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Citation

Bridge or buffer: two ideas of effective corporate governance and public engagement

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This study identifies organizational factors that influence corporatate governance and formulation of public relations strategies for public enagement. This study explores intertwined relationships between public relations strategies and organizational factors. A total of 22 qualitative interviews were conducted with a diverse pool of communication consultants. Results show that the two public relations strategies, bridging and buffering, are frequently observed and linked with key factors such as size, organizational culture, environment specificity, and strategic orientation. Implications for future public relations and corporate governance research are discussed. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

About two decades ago, a leading scholar of stakeholder theory raised an important question that still applies to today's business practices: 'How corporations should be governed and managers ought to act' (Freeman, 1994, p. 413). Many management scholars attempted to address this question with varying results (e.g., Spitzeck & Hansen, 2010; Sacconi, 2007; Shahin & Zairi, 2007). One definition refers to corporate governance as a 'set of principles concerning the govering of companies and how these principles are disclosed or communicated externally' (Parum, 2005, p. 702), and hence, it involves an organization's communicative efforts with its key stakeholders with an aim to achieve its strategic goals.

There are two main approaches of corporate governance: shareholder model and stakeholder model. Although the shareholder model has dominated corporate governance research and practice, it has also been criticized because of its impracticality especially in the context of crisis management, its negligence of intrinsic values of various stakeholders, and its incapability of addressing ethical responsibilities for stakeholders (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Responding to the criticism of shareholder model of corporate governance, scholars developed and proposed the stakeholder model of corporate governance (e.g., Alpaslan *et al.*, 2009).

Several scholars have conducted research on corporate communication and governance (e.g., Ayuso *et al.*, 2006; Parum, 2006). Interestingly, there is relatively little research on the stakeholder model of corporate governance in the context of public relations strategy as an engagement strategy. The dominant coalition makes decisions on the basis of its understanding of publics who are affected by the behaviors of organizations. The public relations manager should advise the dominant coalition about strategic decisions that affect its governance as well as its publics (Grunig *et al.*, 2002). Public relations strategy as an engagement strategy should dictate how the behaviors of an organization should be governed in relation to organization–public relationships and how

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an organization should engage publics into an organization's efforts in achieving its goals. In other words, it is the public relations strategy of an organization that provides a framework of how an organization should govern its practices to achieve the mission and goals that are compatible to the interests of stakeholders. Therefore, it is important for public relations scholars to develop research that would fill the void of corporate governance research in the context of an organization's communicative efforts for favorable organization–public relationship and effective engagement.

In this paper, the authors adopt Daily *et al.*'s (2003) definition of corporate governance as 'the determination of the broad uses to which organizational resources will be deployed and the resolution of conflicts among the myriad participants in organizations' (p. 371). Organizations need to select the most effective public relations strategy to build and maintain favorable relationships with their key publics while acknowledging the limits on the resources that they can use for addressing the issues of their key stakeholders. The public relations strategy should help an organization evaluate and determine the best course of action that will help achieve the organization's objectives and mission and can also address the needs of key publics and stakeholders.

In this study, therefore, the authors aim to propose a theoretical framework of public relations strategy for corporate governance. Adopting Grunig's (2009), two paradigms of public relations, authors suggest an integrative framework of public relations strategy for effective corporate governance that will eventually help organizations have better organization–public relationships and public engagement. To propose a new framework for corporate governance, the authors will identify (a) types of public relations strategies and (b) internal and external factors contributing to an organization's propensity of adopting specific public relations strategy in this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Models of corporate governance

Corporate governance is a complicated and complex phenomenon that involves the management's interpretation of internal and external factors as well as the management's anticipation of organizational effectiveness as a result of its use of strategies. However, there is no consensus on a theoretical base for corporate governance. For example, Tricker (2000) points out that corporate governance is based on a collection of recommendations without theoretical coherence. Parum (2005) views corporate governance frameworks as 'institutional efforts to create structural dialogue between companies and their shareholders and stakeholders with the purpose of paving the way for their understanding the company's strategic and operational goals, including critical success factors for achieving those goals' (p. 702). Her view suggests the combination of two main governance models: the shareholder model and stakeholder model.

