

The Impact of Antecedents and Relationship Maintenance Strategies on Perceived Relationship with Political Parties During the 2008 Presidential General Election

Trent Seltzer¹
Weiwu Zhang
Texas Tech University²

Introduction

Relationships form between organizations and publics when the “actions of either entity impact the economic, social, *political* [italics added] and/or cultural well-being of the other” (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Certainly, this is descriptive of the interaction and interdependency that exists between voters and their political parties. Because these relationships have consequences for those involved, organizations, including political parties, are compelled to take action to successfully manage these relationships. Understanding the interaction of antecedents and relationship maintenance strategies and their influence on perceptions of organization-public relationships (OPRs) within a political context serves to advance best practices in political communication and government relations.

To that end, this study examined the relationship between registered voters and their political parties against the backdrop of the 2008 presidential general election. It extends existing research on OPRs by investigating them within a political context and by moving beyond current approaches that typically focus on an individual organization and its publics (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2007a; Ki & Hon, 2007b; Ledingham, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999; Seltzer, 2007a; Seltzer, 2007b).

This study sought to investigate the interaction of antecedent conditions, the relationship maintenance strategies utilized by political parties, perceptions of the organization-public relationship between voters and their party, and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the relationship. Antecedent variables that were considered included time in the relationship, interpersonal trust, and strength of party identification. Relationship maintenance strategies include communication activities that the organization uses to manage its relationship with the public; Excellence Theory and relationship management theory both suggest that two-way symmetrical, or dialogic, communication is the ideal means for facilitating quality OPRs. Relationship outcomes included voters’ attitudes toward their party and their intention to vote in the general election.

Literature Review

¹ Please direct any inquires to the lead author at trent.seltzer@ttu.edu.

² The authors would like to acknowledge the generous grant that they received from the Texas Tech University Public Relations Department Reputation Enhancement Fund that helped fund this project.

In their analysis of the role of public relations in politics, McKinnon, Tedesco, and Lauder (2001) note that “since the birth of American democracy, public relations practices have played a key role in shaping our politics” (p. 557). Textbooks used in introductory public relations courses typically begin with a discussion of the historical evolution of public relations and identify the American Revolution as the birth of public relations in the US. Examples such as the Boston Tea Party, *Common Sense*, *The Federalist Papers*, and others are cited as evidence of the central role that public relations has played in the early development of American politics (e.g., Broom, 2009; Wilcox & Cameron, 2007). These techniques have changed little over the years in regards to their application within the realm of political communication; public relations strategies and tactics have been used “to promote candidates and key campaign issues, to stage political events, to provide media contacts, to prepare promotional materials (e.g., news releases, ads, brochures, posters), to counsel clients in media relations, to spin political information to candidates’ advantage, and to offer advice on packaging political policies” (McKinnon et al., 2001, p. 558)

McKinnon et al. (2001) used a Delphi panel of political communication experts to locate the role of public relations within the sphere of American politics. The panelists agreed that increased media competition, importance placed on researching publics, and the rise of online communication have placed increasing significance on the role of public relations in politics. There was also strong agreement with the statement “public relations is central to a political campaign,” especially noting its importance in conducting research, setting strategy, developing messaging, and ensuring the consistency of those messages across mediated and unmediated as well as earned and paid channels of communication. Additionally, panelists mentioned establishing and maintaining relationships with various constituencies as a key responsibility of public relations practitioners in politics.

McKinnon et al. (2001) observed that “as the US political system has evolved, public relations practices have continued to grow in importance as those pursuing or wielding political power seek ways in which to communicate their messages to the voting public” (p. 557). This has spawned numerous opportunities in the political communication field for public relations professionals, including work in public affairs, government relations, lobbying, and public information (Broom, 2009; McKinnon et al., 2001; Wilcox & Cameron, 2007). Not only are public relations tools and strategies utilized in some form or another by political campaigns, government agencies, and corporations, but they are utilized by political parties as well in an effort to build support for or fight policy initiatives, raise funds, recruit volunteers and new members, and of course, gain support for the parties’ candidates.

Political parties can be defined as “organizations that seek to control government by recruiting, nominating, and electing their members to public office” (Welch et al. 1998, cited in Rozell, Wilcox, & Madland, 2006). Some political scholars claim that the influence of political parties has declined in recent years (Dalton, 2006); however, others believe that political parties still play a key role in American politics by providing citizens with opportunities to become involved in the political process (Dennis & Owen, 2001). Political parties provide a venue for interest groups to get involved in politics, turning American political parties into loose coalitions of interest groups. The intersection of political parties and interest groups provides not only a channel through which individual citizens can donate money and other resources, but also provides an access point for citizens to participate in the political process and develop political skills (Rozell et al., 2006).

This interaction between political parties and the constituencies on which they depend for supportive behavior presents an opportunity for public relations to contribute to the success of political entities, in this case by building and maintaining relationships with strategically important publics, i.e., citizens, voters, and party activists. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) state that *relationships* form between entities when they “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” (p. 95). This conceptualization of the public relations function within the political realm reflects recent efforts to redefine public relations 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). Adopting this view of public relations, political parties can utilize public relations strategies and strategically based communication programs to manage relationships to produce desirable attitudinal and behavioral outcomes; these outcomes will not only have consequences for the party and for its supporters, but for the larger political-social system as well through enactment of legislation, election of candidates, and setting the policy agenda.

To understand the role of public relations in this citizen-party relationship, this study uses the relational perspective and relationship management as a theoretical framework. The relational perspective has its roots in Ferguson’s (1984) declaration that public relations research should seek to develop a dominant paradigm of its own. She felt that within this perspective, relationships, and specifically *organization-public relationships* (OPRs), should constitute the unit of analysis for public relations research. According to Ferguson, “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). This signaled the beginning of the steady progression toward what would eventually become known as the *relational perspective* (Ledingham, 2003, 2006).

