps due in part to the supposed two-way symmetrical relationship building strategies being executed in a one-way asymmetrical manner. Thus, while a two-way maintenance strategy might be geared toward improving a relationship, both in its operationalization from a theoretical perspective and in its planning from a strategic management perspective, the way these strategies are implemented may not in fact be two-way symmetrical at all. This then becomes an operationalization problem for relationship theory researchers and an implementation issue for practitioners.

Hypothesis 3a proposed that positive interpersonal interaction with the other party in the organization-public relationship would lead to favorable ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions while negative interpersonal interaction would lead to unfavorable
ratings of the organization-public relationship dimensions. Similarly, hypothesis 3b suggested that positive interpersonal interaction would lead to a greater degree of accuracy, agreement, and congruency while negative interpersonal interaction would lead to a lower degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency. Based on the multiple regression models, both interpersonal contact between students and members of the university police department as well as the positive or negative valence of the contact were significant predictors of estimates of respondents’ direct and meta-perspectives of the relationship, agreement, and accuracy, although the variables had different types of effects.

Exposure to interpersonal interaction with members of the university police department had a negative effect on students’ direct perspective, agreement, and accuracy. This suggests that when students have direct experience with members of the university police department, it leads them to perceive the relationship with the university police more negatively. This in turn leads to lower levels of agreement with the university police department perspective which feels that the relationship with students is favorable. Furthermore, the interpersonal interaction could also lead students to believe that the university police evaluate the relationship more negatively as well. It could be that the nature of these interactions that bring students and university police into contact is frequently one with negative overtones, such as when police respond to a noise complaint or when a student is pulled over for speeding on campus. The adversarial nature of these encounters could cause the student to look negatively on the experience. Meanwhile, the demeanor of the officer within the context of the encounter, when they are “all business” and just doing their job, may cause the student to think that the individual member of the university police department also looks negatively on their relationship with students.
However, the valence of interpersonal interaction between students and the university police had a positive relationship with all the relationship and coorientation measures. Increased positive interaction with the university police led students to report increasingly positive evaluations of their direct perspective, their meta-perspective, agreement, accuracy, and congruency. The way a student felt about the direct experience with the university police influenced not only how the student perceived the relationship, but also how the student felt that the university police perceived the relationship. If it was a positive experience, then this improved not only the student’s direct perspective, but also the student’s meta-perspective, which in turn increased agreement, accuracy, and perceived accuracy as well since more positive student direct and meta-perspectives were now being brought into line with the generally favorable view of the relationship held by the university police department. Overall, these findings support hypothesis 3a and 3b.

Although no formal hypothesis had been proposed regarding media exposure, it should be noted that the perceived valence of news stories about the university police department was also a significant factor predicting respondents’ estimates of the relationship measures and the coorientation measures, with the exception of congruency. The more positively students perceived news coverage of the university police department to be, the more favorable were their direct and meta-perspectives of the relationship. Additionally, the more positive news coverage was perceived, the higher was the students’ degree of agreement and accuracy. Thus, it appears that positive news coverage brought the students’ view of the relationship into alignment with the favorable organizational view. Also, positive news coverage was apparently better at helping students’ accurately understand how the university police department viewed the relationship.
Theoretical Implications

The findings from my study have theoretical implications for both the efforts to develop adequate measurement of organization-public relationships and also implications for the relational perspective and relationship management theory.

Implications for the Measurement of Relationships

The findings of my study have several implications relevant to the ongoing efforts to develop adequate measures of organization-public relationships. First and foremost, my study serves as another example of the reliability of the Hon-Grunig (1999) relationship measures. The scales have been shown to be a reliable tool for measuring the direct perspective of publics in several situations (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004), including a university setting (Hon & Brunner, 2002; Ki & Hon, 2007). My study extends the application of the relationship scale by utilizing these measures to assess not only the public’s direct perspective, but also by using them to measure the organizational perspective as well as the organizational and public meta-perspectives. In my study, the scales were found to be reliable when used to measure both the direct perspective of the relationship and also the meta-perspective of the relationship.

As has been noted previously, measurement of the organization-public relationship by using the coorientational framework to assess both the organization’s direct and meta-perspective as well as the public's direct and meta-perspective, provides for a more comprehensive organization-public relationship construct. By considering all four perspectives within the organization-public relationship, researchers attempting to use relationships as a unit of analysis will be getting the whole picture of the relationship, rather than the one-sided view that is provided by only measuring the direct perspective of the public.
In my study, limiting measurement to the students that make up the organization’s primary stakeholders would only reveal that the students viewed the relationship in a somewhat negative light. This does not adequately describe the state of this organization-public relationship. To understand the organization-public relationship fully, one also has to consider the organizational view of the relationship; in this case, the university police department viewed it as fairly positive. Even though both party’s direct perspectives are now considered, this still does not fully capture the nature of this relationship because it does not address the degree of understanding between the two groups. Here, the students understand that the university police do not view the relationship the same way as they do; however, the university police department fails to understand that the students do not share the organization’s favorable view. If strong relationships are built on mutual understanding and agreement, then the use of the coorientational approach provides a means for actually measuring this dynamic, which current measurement of organization-public relationships fails to do through only examining one side (and one perspective) of the relationship. Thus, measures of the relationship derived through the coorientational approach could be considered more valid measurements of organization-public relationships - valid measures that are necessary for the continued development of the relational perspective.

The findings of my study also serve to illustrate why the perceptions of the parties within the organization-public relationship should not be removed from assessments of relationship states in favor of more objective measures as some have suggested (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1998, 2000). Even though it has been generally accepted that relationships can be measured apart from the perceptions of parties in the relationship (Ledingham, 2003), these objective measures may not necessarily be better measures of the relationship.
For example, if objective measures were to be used in measuring the university police-student relationship, one might consider using the number of citations issued during the semester, the number of calls to the university police department received in a month, the number of students requesting to use the university police’s gun storage service, etc. – concrete measures of interaction and communication. However, an objective measure that one would think would color this relationship, such as being issued a citation, did not significantly affect students’ perceptions of the relationship in my study.

What really did matter were their perceptions of those interpersonal interactions (as an affect on students’ direct perspective) and the students’ and university police’s shared view of the relationship as expressed through their direct and meta-perspectives of the relationship, as well as whether and to what degree those perspectives were in agreement or disagreement. In short, perception seems to matter more than the reality of a situation, especially when considering an intangible construct such as the relationship between two entities. To again use an interpersonal example, a married couple’s relationship could be quantified using concrete, objective measures such as the amount of time that they spend together in an average week or how often they call one another, but they may still secretly loathe each other. For an organization-public relationship, the situational antecedent conditions and communication linkages between the two parties may point to a positive relationship due to their frequency and interdependence, but if one or both of the parties perceive the relationship to be negative, then those objective measures would seem to have missed the mark.

**Implications for Relationship Management Theory**

The application of the coorientational methodology for measuring organization-public relationships that was used in my study and the findings that this procedure generated have implications for relationship management theory. Most importantly, by refining measurement of
the organization-public relationship construct, my study helps to develop means for measuring a phenomenon that is the primary unit of analysis for the relational perspective. Additionally, the findings stress the importance of two-way symmetrical communication’s role in relationship management and that two-way symmetrical relationship maintenance strategies may be distinct from the two-way interpersonal communication that takes place between members of an organization and public. The findings also underscore how managed communication efforts can be undercut by negative interpersonal interactions between members of an organization and the public and that the length of time someone is in the organization-public relationship may not necessarily lead to positive perceptions of the relationship. Lastly, the study represents yet another step in the continued effort to integrate interpersonal theories into the relational perspective and public relations research.