Whereas the shareholder model focuses on shareholder value maximization (Friedman, 1970; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Jensen, 2002), the stakeholder model focuses on the legitimate interests of various stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Freeman *et al.*, 1987). Despite its dominance, the shareholder model has been criticized because of its narrow focus on the relationship among shareholders and management and on an organization's legal constraints (Van den Berghe, 2002). In contrast, scholars who value the importance of intangible assets that come from effective stakeholder relationships support the stakeholder model that captures the complex nature of addressing various stakeholder issues and meeting the strategic goals of the firm at the same time (Freeman & Evan, 1990; Freeman, 1994).

The authors believe that the two models of corporate governance address 'for whom organizations should be governed'. However, these models contribute to 'how organizations should be governed for engaging stakeholders' to a very limited extent. For example, although Parum's (2005) view includes the idea of stakeholder model using dialogue, it is an organization-oriented view because the dialogue is suggested mainly for achieving the organization's goals rather than balancing the interests between the organization and its publics. The authors propose that communication practices will differ based on how an organization views and interprets public relations and public engagement for its governance. To address the issue of 'how to govern', it is critical to discuss public relations strategies as engagement strategies used for governance. Therefore, it is important to explore how organizations develop their propensity toward particular public relations strategies in managing their communication and behaviors toward their key publics. It is especially significant to investigate how organizations would like to govern themselves and engage their publics in their dialogic communicative efforts.

Several scholars have begun to pay attention to the role of communication in corporate governance

(Deetz, 2003; Foster & Jonker, 2005; Ayuso *et al.*, 2006). For example, Deetz (2003) points out that governance is a communication issue that involves 'the interaction processes by which we incorporate values and make decisions' (p. 607). Ayuso *et al.* (2006) suggest that stakeholder dialogue and stakeholder knowledge integration contribute to sustainable innovation. Parum (2006) suggests that external communication on corporate governance has led to more transparency in corporate management and a clear corporate identity. However, there is little research exploring how and why organizations formulate and choose different types of communication strategies in governance. In the following sections, the authors will discuss organizations' strategy formulation for corporate governance and types of public relations strategies for organization–public relationship and communication.

Communication strategy formulation for corporate governance

Corporate governance involves management's decision-making process that can explain why an organization communicates and behaves in a certain way. McLagan and Nel (1995) suggest that better decisions can be made when organizations value two-way communication, that is, debate and negotiation. On the other hand, the limited use of communication prevents an organization from addressing social responsibility and achieving effectiveness (Deetz, 2003). Therefore, it is important to investigate how and why an organization develops and chooses a certain public relations strategy in dealing with the issues of publics and communicating with them. As the strategy process for corporate governance is related to the desion-making process that deals with competing values between the organization and its key publics, it should be discussed in the context of public relations strategy formulation for better public engagement and communication.

An organization's strategy formulation is part of an organization's deliberate decision-making process that affects its stakeholders. Mintzberg (1977) distinguished *strategy formulation* from *strategy formation*. Whereas strategy formulation involves a strategy maker's conscious process before making decisions, strategy formation refers to the process by which decisions become strategy (Mintzberg, 1977). Strategy formulation involves *intended* strategies, whereas strategy formation often comes from *unintended* strategies, meaning that a series of certain decisions made gradually evolves into a strategy.

Whether strategies are intended or emergent, because organizations tend to show consistency in their strategies, Mintzberg (1977) defines strategy as 'a pattern in a stream of decisions' (p. 28) and 'the set of consistent behaviors by which the organization establishes for a time its place in its environment' (p. 33). Strategy can be seen as a plan (design for action, conception preceding action), a position (locating organization in an environment), and a perspective (way of perceiving the world; Mintzberg, 1987). When applying this concept, an organization's public relations strategy not only shows its position in its environment where its stakeholders affect or are affected by the organization's decision making or behaviors but also reflects its public relations worldview. Drawing on Mintzberg's (1977, 1987) definition of strategy, this study postulates that organizations also demonstrate a consistent tendency and pattern in formulating and implementing public relations strategies that exhibit their decided positions and perspectives as responses to the changes, pressures, or issues from their environments.

