THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES: THE STATE OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH EDUCATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations Research Education Today

One of the major changes in journalism and mass communication education that continues to flourish during the last decade of the 20th century is the proliferation of undergraduate students who choose public relations as a major. The traditional route of becoming a practicing journalist first and then moving into public relations work is giving way to companies and agencies seeking graduates of public relations programs to fill communications positions. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the largest professional organization of public relations practitioners in the world, began to address the educational preparation of future practitioners. The 1975 Commission on Public Relations Education outlined the first undergraduate public relations course requirements, the 1981 Commission addressed both graduate and undergraduate public relations curricula, and the 1987 Commission, in cooperation with the Association of Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), provided the most detailed curriculum directives for schools offering public relations programs.[1]

As a result, educating future public relations practitioners changed from traditional journalistic training to specific preparation that includes the technical and management functions essential to public relations practice. Where journalism is mainly one-way communication to large audiences, public relations involves a variety of two-way communication techniques and activities to build and maintain relationships with publics relevant to an organization.[2] The difference in orientation and objectives requires different types of training.

Institutions offering public relations education now find themselves developing courses, programs and curricula that center on the two-way communication and counseling functions generally considered to be the framework of the profession. Public relations sequences in many communications programs have worked toward earning the professionalization and recognition that journalism programs have enjoyed through the accrediting process administered by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). Educational standards, based on the 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education, were set in five subject areas: (1) principles, practices and theory of public relations; (2) public relations techniques: writing, message dissemination and media networks; (3) public relations research for planning and evaluation; (4) public relations strategy and implementation; and when feasible (6) supervised public relations experience.[3]

One of the five major areas, public relations research for planning and evaluation, appears frequently in the professional literature. Organizations of

all types are demanding more accountability and calling for use of research-based practice from public relations practitioners. Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann, vice president of Ketchum Public Relations, said, "It's time to codify PR research as a distinct category -- then promote its widespread and continuous use by practitioners."[4] Lindenmann's 1990 benchmark study of public relations professionals reached the same conclusion: that public relations professionals must become better educated in research methods.[5]

Background

Public relations is one of those entities about which people might often say, "I can't describe it but I know it when I see it." Rex Harlow, founder of the *Public Relations Journal,* PRSA's professional publication, accumulated 472 definitions of public relations from which he fashioned a conceptual and operational definition that attempted to incorporate all the main elements, including a "management function" that works with both external and internal audiences in a variety of situations.[6] Cutlip, Center and Broom's textbook, Effective Public Relations, considered to be the "bible" of public relations texts, condensed the definition into "Public relations is the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends."[7]

Another way public relations has been defined is by describing the tasks practitioners perform. Writing, editing, special events planning, speaking,

media relations, production, research, programming and counseling, training and management are common functions.[8]

Public relations is also known as a process consisting of four steps: research, planning, implementation and evaluation. As the practice of public relations has developed from its one-way communication emphasis of publicity and press agentry into its more mature two-way communication efforts, described as a management function concerned with both organization and publics, the emphasis on "doing things" in a reactive fashion has shifted to more proactive counseling efforts based on research; "respect for communications counsel and leadership will depend...on the ability of the chief communicator to monitor, evaluate, interpret and inform management..."[9] Successful management that accomplishes building and maintaining relationships has begun to highlight the importance of research in the process; "the need to know more about the environment for public relations practice and about the publics who create that environment has pushed research to the forefront of public relations activity."[10]

As research becomes "the hue and cry from the boardroom"[11] and undergraduate education continues to produce about ninety-five percent of all practitioners,[12] it seems logical to investigate how public relations programs provide the knowledge and skill base in public relations research the profession is demanding.

Statement of the Problem

Although still traditionally housed in many journalism and/or speech communication schools, public relations sequences are irrevocably linked to the professional practice of public relations by providing graduates specifically trained in the theory and practice of public relations. For most schools with public relations sequences, this means following the five-content area recommendations of the 1987 report on undergraduate public relations education, including teaching research.

What is not apparent in the literature is how the public relations research requirements of the 1987 report are being met by colleges and universities offering public relations programs; what limitations educational institutions face in satisfying those recommendations; what research skills and proficiencies professional practitioners deem necessary in future practitioners; and the extent to which educators and professional practitioners agree and disagree on their attitudes and values about research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine public relations research education and gather data about how research for public relations practice is being taught in public relations programs in colleges and universities preparing students for public relations careers.

The study will also compare the values and attitudes of practitioners and

educators about how public relations programs address the issue of teaching research for public relations. The 1987 Commission's report has not been widely studied with respect to how each of its five individual content areas is being incorporated into public relations curricula, so this study will provide a benchmark against which to measure future public relations studies of report compliance.

Research questions to be answered include:

(1) According to educators, what is the course context in which public relations research is taught, i.e., a separate component or part of each unit in specific public relations courses or as a separate public relations course?

(2) What research-related public relations activities do educators provide for students and how extensive are they?

(3) To what extent do educators and practitioners agree or disagree on how and why research skills are needed and how they should be acquired?

(4) Do accredited programs and individually accredited educators include more research either in courses and/or individual course content than non-accredited programs and non-accredited educators?

Methodology

This study used two questionnaires, one for educators and one for practitioners, to gather information. Educators were asked to complete questions about the research portions of the public relations classes they teach or have taught and about their values and attitudes about the

importance of learning about and teaching research to undergraduates.

Practitioners were asked to complete questions about the use of research in their current positions and about their values and attitudes about the importance of learning about and teaching research to undergraduates and its relation to future career success.

The total population of public relations professors from each college or university that has a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter (179 chapters in all) was surveyed. This population was chosen because to have a PRSSA chapter, schools must provide public relations courses that include the five previously identified content areas as outlined in the Public Relations Society of America bylaws and the 1987 report.

