

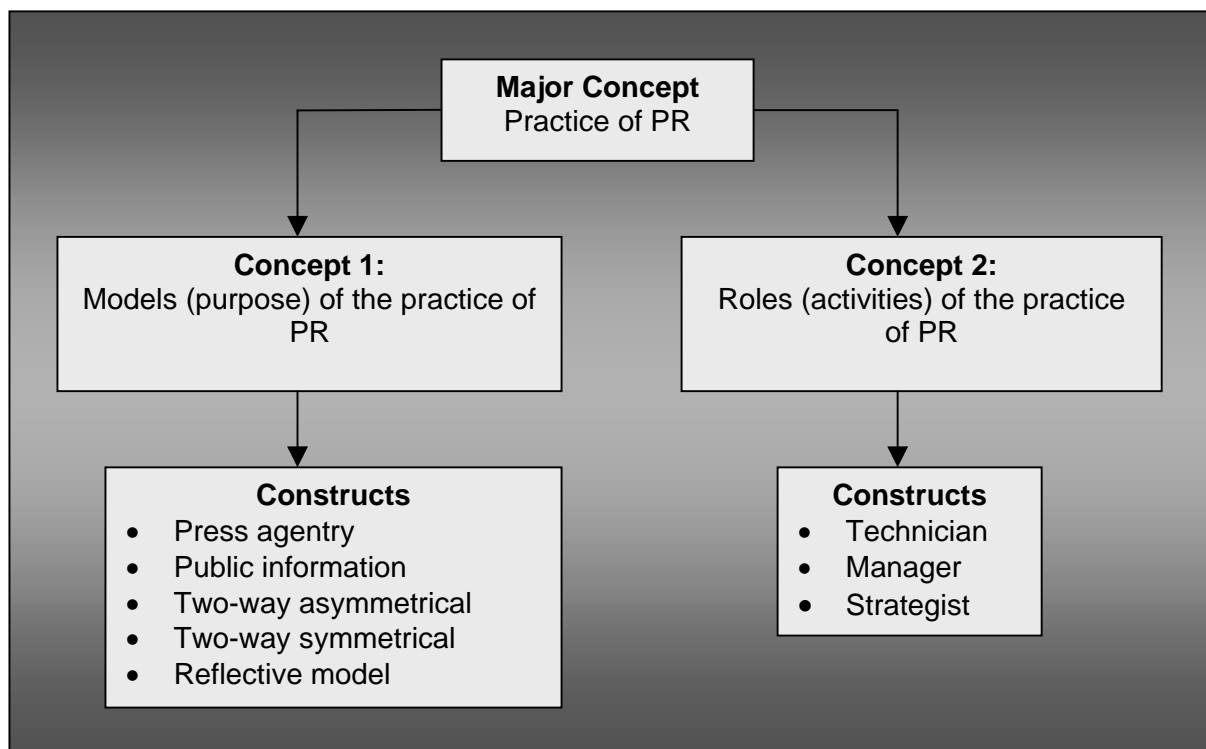
## CHAPTER 3

### THE PRACTICE OF PR - MODELS AND ROLES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

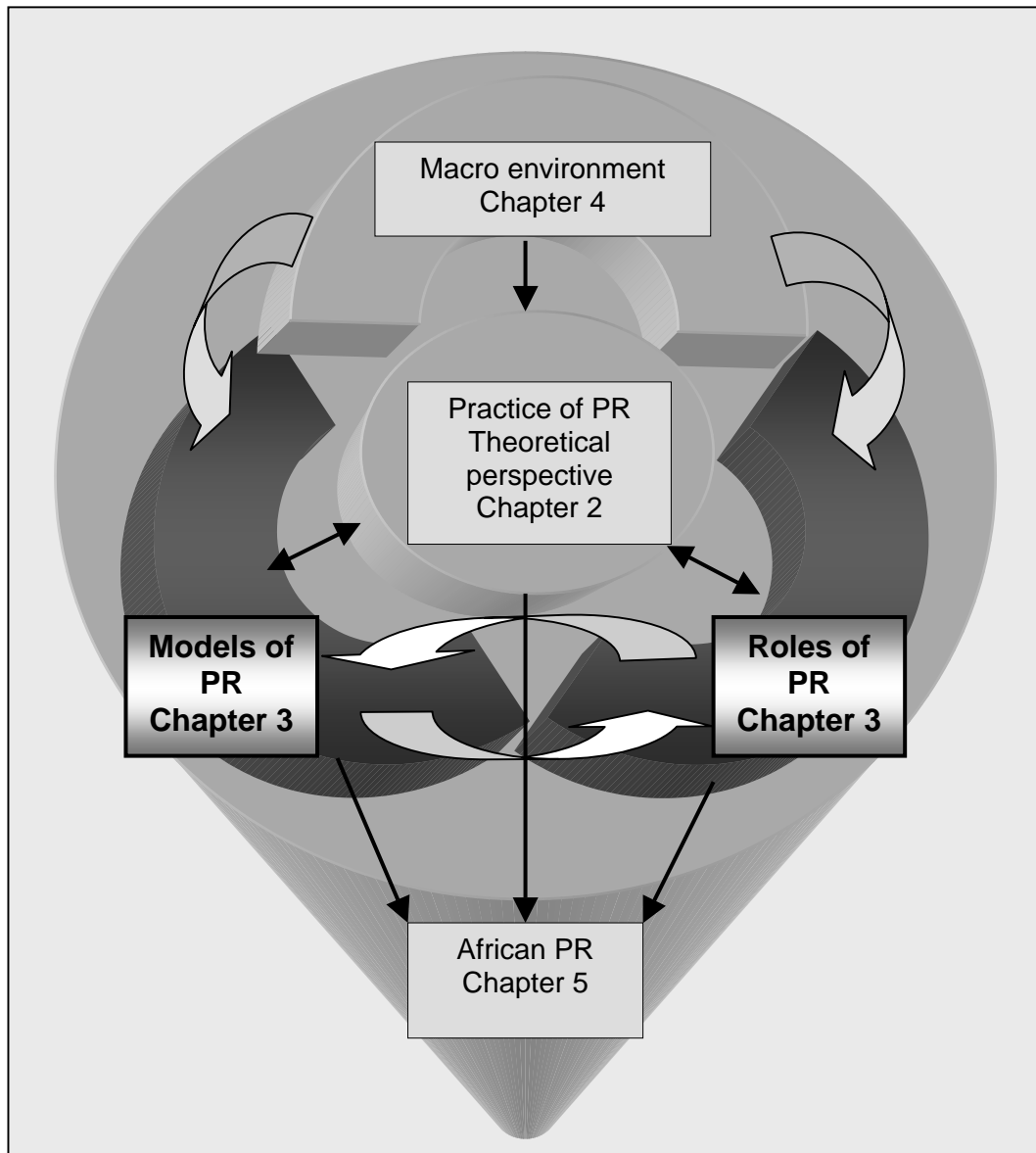
This chapter focuses on the theoretical perspectives defining the major concept under investigation in this study, namely the practice of PR. In the attempt to address the aim of this study, namely to *describe the current practice of PR in Africa*, this chapter will address two of the research objectives highlighted in Chapter 1. Firstly, this chapter will describe the practice of PR, in terms of the models (purpose) and roles (activities) of the practice of PR from a theoretical perspective, focusing on global theory. Secondly, this chapter will explore the level of development of the practice of PR from a theoretical perspective, using global theory. Figure 3.1 provides an illustration of the major concept, two other concepts and the constructs defining these concepts.