The relational 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 and Bruning (2000a) elaborated on the importance of such a perspective stating that “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). In reviewing the literature on organization-public relationships, Ledingham (2003) summarized existing knowledge of OPRs and suggested 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” (p. 190). Public relations researchers have sought to continue to develop this perspective through the identification of methods for measuring relationships (e.g., Hon & Grunig, 1999; Bruning and Ledingham, 1999) and by proposing models of organization-public relations (e.g., Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig & Huang, 2000).

There have been extensive efforts to identify the dimensions that compose OPRs and to create and test scales for measuring these dimensions (e.g., Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ledingham, 2001; Bruning & Galloway, 2003; Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Huang, 1997; Hon & Grunig,

1999; see Seltzer, 2007a, for a review). Hon and Grunig (1999) developed quantitative measurement scales for the proposed dimensions of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. They found these 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; Seltzer, 2007a). The *control mutuality* dimension represents the extent to which parties in the relationship agree as to who is authorized to exercise power and control. In a healthy OPR, each entity will be allowed to exercise power in the relationship. The *trust* dimension includes concepts such as integrity, dependability, and competence. The *satisfaction* dimension represents the degree to which each party perceives the expected benefits of being in the relationship exceed the costs as well as perceptions that each party is actively attempting to maintain a positive relationship. The *commitment* dimension includes both the belief that the relationship is worth maintaining as well as the amount of emotional energy used to maintain the relationship (see Hon & Grunig, 1999, for a full discussion of these dimensions).

In addition to the refinement of methods for measuring OPRs, researchers have sought to develop models of OPRs. Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) proposed a three-stage model consisting of antecedents, relationship state, and consequences of OPRs. 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 in which it operates and include “goal achievement, dependency/loss of autonomy, and routine and institutionalized behavior” (p. 94). Grunig and Huang (2000) also proposed a three-stage model of organization-public relationships that includes situational antecedents, maintenance strategies, and relationship outcomes. Here, situational antecedents describe the types of behavioral and situational factors that link publics and organizations. Maintenance strategies include the efforts of the organization to manage the relationship through communication efforts. Relationship outcomes include goal attainment and perceptions of relationship state.

Based on these models, this study conceptualizes *political organization-public relationships* (POPRs) between citizens and political parties as having politically relevant antecedent variables; as being mediated by the one- and two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical maintenance strategies employed by political parties; as being measured along dimensions of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment; and that the quality of the POPR between citizens and political parties results in attitudinal and behavioral outcomes that have political consequences for political parties as well as the larger political system.

In regards to politically relevant antecedents, this study considers three: time in the relationship, interpersonal trust, and party identification. Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) found that time in a relationship influenced perceptions of the dimensions of an OPR; they concluded that building relationships requires a long-term commitment. Similarly, Ledingham (2003, 2006) acknowledged that relationships are dynamic and evolve over time. Therefore, the following hypothesis is offered in regards to the effect of time on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1a}: Respondents who report longer time spent in the relationship with their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who have spent a shorter period of time in the relationship.

Interpersonal trust is also suggested as a possible antecedent of POPR state. The US is becoming an increasingly cynical and mistrustful country. Slightly over half of all Americans believed that “most people can be trusted” in the 1960s; this view was only shared by a third of all Americans by the 1990s (Uslaner, 2004). Interpersonal trust, also referred to as social trust, is important because it provides the social capital that allows citizens to collaborate to solve societal problems (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Kwak, Shah & Holbert, 2004; Kanervo & Zhang, 2005; Putnam 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000). Interpersonal trust has been positively linked with both civic engagement (Hooghe, 2002; Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Shah, McLeod & Yoon, 2001) and political participation (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2004). Political parties, like all organizations, are comprised of individuals; thus, to trust an organization is to trust the people who make up that organization. It is possible that higher levels of interpersonal trust will result in citizens having more positive perceptions of their relationship with these organizations, especially since these parties presumably are working to resolve political issues and present opportunities for political and civic engagement. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered in regards to the effect of interpersonal trust on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1b}: Respondents who report higher levels of interpersonal trust will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report lower levels of interpersonal trust.

If antecedents include situational and behavioral factors as well as motives, needs, and perceptions of OPRs, then surely partisanship should be considered, especially within the context of examining POPRs during an election. Party identification has been defined as “a sense of personal, affective attachment to a political party based on feelings of closeness to the social groups associated with the parties” (Goren, 2005, p. 881); thus, identification with a group exhibiting partisan leanings leads to closer identification with that party. Partisanship is influential in forming policy positions, evaluating political actors, and, of course, voting behavior (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Feldman, 1988). Given the power of partisanship to affect perceptions, attitudes, and behavior, the following hypothesis is offered regarding the effect of party identification on perceptions of POPRs.

H_{1c}: Respondents who report stronger levels of party identification will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report weaker levels of party identification.

The relationship management perspective supports the use of organizational communication to manage relationships between an organization and strategically important publics (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Maintenance strategies include the efforts of the organization to develop and nurture its relationship with the public through symmetrical and asymmetrical communication efforts. Models of OPRs suggest that the use of relationship maintenance strategies should improve perceptions of the organization-public relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

H_{2a}: Respondents who report higher levels of exposure to the relationship maintenance strategies employed by their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who report lower levels of exposure to maintenance strategies.