The study contributes to public relations theory development primarily by continuing the extension of knowledge regarding the relational perspective. It further refines the organization-public relationship construct by including the coorientational measures that should be used to measure the organization-public relationship. The continued development of valid, reliable, and descriptive relationship measures is crucial to the advancement of the relational perspective and relationship management theory. If the relationship is indeed going to be the unit of analysis for public relations research and if the relational perspective is going to be proffered as a dominant paradigm for the discipline, then every effort needs to be made to ensure that the measurement of that “unit” is adequate. Therefore, there is a need to measure the whole relationship that results from the shared perspectives of all the parties involved and not just use one side of that equation to represent the entire construct. The relational perspective and relationship management theory
should be developed around a comprehensive unit of analysis, and using a coorientational approach to measuring organization-public relationships is a positive step in that direction.

The study also provides further justification for the relational perspective by stressing that the strategic management of organization-public relationships requires that public relations establishes and maintains effective relationships between organizations and publics, not just establishing and maintaining relationships with publics. In their boundary-spanning role, public relations practitioners use managed communication to establish a relationship with a public, but they also have the capacity to look inward and help build a relationship between the public and the organization itself. The use of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations has been repeatedly proposed as the best way to build these mutually beneficial relationships; however, the press agentry model has persisted to be the most frequently used model in public relations (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). It has already been proposed in the preceding discussion that the organization in the university police-student relationship, despite having programs that appear to be two-way relationship maintenance strategies that are intended to build and strengthen relationships, may in fact be one-way in their execution, primarily providing information to external publics about issues and events in lieu of focusing on building consensus between members of the organization and stakeholders. This would be consistent with studies that have identified the public information model as the most prevalent of the four models among state and federal government agencies (e.g., Pollack, 1984; Turk, 1982). This reliance on one-way channels of communication and dependence on a public information model instead of a two-way symmetrical approach may be one reason why the organization’s view of the relationship is one of false consensus. If the organization had actually been utilizing a two-way symmetrical public
relations strategy, then it may have been more in tune with the students’ perspective of the relationship.

There is also the distinct possibility that the organization was in fact practicing two-way symmetrical communication, but this two-way strategy simply failed to have an effect on the public’s perception of the relationship. Although the two-way symmetrical model is frequently proposed as the ideal way to practice excellent public relations, alternative viewpoints do exist. For instance, the contingency theory of accommodation proposes that there is a continuum of public relations stances that an organization can adopt ranging from one of pure advocacy to one of pure accommodation. This continuum may be more representative of the actual practice of public relations in that it allows for flexibility in how an organization responds to an ever-changing and unpredictable environment (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). Contingency theory provides a set of predisposing and situational factors that influence where on the continuum the organization places itself in response to a given public within the context of a given situation. The theory suggests that the two-way symmetrical model may not be the best way (or even the most ethical or legal way) to practice public relations in every situation. In the case of the university police department, it is possible that situational and predisposing factors related to the specific dynamics operating within the organization-public relationship may require the use of a strategy other than two-way symmetrical communication to have a positive effect on the relationship.

The lack of effectiveness of the organization’s one-way and two-way strategies is even more striking in light of the significant affect that interpersonal communication had on perceptions of the relationship. While exposure to the one-way and two-way maintenance strategies (acknowledging that the two-way strategies may suffer from operationalization and/or
actual implementation issues) did little to influence how students rated their relationship with the university police, the students who indicated that they had negative interpersonal interactions with the university police had more negative perceptions of the relationship. This supports relationship management’s contention that healthy organization-public relationships can not be maintained without supportive behaviors (Ledingham, 2003). It also helps to draw a distinction between the types of two-way communication that takes place between representatives of an organization who interact with a public within the context of a communication exchange involving managed communication, such as the SCOPE program in my study, and the type of two-way communication that takes place between a representative of the organization and the public that occurs outside of those contexts in unmanaged situations, such as when a university police officer chastises a student who jaywalks on campus. This would seem to dispute the idea that interpersonal communication is analogous to two-way symmetrical public relations strategies (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Also, due to the relative influence of interpersonal communication and lack of influence of the relationship maintenance strategies, the findings reinforce the importance for those studying public relations, advertising, marketing, and other forms of managed communication to continue to be mindful of the role that interpersonal communication plays within the mass communication world. Research studies seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of managed communication should be sure to consider how personal and interpersonal experience interacts with mediated communication.

Another finding that has implications for the relational perspective is that the length of time that respondents had been in the organization-public relationship had little effect on their perceptions of the relationship and the degree of accuracy, agreement, or congruency that those perceptions had with the organizational perspective. There seems to be this assumption in the
relationship management literature that longer time in the relationship will lead to favorable outcomes, such as a greater degree of understanding, agreement, and congruency. However, the findings from my study indicate that time may not always lead to positive relationships; more time in the relationship does not seem to have an appreciable affect on the way the public views its relationship with the organization. In fact, it is quite easy to conceive of the possibility that more time in the relationship could lead to increasingly negative perceptions of the relationship if longer time in the relationship increases the likelihood of having a negative experience with the organization. In the student-university police relationship, the longer an individual is a student at the university, the more likely they have had an encounter with the university police – this in turn may provide more instances to expose the individual to negative information about the organization from direct experience, news coverage, word-of-mouth, etc. Additionally, in a relationship such as the one that exists between students and university police where the organization is unaware that the public has a negative perception of the relationship, if the public sees that this is the case and that things do not change over time, it may lead to feelings of resentment by the public that they are not only being understood by the organization, but that the organization has continued to turn a blind eye to the situation.

The use of the coorientational approach to measure relationships also helps to advance relationship management and public relations theory in general through the integration of theories from other disciplines – one of the benefits that Ferguson (1984) suggested the relational perspective would provide. The use of a coorientational approach not only serves to improve the relationship construct as previously discussed, but also provides a vehicle for the continued integration of interpersonal theories and models into the relational perspective, including coorientation, theories of balance and consistency, and interpersonal perception. The integration
of coorientation and relationship measurement to measure an organization-public relationship continues the evolution of a process whereby interpersonal communication theories originally designed to describe one-on-one relationships are being applied to group-to-group relationships. This process started with theories of consistency such as Heider’s balance theory (1946, 1958), which looked at how one person organized his or her internal attitudes toward people and objects in relation to each other within the individual’s own cognitive structure. Then Newcomb’s (1953) symmetry theory included a second individual and focused on how two people orient toward each other while considering their attitudes toward another object. These concepts were then developed for group to group applications by McLeod and Chaffee (1973) and Grunig and Stamm (1973). Next, Broom (1977), Broom and Dozier (1990), and others applied this framework to organization-public interactions in considering an issue of mutual concern to the organization and stakeholders. My study takes this one step further by considering how two groups orient toward each other, not about an issue, but about the actual relationship between them. This reinforces Thomlison’s (2000) acknowledgement about the importance of interpersonal communication theories in public relations research due to the fact that relationships are the common core of both interpersonal and public relations research.