**Figure 3.1 Conceptual framework underlying the practice of PR**



In order to put this chapter's discussion into context to the rest of the study a conceptual framework is provided in Figure 3.2, highlighting the topics of discussion.

**Figure 3.2 Conceptual framework for the concepts defining the practice of PR**



The practice of PR has been present for a number of years. Through a literature review this study will identify the current most advanced level of development for the practice of PR. This level will be included in the empirical

phase of this study. In order to assess what the most advanced level of PR is, it is essential to briefly explain the origin of PR.

### 3.2 THE ORIGIN OF PR

There is disagreement amongst authorities on the origin of PR but a selection of general developments has been made from the literature sources consulted. In 1800 BC the Babylonians posted messages on stone tablets for farmers to learn that the more food they produced the wealthier the country became. This was planned persuasion aimed at a specific public for a particular purpose, thus PR. The Greeks placed a lot of emphasis on effective communication skills, especially for leadership positions. The best speaker usually got elected. Political candidates would ask for the help of Sophists (individuals renowned for both their reasoning and rhetoric) to debate amongst each other in the amphitheatres, attempting to influence legislation through effective communication techniques – today referred to as lobbying, thus PR. During the Roman times, persuasive techniques were used whilst preparing for battles. One of the most well-known individuals of that time, Julius Caesar, was a master at getting public support through assorted publications and staged events, thus also referring to PR. In England centuries ago the kings had to maintain Lord Chancellors as 'Keepers of the King's Conscience', therefore a need for a third party to facilitate communication between the government and the people was developed. This role is also an example of PR. During the 1600's the Catholic Church assisted in the creation of PR because the Church wanted to inform the public about the advantages of Catholicism and established a college of PR propaganda to "help propagate the faith". On the African continent, PR praise singers have for centuries publicised the virtues and accomplishments of Africa's leaders. (Mersham *et al*, 1995:4; Seitel 1995:26; Cutlip *et al*, 2000:102; Newsom *et al*, 2000:30; Wilcox *et al*, 2000:26).

It is thus clear that PR has been present for hundreds of years, or, as Wilcox *et al* (2000:26) mentions, "*in a sense it is as old as human communication itself*". PR has been influenced by changes in the environment and is closely related

to the historical development of societies in which it has been practised. It has also been a major influence on the rise and fall of nations, cultures and organisations. All great societies understood the importance of influencing public opinion (Seitel, 1995:26), therefore practising PR through the centuries.

### **3.2.1 North American development of modern PR**

The North American researchers have published and documented most of the research findings in this field and have influenced the emphasis on the Western perspective. In order to understand the development of PR in the United States, Newsom *et al* (2000:35) discuss the development of PR in relation to the history of the United States and clearly identifies that PR has been altered through changes in the environment in which it has been practiced.

When referring to North American literature, PR dates back to the founding of the American republic. The American Revolution dealt with various PR activities making this phenomenon a necessity in influencing public opinion, managing communication and persuading individuals at the highest levels. The colonists used persuasion in order to try and get the same rights as Englishmen. Table 3.1 summarises the development of PR according to historical events, dividing it into five distinct stages.