From the review of extant public relations research, it is possible to postulate that there are two types of main public relations practices. Grunig (2006, 2009) conceptualized two paradigms of public relations, the *symbolic, interpretive paradigm* and the *behavioral, strategic management paradigm*. In the symbolic, interpretive paradigm, public relations' role is in influencing how publics interpret an organization's behaviors, whereas in the behavioral, strategic paradigm, public relations is concerned with managing an organization's decisions and behaviors that affect strategic publics (Grunig & Kim, 2011; Kim *et al.*, 2013). Grunig (2009) called these two paradigms of public relations *buffering* versus *bridging* functions, borrowing the concepts of buffering and bridging from Van den Bosch and van Riel (1998) paper.

Buffering and bridging were originally conceptualized as organization's generic strategies for dealing with issues in its environment, in other words, boundary-spanning functions. Buffering is understood as an activity aimed at preventing external stakeholders from interfering in an organization's operations, and at reducing uncertainty (Scott, 1987). Organizations that are prone to using buffering try to either control or resist the external environment by using means such as contributions to political action committees, lobbying, and advocacy advertising (Meznar & Nigh, 1995). In contrast, the bridging function seeks to adapt organizational activities in a way so that they conform to the expectations of external stakeholders regarding the

environmental aspects of a firm's activities (Van den Bosch & van Riel, 1998). Bridging implies that the firm actively tries to meet and exceed regulatory requirements in its industry or that it attempts to quickly identify changing social expectations in order to promote organizational conformance to those expectations. Bridging promotes internal adaptation to changing external circumstances (Meznar & Nigh, 1995).

How can these bridging and buffering functions be interpreted in public relations? The main difference between the two paradigms of public relations is whether public relations serves as a strategic *message creation* or as a strategic, *behavioral management* function (Grunig & Kim, 2011). The former creates positive images of an organization through messaging or favorable interpretations of an organization's behaviors among publics to buffer the organization from public opposition or negative public behaviors, thus allowing the organization to behave as it wishes without interruption from publics; the latter aligns corporate behaviors with key stakeholder needs or issues. With the behavioral management approach, however, management emphasizes improving business performance or making policies relevant to key stakeholders in order to achieve a positive reputation (Kim *et al*., 2007).

Foster and Jonker (2005) also propose similar concepts to bridging and buffering public relations practices. They suggest that organizations interpret engagement in different ways. They point out that there are organizations that see engagement as control or management to manipulate the organization–public relationships, and hence, those organizations make decisions that best serve their needs rather than considering the needs of stakeholders. In contrast, there are other organizations that interpret engagement as an organization's action-oriented and sense-making efforts for building and maintaining stakeholder relationships using dialogue where the intersts of both managmeent and publics are represented and both parties can increase the possibility of achieving mutual understanding in the sense-making process.

On the basis of Grunig's (2009) conceptualization of public relations practices and Foster and Jonker's (2005) concepts of engagement, the authors reconceptualize these two paradigms of public relations as public relations *strategies* for public engagement that are crucial part of corporate governance especially dealing with key stakeholders and publics. In addressing and resolving the issues of key publics, organizations carefully select public relations strategies. Depending on how organizations view public relations for public engagement and how they would like to address pressures from their

environment, their use of public relations strategies may vary. Their conception and selection of public relations strategies is affected by both internal and external factors and cause consequences to their performance.

The question of how organizations develop their inclinations toward certain public relations strategies for better corporate governance deserves scholarly attention. An organization's public relations strategy formulation is part of an organization's governance process that puts its public relations programs into effect, which thus affects its key stakeholders and its operations. The purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical framework of organizational factors and public relations strategies for effective corporate governance. The study is a new theory-building analysis of the key conditions, processes, and consequences of public relations strategy formulation that is lacking in the current public affairs and corporate governance literature. The main purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of organizations' propensity for certain public affairs strategies by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: What kinds of public relations strategies are used for public engagement by organizations?