A simple random sample of four hundred Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members drawn from the current PRSA Directory was used.

Participants received postcards informing them of the survey's imminent arrival and asking for their participation, followed by the survey with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. A reminder postcard to encourage late responders to contribute was also sent to practitioners.

The analysis of responses provides descriptive data about how public relations research is taught, and how educators and practitioners feel about the value of public relations research.

Significance of the Study

The study focused on the relationship of public relations education and the

practice of public relations in the area of research. Communication programs offering public relations sequences, and public relations students, educators and practitioners should benefit from understanding what public relations programs are realistically providing and what public relations practitioners need as research skills and knowledge for successful careers.

The information from this study should also aid communication curriculum planners in educational institutions in developing or modifying research curricula to better meet the needs of the profession. Similarly, public relations practitioners involved in providing internships for undergraduates might incorporate exposure to and involvement with the research portion of projects as part of the internship experience.

The study is also a way for public relations educators to meet the needs of the profession in three ways:

(1) by discovering how public relations research is being taught and identifying the obstacles that prohibit or make teaching research difficult;

(2) by discovering effective ways public relations research is being taught, and identifying the components and strategies that make research teaching successful;

(3) by comparing educator information to the skills and knowledge current practitioners say future practitioners must possess.

It is also noteworthy that the recommendations of the 1987 commission about providing research curricula have never been used as the basis for a study of undergraduate public relations research education. This information from this study, therefore, should add to PRSA's Body of Knowledge in both the

educational and professional categories.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to assessing how research skill acquisition and practice is provided at the undergraduate educational level. Most public relations practitioners seek their first job in the profession without having an advanced degree, and the 1987 Commission report specifically focused on undergraduate education. Thus, it is logical to focus on undergraduate preparation.

The scope of this study was both exploratory and comparative. The descriptive findings was useful in determining what types of research are being taught in what types of settings. The comparative findings did identify areas of agreement and disagreement on research skills and practice and did suggest possible avenues of curriculum development. Much more research, however, is necessary to achieve model curricula.

This study is limited in time value. Although it provided a current picture of public relations research teaching and attitudes based on the 1987 commission's report, the study should be repeated at a later date to see how things may change.

Survey methodology carries its own limitations. Surveys depend on honest responses from both educators and practitioners. Trust is placed in the survey respondents that they will respond honestly and completely.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Professional public relations and educational literature were reviewed for the importance of research in current public relations practice, the different types of research associated with the public relations field, and the development of teaching research in public relations education.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter described the groups to be surveyed, the survey instruments, and the a rationale for the survey questions asked. The chapter also outlined the timeline for the survey and how the data were analyzed.

Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis

The results of the educators' and practitioners' surveys were presented, analyzed, described and summarized.

Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions were drawn from the data analysis, including how the recommendations of the 1987 Commission's report have been implemented. From this information, recommendations for further study were made.

Endnotes

[1]Jim Grunig, "Teaching Public Relations In The Future," *Public Relations Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 16.

[2]Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom, Effective Public Relations, Seventh Edition, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 6.

[3]The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education, (New York: The Public Relations Society of America, 1987): 5.

[4]"Public Relations Research Methods: A Continuing Dialogue," *pr reporter* 36, no. 17 (May 1993): 1-2.

[5]Walter K. Lindenmann, "Research, Evaluation and Measurement: A National Perspective," *Public Relations Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 12.

[6]Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom, Effective Public Relations, Sixth Edition, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1985), 4.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Cutlip et al., Sixth Edition, 64.

[9]Strenski, James. B. "New Concerns for Public Relations Measurement," *Public Relations Journal* 37, no. 5 (May 1981): 17.

[10]Douglas Ann Newsom, Alan Scott, and Judy VanSlyke Turk, This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations, Fifth Edition, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), xv.

[11]Strenski, 16.

[12]Cutlip et al., Seventh Edition, 29.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In 1951, Stephen Fitzgerald, president of a New York public relations firm, predicted that five or ten years would pass before public relations practitioners would recognize the importance of public relations research and use it.

> Public relations people, pressed constantly into becoming more orderly in their approach to the problems of business management, inevitably must look increasingly toward research for the answers....[1]
>
> ...I predict that, in another generation, public relations work will be very much more professional than it now is; that research skills will be very much more precise than they now are; and that the use of research techniques for public relations purposes will be very much more common than it is today.[2]

Consistent with Fitzgerald's comments, the literature about public relations contains many references to research and its use in professional practice. This literature review will describe how research developed as an important component of modern-day practice and identify why practitioners believe research is important in their work, describe the different types of research commonly associated with the public relations field, and trace the development of research in public relations education.

Importance of Research in Public Relations

Research was not a concern in the early history of public relations in America. Promotion and publicity were the primary aims of such early public relations ventures as raising money for Harvard College, mustering support for a revolution from England, and persuading Americans to continue their westward expansion. The profession began to be shaped into its present-day form of planned, pro-active communication activity and relationship-building during the early 1900s in response to muckraking journalists. Practitioners further refined their strategy and implementation activities through two world wars, a major economic depression, and the transformation of the world into a global communication society.

Public relations matured from a reactive to a proactive communication process after World War II, and it became recognized as a management function.[3] As public relations began to be studied as an outgrowth of journalism, Scott Cutlip's development of the Four-Step Process of research, planning, implementation or action, and evaluation became the hallmark of public relations practice; every major public relations textbook today devotes significant space to it.[4] The evolution from reactive to proactive also brought new emphasis to the research step of the Four-Step process.