**Table 3.1 Capsule history of PR in the United States**

<b>Stage 1: PR preliminary period</b> An era of development of the channels of communication and exercise of PR tactics (publicity, PR promotion and PR press agency).	<b>1600-1799</b> Initial Colonisation American Revolution
<b>Stage 2: Communicating / Initiating</b> A time primarily of publicists, press agents, and propagandists.	<b>1800-1899</b> Civil War, Western Expansion Industrial Revolution
<b>Stage 3: Reacting / Responding</b> A period of writers hired to be spokespeople for special interests.	<b>1900-1939</b> PR progressive Era / Musckrakers World War I, Roaring Twenties Depression
<b>Stage 4: Planning/ preventing</b> A maturing of PR as it began to be incorporated into the management function.	<b>1940-1979</b> World War II, Cold War of the 1950s Consumer Movement
<b>Stage 5: PR professionalism</b> An effort by PR practitioners to control public relation's development, use and practice on an international level	<b>1980-Present</b> Global communication

Adapted from: Newsom, Van Slyke, & Kruckeberg (2000:35)

Ivy Ledbetter Lee, referred to by many as the father of modern PR, was said to be the first PR counsellor in America. In his opinion, for business to gain acceptance and understanding it needs to inform its public and answer critics honestly, accurately and forcefully. Lee's background was that of a reporter but he changed to a political publicist after which he referred to himself as a publicity consultant. In 1906 Lee issued a "*Declaration of Principles*" that gained a lot of respect for PR. In this document Lee defined the important ideals of PR saying: "*Our plan is frankly, and openly... to supply the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which it is of value and interest to the public to know about.*" Lee had a great admiration for industry and capitalism and it was therefore his goal to get businesses to communicate to the public. Initially most of Lee's early efforts were strictly publicity but later also developed into media relations (Seitel, 1995:33; Newsom *et al*, 2000).

The concepts, strategic planning and counselling of PR developed during the so-called Bernays era, as he believed PR was more than merely publicity. In 1921 Bernays was the first to call himself a “*PR counsel*”. Bernays studied the human mind and focused on the effectiveness and honourable manner of influencing the opinions of large numbers of people. This intellectual ability and interest in psychology explained the core of PR in his opinion as people being persuaded with their best interest at heart. He was involved with corporations, governments, celebrities and other institutions from early in 1910 until 1995. Through his experience and the interaction with diverse clients, he was of the opinion that the importance of the word 'social' in the practice of PR needs to be emphasised. Therefore, practitioners should advise a client on the social attitudes and actions to win the support of the public opinion (Newsom *et al*, 2000:31).

In 1923 Bernays published a book called *Crystallising Public Opinion* in which he suggested that the key to PR is to determine what the public likes and to highlight that in a business. In 1955 *The Engineering of Consent* was published and this idea was further developed. Explaining that organisations need to determine the values and attitudes of the public that they want to persuade further developed this concept. The business had to be described to the client in a way that conforms to the client's values and attitudes (Harrison, 2000:22).

Bernays actively tried to establish PR on a more formal basis as a profession and committed his career getting practitioners licensed and registered. According to Bernays, professional status will provide the vocation with the following qualifications. Firstly, the individual will have to graduate from a university in that particular field of study. Secondly the individual will have to pass an examination from the State. Thirdly a "Hippocratic oath" needs to be taken in order to agree to the behaviour and ethics, and finally the individual will have to agree to give up this title when leaving the profession (White & Mazur, 1995:14).

### 3.2.2 European development of modern PR

According to Nessman (1995:151), the development of PR occurred more or less simultaneously in Europe and in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historian Alan Raucher is of the opinion that the United States of America's social, political, cultural and economical climate, as well as the power of the media, has been the cause of the fast development of PR. It was faster than any other country in the world (Newsom *et al*, 2000:31). Vercic (2000:342) explains that the differences in PR development are due to environmental and economic differences resulting from the two World Wars. The wars influenced Europe dramatically and therefore this continent was temporarily left behind. Even though Europe adopted the American name, PR, this is not a sign that European development is directly linked to the history of the United States. Europe and United States PR has developed independently of each other (Nessmann, 1995:152). It is, however, of great importance for the purposes of this study to also investigate the European PR as well.

In order to understand the development of PR in Europe, it is necessary to look at the history of the origin of European PR. In Germany, Carl Hundhausen was the first to use the term PR in 1939. PR had been discussed earlier than 1937 within the European tradition but this discussion was in terms of social criticism. Many critical discussions and scientific debates on PR took place between the wars. During the time frame 1950-1974 the fathers of German PR, Hundhausen and Oeckle, encouraged further discussions on the concept of PR in order to further develop it in theory as well as in practice. Jurgen Habermas, a German researcher in sociology, developed the foundational intersubjective PR paradigm on which most PR theory is based. This theoretical framework provides a framework for studying the ideal of PR practice. Habermas referred to ethical business practice where ethical communication is the prerequisite in order to analyse the business practice. The development of PR theory was specifically influenced by his thoughts on symmetrical communication, discourse, mutual understanding, dialogue and consensus (Nessmann, 1995:151-153; Holmström, 1996:5).

The Europeans are also of the opinion that because Bernays was the nephew of Freud, his work was highly influenced by Freud and therefore affected his view on PR with a definite European influence. When defining the field, many European PR specialists clearly expressed it as a management function, although in European practice, professionals are still not employed in management positions whereas in America this fact has already been accepted. American PR has influenced European PR but the same is true for American PR being influenced by European PR (Nessmann, 1995:155).