**Implications for Public Relations Practice**

In addition to its implications for public relations theory, the findings of my study have several implications for public relations practitioners. First, the coorientational approach utilized here to measure a real-world organization-public relationship can be employed by practitioners as a useful measurement tool that can be used to move beyond the outputs and outcomes that are typically used to assess the effects of public relations programming. Second, the findings stress the importance of practitioners fulfilling a boundary-spanning role not just with stakeholders, but between stakeholders and the organization’s dominant coalition. Additionally, the
coorientational approach suggests the importance of agreement and understanding as goals for public relations practitioners. Finally, the findings illustrate the role that interpersonal interaction plays in organizational communication.

Obviously, one of the main implications of my study for practitioners is that it provides a measurement tool that is in many ways an improvement over existing measures of organization-public relationships. Since the advantages of using coorientational measurement over measurement of the public’s direct perspective of the relationship alone have been addressed in previous sections, the focus here will be on the benefits of using coorientational measurement to replace or complement other more traditional measures of public relations effectiveness such as measuring outputs (e.g., number of press releases distributed) and outcomes (e.g., attitude change). While these measures are indicators of what a particular public relations program produces and what those outputs achieve in the short-term with the specific target publics of those programs, the coorientational relationship measures can help practitioners identify whether the cumulative effect of those program efforts are achieving long-term public relations goals (building mutually beneficial relationships) and organizational goals (creating a favorable environment in which the organization is free to fulfill its mission).

The findings also reinforce the importance of practitioners acting in a boundary-spanning role (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000) between the organization and the public, as well as the importance of the practitioner’s role in the two-way symmetrical model of public relations in which the practitioner negotiates with both the organization’s dominant coalition and the public to establish mutual understanding and benefit. Subscribing to one-way models of public relations which use one-way communication (such as public information and press agentry) may fail to achieve the mutual understanding and agreement that characterize healthy relationships by
ignoring the boundary-spanning role. In the student-university relationship, a reliance on one-way communication and possibly ineffective two-way maintenance strategies failed to improve the level of agreement and understanding between the organization and its stakeholders. This is not only because the student perspective of the relationship was somewhat negative, but also because members of the organization have an incorrect perception of the students’ perspective. If the two-way symmetrical model of public relations was truly being implemented, along with the appropriate two-way relationship maintenance strategies, then the public relations function – by virtue of using two-way managed communication channels – might have made the organization aware of the students’ somewhat negative view of the relationship, and consequently, the organization’s meta-perspective would have demonstrated a greater degree of accuracy in estimating the students’ direct perspective.

The alignment and adjustment of the not only the public’s but also the organization’s perspectives to foster agreement and understanding may be a more appropriate goal for some public relations programs. Broom (1977) proposed that this might be one of the benefits of using a coorientational approach in regards to organization and public perceptions of issues, particularly when a lack of understanding exists between the two parties:

More interesting and more susceptible to change through public relations efforts are the states of false consensus and pluralistic ignorance [i.e. false dissensus]… When the actual states of agreement-disagreement are inaccurately assessed, those involved act on the basis of their misconceptions, or in the context of this discussion, based on what they erroneously believe to be the other group’s definition of the issue (p.111).

Broom goes on to state:

Since mutual understanding and accuracy are often the necessary conditions for appropriate and meaningful corporate-public interaction on an issue, changes in these two variables may be the most important goals of public relations. And given the difficulties of changing the deeply held attributes often associated with important issues, changes in mutual understanding and accuracy may be a more realistic goal of public relations (p. 117).
In the organization-public relationship in my study, one of the first steps to improving the students’ view of the relationship may be for the organization’s public relations managers to design internal communication vehicles targeted at the members of the university police department in order to adjust the organization’s meta-perspective on the issue and to let students know that the organization is in turn aware of students’ perception of the relationship. To lay this groundwork for improving the relationship, effective two-way strategies that foster open and honest dialogue between the parties in the relationship need to be implemented. This in turn may eventually lead to improvement in the public’s perspective regarding the relationship. Again, standard measures of public relations effectiveness do not assess these types of interactions; the coorientational approach used in my study does, and can be used to suggest strategies for improving the relationship from both sides by using two-way symmetrical communication targeted not only at the public, but also at the organization, as well as building the necessary channels of communication between the two parties that will lead to increased agreement and understanding.

Another implication of the findings for practitioners is the importance that interpersonal interaction played in shaping the public’s perspectives regarding the organization-public relationship. As has been discussed previously, while the one-way and two-way relationship maintenance strategies employed by the university police department appeared to have no effect on the students’ perspectives of the relationship, interpersonal interaction did have an effect. This reinforces the importance of employees as both target internal audiences for public relations efforts and the role that they play as ambassadors for the organization. The rank and file members of the organization, not just management, are the face of an organization; the interaction that the public has with members of an organization at the individual, one-on-one,
interpersonal level can undermine the efforts of professional communicators at the organizational, managed communication level. This stresses the importance that relationship management theory places on the need for supportive behaviors to reinforce the efforts of managed communication programs in building and maintaining healthy relationships with stakeholders (Ledingham, 2003). It also suggests that public relations practitioners need to look inward to design employee/organizational communication programs that will ensure that members of the organization understand the importance of their role in building organization-public relationships and provide them with the knowledge and tools to do so.

Limitations

Like most research studies, the present investigation is not without its limitations. The areas of greatest concern regard limitations due to the survey mode, operationalization of the maintenance strategy measures, the difficulties related to the measurement of attitudes, the nature of the specific organization-public relationship examined, and drawbacks tied to the multivariate analysis. The use of an online survey may have contributed to unit and item nonresponse problems. The operationalization of the two-way relationship maintenance strategies was problematic; it has been touched on briefly in the preceding discussion and is elaborated on further here. Additionally, there are several problems tied to the measurement of attitudes that are common within survey research, such as the potential reporting of “non-attitudes” and differences in respondent response style. Also, the police department and student samples used in the study represent only one specific type of organization-public relationship. Finally, the multivariate techniques used to analyze the data are not the most sophisticated methods available.

The study has several limitations due to the selection of the mode that was used to administer the survey. An online survey did provide many advantages, such as affordability,
speed in the recruitment and data collection process, high coverage of a sample known to have
Internet access and for which there was an adequate sampling frame, and management tools that
provided the ability to track data such as when the survey was taken and how long it took to
data collection process, high coverage of a sample known to have
Internet access and for which there was an adequate sampling frame, and management tools that
provided the ability to track data such as when the survey was taken and how long it took to
complete. However, the mode of survey administration may have contributed to a low response
rate and missing data issues as a result of item-non response. The response rate for the student
terminated the survey by closing the browser window prior to
clicking the “continue to the next page” link at the bottom of any given “page” (i.e., screen), then
data collection method.

A final problem that was the result of survey mode (at least in part) was the form that item-
missing data took. If respondents terminated the survey by closing the browser window prior to
clicking the “continue to the next page” link at the bottom of any given “page” (i.e., screen), then
any data that had been entered on that page was lost. Therefore, there was no item-missing data
within any completed page, but only item-missing data for the entire page. Whereas any data present on an uncompleted pen-and-paper survey could be retrieved, a missing page of the online survey was lost forever and irretrievable. However, the online survey could still be considered as providing an advantage in that if a respondent decided to terminate the survey early, any completed pages were submitted; if the recipient of a mail survey decides to terminate early, the entire instrument may wind up in the trash. In the end, the net result of the low response rate and the item-missing data is that the survey results for the student sample should be interpreted cautiously, especially when attempting to generalize from the sample of students who completed the survey to the larger population of all students living on campus.