RQ2: What factors influence an organization's propensity for certain public relations strategies?

METHOD

Qualitative in-depth interviews were used to explore organizational understanding of public relations strategies for public engagmeent and the factors associated with them. IRB approval was obtained prior to the interviews. Twenty-two participants in total were interviewed.

Sampling

To gain insights about organizational understanding and use of public relations strategies across a variety of organizational types, communication consultants were chosen as participants for interviews. Specifically, consultants at the account director level or higher were selected because it is more likely for the consultants at higher levels to have a variety of client experiences across different industries, as well as to have provided different types of public relations services. They are also likely to have been exposed to strategy and management consulting,

issue management, and crisis management, all of which give them rich and deep insights about the communication strategies and management decisions made by organizations and the opportunity to observe differences among organizations.

This study used the snowballing sampling technique. Once the first participant was contacted through the one of the author's personal contacts, the interviewee was asked to recommend other participants who could also participate in interviews. Upon recommendation, the list of interview questions was forwarded to potential participants via email; if they agreed to participate, the researcher contacted them to schedule interviews. While some of them recommended people work for other public relations firms, others listed their colleagues

working for the same company. In total, 22 public relations consultants across nine public relations firms participated in the interviews. Alphabetic characters were randomly assigned for company names, and numerical ordering was also randomly used for participants' names (Table 1).

This study is based in South Korea. South Korea is considered to be one of the emerging markets in public relations industry while facing high degree of activism. The growth of public relations in South Korea has been attributed to the operations of multinational corporations there. In addition, the researcher's previous work experience in the South Korean public relations industry was taken into consideration because it would allow easier access to participants in terms of data collection.

Table 1   Background information of the participants

Participant	Company	Title	Work experience in PR industry (year)	Expertise
1	A	Account Director	12 years	Food and Beverage, Government, Public Affairs, Technology, Consumer
2	A	Account Director	16 years	Consumer, Healthcare
3	A	Vice President		Healthcare, Corporate PR
4	A	Account Director		Technology, Government
5	A	CEO	18 years	PR consulting, Reputation Management, Public Affairs, Issue Management
6	B	Senior Vice President	16 years	Healthcare, Corporate PR, Issue management, Government, Corporate PR
7	B	Account Director	12 years	Marketing PR, Issue/Crisis Management, Public Affairs
8	B	Account Director/ Public Affairs Group Leader	10 years	Public Affairs, Government, Issue Management, Automotive
9	B	Account Director	8 years	Government, Public Affairs, Communication Strategy Consulting
10	B	Account Director	12 years	Technology, Government, Public Affairs
11	C	Group Director	13 years	Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer
12	C	CEO	25 years	Strategy Counseling, Media Training, CSR, Issue/crisis management
13	D	Executive Account Director	15 years	Corporate PR, Corporate Social Responsibility, IMC, Issue/Crisis management, CEO branding, Internal Communication
14	D	Account Director	11 years	Government, Healthcare, Consumer, Sport and Entertainment, Luxury, Medical PR
15	E	CEO	16 years	Issue/Crisis Management
16	F	CEO	15 years	Issue/Crisis Management, Healthcare
17	G	Senior Vice President	15 years	IMC, Marketing PR, Online Communication, Public Affairs, Branding
18	G	CEO	16 years	IMC, Marketing PR, Strategy Consulting, Public Affairs
19	H	CEO	15 years	Government Consulting, Issue Management, Research, Technology
20	I	Managing Director	14 years	PR consulting, Government
21	I	Vice President	19 years	Risk management
22	I	Managing Director	14 years	Marketing PR, consumer

Data collection

Interview protocol design

The interview protocol was first created on the basis of the studies that contributed to the development of two paradigms of public relations (e.g., Grunig, 1992, 2001, 2006, 2009; Grunig *et al*., 2002; Kim *et al*., 2013; Kim & Ni, 2010) but was mainly based on Grunig's (2009) book chapter. Questions regarding relationships between potential factors and public affairs strategies were then added. Finally, questions were developed pertaining to the relationship between public affairs strategies and organizational effectiveness.