In 1994 a comprehensive survey of PR in Europe was published in which it was stated that there were approximately 60 000 practitioners in Europe. The last survey published on PR education in Europe was published in 1991, stating that there were 79 PR programmes at a higher level of education, 61 of these at university level. The lack of research led a group of academics and practitioners in 1994 to initiate an annual symposium on PR research in Slovenia, which proved to be very successful. Owing to the lack of European PR knowledge, the EBOK project was initiated in 1998 (Vercic, 2000:342).

In most definitions, PR is defined as a management function, therefore operating in a business environment. The business environment has changed substantially; so functional areas within business will also be affected by these changes. PR is a management function within the business environment and in order to better comprehend the practice of PR and the professional requirements thereof a discussion is essential. Furthermore, because PR is also viewed from an economic and management perspective, it necessitates the understanding of the role of business in society, as this will impact on the PR profession.

### **3.3 THE MAIN CONCEPT: THE PRACTICE OF PR**

Research in the field of PR has concentrated on the practice of PR, primarily being instrumental in nature, therefore focusing on the problems and questions of practitioners. Instrumental research is concerned with the micro-level



questions referring to the activities performed by practitioners. Very little interest, however, has been shown towards critical research concerned with the broader social, political and economic implications of the practice of PR (Karlberg, 1996:263-265). It is the opinion of the researcher that research in the field of strategic PR will provide insight into the social implications of the practice of PR.

At this stage it is important to clarify what strategic PR in the context of this study entails. In order to understand strategic PR, the concept of 'strategy' must be understood as this is often where misunderstanding regarding strategic PR occurs. PR practitioners often misuse the word strategy. This term is mostly used to describe important aspects or activities (Steyn, 2000:52) when in fact strategy refers to the 'thinking' part, providing clear direction, and not the 'action part' of the activities performed. This thinking process results in a framework. This framework enables the PR practitioners to continuously test their decisions, activities performed or problems solved. By testing the latter against the framework, the practitioner will be able to determine if they are in alignment with what the organisation wants to achieve. In this way, PR should be able to reflect the enterprise (societal role regardless of the size or sector of the economy, which is stakeholder-orientated) as well as the corporate (referring to the portfolio of businesses that the organisation is competing in, which is financially orientated) strategies identified by the organisation (Steyn, 2000:41-53; Likely, 2002:27).

Major themes from strategy literature, concluded that the external opportunities and threats that confront an organisation are responded to by a strategy, which is continuous and adaptive of nature. The role of strategy is therefore a process of managing the interaction between the organisation and its external environment (Moss & Warnaby in Kitchen, 1997:45). It is therefore clear that when the focus is on strategic PR a discussion on the interaction of PR and the macro-environment is critical. Chapter 4 will discuss the impact of the macro-environment by referring to the remote and industry environment.

Leeper & Leeper (2001:464) explored the practice of PR in MacIntyre's theory that stated that the development of a virtue takes place within the context of a practice. In the endeavour to understand the practice of PR in the African continent a discussion on the practice of PR is critical.

The practice of PR will be theoretically and empirically described by referring to, firstly, the models (purpose) of the practice of PR. It can also be explained by referring to the contribution of the PR department to the overall effectiveness of an organisation. Section 3.4 will discuss the models (purpose) of the practice of PR. The role (activities) of the practice of PR, which can be explained by referring to the actual activities an individual performs, is also referred to as the organisational roles. These roles have also been theoretically and empirically proven to be useful in explaining the phenomenon of the practice of PR.

### **3.4 CONCEPT 1: THE MODELS (PURPOSE) OF THE PRACTICE OF PR**

According to Grunig (1992), research conducted on PR in the United States before 1970 did not explain the behaviours of PR practitioners. Grunig & Hunt (1984) published a textbook, *Managing PR*, where four models were conceptualised in order to describe the development of PR in the United States and also to describe an ideal set of typical ways in which PR can be practiced. Various world-views have been captured in these models of PR and are used to describe the variation of PR practice. Grunig (1992:286) explains that these models are viewed as a set of values and patterns in order to describe the behaviour that characterizes the approach taken by a PR department or PR practitioners.

The most influential part of PR literature, defined in terms of organisational behaviour, has been Grunig's definition of the two-way symmetric model for PR. This implies that PR performance cannot occur until this symbiotic model of performance has been achieved. The symmetrical model of PR leads to understanding and not persuasion or manipulation. The identification of ethical

presuppositions leads to the ability to identify the achievement of PR not as performance but as social behaviour. This is what this paradigm broadly suggests (Sharpe, 2000:348).

### **3.4.1 North American perspective: models (purpose) of the practice of PR**

The concept of PR is an extension of the four-model classification of PR in Grunig & Hunt (1984). These models propose four qualitatively different ways by which organisations relate to their publics. Organisational values, goal and behaviours are represented in these models of the practice of PR. These are briefly discussed below:

- The press agency model consists of creating favourable publicity or propaganda that seeks media attention in almost any way possible in order to pacify and manipulate public opinion.
- The public information model typically employs a journalist in residence in the organisation to provide the public with generally accurate information about the organisation but does not volunteer negative information.

In the press agency/publicity model the function is propaganda. Information about the organisation is shared but this is not necessarily the truth. The public-information model aims at providing information to the public where the information needs to be shared in a truthful and objective manner. These two models both represent one-way communication. Grunig & Grunig (1989) also used the term craft PR in order to describe the press agency and public information models, referring to one-way communication. This type of PR can be put on a continuum ranging from propaganda on the one end to journalism on the other.