Another limitation to the study which has been alluded to previously in the discussion is the operationalization of the relationship maintenance strategy measures, particularly the two-way strategies. Again, one explanation for the lack of any effects from two-way strategy exposure could simply be that the organization’s implementation of the strategy may not have actually reflected the true nature of a two-way relationship maintenance strategy. However, it must be acknowledged that the operationalization of the measure itself could be responsible, or it could be a combination of these two factors.

This could present a problem for researchers desiring to study the effectiveness of these types of strategies on organization-public relationships, and needs to be addressed with as much enthusiasm as has been exhibited for developing the relationship measures themselves. Whereas quantifying the content of tactics that facilitate one-way communication is fairly straightforward, such as when press releases are content analyzed as part of agenda building or framing studies, measurement of two-way strategies may prove to be more elusive. How does or should one measure a community relations program? How can this be accomplished in a reliable manner
from one organization-public relationship study to the next? Although relationship maintenance strategies are suggested as important factors in moderating perceptions of organization-public relationships (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1998; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999), they are only described in loose terms. Stacks and Watson (2007) suggest some hypothetical models for potentially measuring two-way communication, but do not offer any firm conclusions as to the best way to operationalize measures of relational variables for use in quantitative analyses. Furthermore, even if these strategies can be clearly identified and operationalized, if the organization does not implement the two-way strategy in the manner it was designed, it may only have the effect of a one-way strategy.

Another limitation of my study is a problem inherent in much of survey research – the difficulty in attempting to measure attitudes. Several aspects of attempting to measure attitudes can result in measurement error wherein the true measure of the respondents’ attitude is not assessed. Among the factors that could contribute to these reporting errors include the use of different estimation processes by different respondents when responding to an attitudinal rating scale such as the ones used on the survey in my study. Another problem with attitudinal rating scales is that some respondents utilize an extreme response style in which they consistently use the extreme ends of a multi-item attitudinal scale (e.g., always selecting “strongly disagree” or “strongly agree” on a Likert scale). Other respondents may exhibit an acquiescence response style in that they are predisposed to indicate agreement on attitudinal scales (e.g., always selecting “strongly agree” on a Likert scale).

Yet another problem related to measurement of attitudes is the possibility that the respondents really do not have well-formed attitudes at all. There is some debate within the survey research literature over how and if respondents form and report “non-attitudes.” Converse
(1964, 1970) believed that the general public did not have well-formed attitudes about many issues as evidenced by the lack of ideological constraint exhibited in their attitudes; when asked to report their attitudes in regards to a particular issue, Converse believed that respondents simply made up attitudes, thus, attitudinal items really measure “non-attitudes.” Zaller and Feldman (1992) believed that respondents hold a number of considerations (orientations or predispositions toward issues), some of them conflicting, at any given moment, and particular considerations can be made more salient through the framing of issues or word choice in a survey. Holbrook, Green, and Krosnick (2003) indicated that respondents engaged in satisficing behaviors in order to reduce the amount of effort required to answer a particular question; the nature of the question, the motivation of the respondent, and the difficulty of the task were all factors that could lead to satisficing. So, if respondents are not reporting their true attitudes, if they are unable to report their true attitudes, or if they are satisficing and only reporting non-attitudes, then the answers derived from the survey may not reflect the true attitudes held by the population and therefore the results would lack validity. This could certainly be an issue in my study, as it is possible that many students did not have well defined attitudes or considerations about their relationship with the university police department. Suddenly confronted with a survey requesting those attitudes, the respondents may have exhibited satisficing behaviors to some degree or simply “made up” and reported attitudes on the spot.

An additional problem for my study was that it examined only one specific organization-public relationship. The characteristics of the relationship between the police department and university students and the nature of that relationship may have led to the observed results. Given that the university police department enjoys a large measure of authority and power in comparison to the university students living on campus and that the median age of the student
respondents was below the legal drinking age, it is not surprising that there was the possibility for a contentious relationship between these two groups. Other types of relationships featuring different organizations and publics may not exhibit the same patterns of interactions among the various group perspectives. Also, independent variables that were significant predictors of relationship outcomes in this study may not prove to be significant in studies that utilize other types of relationships. For instance, while two-way relationship maintenance strategies did not have a significant effect on ratings of the relationship dimensions in this study, they may prove to be effective in other police-student relationships or in other forms of organization-public relationships, such as the relationship between a nonprofit organization and the community in which it operates.

Other limitations of my study are related to the types of statistical analyses that were conducted to investigate the research questions and test the hypotheses. While MANOVA and multiple linear regression are certainly well established and widely used statistical tools for conducting multivariate analysis, there are certainly more advanced tools that could have been used. For example, structural equation modeling (SEM), which is a “melding of factor analysis and path analysis into one comprehensive statistical methodology” (Kaplan, 2000, p. 3), could have been helpful in developing a model of the complex pattern of interactions among the numerous independent and dependent variables in my study. Another potential problem with the statistical analysis is that some of the assumptions for MANOVA, such as the normality of the dependent variables, may have been violated; these issues and efforts to account for them have already been detailed in the results section. One final limitation related to the data analysis is the limited explanatory power of some of the models. The multiple linear regression equations that were calculated for the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables of meta-
perspective, accuracy, and congruency had fairly low adjusted coefficients of determination and consequently do not explain a lot of the variance observed in those dependent measures. Again, this not only means that caution should be taken in interpreting the results related to these dependent variables, but it also suggests that additional independent variables exist that were not included in the models. The need to identify these potential variables leads to the next part of this discussion – suggestions for future research.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The need to identify additional variables is but one avenue public relations researchers can pursue to extend their understanding of organization-public relationships and the relational perspective. Consideration of the uses and gratifications that individuals seek from relationships could be explored as possible antecedent variables, as could the influence of opinion leaders and real world cues. New ways of studying relationships need to be considered as well, including a shift from examining individual perceptions of relationships and to studying the characteristics of the organizations and the publics themselves that lead to healthier relationships. The investigation of time as a factor in the organization-public relationship needs to be continued, but by taking a long-term approach and by examining the relationship outcomes as a series of effects. New methodologies besides survey research, such as qualitative methods, could be utilized as well. Finally, relationship management theory can benefit from integration with other mass communications theories, specifically, the agenda-setting processes and contingency theory.

Including additional antecedent conditions would provide a promising starting point. Both Broom, Casey, and Ritchey’s (1998) and Grunig and Huang’s (2000) models for organizing relationship theory development suggest the presence of antecedent states that can affect the organization-public relationship. While they seem to focus more on classifying the types of
possible linkages between organizations and publics (e.g., organization affects public, public affects organization, etc.), it may be that individual antecedents play a role as well; therefore, drawing on uses and gratifications theory may prove fruitful. Uses and gratifications theory seeks to understand why individuals choose between various media and what needs are met through their use (Rubin, 1994; Ruggiero, 2000; Severin & Tankard, 2001). Uses and gratifications departs from traditional media effects theories which tend to focus on what media does to individuals by asking instead what individuals do with media and why certain people gravitate to particular media. In a similar vein, organization-public relationship research could address why certain individuals gravitate toward particular relationships and develop a typology of motives, needs, and antecedents that drive this process, similar to the typologies developed by uses and gratifications researchers.