Interviews were conducted via either Skype or email because of the distance between the researchers (USA) and participants (South Korea). Participants decided on the type of interview that best fit their situations. At the consent of Skype interviewees, the interviews were audiotaped; no cases of declining taping occurred. In the case of email interviews, follow-up interviews were necessary because of the inherent lack of interactivity in written questions. Email responses were saved as data.

The interview was open to identifying other possibilities of public relations strategy categorization and factors. There were no questions regarding the two types of public affairs strategies; participants were thus able to freely express their opinions about public affairs strategies and to categorize them by themselves without being limited to any predetermined categories of public relations strategies.

Data analysis

The coding scheme was a combination of *a priori* and emerging codes. The initial 26 codes were developed on the basis of Grunig's (2009) book chapter and his colleagues' contribution (Grunig, 2006, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2007; Kim & Ni, 2010; Kim *et al.*, 2013). The emerging codes of target audience, promotion, marketing public relations, sales, and stakeholder/publics were added to the coding scheme. To explain, when communication consultants described communication strategies related to buffering, they often mentioned their target audience in the contexts of promotion, marketing public relations, and sales instead of stakeholders/publics. In contrast, in describing communication strategies that fall into bridging, they mostly used the term stakeholders/publics. Transcripts required back translation from Korean to English to report findings.

RESULTS

RQ1: What kinds of public relations strategies are used for public engagement by organizations?

Overall, the responses from participants showed that two paradigms of public relations strategies for public engagement do exist and are actually used in public relations practice.

Buffering

Many communication consultants listed the types of public relations strategies that are used in Korea, such as marketing public relations, corporate image management, brand management and differentiation from competitors, maximization of publicity, and message reinforcement (buffering strategy). With these types of public relations, strategies organizations mainly aim at changing their target audience's attitudes and behaviors in the way that organizations want and promoting their brands or products, not necessarily accommodating the interest of publics. One senior vice president (#17) at company G stated, 'If brand or reputation management is an identity-oriented approach, relationship management is a stakeholder-oriented approach. The identity-oriented approach means that organizations are mainly talking about themselves via messaging as opposed to stakeholder-oriented relationship management.'

Bridging

The other types of public relations strategies that communication consultants identified are related to relationship management, issue management, and strategic management (bridging strategy). One account director (#9) working at company B said that their public relations strategy consists of building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders who are directly or indirectly affected by the organization's behaviors and decisions, and listening to stakeholders in order to reflect their voices in future decision making. In line with this, the CEO (#19) of company H used the term 'public engagement'. He defined public relations strategy as public engagement strategy for problem solving. According to him, media strategies are narrowly defined strategies for public relations, whereas public engagement strategies are concerned with changing or revising an organization's reality as part of management function that extends beyond relationship management. Similarly, other CEOs talked about strategies that help reduce gaps or form a consensus between an organization and its publics. The CEO (#18) of company G believed that empathy strategy

is important: 'It is about how to share value with stakeholders rather than how to deliver messages. It is being stakeholder oriented rather than market-competition oriented.' The CEO (#5) of company A emphasized reducing gaps between an organization and stakeholders in a situation where the organization is a message sender and stakeholders are message receivers. Although he described a message strategy, his focus was placed on narrowing gaps between the positions of the organization and publics through communication.

RQ2: What factors influence an organization's propensity for certain public relations strategies?