- The two-way asymmetrical model is more sophisticated in the practice of PR as it involves considerable organisational research. Two-way communication can be manipulative. The research into the public's perspective on issues is important to the organisation as it is used to develop better persuasive campaigns. The outcome is that the behavioural change will benefit the organisation but not necessarily the public.

In the two-way asymmetrical model the function is to persuade the public in order for them to agree with the organisation's view and to gain their support. The two-way symmetrical model is used to act as mediators between the organisation and its publics in order to reach mutual understanding. Grunig & Grunig (1989) also used the term professional PR in order to describe the two-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical models, referring to two-way communication. This type of PR can be put on a continuum ranging from persuasion on the one end to conflict management on the other. The division of the four models into craft and professional PR occurred because of the fact that corporations mainly practiced the two-way asymmetrical model even though the two-way symmetrical model is most effective from a normative perspective (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:21-22; Kim & Hon, 1998:158).

- The two-way symmetrical model is where organisations use two-way dialogue, bargaining, negotiation and strategies of conflict resolution with a public in which the perspectives of all parties are voiced and heard to bring about symbiotic changes in ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both the organisation and the publics (Leichty & Springston, 1993:328; Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang & Lyra, 1995:168-169).

Symmetrical PR has been criticised by many and misinterpretations of the models of PR and the symmetrical theory of PR have become evident. Concepts such as 'equilibrium, social harmony, equality, mutual goodwill or ideal communication situations' were associated with the 'symmetrical' and all of these concepts are those of a utopian society, posing an overly idealistic vision for PR. Grunig conceptualised the idea of symmetry of PR as a

movement beyond the advocacy of self-interest without concern for the consequences of an organisation's behaviour towards others, to a balance between self-interest and concern for others. The intention was not to describe symmetrical PR as an outcome but rather as a process. Communicators therefore have to focus on a broader professional perspective of balancing private and public interest. Grunig's research focus has recently moved to the development and maintenance of relationships as the central goal of PR. Interpersonal relationship literature has been useful in the conceptualisation of what good relationships entail and which of the strategies are most effective in maintaining relationships. Therefore, certain dimensions or strategies underlying the four models of PR have been devised (Grunig, past,present,future:30-32).

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the characteristics of the four models of PR.

**Table 3.1 Characteristics of PR**

CHARACTERISTIC	MODEL			
	PR press Agency/ Publicity	Public information	Two-way Asymmetric	Two-way Symmetric
<b>Purpose</b>	PR propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
<b>Nature of Communication</b>	One-way: complete truth not essential	One-way: truth important	Two-way: imbalanced effects	Two-way: balanced effects
<b>Communication model</b>	Source to Receiver	Source to Receiver	Source to Receiver and Feedback back to the source	Group to Group
<b>Nature of research</b>	Little: Counting House	Little: readability readership	Formative: Evaluative of attitudes	Formative: Evaluative of understanding
<b>Leading historical figures</b>	PT Barnum	Ivy Lee	Edward Bernays	Bernays, educators, PR professional leaders
<b>Where PR is practiced today</b>	Sports, theatre, PR product, PR promotion	Government, non-PR profit business	Competitive business: agencies	Regulated business: agencies

Adapted from: Sharpe (2000:349)

The models have stimulated many research studies in both developed and developing countries throughout the world and it was agreed that they best describe and analyse the practice of PR in various cultures and political systems. It has further also been used as a teaching tool for explaining typical practice of PR and more advanced practices (Grunig, past, present, future:4). These models will guide this study both from a theoretical and empirical phase. It is essential for Africa to be able to explain at which level it is currently functioning in order to enter global discussions.

### **3.4.2 European perspective: models (purpose) of the practice of PR**

Van Ruler & Vercic (2003:2) proposed a public view on PR by introducing reflective PR. Four models of PR were derived from a two-by-two dimensional definition of organisation and management as well as communication; these models are not exclusive but complementary. A fifth model was developed, focusing on the organisation as an institution.

- In the information model, PR is seen as the dissemination of information about the organisation. The aim is to reduce uncertainty as knowledge is gained. It is based on the theoretical field of mass media on which communication science is based. The creation of meaning is restricted to the revelation of the denotative meaning of the organisation to certain target groups.
- In the persuasion model, PR is seen as a means to promote the organisation to others. The aim is to enable the organisation to continue its functions. It is based on the early theories of rhetoric to persuasion research. The focus is for target groups to accept the organisation's perspective on relevant issues. The creation of meaning is restricted to luring the connotative meanings of certain target groups into the meaning of the organisation.