Patrick Jackson, editor of *pr reporter*, a well-established weekly public relations newsletter, concluded that "research...has become a major factor -- probably the factor," in public relations practice during the last three decades.[5]

What this means is a scientifically oriented practitioner...whose work is

> accountable...& (sic) linked to organizational goals & (sic) the bottom line. Creativity is still immensely valuable, but more apt to arise from trained lateral thinking than sudden inspiration over a martini.[6]

Ten years later in 1993, the results of an annual survey conducted by *pr reporter* found that 54 percent of practitioners said "obtaining specific measurable behaviors" is the focus of their work.[7]

A number of studies have also documented that research is gaining the attention of practitioners and educators. In 1988, Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann, APR, a senior vice president and director of research for Ketchum Public Relations in New York, conducted a national benchmark study of public relations research. He found practitioners recognized that "...research is and can be a necessary and integral part of the public relations planning, program development and evaluation process."[8] Lindenmann said, "Research and evaluation...mean that the days of relying exclusively on hunches for your communications planning are over. Give us the facts...hard, provable facts to justify whatever you're doing when it comes to communicating."[9] In Lindenmann's own guide to public relations research, he listed the following real needs for conducting research:

- To collect information that public relations professionals need to have and to know to do their jobs more effectively.
- To obtain benchmark data regarding the views of key target audience groups.
- To plan, develop, or possibly refine a public relations, public affairs, or marketing communications program or activity.
- To track or monitor programs, activities, or events that are or can be important to an organization.
- To evaluate the overall effectiveness...by measuring outputs and outcomes against a predetermined set of objectives.
- When facing a...crisis, to put the issues...into proper perspective through ...monitoring or polling.
- When circumstances allow, to provide appropriate support in publicizing or promoting a specific program, activity or event.[10]

In 1980, Philip Lesly's year-long Task Force on the Stature and Role of Public Relations found that top management positions in public relations units were still being filled with professionals who did not have a public relations education but did have a speciality such as management or law. Lesly said "that is consistent with an increasing trend toward specifying that candidates for executive positions have administrative and management skills as well as technical capability."[11] San Diego State University professor David Dozier also found this hiring practice in his on-going research of the roles of practitioners and attributed it to practitioners not trained as managers who engage in what he called "pseudo-planning" and "pseudo-evaluation" not based on research.[12]

Dozier's conclusions are also supported by the results of a 1986 survey of Fortune 500 companies that public relations practitioners have "a moderate amount of input into the planning process; practitioners in the same study reported limited involvement in environmental analysis and an overwhelming preoccupation with production work."[13] Don W. Stacks, University of Miami public relations professor, agreed, "Today's public relations recruiter seems more interested in hiring a business student than a communication major. Why? One compelling reason seems to be the business student's grasp of what data are and how they should be interpreted."[14]

In a 1983 speech to the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) in Atlanta, Georgia, Roger Haywood, managing director of Roger Haywood Associates Limited in Norwich, England, said the challenge to have management involve public relations in policy making

depended on research. "Our programmes would need to be based on far more substantial research - which will probably be the biggest growth area in organisational communications over the coming decade."[15]

Dr. David Lilly, dean of the School of Management at the University of Minnesota, concurred.

> ...public relations need no longer be excused as an "unmeasureable" department whose value is difficult to quantify...if you want the same input into policy making that other departments enjoy, you will have to accept the same scrutiny. If you don't already know what cost-benefit analysis means, you will soon.[16]

Lilly specifically advised practitioners to be able to "...design, administer and interpret modern research" and, if they are unable to do conduct their own research, to know enough about research to intelligently use existing resources.[17]

James M. Strenski, APR, chairman of Public Communications, Inc., Chicago, said a "measurable return on investment is the hue and cry from the board room to the communications department."[18] He predicted that "respect for communications counsel and leadership will depend in large measure on the ability of the chief communicator to monitor, evaluate, interpret and inform management of the necessity, value and benefits of the communications function."[19]

In addition to contributing information, research is often overlooked as a way to preserve or enhance the public relations function in organizations. Peter Finn, chairman of Research & Forecasts, Inc., New York, said, "Communication research can demonstrate that public relations improves the company's bottom line by improving relations with its critical

audiences...research will be in even greater demand to produce hard, reliable information to guide policy decisions and communication efforts."[20] Finn's company conducted a study of Fortune 1,000 companies about their use of communication research and found that 82 percent of Fortune 1,000 public relations directors believe that corporate use of communication research will increase during the next five years.[21] Forty-eight percent said management considers public relations very important compared to 28 percent of the managers in organizations who do not use research in public relations.[22] Finn concluded that good research and management's support of public relations are related. The other side of the story, communicators in the study said, is that research efforts need to be adequately funded, information must be implemented, not ignored, and research findings must be carefully defined.[23]

Professor Craig C. Aronoff used the term "boundary spanner" to illustrate the critical management position the research-based communicator has in an organization. "In this crucial role, public relations practitioners assess the behavior of their organization in relation to its environment, assess the state of the environment to provide direction for the organization, and help to provide the means by which organizations adapt to meet public expectations."[24]

"The assumption...is that research makes the practice of public relations more responsive, effective, useful, and professional," wrote Glen Broom and David Dozier in their research textbook *Using Research in Public Relations: Applications to Program Management.*[25] Scott Cutlip, the professor who developed the Four-Step public relations process, characterized public relations practitioners not using research as "horse and buggy primitives" in

an age of space travel. The lack of research and evaluation, Cutlip concluded, finds practitioners who "...go merrily along shooting our arrows into the air, to land we know not where."[26]

Just What Is This Research They're All Calling For?

While the preceding section demonstrated that the call for "research" in public relations practice is strong, it is important to describe what research is and how it applies to public relations.