Size

Organizational size seems to be positively associated with the buffering strategy. Participants stated that large organizations prefer advertising or tend to pursue image-focused strategy. However, the interview responses on size showed that small size is not necessarily related to bridging strategy. This means that a high tendency toward one strategy does not always mean a low tendency toward the other and that a small size does not mean that the organization has a better capability of utilizing bridging strategy. In addition, buffering strategy or image-focused stratey should be differentiated from media relations. For example, an account director (#4) at company A stated, 'No matter how big or small the organization is, they need publicity to get media attention'. This is consistent with Kim, Hung-Baeseke, Yang, and Grunig's (2013) argument that bridging does not exclude media relations or dissemination of information. The CEO (#16) at company F raised an interesting point, however: 'Size may matter. But how much people are aware of the organization can affect its communication approach more than organization's size. Even if its size is small, if an organization receives much attention from society, it is very likely to be sensitive to social pressure.' Some consultants such as the vice president (#6) of company B argued that small organizations may be better in collaboration, stakeholder management, and relationship management, yet no salient theme appeared throughout the interviews.

Organizational culture

Many interviewees thought there were relationships between organizational culture and an organization's propensity for certain public relations strategies. Participatory culture was mentioned for communication strategies that are related to two-way communication and a flexible and democratic approach (bridging). For example, an account director (#9) at company B said, 'An organization with a participatory culture may approach its public with an open-minded approach and will have less aversion to accepting others' opinions. It also acknowledges that environments or publics can be fluid, and therefore the organization uses a flexible strategy for them.'

While an authoritarian culture was criticized for its negative influence on collaboration or partnership with external stakeholders, the buffering strategy was not associated with an authoritarian culture despite this tendency. A group director (#11) at company C stated, 'Organizations with an authoritarian culture are not open to collaboration. Even if the public relations agency set up the partnership for them, it is impossible for them to maintain such a partnership.' An account director (#8) at company B thought this is because seniors' decision making matters most in organizations in which it is difficult to make suggestions or discuss problems regarding better public relations strategies and are not open to others' opinions. Another account director (#9) at the same company believed that this is because such organizations tend to see publics as subordinate targets for persuasion or attitude change rather than targets for mutual understanding.

Environment specificity

Organizations with a broad concept of publics tend to prefer the buffering strategy, whereas those with a specific concept of publics incline toward the bridging strategy. A vice president (#3) at company A stated, 'If an organization defines its strategic publics as very general, it tends to take a long-term image strategy'. An account director (#7) at company B offered one example of the relationship between the general concept of publics and the buffering strategy: 'In many cases of public affairs, targets are very broad and organizations are likely to use one-way, persuasive communication to change the public's attitude or behaviors and to use strategies to improve brand awareness or reputation.'

However, organizations with the specific concept of strategic publics pay more attention to the voices of stakeholders or publics and to using two-way communication (bridging strategy). This is mainly because those organizations want to deal with issues or conflicts that affect not only their stakeholders but also themselves. Using an example of a controversial government policy, the CEO (#19) of company H said that when organizations'

businesses frequently involve issues or conflicts, they tend to have a very specific idea of strategic publics and want to reflect the opinions of various stakeholders to resolve those problems or issues. He felt that this was a noteworthy change in organizations' strategies compared with the past, when organizations' approach was a zero-sum game.

Strategic orientation
Although many participants described an organization's strategic orientation as part of organizational culture, they argued that if organizations tend to take a defensive strategy in general, it is also likely that they are defensive in their public relations strategy. An account director (#9) at company B associated an organization's defensiveness with the buffering strategy: 'Although an organization is sensitive to the changes in the environment, if the organization usually takes a defensive strategy it is also very likely to be very reactive and it is likely to rely on messaging rather than relationship building.'