Beyond mere exposure to strategic communication efforts, both Excellence Theory and relationship management theory suggest that adopting the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice is the best way for public relations to contribute to organizational effectiveness and to build mutually beneficial relationships with strategically important publics (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham, 2006). In communication programs based on the two-way symmetrical model, feedback from publics is utilized to facilitate a two-way exchange of information. This exchange is symmetrical if the organization uses communication not just to influence the public, but also to understand the public (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The use of two-way symmetrical strategies is likely to result in dialogic communication between the organization and the public (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

H_{2b}: Respondents with greater exposure to relationship maintenance strategies perceived as two-way symmetrical communication (i.e., dialogic communication) will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents whose interaction with their party is not perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature.

Various OPR studies have identified relationship outcomes such as attitude formation and behavioral intention (Ki & Hon, 2007a), loyalty (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), satisfaction with the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000), and reputation (Yang, 2007). Ki and Hon (2007a, 2007b) found that stronger perceptions of OPRs lead to more positive attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the following hypotheses are offered regarding the effect of perceptions of the POPR on relationship outcomes:

H_{3a}: Respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report more favorable attitudes toward their party.

H_{3b}: Respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report engaging in behavior that supports their party to a greater degree than will respondents who perceive unfavorable relationships with their party.

The 2008 presidential general election provided an opportunity to test the hypothesized linkages among politically relevant antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies utilized by political parties, citizens' perceptions of political organization-public relationships, and attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of POPRs within a political context in which multiple political parties were employing strategic communication to achieve favorable political objectives.

Methodology

A telephone survey of 508 respondents residing in a midsized city and its surrounding county was conducted between October 20 and November 3, 2008, by trained interviewers in a research methods course at a university in the Southwestern United States. Respondents were selected randomly from a database of county residents. The response rate was approximately 40%.

The respondent pool was 63.2% female, and the median age was 53. Education was assessed on a seven-point scale ranging from "8th grade or less" to "graduate degree." The sample median was four, which meant "having attended some college." The sample was 78.6% Caucasian, 12.6% Hispanic, 6.7% Black, 1.0% Native American, and 0.2% Asian. 24.4% considered themselves to be Democrats, 17.8% Independents, and 57.8% Republicans. About

51.7% of the respondents identified themselves as conservative, 38% as moderate, and 12.4% said they were liberal. The average number of years respondents considered themselves to be affiliated with their current political party or considered themselves to have been independent was more than 10 years.

Interpersonal trust was a composite measure of two variables. Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with the statements “most people are honest” and “you can’t be too careful in dealing with people” (reverse coded) on a five-point scale where “1” meant “strongly disagree” and “5” meant “strongly agree.” The two statements were summed to form the *interpersonal trust* variable.

A slightly modified version of Huang’s (2004) Public Relations Strategy Assessment (PRSA) was used to measure exposure to four categories of relationship maintenance strategies: (1) mediated communication, (2) social activities, (3) interpersonal communication, and (4) online communications. *Mediated communication* was an additive measure of three items that asked how frequently the political party the respondent most closely identified with: (1) held press conferences; (2) distributed flyers, brochures, pamphlets, letters or other publications expressing their position; and (3) used the mass media, for example, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, etc. *Social activities* was an additive measure of two items: (1) how often the political party gave respondents gifts or tokens of appreciation, and (2) how often it held lunches, meetings, parties, or get-togethers. *Interpersonal communication* was a composite measure of two items: (1) how frequently the political party contacted the respondent in person, that is, face-to-face, and (2) how often it contacted the respondent by telephone. *Online communication* was a single measure which asked how often the political party contacted the respondent online, whether via e-mail, social networking sites, blogs, or instant messaging. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where “1” meant “never” and “4” meant “often.”

The PRSA was also used to assess whether the relationship maintenance strategies employed by the political parties were two-way symmetrical, or dialogic, in nature. Dialogic communication was measured along two dimensions: (1) two-way communication, and (2) symmetrical communication. *Two-way communication* was an additive measure of three items that asked how often one’s political party: (1) conducted research before they started communicating with the respondent to find out what their attitude was toward the party or the respondent’s position regarding issues; (2) made an effort to understand the respondent’s opinions and suggestions while communicating with the respondent; and (3) contacted the respondent to get the respondent’s feedback after the party completed their political activities. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where “1” meant “never” and “4” meant “often.” The three items were summed to an index.

Symmetrical communication was measured using four items drawn from Huang’s (2004) PRSA scale that asked how often respondents felt that the party: (1) consulted the respondent while the party was making decisions, (2) took into account the possible impact the party’s decisions could have on the respondent, (3) considered both the party’s and the respondent’s positions during communication; and (4) considered the possible influence that the party’s communication activities had on respondents. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale where “1” meant “never” and “4” meant “often.” The four items were summed to an index.

Relationship with political party consisted of four dimensions identified by Hon and Grunig (1999): (1) trust, (2) satisfaction, (3) commitment, and (4) control mutuality. Respondents indicated agreement with statements drawn from previous OPR research intended to measure each of these dimensions using a five-point Likert scale where “1” meant “strongly

disagree” and “5” meant “strongly agree.” *Trust* was an additive measure of five items. Respondents were asked to rate five statements describing their relationship with the political party with which they most closely identified with: (1) whether the party treated people fairly, (2) whether the party considered the impact of its decisions on people, (3) whether the party could be relied on to keep its promises, (4) whether the party took the respondent’s opinions into account when making decisions, and (5) whether the party had the ability to accomplish what it said it would do. *Satisfaction* was an additive measure of four items: (1) whether the party and the respondent both benefitted from their relationship with each other, (2) whether the respondent was dissatisfied with his/her interaction with the party (reverse coded), (3) whether the respondent was happy with the party, and (4) whether the respondent was pleased with the relationship that the party had established with him/her. *Commitment* was a composite measure of four items: (1) whether the party was trying to maintain a long-term commitment to the respondent, (2) whether the party wanted to maintain a positive relationship with the respondent, (3) whether the respondent valued their relationship with the party more compared to other organizations, (4) and whether there was a long-lasting bond between the respondent and the party. *Control mutuality* was an additive measure of five items: (1) whether the party believed the respondent’s opinions were legitimate, (2) whether the party neglected the respondent (reverse coded), (3) whether the party had a tendency to throw its weight around (reverse coded), (4) whether the party really listened to what the respondent had to say, and (5) whether the party seemed to ignore respondent’s opinions when making decisions that affected the respondent (reverse coded).