- In the relationship model, PR is seen as establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics. The aim is to create consensus on important issues and avoiding conflict by assuring cooperation. It is based on the “balance theories” of communication. This implies that where there is balance, each participant will resist change, and where there is imbalance, attempts will be made to restore the balance. PR is seen as negotiating with publics.
- In the dialogue model, PR is seen as the facilitation of dialogic interaction between the organisation and its publics. The aim is the development of learning processes. It is based in the contemporary rhetorical theory, creating as many meanings as possible, which is based more on a ‘battle’ of interests than on harmony of interest. The meaning creation is restricted to the ongoing learning processes of people who are related organisationally to the co-creation of new connotative meanings

**Table 3.2** The reflective model of PR compared to existing models

CHARACTERISTICS	MODEL				
	Information	Persuasion	Relationship	Dialogue	Reflective
<b>Organisational &amp; managerial</b>	Classical	Human relations	Contingency	Learning	Institutional
<b>Managerial intervention</b>	Directive	Directive	Interactive	Interactive	Reflection in action
<b>Organisational communication</b>	Mechanical	Psychological	System interaction	Interpretive	Depends
<b>PR problem</b>	Knowledge	Influence	Trust	Meanings	Public legitimation
<b>PR indicator</b>	Readability	Image/ reputation	Relationships	Understanding of meanings	Public license to operate
<b>PR focus of management</b>	Dissemination of information	PR promotion of plans/ decisions	Accuracy of relationships	Co-creation of new meanings	Public sphere
<b>PR intervention</b>	Informational	Persuasive	Negotiating	Discursive	Depends
<b>Task of PR specialist</b>	Broadcasting of decisions	Engineering cooperation to decisions	Controlling decision making	Mediating decision making	Counselling & coaching on reality construction

Adopted from: Van Ruler & Vercic (2003:22)

Van Ruler & Vercic (2003) argued that a feasible concept of PR needs more indicators than relationships to reflect the plural nature of its service to organisations and society. They suggested that one should view these models as strategies of communication behaviour that can be used in order to provide solutions to problems. Grunig (past, present, future:32) agrees that future research in the practice of PR should be thought of as dimensions or strategies underling the traditional models of PR.

When referring to the above-mentioned discussions, similarities can be drawn between the first four models identified by the European researchers and that identified by Grunig & Hunt (1984). However, the press agentry is not included in this discussion. The additional model, namely the reflective model, will be viewed as the fifth model for PR. It will be treated as another PR world-view of practicing PR. This is important for this study from a theoretical developmental level as well as from an empirical level. This fifth model will be operationalised and tested in this study.

As these models operate on the behavioural level on organisations and publics, it means that in the societal level, the legitimacy problem of organisations remains neglected (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:7-12). The constraint in using these strategies is often public legitimacy, which is important for business survival. In order for organisations to survive in the long term, a societal perspective is essential and can offer a profound view on PR. Therefore, the fifth model of PR identified by European researchers is called reflective PR and will be briefly discussed in the section below.

- Reflective PR is not a phenomenon to be described and defined, nor a way of viewing relationships between parties. It is a strategic process of viewing the organisation from the “outside” or “public” view. The focus is on an organisation’s societal legitimation and trustworthiness. Legitimacy is, however, not founded on moral or ethical aspects but rather on that which is good and justifiable for society. Friedman (1970) (in Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:14) stated that social responsibility of business increases profits and



therefore societal legitimacy of corporations is defined by the profits in markets. Reflective PR differentiates between the societal and economic roles that organisations play in PR. It also differentiates between an organisation and an organisation as an institution. Society at large therefore is the unit of analysis.

PR as a reflective structure addresses two tasks, namely reflective and expressive roles, which will be quoted as discussed by (Holmström, 1996:98-99):

- The reflective role of PR has traditionally been referred to as inward PR. This process can be explained by focusing on the information shared in the macro-environment. It therefore refers to the selection and decoding of information from society. The information is usually shared through the mass media. This information is then fed into the organisation, particularly to the decision makers. The organisation then reflects on the information shared in an attempt to understand the essence of what society's expectations are. Once the organisation has reflected on the information shared, it can balance its behaviour in relation to that which is expected by society. This process will assist the organisation to continue to build public trust for the organisation.
- The expressive role of PR has traditionally been referred to as outward PR. PR creates and transmits images on behalf of the organisation. This is done in order to create a socially responsible image for the organisation within society. The information is usually presented to society via mass media. This is done to assist the organisation in strengthening its image regarding social issues and to strengthen public trust.

It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that reflective PR is a strategic process. In order to understand what a strategic process entails it is necessary to once again refer to the strategy literature. The strategic process is the interaction between the organisation's internal and external environment. The internal environment

refers to the organisation's vision, mission, values, philosophy, culture and policies. The external environment consists of four categories, namely the remote (social, economic, political, technological and ecological), industry, operating and functional/internal environment (Steyn, 2000:54-59).

The European models of PR practice discussed in Chapter 2 concluded that these models neglected the societal level. However, PR needs more indicators than relationships and therefore the fifth model, the reflective model for PR, was conceptualised (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2003:2-12). This model focuses on the legitimation and the creation of social trust for the organisation. Through reciprocal reflection (a degree of closeness is needed for the system to open) organisations determine their identity, role and responsibility in society. And therefore in an increasingly uncertain, complex and differentiated society, the central task of reflective PR is to secure trust as a mechanism in relationships (Holmström, 1996 & 1997).

Referring to reflective PR, Van Ruler & Vercic (2003:24) have developed parameters of the profession stating that:

*"Communication management as a specialty helps organisation by counselling the deliberations on legitimacy, by coaching its members in the development of their communicative competencies, by conceptualising communication plans, and by executing communication means, using informational, persuasive, relational and discursive interventions".*

The reflective model for PR in this study is seen as the most advanced level of the practice of PR and will therefore be operationalised and empirically tested. In Chapter 3 a discussion on the macro-environment paid attention to the role that business plays in society. This changing role has influenced the various functions within an organisation and can therefore be used to explain the development in the practice of PR as well.