In contrast, if organizations tend to be proactive, future oriented, and ready to take risks, they show similar preferences in their public relations strategies. Although being proactive was mentioned frequently, there was a tendency to show the relationship between an organization's strategic orientation in being proactive and bridging strategy. An account director (#7) at company B stated, 'If an organization is proactive in its strategic orientation, it is likely to pursue direct communication with stakeholders for relationship management.' Another account director (#9) at the same company talked about risk and being proactive, but it was not clear what she meant by a proactive public relations strategy. 'If an organization takes a proactive and aggressive strategy in general, it is also very likely to take a very proactive public relations strategy and is ready to take some risk.' A vice president (#3) at company A believed there is a relationship between an organization's futurity and public relations strategies, arguing that lack of a long-term plan leads organizations to focus only on short-term activities or urgent issues in their communication programs.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study aimed to answer Freeman's (1994) question, 'how corporation should be governed' in the context of public relations strategy formulation for public engagement. Specifically by investigating why organizations are inclined toward certain public relations strategies for public engagement, we identified potential factors that influence strategy formulation and decision making in the dominant coalition that is a significant part of corporate governance. As Shahin and Zairi (2007) also pointed out, corporate governance and management is influenced by internal and external factors and those should be considered in the strategy formulation. From this study, we discovered that our findings are in line with Grunig's (2009) conceptualization of two paradigms of public relations as well as with Foster and Jonker's (2005) conceptualization of dialogue of engagement; organizations view and use communication differently for public engagement and for their goal achievement.

This identification of paradigms of public relations strategies and dynamics associated with these paradigms advances theoretical development in the future study of corporate governance with a focus on public engagement and dialogue. The role of public relations and communication in the corporate governance, especially, should be further investigated to help organizations not only achieve their goals but also attain mutual understanding between management and publics. Ongoing dialogue between organizations and their publics is necessary for better organization–public relationships (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Grunig *et al.*, 2002). In this study, authors identified factors that explain why certain organizations prefer the bridging strategy that utilizes dialogue between the management and publics (i.e., participatory culture, proactiveness in strategic orientation, specific concept of public). In other words, corporate governance practices may highlight dialogue with key publics when dominant coalition would like to reflect the voices of publics into their decision-making process and is open to diverse opinions to better manage the consequences of organizational behaviors.

A notable implication of the present study is that this exploratory research has started to lay the conceptual ground for further theorizing on two types of strategies, bridging and buffering, that intuitively capture common organizational strategies of both business management and public affairs fields. Authors tried to extend the discussion on stakeholder model of governance and stakeholder dialogue for relationship building by adding the context of public relations strategy formulation and decision making for public engagement. By linking bridging and buffering to corporate governance, authors attempted to provide a normative model of corporate governance for public engagement and dialogue. Future research should consider empirical studies that test the newly proposed theoretical framework in order to achieve statistical

generalization. In addition, cross-cultural studies should be conducted to explore and identify similar patterns or other unique factors that explain organizations' propensity for certain public relations strategies.

This exploratory study has several limitations. The participants may not be a representative population of public relations consultants in South Korea because data collection relied on the snowballing technique. Findings from this qualitative study in South Korea may not be the same in other countries. The use of email and Skype interviews had limitations compared with face-to-face interviews. Although email interviews involved several follow-up questions via email or phone calls, the resulting interview transcripts were not equivalent to Skype interviews in terms of richness and degree of detail. Skype interviews provided much richer data than email interviews and allowed real-time interaction, although the sensory interaction of face-to-face meetings did not fully exist. However, the immediacy of real-time interaction from this type of computer-mediated interview can still facilitate a climate of intimacy in which understandings can be better explored (Lindlorf & Taylor 2010).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Soojin Kim, an assistant professor at Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Singapore Management University, is interested in strategic management of public relations. She is looking at how organizations' behaviors or decisions along with key antecedents can affect public behaviors, organization-public relationships, and their organizational effectiveness. As strategic management of public relations starts with understanding of publics, she also explores various types of publics' communication behaviors in different contexts. She received her PhD in Public Relations from Purdue University.

Jeong-Nam Kim received his PhD in communication (Public Relations) from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2006 and joined the faculty at Purdue in 2007. His specialties are communication theory, strategic management of public relations, public behavior and its social consequences, information behaviors and problem solving. Jeong-Nam has constructed a communication theory called the situational theory of problem solving with James E. Grunig. The situational theory explains causes and processes of information behaviors in problematic life situations. He applies the situational theory to public relations, public diplomacy, health communication, risk communication, science communication, and employee communication. He also

developed a new theoretical model that integrates the causes and processes of organizational relationships, reputation, and brand through the Behavioral, Strategic Management Paradigm in public relations, and communication management.

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