Public relations textbook authors have a variety of definitions of public relations research. Glen Broom and David Dozier defined research as "...the controlled, objective, and systematic gathering of information for the purposes of describing and understanding...the scientific approach to answering questions."[27] Scott Cutlip, Allen Center and Glen Broom suggested that research is the process of defining a problem (answering the 5Ws and the H) in a situational context.[28] Dennis Wilcox, Phillip Ault and Warren Agee summed up research as "...a form of listening,"[29] while Otis Baskin and Craig Aronoff said research "...provides the initial information necessary to plan public relations action and perform the important role of evaluating its effectiveness."[30] Doug Newsom, Alan Scott and Judy VanSlyke Turk describe research as three main functions: gathering facts for backgrounding and planning, monitoring progress and evaluating results. The form follows the function because each situation is different.[31]

Public relations professor John V. Pavlik, in his book *Public Relations: What*

Research Tells Us, defined research as a two-part activity involving collection and interpretation of information.[32] Just as research can be defined by what it is, it can also be defined by its purpose. Pavlik has identified three types of research according to purpose: basic, applied and introspective.

Basic research's purpose is to build theory about the public relations process, not solve particular problems.[33] Pavlik characterizes this type of research as abstract and conceptual and its uses as equally esoteric: to increase understanding, explain causes-and-effects, and predict future situations and/or conditions.[34] Cutlip, Center and Broom called this type of research formal because of the use of specific, social science methodology which involved systematically gathered data from scientifically representative samples.[35]

Examples of basic research in public relations include the articles published in *The Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Public Relations Quarterly*. Consistent with other academic disciplines, each of these publications has its own peer review process and academic standards to be met before articles are cleared for publication.

Applied research is the other side of basic research, according to Pavlik. Its primary purpose is to solve practical problems using strategic and evaluative tools.[36] Pavlik's view of this type of research is situational, problem-oriented, and tied to goals and objectives; its focus is on methods, tools, and relationships with specific groups in specific circumstances.[37] Because of its application emphasis, Pavlik equates applied research with practitioners whose application also often involved specific deadlines and finite resources for

research.[38] This is also often called informal research which Cutlip, Center and Broom described as "exploratory" because of its unrepresentative sample selection.[39]

The *pr reporter* public relations newsletter is an example of a publication that often contains applied research information. For example, the June 21, 1993, edition outlines the steps in conducting a community case study; "it mixes observation, participation, role-playing, secondary analysis, content analysis, formal & (sic) informal interviewing techniques..." but said nothing about whether the methodology met social scientific research standards. The July 18, 1994, edition details the four questions involved in the gap research technique, which focuses on encouraging respondents to answer in their own terms rather than in a formal, controlled, survey-type of research.[40]

The *Public Relations Journal* is another example of a publication that features applied research designed for practitioner use. For example, the May 1994, edition featured "Six ways to use research;" all six ways are application-oriented, including formulating strategy, gauge success, testing messages, and getting publicity.[41] Again, nothing was said about the social scientific methods standards adhered or not adhered to.

Introspective research centers on the public relations function and the higher education system that supports the function -- what Pavlik terms self-examination.[42] Considering whether public relations is a profession, identifying the standards and practices of public relations, studying practitioner characteristics, and critiquing the relevance of undergraduate and graduate curricula to actual practice are major considerations in this type of research.[43]

The various reports by the Commissions on Public Relations Education are examples of introspective research; accreditation reviews which include undergraduate public relations education are another.

Although the three major types of research have been identified as separate entities with specific characteristics, the types can and do mingle. Pavlik points out that research on public relations roles is primarily introspective but it also helps explain the theoretical nature of the field.[44] James E. Grunig, University of Maryland public relations professor, suggested that basic research should be used to construct theories which can then be applied in actual practice and be adjusted as needed.[45] Jarol Manheim, George Washington University political communication professor, maintained that theory is a factor in all applied research, "...theory refers to an underlying conceptual framework that tells the practitioner what aspects of a given situation are important to measure and how they should be measured...It provides a rationale..."[46] Larissa Grunig, University of Maryland public relations professor, concurred, "...seeking 'underlying theoretical causes' does provide 'useful data for immediate application."[47]

Pavlik maintained that the orientation of people interested in public relations determined what they studied, why they studied it, and how they studied it regardless of whether the research itself was basic, applied or introspective.

James E. Grunig provided one viewpoint about what public relations research should be. "The role of public relations educators and academic researchers should be to serve the profession: to conduct research that will

advance the profession and train the next generation of practitioners."[48] Pavlik also pointed out that educators with advanced degrees traditionally have academic backgrounds which include social science research experience that focuses attention on theoretical research and a broader perspective of public relations.[49] Because basic research must meet established publishing criteria, including peer review, and may involve substantial amounts of time in designing, collecting and interpreting information before publication, it is not surprising that Pavlik's census of public relations research published from 1975 to 1985 found that "...only a fraction of the past 10 years of PR research has been basic research." [50]

pr reporter publisher Patrick Jackson, APR, has for some years espoused another view of public relations research. He said it needed to be comprised of "...research methods specifically for the *actionable* (sic) decisions practitioners must make to motivate behavior.[51] He maintained that academic/basic research emphasized theoretical causes "...rather than useful data for immediate application...Statistical overkill is the current norm...."[52] He found fault with many social scientific methods, including marketing research, which he said seeks commonalities rather than segmenting audiences which public relations does and crunches numbers "...to the point of silliness.... "[53] Jackson also said statistics are used without any explanatory or contextual information; "Practitioners must still exercise judgment about what to do with the numbers."[54]

Jackson's solution is to develop public relations research to serve three purposes: (1) to answer planning questions; (2) to obtain strategic information

to determine what the environment really is; and (3) to establish baselines to permit evaluation.[55]

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Professor John Luecke is an example of someone who has used his own experience as a researcher to contribute an academic-practical research mixture working to aid practitioners in day-to-day practice.