Attitudinal and behavioral outcomes were the dependent variables. Attitudinal outcomes consisted of two items. Respondents were asked to think about the political party with which they most closely identified and rate the party in general on a scale of 1 to 10 where “1” meant “negative” and “10” meant “positive” ($M = 6.80, SD = 2.24$). Then respondents were asked to rate the party again on a scale of 0 to 10 where “0” meant “strongly dislike” and “10” meant “strongly like” ($M = 7.99, SD = 2.19$). The two items were standardized before they were summed to form the *attitude toward political party* index.

There were three elements comprising the behavioral outcome. The first two elements were the combination of two questions measuring party affiliation and intention to vote for one’s party’s candidate. Respondents were asked to indicate their strength of party affiliation where “1” meant “strong Democrat,” “2” meant “Democrat,” “3” meant “Independent,” “4” meant “Republican” and “5” meant “strong Republican.” Democrats and strong Democrats were collapsed, as were Republicans and strong Republicans. Other categories were recoded as missing so a direct comparison between Democrats and Republicans could be made. Respondents were then asked who they intended to vote for in the general election: John McCain, Barack Obama, or another candidate. All other categories were recoded as missing. Democrats who intended to support their party by voting for Barack Obama were coded as “1,” all other choices were coded as “0;” this process was used to construct the dummy variable *Democrat supportive behavior*. Similarly, Republicans intending to support their party by voting for John McCain were coded as “1,” all other vote intentions were coded as “0;” this created another dummy variable called *Republican supportive behavior*. Finally, all voters were coded in terms of the third and final behavioral outcome *intention to vote*. Respondents' intention to vote in the general election was indicated by either "1," which meant "intention to vote," or "0," which meant "no intention to vote."

Results

Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses ($H_{1a} - H_{3a}$) after controlling for the demographic variables of gender, race, education, and age. H_{1a} proposed that respondents who report longer time spent in the relationship with their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who have spent a shorter period of time in the relationship. Table 1 showed that time spent with one's political party was not a significant predictor of a favorable relationship with one's party. Therefore, H_{1a} was not supported.

H_{1b} predicted that respondents who report higher levels of interpersonal trust will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report lower levels of interpersonal trust. As seen from Table 1, interpersonal trust was a significant predictor of one's relationship with one's political party ($\beta = .09, p < .05$). Therefore, H_{1b} was supported.

H_{1c} predicted that respondents who report stronger levels of party identification will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents who report weaker levels of party identification. Strength of political party affiliation was not a significant predictor of one's relationship with one's political party. Thus, H_{1c} was not supported.

H_{2a} proposed that respondents who report higher levels of exposure to the relationship maintenance strategies employed by their political party will perceive more favorable relationships with their party than respondents who report lower levels of exposure to maintenance strategies. As seen in Table 1, mediated communication was a significant predictor of favorable relationships with political parties ($\beta = .12, p < .05$), but not social activities, interpersonal communication, or online communication.

H_{2b} asserted that respondents with greater exposure to relationship maintenance strategies perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature (i.e., dialogic communication) will perceive more favorable relationships with their political party than respondents whose interaction with their party is not perceived as two-way symmetrical in nature. According to

Table 1, both two-way communication ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) and symmetrical communication ($\beta = .41, p < .001$) were significant predictors of favorable relationships with political parties.

Therefore, H_{2b} was supported.

H_{3a} predicted that respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report more favorable attitudes toward their party. Table 1 shows that all four dimensions of organization-public relationships were significant predictors of favorable attitudes toward their party: trust ($\beta = .21, p < .01$), satisfaction ($\beta = .32, p < .001$), commitment ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), and control mutuality ($\beta = .19, p < .01$). Therefore, H_{3a} was supported.

H_{3b} proposed that respondents who perceive more favorable relationships with their political party will report engaging in behavior that supports their party to a greater degree than will respondents who perceive unfavorable relationships with their party. As seen in Table 2, those respondents who perceive that they have positive relationships with their political party did engage in activities that supported their political party: Democrats intending to vote for Obama ($\beta = .14, p < .001$) and Republicans intending to vote for McCain ($\beta = .05, p < .05$). Therefore, H_{3b} was supported. As expected, the more one leaned Republican, the more likely one would intend to vote for McCain ($\beta = .88, p < .001$; GOP coded higher); the more one leaned Democratic, the more likely one would intend to vote for Obama ($\beta = -.83, p < .001$; GOP coded higher). Also, when all respondents were considered, perceived relationship with political parties alone did not

have a significant impact on the reported intention to vote, although exposure to relationship maintenance strategies did ($\beta = .11, p < .05$).

Discussion

In general, the findings support our proposed model of political organization-public relationships (POPR) by identifying significant political antecedents to POPR formation, the important role of relationship maintenance strategies on perceptions of the POPR, and the impact of POPR perception on attitudinal and behavioral relationship outcomes.