Another possible variable that could affect perceptions of the organization-public relationship is the influence of opinion leaders on individuals and parties within the relationship. Through interpersonal communication, persuasion, or by virtue of their expertise or authority, certain influential may be able to sway the individual and group perceptions of an organization-public relationship in a manner similar to the two-step flow process in which media messages are consumed first by opinion leaders who then pass on these messages to others who look to these opinion leaders for information (Katz, 1957). This idea could be extended even further by incorporating the diffusion-innovation process (Rogers, 1995); here, the spread of new ideas and practices throughout the population is affected by characteristics of the innovation such as its relative advantage over existing ideas or practices, its compatibility with the beliefs and needs of adopters, its complexity, the degree to which it can be tested before adoption, and degree to which the benefits of adoption can be seen by others. The decision to invest oneself in a
relationship and the spread of ideas and perceptions of the relationship could be affected by a process similar to the diffusion-innovation process, especially if opinion leaders are acting as the engine for the diffusion of those ideas.

Yet another variable that could prove to be important is the influence of real world events on perceptions of the relationship. Even though the Virginia Tech shooting did not exhibit a significant effect on perceptions of the organization-public relationship in my study, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that in other situations with other organizations and publics, a real world cue could have a significant effect on the organization-public relationship by increasing the salience of the relationship, certain dimensions of the relationship, or various situational antecedents of the relationship, thus making them more relevant to individuals when judging the relationship. The obtrusiveness or unobtrusiveness of the event (i.e., whether the individual has direct experience with the event) could moderate the influence of a real world cue, similar to how issue obtrusiveness moderates the agenda-setting effect (Gonzenbach, 1996).

Moving from possible independent variables that might influence the organization-public relationship measures when viewed as dependent variables, additional research can focus on using measures of the organization-public relationship to understand how perceptions of the relationship affect the outcomes and consequences of relationship state. For example, Ki and Hon’s (2007) study investigating the influence of perceptions of the relationship measures on resulting attitudes and behavioral intentions toward an organization could be extended by including the coorientational measures as independent variables. Also, more work needs to be done to tie the perception of relationship measures and the coorientation measures to the objective relationship measures that have been advocated by Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1998, 2000).
Another way the study of organization-public relationships could be extended is by moving from investigations of single organization-public relationships in which the observational level is the individual member of the organization or public and instead looking at multiple organization-public relationships in which observations are made at the organization and public level. By studying multiple organization-public relationships - including different types of organizations, different types of publics, and different types of relationships – the characteristics of the organizations and the publics themselves can be examined at the macro-organizational level. In this manner, factors that vary from organization to organization and public to public can be studied as independent variables and not just what drives individual perceptions of these relationships.

Replicating my study with multiple organizations would most likely be easier said than done given the difficulty in securing the cooperation of just one organization to participate in my study, much less recruiting respondents to compose multiple stakeholder samples. This may suggest the use of other methodologies besides surveys to investigate the organization public relationship. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, experiments, even field observations could all prove to be informative avenues for exploring the complexities of multiple, unique organization-public relationships.

Another consideration for future research of organization-public relationships is to conduct more longitudinal studies and to consider the ordering of relationship outcomes. Since the management and cultivation of relationships takes a long-term perspective, organization-public relationships need to be studied over a period of years and not just at one point in time. Even though time did not prove to be a factor in influencing perceptions of the organization-public relationship in my study, it could be that students are not involved in a relationship with
the university police department long enough for time to have emerged as a factor. A few organization-public relationship studies have begun the investigation of time’s impact on relationship perception (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999), but this avenue of research needs to be continued; especially if the additional coorientation dimensions are to be considered. Additionally, the manner in which individuals within an organization-public relationship form perceptions of the various relational dimensions should be considered. For example, over time, do perceptions of trust develop prior to the formation of perceptions of satisfaction? While some studies have begun to investigate the intra-relationship of these relational dimensions through assessments of public direct perspectives (e.g., Jo, 2003; Ki & Hon, 2007), this line of inquiry needs to be continued and extended to the coorientational approach by examining the ordering of relationships outcomes within both organization and public meta-perspectives as well as organizational direct perspectives.

Another suggestion for future research aimed at further developing the study of organization-public relationships, and one that could benefit from including the constructs of agreement, congruency, and accuracy between the various direct and meta-perspectives within an organization-public relationship, would be an effort to integrate the relational perspective and relationship management into the agenda-setting processes. Agenda-setting theory asserts that increased media concern and emphasis on certain issues over others will raise the salience of those issues for the public; in other words, increased salience of issues on the media agenda will correspond with increased salience of the same issues on the public agenda (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, & McCombs, 1998). The agenda-setting concept has been extended to the agenda-building process in which the media, policy makers, news sources, organizations, and the public collaborate to shape the media agenda (Lang & Lang, 1983). Not
only can the salience of issues be influenced, but the salience of attributes of those issues can be influenced by actors in the agenda-building / agenda-setting process through framing. Framing focuses on the selection and salience of specific object attributes during both agenda setting and agenda building (Ghanem, 1997; Lancedorfer & Lee, 2003; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Ohl, Pincus, Rimmer, & Harrison, 1995; Tedesco, 2001).

The integration of agenda setting, agenda building, and framing into the theory of relationship management could prove beneficial to public relations researchers and would place added emphasis on the use of coorientational measurement. Public relations can be considered in some ways the strategic management of frames; this frame management could be used to align the organization and public perceptions of an issue, which would lead to the mutual understanding necessary to facilitate healthy relationships. The agenda-building and agenda-setting model could possibly add a frame feedback loop in which public relations practitioners read and interpret the salience and framing of issues and then communicate them to the dominant coalition within the organization. By acting as a facilitator of frame alignment, the public relations practitioner would be helping organizations and publics understand one another in order to build mutually beneficial relationships. The practitioner could even reframe the public agenda in a manner that would help the dominant coalition understand organizational stakeholders’ needs and concerns, and thereby serve to move both the organization and the public toward the “win-win” zone proposed by the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice.

In addition to the agenda-setting processes, the integration of relationship management theory with the contingency theory of accommodation would seem to be a natural fit. As suggested earlier, the lack of effectiveness of the two-way relationship maintenance strategies
employed by the university police department may not be due to poor operationalization or implementation, but could be the result of selecting the wrong strategy to address the public relations problem at hand. Incorporating the predisposing and situational variables from contingency theory as antecedents in the organization-public relationship model would provide one way of integrating the two theories. Additionally, other types of relationship maintenance strategies besides two-way symmetrical strategies should be included in the model to see which are more effective at improving the organization-public relationship under different circumstances.

In Closing

My study began with the proposition that the current conceptualization of “relationships” and “organization-public relationships” found in the field of public relations as well as the methods for measuring and evaluating these constructs needed refinement. The definitions and measurement of these concepts need to be further developed from both a theoretical standpoint and from a practitioner standpoint. In terms of theoretical use, the lack of an adequate definition of organization-public relationships and the limitations inherent in the methods currently used to measure those relationships restricts relationship theory development. From a practitioner standpoint, current measures of public relations effectiveness that focus on short-term program outputs and target public outcomes often fail to demonstrate the value of public relations effectiveness in establishing and maintaining the long-term mutually beneficial relationships with publics that should be the ultimate objective of effective public relations practice. Measures that can fully capture the quality and nature of the relationships between an organization and its publics could be used to justify the value of public relations to an organization by demonstrating public relations effectiveness. However, measurement of organization-public relationships has continued to focus on assessments of the public’s direct perspective only.
Public relations theories, such as relationship management, as well as interpersonal communication theories, suggest that the perceptions of both parties in the organization-public relationship are critical to understanding the nature of the relationship between them. By only incorporating the public’s direct perspective, the current conceptualization of the organization-public relationship fails to acknowledge the perspectives of the other party in the relationship – the organization. My study represents an effort to advance theoretical and methodological development in the area of relationship measurement. The proposition that relationships should be the unit of analysis in public relations theory demands the continued development of new methodologies to measure relationships to ensure that the unit of analysis is being properly operationalized.