> If the PR professional has more time than money, and we can meld our academic interests with the practical needs of the professional, there can be a role for academics in public relations research that goes beyond theory building & getting tenure. As an academic I am currently involved in several research projects for clients that will yield valuable information for them -- and will provide me with an opportunity to examine various public relations issues.[56]

Several studies have shown that other practitioners also believe formal research could help them in the world of professional practice.

Finn's Research & Forecasts, Inc., 1982 study showed 91 percent of public relations directors believed formal research would help in their overall practice, including providing management with facts about performance, setting and measuring program objectives, and gaining visibility for their organizations.[57] He also found respondents favored different types of communication audits; 68 percent of communicators had conducted financial relations audits, and 63 percent had done employee surveys.[58] Whether they actually used what they said they favored was not reported.

Professors Michael Ryan and David L. Martinson studied 111 public relations practitioners in the late 1980s for their use of social science research and discovered 64 percent said "practitioners who cannot understand social science techniques do not serve clients as well as those who can."[59] While they

found that more than half of the practitioners said it is important to both understand and/or use social science research techniques, only 13.2 percent said they regularly use basic research in all their programs, 52.7 percent said they occasionally use basic research, and more than a third seldom or never use basic research.[60]

A number of studies also examined practitioners' applied use of social science methods in their work. One of the earliest was professor and public relations consultant Otto Lerbinger's 1977 Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education Survey of 28 organizations' research use. He found four types of practice-based research: (1) environmental monitoring to assess the corporate climate; (2) public relations audits to evaluate an organization's standing with relevant publics; (3) communication audits to assess the effects of communication vehicles like newsletters and news releases; and (4) social audits to examine the corporate citizen role of the organization.[61]

Lindenmann, in his 1988 benchmark research study of senior public relations and public affairs executives from Fortune 500 companies, found 75.9 percent see research as "a necessary and integral part of the planning...development and evaluation process;"[62] and 74 percent said they used planning research while 58 percent used research to monitor activities and 55 percent used research for evaluation.[63] He also identified literature searches and information retrieval projects, tracking publicity and media, using telephone or mail surveys, and focus groups as the respondents' four most favorite research techniques.[64] Lindenmann's research also showed that different entities tended to use different types of research; for example, public

relations counseling firms do more information retrieval projects than others, and academics do more model building.[65]

Mitch Kozikowski, principal of New Jersey-based Kozikowski & Co., who surveyed 105 major public companies' top communications managers in March 1994, found 97 percent said "we must routinely measure impact and effectiveness of pr," and 91 percent said "database info (sic) and audience research must play an increasingly important role in pr."[66]

pr reporter conducts a yearly survey of its subscribers; its twenty-ninth annual survey in June 1993 revealed that focus groups were the most favored research technique (73 percent); opinion surveys ranked second (71 percent); and open-ended questions ranked third (65 percent).[67] While the percentages seem to indicate a great amount of research is being done, many of the survey's respondents said they were just beginning to learn how to use and do research.[68]

Lisa Richter, director of research for Fleishman-Hillard, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, and Steve Drake, Fleishman-Hillard vice president in Washington, D.C., outlined applying measurement to programs to set bottom lines and goals and track progress toward achieving them. Their strategy focused on formative research, such as reviewing secondary data and conducting primary research, to plan programs, analytical research, such as analyzing media and third-party messages, to monitor progress, and evaluation research, including measuring results against benchmarks set in planning.[69]

Harry O'Neill, president of the Opinion Research Corporation, advocated survey research as an important information-gathering tool in "managing

(corporate) reputation factors."[70]

Dozier concluded that research tools are well-developed , and as future practitioners learn the methodology in school, "the practitioner community will be enriched with heretofore misunderstood and under-used social tools" including survey sampling, trend studies, panel designs, experiments and a variety of qualitative techniques such as focus groups and depth interviews.[71]

How research is used or not used is sometimes determined by the type of roles practitioners play. Dozier also conducted a 1981 survey of 333 San Diego, California, practitioners to determine whether their organizational role influenced whether they employed "seat-of-the-pants" techniques or used scientific research techniques. He found that managers did use scientific evaluation methods along with intuition (or seat-of-the-pants) while communication technicians did not use scientific evaluation methods nor any other kind of evaluation.[72] He concluded that communication managers use both information and intuition when making decisions, indicating what he termed "a multiple-method" style of evaluation.[73]

In a 1980s six-year panel study, Dozier and Glen Broom, also a San Diego State University professor, found that practitioners who took on more managerial roles increased their use of evaluation research.[74] A 1987 survey of IABC members by Dozier found that manager scores correlated strongly with mixed research, scientific and informal research while technician roles correlated weakly with mixed research but not at all with scientific or informal research.[75] Dozier concluded that conducting research, particularly scientific research, increased practitioners' participation in management decision-

making.[76]

Jennie Piekos and Edna Einsiedel of the University of Calgary conducted a similar role and research relationship study with Canadian practitioners in 1987. They also found a positive, significant correlation between managerial roles and scientific evaluation methods.[77] But they also found positive, significant relationships between communication technician roles and scientific research. Piekos and Einsiedel speculate that technicians may be using evaluation research because they are the highest ranking communication practitioners in their organizations and most practitioners surveyed worked in small departments where they performed almost all of the public relations functions.[78]

A study reported in the October 18, 1993, edition of *pr reporter* stated that practitioners who worked to create awareness and those whose focus was changing behavior favored different research techniques. Behavioral practitioners listed factor analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA), "climate" surveys, and sales figures as favored methods, while awareness practitioners cited content analysis and media tracking as most used methods. The two groups agreed on only two techniques as being equally effective: evaluating media coverage and assigning ad-cost numbers.[79] The study gave no reasons for the descriptive differences, but one could speculate that awareness practitioners might be more interested in media portrayal and frequency while behavioral practitioners use numbers to track changes.