In regards to antecedent variables, demographics (for which there was no hypothesis *per se*) exhibited some, albeit small, influence on perceptions of the POPR, attitude toward one's party, and behavior. Looking at perceptions of POPR, age, gender, and education were significant predictors while race was not. Only gender was significant in regards to attitude toward the party. Race was significant in terms of Democrats exhibiting supportive behavior; African Americans were more likely to vote for Obama. Age was significant in predicting overall vote intention; older respondents were more likely to vote. Overall, the demographic variables were significant, but explained very little variance in perceptions of POPR ($R^2 = 2.7\%$) and attitude toward party ($R^2 = 3.3\%$); demographics played a greater role in determining supportive behavior for one's party ($R^2 = 11.9\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 11.1\%$ for Republicans).

Similarly, some of the political antecedents were also significant, but explained very little variance in terms of perceptions of the POPR ($R^2 = 4.8\%$) and attitude ($R^2 = 4.1\%$). We found support for the proposition that higher levels of interpersonal trust would result in more favorable perceptions of the relationship with the party; i.e., as interpersonal trust increased, favorable perceptions of the POPR also increased. This supports our contention that more generalized trust helps lay the basis for forming healthy relationships with political organizations. This also confirms findings from social capital research that propose that trust in one area appears to spill over into other areas; interpersonal trust leads to more trust in social and political institutions (Kanervo and Zhang, 2005; Putnam, 2000). This is important for political parties in that theorists have argued that political trust provides the legitimacy that leaders need to launch government initiatives for solving the nation's problems (Easton, 1965), that it affects compliance with governmental authority (Scholz & Lubell, 1998), and that it influences voting behavior (Hetherington, 1998).

Party identification and longer time spent in the relationship with one's political party were not identified as significant predictors of more favorable perceptions of POPRs. There seems to be a disconnect between partisanship and perceptions of the relationship with one's political party. One explanation could be that self-identified partisans have fairly stable perceptions of their relationship with their political party; otherwise, they would not consider themselves party members. The more surprising finding was the lack of significance of time in developing positive perceptions of POPRs. This could reflect a "what have you done for me lately" attitude; voters will "stick" with a party for as long as they are enjoying a satisfying relationship with the party. If not, then they'll switch allegiances come the next election.

The second group of hypotheses sought to test the linkage between the use of communication strategies by parties to maintain the relationship with voters and voters' perceptions of the POPR. In general, increased exposure to strategic communication emanating from the party served to strengthen the party's relationship with respondents, accounting for over 30% of the variance in OPR strength. Increased exposure to mediated communication (e.g., mass media, brochures, pamphlets, letters, etc.) in particular served to enhance perceptions of the

POPR. Increased exposure to social activities, interpersonal communication, and online communication did not exhibit a significant influence on perceptions of the POPR. One reason for this could be due to the fact that the study was conducted during the height of the presidential election; there may have simply been increased opportunity to be exposed to mediated communication by the parties as they ramped up their output of this type of political messaging.

More interestingly, perceptions of engaging in two-way symmetrical communication with one's political party had a significant impact on perceptions of the POPR as demonstrated by the high coefficients for both two-way communication ($\beta = .17$) and especially symmetrical communication ($\beta = .41$). This provides continued support for the assertion that the two-way symmetrical model of public relations practice provides the best strategy for establishing and maintaining healthy OPRs. However, this finding is tempered by the fact that none of the channels that would seem to be conducive to facilitating two-way symmetrical strategies, i.e., social activities, interpersonal communication, and online communication, were significant, but mediated communication was. This seems to indicate that the perception of two-way symmetrical communication may be divorced somewhat from the actual channel used, whether or not that channel is inherently suited for two-way symmetrical communication with publics.

Two possible explanations are offered. First, it could be that some other factor is at play here; it may be possible that people who support a particular party are more likely to view the relationship maintenance strategies as inherently more two-way symmetrical in nature; i.e., partisans may be biased toward perceiving their party's communication efforts as dialogic. For example, if someone views himself as a Democrat, he may see any communication from the Democratic party as evidence that the party truly cares about him and wants to engage in an open, honest dialogue regardless of whether that message is communicated in a face-to-face conversation at a party meeting or whether it is communicated via a direct mail piece. Second, the content of the message itself could play a role in fostering the perception of two-way symmetrical communication. For instance, the direct mail piece mentioned previously could state that the party cares about the voter's concerns and wants to hear their voice (regardless of whether or not any dialogic feedback loop is provided). That is to say, the message is perceived as being dialogic because the message itself argues that it is in fact dialogic.

This poses an interesting question for advocates of the two-way symmetrical model: are relationship maintenance strategies two-way symmetrical only if they are authentically two-way symmetrical in nature, or are they two-way symmetrical if the receiver perceives them as such? Conversely, what if an authentically two-way symmetrical strategy is perceived as one-way asymmetric in nature? In short, what matters more – perception or reality? While we would like to advocate for the employment of authentically two-way symmetrical strategies and fostering dialogic communication, it appears that within the context of a political organization-public relationship, mediated communication may be sufficient to generate perceptions of two-way symmetrical communication to enhance favorable perceptions of POPR state. This suggests that political bias may be a potential antecedent variable to consider in future POPR research (and possibly even in more general OPR research).