### 3.4.3 Previous research using the models of PR

The models have been the focus of numerous other studies, theses and dissertations throughout the world. The models have stimulated many studies of PR in both developed and developing countries. This research has generally confirmed that the models do describe the practice of PR in many cultures and political systems, but also suggested variations on the models – in particular, matters of practice that can be described as personal influence and cultural interpretation models. Research has also suggested that practitioners in countries such as Korea are most likely to practice the craft models of press agency and public information, although they aspire to practice the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang & Lyra, 1995; Kim & Hon, 1998; Grunig: Past, present, future:3).

Although the models of PR have provided typologies that represent the practice of PR and although this is a valuable development of a theory, a need has developed to move beyond these typologies to theories composed of continuous rather than discrete variables. Four isolated variables were developed in order to define the models and are called 'maintenance strategies'. Grunig (past, present, future: 33-36) refers to these variables as, firstly, symmetry and asymmetry or the extent to which advocacy and collaboration describe PR behaviour. Secondly, the extent to which PR is one-way or two-way, referring to the direction of communication. Thirdly, the use of mediated and interpersonal forms of communication as personal relationships can be either asymmetrical or symmetrical. And lastly, the extent to which PR practice, is ethical.

The theoretically and empirically tested models of PR, measuring instrument, used by Grunig & Hunt (1984) and modified by Kim & Hon (1998) will be used in this study. In order to describe the level of practice of PR in Africa the latter of the measuring instruments will be used but will be further adapted to include and operationalise the reflective model of PR. The models will be used as a positive model where the theory describes and explains how PR is currently

practiced. Positive theories describe the phenomenon as it actually occurs and can be evaluated by whether it corresponds to reality. Research has proven that the models of PR can be reliably measured, that they are valid, that they exist in real organisations and that there may be a theoretical reason why organisations combine the models (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:291-297).

### **3.5 CONCEPT 2: THE ROLES (ACTIVITIES) OF THE PRACTICE OF PR**

PR roles (activities) are the behavioural patterns of individuals in organizations when practicing PR. These roles set individuals apart and define expectations from the organisations perspective and therefore these roles are key in understanding PR (Dozier in Grunig, 1992:327). According to Petersen, Holtzhausen & Tindall (2002:1) it is essential to examine PR roles in international settings in order to understand how PR is practised in a particular country. In order to compare PR practices it is necessary to determine and explain what the PR roles and models of a particular country entails.

#### **3.5.1 North American roles of PR**

The empirical and theoretical linkage of the role and the models of PR as previously mentioned will be discussed after a brief discussion of each role. Broom & Smith, 1979 in Dozier in Grunig (1992:329) conceptualised four theoretical roles:

- The expert prescriber is explained as the authority on PR problems and solutions. This individual is seen to be the best qualified to address the PR problems, it is expected of him/her to take full responsibility for defining the problem and developing and implementing a programme (Cutlip *et al*, 2000:42). The result of this role is that of passive management involvement in the problem-solving process. The practitioner is responsible for the result of the programme but is isolated from the mainstream of the enterprise, having little control over critical parts and therefore fulfils a reactive role (Dozier in Grunig, 1992:329; Cutlip *et al*, 2000:43; Steyn, 2000:15).

According to Grunig & Hunt (1984), this role expert prescriber can be linked to the two-way asymmetrical and publicity/press agency model.

- The communication facilitators serve as liaisons or “go between” interpreters and mediators between the organisation and its publics. This role facilitates exchange by keeping channels of communication open by removing barriers in relationships. These practitioners fulfill boundary-spanning roles in order to provide information needed for making decisions of mutual interest between organisations and publics (Dozier in Grunig, 1992:330; Cutlip *et al*, 2000:44; Steyn, 2000:15). Grunig & Hunt (1984) link this role to the public information and two-way symmetrical models of practice.
- The problem-solving process facilitator assumes the role of problem-solving facilitator, helping management to systematically assess problems in order to define and solve these problems. This role works collaboratively with management and becomes part of the strategic planning team and transforms PR thinking into management thinking (Dozier in Grunig, 1992:330; Cutlip *et al*, 2000:44; Steyn, 2000:15). This role, according to Grunig & Hunt (1984), can be linked to the two-way symmetrical models of practice.
- The corporate communication technician role is that of a technical services provider. The technician executes the communications actions directed at publics as decided by the dominant coalition. This role provides the communication and journalistic skills essential for communication programmes. No participation in decision making or research activities is included in the function of this role. Grunig & Hung (1984) essentially linked this role to organisations practising the press agency and public information models.

The above-mentioned four theoretical roles were measured empirically and two empirical roles emerged, the role of the manager and the role of the technician.

The expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator are all conceptual components of the same role, namely the manager (Broom in Steyn, 2000:16). Research is often used in this role in order to assist the individual in policy decision making as well as to plan and evaluate communication programmes. Grunig & Hunt (1984) found that practitioners in the manager role make communication policy decisions and are involved in the PR decision making. It was further determined that practitioners fulfilling the role of the technician within organisations perform at an operational level, implementing communication programmes and never actively participating in the decision-making process. According to Steyn (2002:44), the manager role is performed on the functional level of the organisation responsible for developing PR strategy (providing direction) as part of managing the PR function.

The technician role emerged conceptually different to the manager role, not using research or partaking in decision making. It can therefore be stated that these roles are uncorrelated as they are empirically and conceptually different (Steyn, 2000:16).