The type of environment practitioners work in also appeared to have some influence on research use. David L. Martinson and Michael Ryan's 1992 study

tested whether practitioners' environments were related to the use of social science research and found that differences between one-way and two-way environments were significant in short- and long-term research-based planning situations. Although Martinson and Ryan did not offer any reasons for the difference, they did conclude that practitioners in one-way environments typically talk more about research than do it, and practitioners in two-way environments do more research.[80]

The type of audience has also been shown to influence how research is used. Ryan and Martinson found research was most often used to discover attitudes of both internal and external audiences. Nearly two-thirds of their respondents said identifying and/or understanding particular audiences was their research goal.[81] Most used techniques to aid in identification included focus groups (60.9 percent); mail surveys (59.8 percent); telephone surveys (57.6 percent); and in-person surveys (55.4 percent).[82]

A great deal of the literature is focused on research methods themselves. Lindenmann wrote about communication audits as a way to monitor the effectiveness of communications budget expenditures. By monitoring the messages of senior management, the communications department and the outside audiences, he concluded that adjustments in the budgets can be made.[83]

Rolling research, which is spread out over time, provides comparisons that allow for course correction, much like gyroscope research which follows respondents through a decision-making cycle so adjustments can be made as necessary.[84]

Gap research is another frequently cited method of monitoring activities. Gap research, a method which involves questions followed by probes, allows respondents to state the problem and their perceived reasons for it in their own terms, which allows practitioners to understand the "why" along with the "what."[85] The benefits of using gap studies include being simple to use, direct, and phrased in the respondents' own terms.[86]

Larissa Grunig, University of Maryland professor, detailed the use of focus groups used by a county mental health department to plan a program aimed at reducing the stigma of mental illness. She said gathering the data through focus groups suggested some control over the outcome because the data contained both explanation and description.[87]

Retailer Pier I Imports used cue framing studies to figure out why customers who said they loved the company's advertising were not buying the store's merchandise. The how-to process of conducting this type of research study was outlined in a 1993 *pr reporter* feature.[88]

Professors Hugh Culbertson and Dennis Jeffers wrote about their use of "front-end research" in a study of osteopathic medicine in Ohio. A variety of methods, including content analysis, open-ended interviews, focus groups, content analysis and surveys, were used to define the social, political and economic roles of the client. Interspersed with how and why the methods were used are the project results.[89]

Comparisons of research techniques and methods have also become international. Elaine Falk Katz of Health Education Research surveyed Japanese public relations firms to see what research methods they used. She

found one-on-one interviewing was the number one technique; 70 percent of Japanese practitioners said they used it.[90] In comparison, 73 percent of the practitioners in the United States and Canada chose focus groups as their number technique.[91] Sixty-five percent of the Japanese said they used market research and telephone surveys, 61 percent used mail surveys and 56 percent used focus groups. In the United States and Canada, 71 percent used opinion surveys, 65 percent used open-ended questions, and 63 percent used survey and/or market research.[92] Falk found that the major difference between the Japanese and their Western counterparts was that the Japanese were more interested in building awareness and interest while 72 percent of the United States and Canadian practitioners said measuring behavior was their major goal.[93]

Other literature focused on research "success" stories. Several examples were:

- Helen Sullivan APR, a senior vice president Kaufman Public Relations, Washington, D.C., outlined launching a public relations campaign conducting planning research, monitoring what audiences are thinking, and evaluating programs against standards set during the planning stage.[94]
- Hewlett-Packard's public relations manager Deborah Holloway wrote about guidelines to selecting the right measurement system for evaluating public relations program results. She details in-house assessment techniques, describes Hewlett-Packard's awareness and preference studies and discusses computer-based press coverage analysis.[95]
- The City Council of Wahoo, Nebraska, described its mix of qualitative,

quantitative and data analysis in its successful efforts to stop the city's takeover of a private natural gas system.[96]

The impact of technology

The research function is changing as computer hardware, software, on-line information research services, and a growing number of independent public relations research firms not only offer practitioners and their clients relatively easy access to an abundance of data but "venerable techniques such as article content analysis, phone and mail surveys, focus groups, and before-and-after attitude studies are being looked at in a new light," said Deborah Hauss, president of In-Hauss Strategies, a New Jersey research firm.[97] Research firms and communication departments are turning to computerized information for everything from "...monitoring breaking news and client press coverage to researching key issues and social trends."[98] "Clients are impressed with the depth and speed of information we can deliver, and many clients are becoming more research-savvy in their own operations," said Karyn Sterberger, Ketchum Public Relations.[99] "Who has time to go to the library for this stuff," asked James L. Horton, APR, president of Slater Hanft Martin, Inc.'s New York City office.[100]

Computers allow an abundance of data to be analyzed for identifying trends and planning, monitoring and evaluating strategy. Before computers, practitioners found too much data was cumbersome to tabulate and present, and clients found too much data hard to use and measure. Computers have

changed that: Lindenmann of Ketchum Public Relations, New York, said he routinely does computerized content analysis with up to 36 to 40 variables "Content analysis is getting more sophisticated versus just picking up clips."[101] Albert Barr, CARMA International Vice President, Washington, D.C., uses databases to "survey" media coverage to predict trends and forecast issues;[102] as does Nuffer, Smith, Tucker, Inc., San Diego, and Inquiry Handling Service of San Francisco, California, uses computers to set target sales figures from leads.[103]