The third group of hypotheses investigated the linkages between perceptions of POPR state and the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the relationship with one's political party. As predicted, more favorable perceptions of the POPR were related to increasingly favorable attitudes toward one's political party. In fact, all four individual OPR dimensions were significant predictors of attitude with the coefficient for satisfaction being the highest ($\beta = .32$), followed by trust ($\beta = .21$), control mutuality ($\beta = .19$), and commitment ($\beta = .15$). Overall,

perceptions of the POPR explained over 38% of the variance in attitude toward the political party. This is particularly striking given that the demographic variables and political antecedents only explained 3.3% and 4.1% of the variance in attitude toward the political party respectively. This suggests that fostering healthy relationships, particularly engendering feelings of relational satisfaction, is incredibly important in regards to generating positive attitudes toward the party and reinforces findings from existing OPR research (e.g., Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Ki & Hon, 2007a).

Perceptions of POPR state were also linked to exhibiting behaviors that were supportive of the party; however, this explained very little variance ($R^2 = 1.7\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 0.2\%$ for Republicans). In regards to actual behavior, political antecedents, and specifically strength of party identification, were the most significant predictors ($R^2 = 64.8\%$ for Democrats; $R^2 = 68\%$ for Republicans). These findings, considered in conjunction with the findings regarding POPR's affect on attitude and the role of the political antecedents, seems to point to perceptions of the POPR as having a greater influence on affective outcomes while partisanship exerts a greater influence on behavioral outcomes.

These findings have implications for practitioners engaged in political communication and suggest that political parties would benefit from adopting a relational perspective. In the short term, relational consequences such as behavioral outcomes may be a function of party identification; however, OPR is a long-term measure of public relations effectiveness and may be a better barometer of excellent public relations practice than short-term outputs and outcomes (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Relationship maintenance may result in stronger OPRs and more favorable attitudes over time that pave the way for short-term behavioral outcomes, as suggested by Ki and Hon (2007a). This would suggest that long-term relationship maintenance *between* elections is critical for retaining members and growing the party through addition of new members who identify themselves as being aligned with the party. It would be interesting to see that if, over time, positive perceptions of the POPR led to decisions to stay with or leave the party in a manner similar to the study conducted by Bruning and Ledingham (2000).

Additionally, the findings suggest that a combination of both mediated communication and two-way symmetrical communication could prove to be fruitful in relationship building with political constituencies. While mediated communication may be sufficient in the short run leading up to an election, the groundwork for this approach may be laid over time by utilizing two-way symmetrical communication with voters to establish and maintain healthy relationships and favorable attitudes that keep those voters satisfied with their party membership and who will in turn vote based on party identification come election day.

This study also has implications for the relational perspective itself. First and foremost, this study situates the investigation of OPRs within a political context, specifically exploring the linkages between political antecedents, relationship outcomes, strategic political communication, and political organization-public relationships (POPRs). Exploring these linkages within the context of a presidential election allowed us to test the influence of antecedents that are relevant to perceptions of POPRs, specifically identifying interpersonal trust as an influence on perceptions of political OPRs.

Additionally, our study lends broader support for developing models of OPRs by not limiting our study to the investigation of one specific organization. Respondents were asked to evaluate relationship maintenance strategies, attitudes, and perceptions of OPRs for the "political party that they most closely identified with" and not with a specific party. This allows us more freedom to generalize our findings to other political organizations and not just to one specific

OPR. This moves the investigation of OPRs beyond the case study like approach generally employed in OPR research; we studied a *type* of OPR – in this case, political organizations – and not a *specific* OPR.

Perhaps the most interesting finding with implications for the development of the relational perspective was related to the use of specific strategies for maintaining and enhancing perceptions of the OPR. The literature on Excellence Theory and the relational perspective both operate under an assumption that two-way symmetrical practice is the best approach for establishing and maintaining long-lasting, healthy relationships. The findings in our study seem to undermine this perspective by suggesting that mediated communication was more influential in fostering favorable perceptions of the OPR than were interpersonal, social, and online communication – all channels that should provide more opportunities for dialogic communication. This suggests that either one-way, mediated communication channels are still capable of facilitating two-way symmetrical communication or that *perceptions* of two-way symmetrical communication may be more important than engaging in actual, authentic two-way symmetrical communication; that is to say, a properly crafted mediated message may be just as capable of managing strategic relationships and engendering favorable perceptions of an OPR as two-way symmetrical strategies. Alternately, if authentically two-way symmetrical strategies are employed, but implemented improperly, they could fail to have the impact on an OPR that the practitioner was seeking. This could have serious ethical and practical implications for practitioners seeking to apply the two-way symmetrical model, for educators seeking to promote the use of two-way symmetrical models, and for scholars seeking to study the role of two-way symmetrical communication.

Obviously, as with all studies, these findings are tempered by the limitations of the methodological design; however, these limitations suggest avenues for future research. One drawback was the use of a regional sample that was skewed toward voters who perceived themselves as conservative. While our intention was not to forecast the results of the election, this could present a problem in attempting to generalize our findings to the broader population. Further investigations of POPRs need to be expanded to national samples. An additional limitation was conducting the study during a particularly highly involving presidential election. The most immediate consequence was that since practically every respondent indicated that they intended to vote in this historic election, there was very little variance in the vote intention variable. This suggests that the behavioral outcome variable should have been operationalized differently; for instance, we could have asked whether the respondent intended to contribute money to the party, to volunteer their time to helping the party, or whether the respondent intended to stay with or leave the party. Furthermore, it would be interesting to replicate the study outside of the context of a national presidential election by expanding the investigation of POPRs to not only mid-term elections at the national, state, and even local levels, but also replicating the study during non-election years as well.