### **3.5.2 European roles of PR**

The purpose of the EBOK project was, firstly, to compile a bibliography of European PR literature. Secondly, a Delphi study was conducted in order to understand the current practice and theory of European PR. A Delphi study is usually conducted when an understanding of a concept has to be generated. This study was conducted in three phases. The first phase is usually very general and open-ended in order to get as many as possible explanations on a particular term. The second round usually is more focused and the respondent usually needs to rank the given explanations, and the third round is even more specified. Furthermore, the European researchers and practitioners wanted to contribute to the development of a global PR body of knowledge (Van Ruler *et al*, 2001:2). The dimensions of PR as found in this project were reported as follows: The definition of PR used, key concepts of PR, the essence of PR, the

contribution of PR, the aim and value of PR, the parameters of PR, the tools of PR, is it theory or practice based, knowledge and skills needed, separate research field, the issues of PR, country characteristics and lastly the name of the discipline. The project team responsible for the EBOK Project (Van Ruler *et al* 2001:380) conceptualised four dimensions or roles of European PR, and these will be briefly discussed below:

- The managerial role is mainly concerned with the organisational mission and strategy aimed at commercial and other groups. The development of strategies is aimed at gaining public trust and/or mutual understanding through relations between the organisation and its public groups.
- The operational role is aimed at implementing and evaluating the communication process formulated communications on behalf of the organisation by preparing a mean of communication.
- The educational role is concerned with the behaviour of the members of the organisation and is aimed at internal public groups. This role assists members of the organisation in becoming communicatively competent, in order to respond to social demands.
- The reflective role is concerned with organisational standards and values aimed at the decision makers within the organisation. This role is responsible for the analysis of the changing standards and values in society. This is essential for an organisation when focusing on social responsibility and legitimacy, in order to adjust the standards and values of the organisation.

When referring to the role manager and technician it is clear that the first two roles empirically identified in the European context support these roles. Therefore, the terms manager and technician will be equated to the terms used in the above discussion, managerial and operational. In terms of organisational levels, the manager role will function on a functional level and the technician

role on an operational level. It is not clear at this stage if the role of the educator exists in the African context and this study will not attempt to determine if it does exist. The focus in this study is to determine if the role of the manager and technician exists in Africa.

### **3.5.3 South African Perspective: The emerging role of the strategist**

A two-phase research programme in strategic PR management was carried out in South Africa between 1997 and 2003. This study was originally intended to replicate the IABC Excellence Study. It was, however, decided to use the findings of the Excellence Study as a theoretical base in order to investigate problems in the local context. Phase One focused on the knowledge base and Phase Two focused on the shared expectations, which consisted of two separate studies. A strategic role was conceptualised and empirically tested in the South African context (Steyn, 2003:1), based on the identification of a limitation on the widely accepted two-typology of roles of manager and technician. The role of the strategist was conceptualised and based on Van Riel's in Steyn (2002:44) 'mirror' function. This function was broadened to include:

*“monitoring of relevant environmental developments and the anticipation of their consequences for the organisation's policies and strategies, especially with regard to relationships with stakeholders and other interest groups in society”* (Steyn, 2003:8).

In the latest European research it was also proven that the reflective role is theoretically totally different to that of either the manager or technician. Steyn (2002:46) is of the opinion that the role of the strategist is closest in nature to the reflective role identified by the EBOK project and theoretically conceptualised by Holmström (1996).

According to Steyn (2000:20), the most senior PR practitioner within an organisation usually portrays the role of the strategist. This role is performed at the macro-level of an organisation, monitoring environmental developments



and anticipating the consequences for the organisation's strategic function. The similarities as mentioned by Steyn (2003:20) between the role of the strategist and the reflective role as known in the European literature view PR as:

- *“operating at the macro level, spanning the boundary between the organisation and external environment*
- *bringing in information from the external/societal environment that the top management structure in an organisational system should consider*
- *pointing out to top management the consequences of the information for the organisation*
- *influencing top management to adapt organisational strategies and behaviour according to the social intelligence obtained*
- *being involved in issues of organisational trust, legitimation and reputation”.*

Singleton & Groenewald (2003:3) refer to the reflective task of PR as a task that is within the space between the company and its environment using the “*window out and window in*” reflection. These authors refer to trust as fragile and therefore the organisation's behaviour needs to be aligned with its intentions. They further mention that the motive of reflective PR is functional, not ethical, rationale is cognitive, not normative, and therefore environmental data is gathered in order to feed it back into the organisation to strengthen its self-reflection. All three the roles discussed, namely manager, technician and strategist, will be included in this study in order to direct the theoretical discussion as well as the empirical aspects of this study.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

The practice of PR was discussed according to global theory. In an attempt to describe the current practice of PR it is essential to assess and explain Africa's current situation according to the models and roles of the practice of PR. This chapter also wanted to explore the level of development for the practice of PR. It was found that the European, reflective paradigm has been theoretically explained as a continuation of the existing four models developed by Grunig &

Hunt (1984). The reflective model will be operationalised in this study in order to, firstly, purify the measuring instrument in an attempt to measure the reflective paradigm but also to assess if this model does indeed exist in Africa. Furthermore, the role of the strategist is also viewed as the most advanced level of the practice of PR according to the role classification. This role will also be included in this study.

In this chapter it was explained that PR is studied from a strategic perspective. For this reason, it is critical to refer to the macro-environmental issues and the impact thereof on the practice of PR but on life in general. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will therefore focus on the impact of the macro environment on the practice of PR.