The coorientational approach for measuring organization-public relationships detailed in my study represents another step in the effort to improve the measurement of the organization-public relationships that comprise this key unit of analysis for public relations research. The findings from my study have served to illustrate how the coorientational measures that are generated by this methodology can be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the true state of an organization-public relationship.
APPENDIX A
RELATIONSHIP MEASURES

Control Mutuality:

1. The organization and public are attentive to what each other say.
2. The organization believes the opinions of the public are legitimate.
3. In dealing with the public, the organization has a tendency to throw its weight around (reversed).
4. The organization really listens to what the public has to say.
5. The organization gives the public enough say in the decision-making process.

Trust:

6. The organization treats the public fairly and justly.
7. Whenever the organization makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about the public.
8. The organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that the organization takes the opinions of the public into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about the organization’s capabilities.
11. The organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Commitment:

12. I feel that the organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to the public.
13. I can see that the organization wants to maintain a relationship with the public.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between the organization and the public.
15. Compared to other organizations, the public values its relationship with the organization more.
16. The public would rather work with the organization than not.

Satisfaction:

17. The public is happy with the organization.
18. Both the organization and the public benefit from the relationship.
19. Most members of the public are happy in their interactions with the organization.
20. Generally speaking, the public is pleased with the relationship the organization has established with the public.
21. Most members of the public enjoy dealing with the organization.
APPENDIX B
PILOT STUDY SURVEYS

Public Version

SECTION I.

The following items are statements about the relationship that exists between [ORGANIZATION] management and staff. For each item, you will be asked to state whether you personally agree or disagree with the statement (indicate in the appropriate column to the right of each statement).

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

1. Management and employees are attentive to what each other say.
2. Management believes the opinions of employees are legitimate.
3. In dealing with employees, management has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. Management really listens to what employees have to say.
5. Management gives employees enough say in the decision-making process.
6. Management treats employees fairly and justly.
7. Whenever management makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about employees.
8. Management can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that management takes the opinions of employees into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about management’s capabilities.
11. Management has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that management is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to employees.
13. I can see that management wants to maintain a relationship with employees.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between management and employees.
15. Compared to other organizations, employees value their relationship with management more.
16. Employees would rather work with management than not.
17. Employees are happy with management.
18. Both management and employees benefit from the relationship.
19. Most employees are happy in their interactions with management.
20. Generally speaking, employees are pleased with the relationship management has established with staff.
21. Most employees enjoy dealing with management.

SECTION II.

You will now be asked to estimate how upper management at [ORGANIZATION] would respond to the same statements (indicate in the appropriate column to the right of each statement). In your opinion, how would a typical member of [ORGANIZATION]’s upper management respond to these statements?
Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

1. Management and employees are attentive to what each other say.
2. Management believes the opinions of employees are legitimate.
3. In dealing with employees, management has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. Management really listens to what employees have to say.
5. Management gives employees enough say in the decision-making process.
6. Management treats employees fairly and justly.
7. Whenever management makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about employees.
8. Management can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that management takes the opinions of employees into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about management’s capabilities.
11. Management has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that management is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to employees.
13. I can see that management wants to maintain a relationship with employees.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between management and employees.
15. Compared to other organizations, employees value their relationship with management more.
16. Employees would rather work with management than not.
17. Employees are happy with management.
18. Both management and employees benefit from the relationship.
19. Most employees are happy in their interactions with management.
20. Generally speaking, employees are pleased with the relationship management has established with staff.
21. Most employees enjoy dealing with management.

SECTION III.

The following questions ask for some general demographic information. Please circle the appropriate response or fill in the blank as needed.

1. Your gender (circle one):
   (a) MALE
   (b) FEMALE
2. How old are you?
3. What is your position at [ORGANIZATION]?
   How many years have you worked in that position?
4. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in face-to-
face interactions with management (*please round to the nearest hour*).

5. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in online interactions (e.g., e-mail, chat, etc.) with management (*please round to the nearest hour*).

6. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in interactions with management via the telephone (*please round to the nearest hour*).

7. How many hours do you work at [ORGANIZATION] during a typical week?

8. How many years have you worked at [ORGANIZATION] in all (*circle one*)?
   (a) LESS THAN A YEAR
   (b) 1-5 YEARS
   (c) 6-10 YEARS
   (d) MORE THAN 10 YEARS

Organization

SECTION I.

The following items are statements about the relationship that exists between [ORGANIZATION] management and staff. For each item, you will be asked to state whether you personally agree or disagree with the statement (indicate in the appropriate column to the right of each statement).

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

1. Management and employees are attentive to what each other say.
2. Management believes the opinions of employees are legitimate.
3. In dealing with employees, management has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. Management really listens to what employees have to say.
5. Management gives employees enough say in the decision-making process.
6. Management treats employees fairly and justly.
7. Whenever management makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about employees.
8. Management can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that management takes the opinions of employees into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about management’s capabilities.
11. Management has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that management is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to employees.
13. I can see that management wants to maintain a relationship with employees.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between management and employees.
15. Compared to other organizations, employees value their relationship with management more.
16. Employees would rather work with management than not.
17. Employees are happy with management.
18. Both management and employees benefit from the relationship.
19. Most employees are happy in their interactions with management.
20. Generally speaking, employees are pleased with the relationship management has established with staff.
21. Most employees enjoy dealing with management.

SECTION II.

You will now be asked to estimate how staff at [ORGANIZATION] would respond to the same statements (indicate in the appropriate column to the right of each statement). In your opinion, how would a typical [ORGANIZATION] employee respond to these statements?

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

1. Management and employees are attentive to what each other say.
2. Management believes the opinions of employees are legitimate.
3. In dealing with employees, management has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. Management really listens to what employees have to say.
5. Management gives employees enough say in the decision-making process.
6. Management treats employees fairly and justly.
7. Whenever management makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about employees.
8. Management can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that management takes the opinions of employees into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about management’s capabilities.
11. Management has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that management is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to employees.
13. I can see that management wants to maintain a relationship with employees.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between management and employees.
15. Compared to other organizations, employees value their relationship with management more.
16. Employees would rather work with management than not.
17. Employees are happy with management.
18. Both management and employees benefit from the relationship.
19. Most employees are happy in their interactions with management.
20. Generally speaking, employees are pleased with the relationship management has established with staff.
21. Most employees enjoy dealing with management.

SECTION III.
The following questions ask for some general demographic information. Please circle the appropriate response or fill in the blank as needed.

1. Your gender (circle one):
   (a) MALE
   (b) FEMALE

2. How old are you?

3. What is your position at [ORGANIZATION]? How many years have you worked in that position?

4. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in face-to-face interactions with staff (please round to the nearest hour).

5. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in online interactions (e.g., e-mail, chat, etc.) with staff (please round to the nearest hour).

6. Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in interactions with staff via the telephone (please round to the nearest hour).