This study also suggests future research for the more general investigation of OPRs. For instance, the findings regarding time bear further study; while time may be a factor in some situations and for particular types of OPRs, this may not hold true in all cases. The findings regarding the influence of the maintenance strategies on perceived OPR state suggest another area for potential OPR research. The fact that two-way symmetrical communication was significant coupled with the significant influence of mediated communication suggests that further research is needed regarding the factors that might affect publics' perceptions of the two-way symmetrical nature of organizational communication regardless of channel and whether or

not such communication is indeed representative of two-way symmetrical public relations practice; i.e., it doesn't matter what you say, how you say it, or the ethical basis for the rationale behind the organization's efforts to engage in communication – some publics may be predisposed to perceive the organization as two-way symmetrical and engaging in a dialogue whether it really is or is not.

Finally, while this study focused on relationships with political parties, other types of political organizations could be studied to continue the development of models of POPRs. For instance, the role of voter relationships with interest groups and the relationships between interest groups and political parties could be studied. Also, there is the potential for integrating OPR research with other political theories, such as Zhang and Seltzer's (2008) efforts to integrate OPR measures into models of social capital. This is especially relevant given the influence that interpersonal trust had on shaping perceptions of POPRs and because social capital focuses on building relationships between citizens and their communities. Another possibility lies in the area of measurement of POPRs. For instance, the use of a coorientational approach in which the perceptions of both entities in the POPR – voters and party leaders – could be assessed to understand the level of agreement, accuracy, and perceived agreement that exist between the direct and meta-perspectives of the relationship (e.g., Seltzer, 2007a; Seltzer, 2007b; Seltzer & Mitrook, in press).

Conclusion

In summary, this investigation of politically oriented organization-public relationships will hopefully act as the impetus for the further study of POPRs as an important area to focus on within more general OPR research. While the findings by and large support our proposed POPR model, future research can further refine the model, particularly in regards to identifying additional politically situated antecedents and outcomes and possibly even additional politically relevant OPR dimensions. Additionally, in our view, one of the key findings was related to the influence of mediated and two-way symmetrical communication to maintain the relationship between voters and their political parties. The possibility that perceptions of dialogic communication may trump the use of authentic dialogue in building relationships with certain publics is cause for some concern; future studies should more thoroughly investigate this phenomenon, not only within the context of political communication, but within broad-based research on OPRs and two-way symmetrical communication.

In the end, perhaps the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that public relations, and the adoption of a relational perspective in particular, has continued relevance for political communication. Broom (2009) observed that “the tools and techniques of public relations have long been an important part of political weaponry. Sustained campaigns to shape and move public opinion go back to the Revolutionary War” (p.86). Certainly, this still holds true for those engaged in modern political communication as well. Cultivating a healthy relationship between voters and political parties via strategically based communication efforts has important consequences for political parties, namely, fostering positive attitudes toward the party. Political parties should look beyond the immediate short-term outcomes of their communication strategies and consider the adoption of a relational perspective in which effectiveness of political communication and other public relations activities are measured in terms of long-lasting, mutually beneficial organization-public relationships. It is precisely these types of relationships that will help the party continue to *grow* and *thrive* over time by satisfying

the long-term relationship needs of their constituents and not merely *survive* the next election cycle.

References

- Alvarez, R. M., & Brehm, J. (2002). *Hard choices, easy answers: Values, information, and American public opinion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Beaudoin, C. E., & Thorson, E. (2004). Social capital in rural and urban communities: Testing differences in media effects and models. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2), 378-399.
- Brehm, J. & Rahn, W. (1997). Individual-level evidence for the causes and consequences of social capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41(3), 999-1023.
- Broom (2009). *Cutlip & Center's effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 83-98.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (2000). Concept and theory of organization-public relationships. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 3-22). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1998). Organization-public relationships and consumer satisfaction: Role of relationships in the satisfaction mix. *Communication Research Reports*, 15 (2), 199-209.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (1999). Relationships between organizations and publics: Development of a multi-dimensional organization-public relationship scale. *Public Relations Review*, 25, 157-170.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 26 (1), 85-95.
- Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). *Effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Dalton, R. (2006). Partisan mobilization, cognitive mobilization, and the changing American electorate. *Electoral Studies*, 25, 1-13.
- Dennis, J., & Owen, D. (2001). Popular satisfaction with the party system and representative democracy in the United States. *International Political Science Review*, 22, 399-415.
- Easton, D. (1965). *A system analysis of political life*. New York: Wiley.
- Feldman, S. (1988). Structure and consistency in public opinion: The role of core beliefs and values. *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (2), 416-440.
- Ferguson, M. A. (1984, August). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships as a public relations paradigm*. Paper presented to the Public Relations Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Convention, Gainesville, FL.
- Goren, P. (2005). Party identification and core political values. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (4), 881-896.
- Grunig, J. E. (1984). Organizations, environments, and models of public relations. *Public Relations Research & Education*, 1, 6-29.

- Grunig, J. E. (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present, and future. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 11-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Grunig, J. E., Dozier, D. M., Ehling, W. P., Grunig, L. A., Repper, F. C., & White, J. (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig, D. M. Dozier, W. P. Ehling, L. A., Grunig, F. C. Repper, & J. White (Eds.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-325). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (2006). The excellence theory. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 21-62). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Ehling, W. P. (1992). What is an effective organization? In J. E. Grunig, D. M. Dozier, W. P. Ehling, L. A., Grunig, F. C. Repper, & J. White (Eds.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp.65-90). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relationship strategies, and relationship outcomes. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 23-53). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Hetherington, M.J. (1998). The political relevance of political trust. *American Political Science Review*, 92(4), 791-808.
- Hooge, M. (2002). Watching television and civic engagement: Disentangling the effects of time, programs, and stations. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 7(2), 84.
- Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.
- Huang, Y. H. (1997). *Public relations strategies, relational outcomes, and conflict management strategies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Huang, Y. (2001). OPRA: A cross-cultural multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 61-90.
- Huang, Y. (2004). PRSA: Scale development for exploring the impetus of public relations strategies. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81, 307-326.
- Jeffres, L.W., Jian, G., Neuendorf, K., & Bracken, C. (2004, November). Social capital: Community engagement vs. political participation. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research, Chicago, IL.
- Kanervo, E., & Zhang, W. (2005, November). Mass media, interpersonal and institutional trust and Participation. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research, Chicago, IL.
- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 21-37.