"What we're doing is adding value to the results of research by making sure they are tailored as precisely as possible to what the client wants to communicate," said David Jacobson, vice president of Research & Forecasts, New York City. Jacobson said the research techniques themselves do not have any special significance; the key is "...how you use the research that you've found."[104] Most of the experts interviewed for a 1993 *Public Relations Journal* special section on electronic research methods stressed that practitioners will have to define measurable objectives supported by research at the onset of a program to be able to prove to clients that they did receive an return on their investment in public relations To set objectives, practitioners are finding that they have to include research as part of their strategy.[105]

"Our main emphasis is on providing correct information on all sides of an issues, " said Agnes S. Galban, senior vice president of Fleishman-Hillard, New York City.[106] In addition to serving existing clients, database research allows PR firms to prospect for new clients.[107] The same edition of *Public Relations Journal* lists seven databases, Burrelle's Broadcast Database, DataTimes,

Dialog, Dow Jones News/Retrieval, Investext, Nexis and NewsNet, practitioners are bringing into common use.[108] "The sources of information now available on online appear to be virtually limitless these days. With a little research, practitioners might find a database that provides the perfect nugget of information that could mean the difference between success and failure."[109]

"I feel that there is going to be a gravitation toward more in-depth customer research. This type of research uncovers more than just 'how are we doing?' It is a real probing and discussion about needs that not being filled," said Kenneth Makovsky, APR, president of a New York City-based firm.[110]

Charles Pizzo, Jr., principal of P.R., P.R. Inc., New Orleans, demonstrated the power of a personal computer and three on-line services -- CompuServe, Nexis/Lexis and America On-Line at a district PRSA conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, in January 1995. In one and one-half hours, he answered approximately ten research questions about public relations, ranging from finding support to show the boss about public relations contribution to the bottom line to the favorability rating of an identified reporter when reporting on a specific company.[111]

Computers allow data to be effectively tabulated and easily retrieved and implemented by clients.[112] Interactive software makes information retrieval available to anyone with a PC, and programs help practitioners chart and tabulate data to spot trends, identify areas of opportunity or problem and summarize results.[113] Because so much data is available, practitioners are able to customize programs to specific audiences, set more measurable

objective and evaluate to what extent the objectives were met.[114]

One example is measuring media influence. CARMA International, a company manufacturing its own menu-driven research software program, tracked media influence on public opinion in the 25 weeks before the 1992 election. Data was plotted against the Gallup surveys of "if the election was held today, who would you vote for?" The result, reported Albert Barr, CARMA president, "..was a tremendous correlation of good and bad news and how people would vote.[115]

Another example is Ketchum Public Relations use of computerized factor analysis to determine which factors link together to create a favorable or unfavorable hospital experience. The hospital distributes a questionnaire with agree-disagree statements to new patients before they are admitted, and patients are surveyed again three months after they are discharged. Factor analysis is used to see if patients' expectations of the facility are met. "With factor analysis, we hunt all different items linked together by computer and see what is crucial to the respondents' attitudes and behaviors," said Walter K. Lindenmann.[116]

The two challenges to widespread adoption of electronic public relations research are cost to the client and educating public relations practitioners in the use of research. Deborah Hauss, president of In-Hauss Strategies, a marketing communications firm, said public relations practitioners are more convinced than clients of the value of research. "The challenge is to get clients to stretch their budget to include research in their overall public relations program," she said.[117] David Jacobson, vice president, Research &

Forecasts, said, "What we're doing is adding value to the results of research by making sure they are tailored as precisely as possible to what the client wants to communicate. The real challenge in the industry is to apply these measurements on a more consistent basis."[118]

The advantage of computerized research is that practitioners have more time to focus on synthesizing, evaluating and planning strategy, said Ira Krawitz, PR Newswire.[119]

Educating current and future public relations practitioners about the new techniques and technology is the second challenge. "We are still in a learning curve. As people become more sophisticated, the 1990s will bring in more research and evaluation," Lindenmann predicted.[120]

A recent Public Relations Society of America Counselors Academy survey found nine of 10 firms said they are on-line with some computer database, and 89 percent said they actually use it once or more a week.[121] And two-thirds of the respondents said they have a staff member responsible for maintaining the computer technology information.[122] Another survey reported in *pr reporter* compared a NEXIS database search with manual research and a composite of other electronic search devices; the database search was 64 percent faster than the normal manual and electronic data search.[123]

"A new day has dawned and everyone had better wake up to it. Databases are easier to use than every before," said Ian Capps, PR Newswire president. "In the PR industry, these events have served to equalize the ability of small agencies with their larger competitors to provide instant information for their clients. A two-person shop, where a database is handled well, can provide the

same information as a multinational agency."[124]

In addition to the database services, new software programs bring research techniques directly to personal computers. Public relations professor Glen Cameron developed "Publics," a program which segments audiences, creates questionnaires and surveys them, and helps interpret results.[125] Corpus 400 is a program that maintains a continuous survey of 10,000 selected individuals targeted as the top 25 percent of the U.S. population; NDP Research, Port Washington, New York, conducts the daily research, enters it into a computer system and provides periodic reports to subscribers at a cost of $20,000 per year.[126] Reduct Systems, Regina, Saskatchewan, developed its DataLogic R program which uses the rough sets theory to analyze multiple issues and audiences to identify "important issues, patterns and relationships in opinion survey and similar research data." Results are available as a list of the most important concerns of each party and as a chart showing the distance between parties' attitudes.[127] The program Pattern Discovery uses interaction between variables to discover relationships among them; its main objective is to target where resources should be allocated for each variable, said Steve Hokanson, the program's creator.[128]

Future of Public Relations Research and Practitioners

Finn predicts that research in public relations will permeate all practice. "As more public relations professionals experiment with different types of

research, research will become a ubiquitous method for fortifying the position of public relations within the corporate structure."[129]

Lindenmann's 1990 survey included comments from respondents that echoed Finn's prediction.