7. How many employees do you currently supervise?

8. How many years have you worked at [ORGANIZATION] in all (circle one)?
   (a) LESS THAN A YEAR
   (b) 1-5 YEARS
   (c) 6-10 YEARS
   (d) MORE THAN 10 YEARS
APPENDIX C
MAIN STUDY SURVEYS

Organization Version

SECTION 1:

Below are several statements about the relationship that exists between the university police department (UPD) and university students.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. strongly disagree, 2. disagree, 3. somewhat disagree, 4. neither agree nor disagree, 5. somewhat agree, 6. agree, and 7. strongly agree.]

1. UPD and students are attentive to what each other say.
2. UPD believes the opinions of students are legitimate.
3. In dealing with students, UPD has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. UPD really listens to what students have to say.
5. UPD gives students enough say in its decision-making process.
6. UPD treats students fairly and justly.
7. Whenever UPD makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about students.
8. UPD can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that UPD takes the opinions of students into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about UPD’s capabilities.
11. UPD has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that UPD is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to students.
13. I can see that UPD wants to maintain a relationship with students.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between UPD and students.
15. Compared to other organizations, students value their relationship with UPD more.
16. Students would rather work with UPD than not.
17. Students are happy with UPD.
18. Both UPD and students benefit from the relationship.
19. Most students are happy in their interactions with UPD.
20. Generally speaking, students are pleased with the relationship UPD has established with students.
21. Most students enjoy dealing with UPD.

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

SECTION 2:
Thank you for continuing with the survey. Your responses are valuable and appreciated.

In this section, please estimate how students would respond to the same set of statements. In your opinion, how would a university student respond to these statements?

Indicate your estimate to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means “A student would strongly disagree” and 7 means “A student would strongly agree.”

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. strongly disagree, 2. disagree, 3. somewhat disagree, 4. neither agree nor disagree, 5. somewhat agree, 6. agree, and 7. strongly agree.]

1. UPD and students are attentive to what each other say.
2. UPD believes the opinions of students are legitimate.
3. In dealing with students, UPD has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. UPD really listens to what students have to say.
5. UPD gives students enough say in its decision-making process.
6. UPD treats students fairly and justly.
7. Whenever UPD makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about students.
8. UPD can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that UPD takes the opinions of students into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about UPD’s capabilities.
11. UPD has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that UPD is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to students.
13. I can see that UPD wants to maintain a relationship with students.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between UPD and students.
15. Compared to other organizations, students value their relationship with UPD more.
16. Students would rather work with UPD than not.
17. Students are happy with UPD.
18. Both UPD and students benefit from the relationship.
19. Most students are happy in their interactions with UPD.
20. Generally speaking, students are pleased with the relationship UPD has established with students.
21. Most students enjoy dealing with UPD.

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

SECTION 3:

We’re almost done with the survey. Below are a few questions about the type of contact you have with university students.

1. Which of the following UPD programs have you actively participated in? Please check all that apply.
Presentation to students for the SCOPE program

Presentation to students for the Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) program

An educational presentation for students on personal safety or crime prevention (other than SCOPE or RAD)

Other (please specify) [An open-ended response box is included for “other” responses.]

2. How many hours do you spend in an average work day communicating with students? This includes communicating face-to-face, online (e.g., via e-mail), and/or on the telephone?

[Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 0 – 24.]

3. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “very negative” and 7 is “very positive,” in general, how would you characterize these interactions with students?

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1. very negative, 2. negative, 3. somewhat negative, 4. neutral, 5. somewhat positive, 6. positive, and 7. very positive]

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

SECTION 4:

Thank you for your patience. Please answer the following general background questions to conclude the survey.

1. Are you male or female?

[Respondent answers by clicking “male” or “female.”]

2. How old are you?

[Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 18 – 64 plus an “older than 64” option.]

3. Are you a sworn or non-sworn officer?

[Respondent answers by clicking “sworn officer” or “non-sworn officer.”]

4. What is your current position at UPD?

[Respondent answers in an open-ended response box.]
5. How many years have you worked in your current position?

[Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 1 – 20 plus “less than a year” and “more than 20 years” options.]

6. How many years have you worked at UPD in all?

[Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 1 – 20 plus “less than a year” and “more than 20 years” options.]

7. How many years have you worked at the university in all?

[Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 1 – 20 plus “less than a year” and “more than 20 years” options.]

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

FINISHED!

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time and your participation.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this study, please feel free to contact the primary researcher at tseltzer@jou.ufl.edu.

[Clicking on “Done” redirects respondent to the UPD Web site homepage.]

**Public Version**

SECTION 1:

Below are several statements about the relationship that exists between the university police department (UPD) and university students.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Answer to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. strongly disagree, 2. disagree, 3. somewhat disagree, 4. neither agree nor disagree, 5. somewhat agree, 6. agree, and 7. strongly agree.]

1. UPD and students are attentive to what each other say.
2. UPD believes the opinions of students are legitimate.
3. In dealing with students, UPD has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. UPD really listens to what students have to say.
5. UPD gives students enough say in its decision-making process.
6. UPD treats students fairly and justly.
7. Whenever UPD makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about students.
8. UPD can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that UPD takes the opinions of students into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about UPD’s capabilities.
11. UPD has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that UPD is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to students.
13. I can see that UPD wants to maintain a relationship with students.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between UPD and students.
15. Compared to other organizations, students value their relationship with UPD more.
16. Students would rather work with UPD than not.
17. Students are happy with UPD.
18. Both UPD and students benefit from the relationship.
19. Most students are happy in their interactions with UPD.
20. Generally speaking, students are pleased with the relationship UPD has established with students.
21. Most students enjoy dealing with UPD.

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

SECTION 2:

Thank you for continuing with the survey. Your responses are valuable and appreciated.

In this section, please estimate how members of the UPD would respond to the same set of statements. In your opinion, how would a member of the UPD respond to these statements?

Indicate your estimate to the right of each statement on the scale ranging from 1 to 7, where 1 means “A member of the UPD would strongly disagree” and 7 means “A member of the UPD would strongly agree.”

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. strongly disagree, 2. disagree, 3. somewhat disagree, 4. neither agree nor disagree, 5. somewhat agree, 6. agree, and 7. strongly agree.]

1. UPD and students are attentive to what each other say.
2. UPD believes the opinions of students are legitimate.
3. In dealing with students, UPD has a tendency to throw its weight around.
4. UPD really listens to what students have to say.
5. UPD gives students enough say in its decision-making process.
6. UPD treats students fairly and justly.
7. Whenever UPD makes important decisions, I know it will be concerned about students.
8. UPD can be relied on to keep its promises.
9. I believe that UPD takes the opinions of students into account when making decisions.
10. I feel very confident about UPD’s capabilities.
11. UPD has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
12. I feel that UPD is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to students.
13. I can see that UPD wants to maintain a relationship with students.
14. There is a long-lasting bond between UPD and students.
15. Compared to other organizations, students value their relationship with UPD more.
16. Students would rather work with UPD than not.
17. Students are happy with UPD.
18. Both UPD and students benefit from the relationship.
19. Most students are happy in their interactions with UPD.
20. Generally speaking, students are pleased with the relationship UPD has established with students.
21. Most students enjoy dealing with UPD.

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.

[Respondent clicks “Next” to continue to next page of survey.]

SECTION 3:

We’re almost done with the survey. Below are a few questions about the type of contact you have with members of the UPD.