- Ki, E., & Hon, L. C. (2007a). Testing the linkages among the organization-public relationship and attitude and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 19*, 1-23.
- Ki, E., & Hon, L. C. (2007b). Reliability and validity of organization-public relationship measurement and linkages among relationship indicators in a membership organization. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 84*, 419-438.
- Kim, H. (2007). A multi-level study of antecedents and a mediator of employee-organization relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 19*, 167-197.
- Kwak, N., Shah, D.V., & Holbert, R.L. (2004). Connecting, trusting, and participating: The direct and interactive effects of social associations. *Political Research Quarterly, 57*(4), 643-652.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001). Government-community relationships: extending the relational theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 27*, 285-295.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 15*, 181-198.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2006). Relationship management: A general theory of public relations. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 465-483). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1997). Building loyalty through community relations. *The Public Relations Strategist, 3* (2), 27-29.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations: Dimensions of an organization-public relationship. *Public Relations Review, 24*, 55-65.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (2000a). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (2000b). A longitudinal study of organization-public relationship dimensions: Defining the role of communication in practice of relationship management. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 55-69). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Ledingham, J. A., Bruning, S. D., Thomlison, T. D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The transferability of interpersonal relationship dimensions into an organizational setting. *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal, 1*, 23-43.
- Ledingham, J. A., Bruning, S. D., & Wilson, L. J. (1999). Time as an indicator of the perceptions and behaviors of members of a key public: Monitoring and predicting organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 11*, 167-183.
- McKinnon, L. M., Tedesco, J. C., & Lauder, T. (2001). Political power through public relations. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 557-563). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Pattie, C., Seyd, P., & Whiteley, P. (2003). Citizenship and civic engagement: Attitudes and behaviour in Britain. *Political Studies, 51*, 443-468.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995a). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*, 65-78.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995b). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 28*(4), 664-720.

- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and survival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rozell, M. J., Wilcox, C., & Madland, D. (2006). *Interest groups in American campaigns: The new face of electioneering*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Scholz, J.T., & Lubell, M. (1998). Trust and taxpaying: Testing the heuristic approach to collective action. *American Journal of Political Science*, 42(2), 398-417.
- Seltzer, T. (2007a). *A coorientational approach for measuring organization-public relationships*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Florida, Gainesville.
- Seltzer, T. (2007b, August). *Coorientational measurement of organization-public relationships*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C.
- Seltzer, T., & Mitrook, M. (in press). Two sides to every story: Using coorientation to measure direct and meta-perspectives of both parties in organization-public relationships. *Public Relations Journal*.
- Shah, D., McLeod, J. and Yoon, S. (2001). Communication, context, and community: An exploration of print, broadcast, and Internet influences. *Communication Research*, 28(4), 464-506.
- Uslaner, E.R. (2004). Trust, civic engagement and the Internet. *Political Communication*, 21, 223-242
- Wilcox, D. L., & Cameron, G. T. (2007). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon
- Zhang, W., & Seltzer, T. (2008, August). *The effects of media use, trust, and political party relationship quality on political and civic participation*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, IL.

Table 1. Hierarchical regression predicting OPR and attitudes toward political party.

	OPR	Attitudes toward Political Party
Demographics		
Age	-.12*	-.003
Gender (female coded higher)	.10*	.08*
Education	-.09*	-.01
Race (dummy variable, Caucasian coded higher)	-.07	.001
R² (%)	2.7*	3.3*
Political Antecedents		
Time R affiliated with political party	.09	.08*
Interpersonal trust	.09*	-.07*
Strength of party ID (GOP coded higher)	.05	-.01
Incremental R² (%)	4.8***	4.1**
Relationship Maintenance Strategies		
Mediated communication	.12*	.03
Social activities	.003	-.10*
Interpersonal communication	-.03	.04
Online communication	-.01	-.06
Two-way communication	.17**	-.07
Symmetrical communication	.41***	.04
Incremental R² (%)	30.6***	17.6***
Organization-Party Relationships (OPR)		
Trust	---	.21**
Satisfaction	---	.32***
Commitment	---	.15**
Control mutuality	---	.19**
Incremental R² (%)	---	38.4***
Total R² (%)	38.1***	63.4***

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p < .001

Table 2. Hierarchical regression predicting engaging in supportive behavior.

	DEMs for Obama	GOPs for McCain	Intention to Vote (all voters)
Demographics			
Age	-.04	-.004	.11*
Gender (female coded higher)	.04	-.02	.10
Education	.01	-.05	-.01
Race (dummy variable, Caucasian coded higher)	-.05*	.03	.01
R² (%)	11.9***	11.1***	2.7*
Political Antecedents			
Time affiliated with political party	-.02	.04	.05
Interpersonal trust	-.01	-.04	.01
Strength of party ID (GOP coded higher)	-.83***	.88***	.04
Incremental R² (%)	64.8***	68.0***	.7 (n.s.)
Relationship Maintenance Strategies			
	.01	.01	.11*
Incremental R² (%)	.3*	.1 (n.s.)	1.5*
Organization-Party Relationships (OPR)			
	.14***	.05*	.07
Incremental R² (%)	1.7***	.2*	.4 (n.s.)
Total R² (%)	78.7***	79.3**	5.4*

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p < .001