1. Which of the following UPD services or programs have you used or participated in? Please check all that apply.

   Presentation to students for the Student Community Oriented Police Effort (SCOPE) program

   Presentation or class for the Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) program

   An educational presentation on personal safety or crime prevention (other than SCOPE or RAD)

   Other (please specify) [An open-ended response box is included for “other” responses.]

2. How many hours do you spend in an average day communicating with members of the UPD? This includes communicating face-to-face, online (e.g., via e-mail), and/or on the telephone?

   [Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 0 – 24.]

3. How many hours do you spend in an average week communicating with members of the UPD? This includes communicating face-to-face, online (e.g., via e-mail), and/or on the telephone?
4. On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “very negative” and 7 is “very positive,” in general, how would you characterize these interactions with members of the UPD?

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. very negative, 2. negative, 3. somewhat negative, 4. neutral, 5. somewhat positive, 6. positive, and 7. very positive]

5. Have you done any of the following? Please check all that apply.

- Visited the UPD Web site
- Read a UPD brochure (e.g., UPD Safe Campus brochure)
- Read a UPD newsletter (e.g., UPD Advocate Newsletter)
- Read a press release issued by UPD
- Listened to a speech by a UPD member
- Called UPD
- Wrote an e-mail or letter to UPD
- Visited UPD’s offices
- Talked face-to-face with a member of the UPD

6. Have you ever seen or read stories about UPD in the media (e.g., on the Internet, TV, radio, newspaper, etc.)?

[Respondent answers by clicking on “yes” or “no.” If “no,” skip question 6 and continue to the next section; if “yes,” continue to question 6.]

7. In general, how do you think UPD is portrayed in these stories? Please indicate your answer on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is “very negative” and 7 is “very positive.”

[Respondent answers by clicking on 7-point Likert scale with following response options: 1. very negative, 2. negative, 3. somewhat negative, 4. neutral, 5. somewhat positive, 6. positive, and 7. very positive.]

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.
SECTION 4:

Thank you for your patience. Please answer the following general background questions to conclude the survey.

1. Are you male or female?
   [Respondent answers by clicking “male” or “female.”]

2. How old are you?
   [Respondent answers using drop-down menu ranging from 18 – 64 plus an “older than 64” option.]

3. What is your class standing?
   [Respondent answers using drop-down menu with the following response options: “freshman,” “sophomore,” “junior,” “senior,” and “graduate student.”]

4. How many years have you been a student at the university?
   [Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 1 – 7 plus “less than a year” and “more than 7 years” options.]

5. Do you currently live on campus or off campus?
   [Respondent answers by clicking “on campus” or “off campus.”]

6. How many years have you lived in your current location?
   [Respondent answers using drop down menu ranging from 1 – 7 plus “less than a year” and “more than 7 years” options.]

7. Have you ever lived on campus?
   [Respondent answers by clicking “yes” or “no.”]

8. Do you ever drive on campus and/or park a car on campus?
   [Respondent answers by clicking “yes” or “no.”]

9. Have you ever been cited by UPD for any reason?
   [Respondent answers by clicking “yes” or “no.”]

Please click “next” to continue to the next section.
FINISHED!

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time and your participation.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the primary researcher at tseltzer@jou.ufl.edu.

[Clicking on “Done” redirects respondent to the UPD Web site homepage.]
Dear UPD Employees,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting in cooperation with the university police department. This study examines the relationship that exists between UPD and university students.

Your participation is critical to helping us understand the relationship between these two groups. The survey is not being conducted for marketing purposes; no attempt will be made to sell you anything.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to participate in this study:

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between UPD and students at the university. You will be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey that asks for your opinions about this relationship.

If you agree to participate in this study, your answers will be kept confidential. No attempt will be made to link you to your responses. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you if you agree to participate in this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time simply by closing your browser window. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact the primary researcher, Trent Seltzer, at tseltzer@jou.ufl.edu, or his supervising professor, Dr. Michael Mitrook, at mmitrook@jou.ufl.edu. Should you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB-02) at (352) 392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu. The IRB protocol number for this study is #2007-U-322.

If you chose to participate, please click on the following link or cut and paste the URL into your browser window to continue to the survey Web site:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=199163452591

The survey is open until April 25, 2007. Thank you for your cooperation.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Best regards,
Dear UPD Employees,

Last week you received an email asking for your participation in a research study that I am conducting in cooperation with the university police department (UPD). This study examines the relationship that exists between UPD and university students. I would like to ask you again to please take a few minutes to participate in this study.

Your participation is critical to helping us understand the relationship between these two groups. The survey is not being conducted for marketing purposes; no attempt will be made to sell you anything.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to participate in this study:

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between UPD and students at the university. You will be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey that asks for your opinions about this relationship.

If you agree to participate in this study, your answers will be kept confidential. No attempt will be made to link you to your responses. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you if you agree to participate in this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time simply by closing your browser window. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact the primary researcher, Trent Seltzer, at tseltzer@jou.ufl.edu, or his supervising professor, Dr. Michael Mitrook, at mmitrook@jou.ufl.edu. Should you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB-02) at (352) 392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu. The IRB protocol number for this study is #2007-U-322.

If you chose to participate, please click on the following link or cut and paste the URL into your browser window to continue to the survey Web site:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=199163452591

The survey is open until April 25, 2007. Thank you for your cooperation.
Thank you for your cooperation.

Best regards,

Trent Seltzer  
Primary Researcher  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Florida  
College of Journalism & Communication  
Department of Public Relations

Students

Dear university student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting in cooperation with the university police department (UPD) and the Department of Housing & Residence Education. This study examines the relationship that exists between UPD and university students.

Your participation will help further our understanding of the relationship between these two groups. The survey is not being conducted for marketing purposes; no attempt will be made to sell you anything.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to participate in this study:

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between UPD and students. You will be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey that asks for your opinions about this relationship.

If you agree to participate in this study, your answers will be kept confidential. No attempt will be made to link you to your responses. There are no anticipated risks or benefits to you if you agree to participate in this survey.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time simply by closing your browser window. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact the primary researcher, Trent Seltzer, at tseltzer@jou.ufl.edu, or his supervising professor, Dr. Michael Mitrook, at mmmitrook@jou.ufl.edu. Should you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB-02) at (352) 392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu. The IRB protocol number for this study is #2007-U-322.

If you chose to participate, please click on the following link or cut and paste the URL into your browser window to continue to the survey Web site:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=53993640846

The survey is open until April 25, 2007. Thank you for your cooperation.

Best regards,

Trent Seltzer
Primary Researcher
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
College of Journalism & Communication
Department of Public Relations

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.
[RemoveLink]
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trent Seltzer is a fourth year doctoral candidate specializing in public relations research at the University of Florida’s College of Journalism and Communications. In December 2000, he was awarded his master’s degree in communication from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. He was awarded his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Florida in December 1995.

Mr. Seltzer has over eleven years of professional and teaching experience. In 2005, he was selected as the recipient of the Ketchum Excellence in Public Relations Research Award from the Institute for Public Relations. Mr. Seltzer has been published in the Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Review. He has presented papers at numerous conferences, including the annual conferences of the International Communication Association and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Mr. Seltzer is a native of Florida and has lived there most of his life. After graduation, he and his wife plan to move to Lubbock, Texas, where Mr. Seltzer has accepted a position as an assistant professor in public relations at Texas Tech University’s College of Mass Communications.