> "CEOs talk in numbers, facts, and figures. So must PR practitioners if we are to be taken seriously by corporate leaders," (Financial institution PR manager).[130]

> "In the past, too much emphasis was placed on research for planning purposes only. In today's business climate, we must be prepared to show our CEOs, through research, the results of our communications programs." (Corporate Public Relations Executive). [131]

> "The decline of PR is in large part due to the lack of monitoring and substantive evaluation of results. That's why PR is seen by CEOs as 'fluff.'" (Non-Profit Organization Public Relations Officer).[132]

Strenski, chairman of Public Communications, Inc. said,

> Respect for communications counsel and leadership will depend in large measure on the ability of the chief communicator to monitor, evaluate, interpret and information management of the necessity, value and benefits of the communications function.[133]

Public Relations Research Education

Most public relations positions require an undergraduate degree, and in the past two decades, public relations has become a major subject discipline in its own right, generally housed in some type of communication department. So the expectations are that future practitioners, by and large, will be college or university trained. The July 1978 issue of the *Public Relations Journal*, the official magazine of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), stated that "...education for public relations is no longer a cottage industry."[134] In

1978 Dr. Kenneth Owler Smith, APR, an educator and past PRSA president, said, "It is becoming increasingly and steadily apparent that the route to public relations is through good academic preparation."[135] In 1992 more than 200 colleges and universities offered public relations programs.[136] A PRJ 1992 survey showed that 89 percent of public relations practitioners said the *best* (sic) undergraduate preparation for a public relations career is a major or minor in public relations.[137]

Practitioners have called for public relations education that addressed the research skills and knowledge they believe future practitioners need to know. "Those who make it in the field of corporate public relations are the practitioners who have had adequate business education beyond basic public relations and journalism studies," said Dorothea R. Willix, APR, public affairs officer for Decatur (Georgia) Federal Savings and Loan.[138] "Research is one area in which young practitioners seem badly undertrained. Audience testing and opinion sampling keep costs down by targeting communications and programs. Evaluation is needed to justify budgets," said Patrick Jackson, APR, senior counsel for Jackson, Jackson & Wagner.[139]

A 1992 PRSA survey of practitioners conducted by Dr. Donald Schwartz and Dr. J. Paul Yarbrough showed that 87 percent said problem-solving skills were quite or very important in undergraduate public relations curriculum, and 74 percent rated research skills as "quite" or "very important" in public relations education.[140] And six out of ten ranked as "quite" or "very important" "public opinion concepts and research, audience analysis, case analysis and issues analysis."[141] The survey also showed, however, that

practitioners admitted they had little knowledge of what public relations education involved.[142]

The lack of knowledge about public relations education was echoed by a 1992 IABC Conference discussion seminar where practitioners said they "believe most of their colleagues do not have the slightest idea of what...is being taught in PR programs."[143]

Twenty-five professional and educational members of the Arthur W. Page Society said they thought the "better" schools were doing an adequate job of preparing future practitioners in the areas of management and research methods.[144] The article's author, Professor William Adams, questioned, however, whether the survey participants viewed the "research they overwhelmingly profess to use as a necessary staple of public relations education -- not just an affectation promoted by a cadre of eggheads who have no grasp of the 'real world'?"[145]

Educators have also addressed the research concern in public relations. Professors Vincent Hazleton and Larry Long discussed the importance of teaching research as part of a "rigorous, social scientific orientation"[146] and added that research is a necessary concept in developing public relations models.[147] While they argued for including research, they did not address how to incorporate it in a curriculum.

In 1980, Frank B. Kalupa and T. Harrell Allen conducted a survey of practitioners and educators and found that 79.9 percent of the respondents indicated strong preferences for more social science research statistics and computer technology training for future practitioners.[148] Again, they did not

suggest how to achieve the respondents' preference.

Also in the early 1980s, Professor Albert Walker compared three studies of public relations education conducted in 1970, 1975 and 1980, and suggested that public relations education should include a fifth year of study devoted to "research and measurement, (and) meaningful applied research..."[149] Other than his conclusion, Walker had no recommendations as to how this objective should be accomplished.

In 1984, Professor Bill Baxter surveyed members of PRSA's corporate section to see what courses practitioners thought were most valuable for future practitioners. On a 1 to 5 scale (5 being the highest), practitioners rated research techniques and computer use at a 3.25 mean score, behind the 4.68 journalism courses received and above the 1.80 foreign languages received.[150] Although identified as a skill with some value, no recommendation on how to incorporate this need into a public relations curriculum was posed.

In his five outcomes of public relations education, Dirk Gibson included research skills as one of the four required skills important to all public relations jobs.[151]

Professors Gay Wakefield and Laura Cottone, APR, in their 1984 literature review of the future of public relations education, questioned "whether the specific academic PR programs offered are truly applicable to today's and tomorrow's job markets."[152] They concluded that curricula should "require courses equipping students as generalists to function in such areas as: planning, management, and evaluation...and research..."[153] No mention, however, of how that equipping should be accomplished.

Professors Judy VanSlyke Turk and Maria P. Russell's 1990 study of managers in a four-state area found that 61.8 percent of the managers said entry-level practitioners should have research skills.[154] Professor James Grunig, University of Maryland, concurred with Turk and Russell: "public relations education will produce the best practitioners if it is taught with a management component when they are identifying issues, researching public opinion (and) evaluating programs..."[155] Grunig concluded that undergraduate programs should prepare students for entry-level roles and "...introduce them to the management of public relations, to communication theory and research methods..."[156] While all three professors cite research as an essential component of management-level public relations, none mentioned how or where a research component should fit into a curriculum.

PRSA's 1993 Professional Progression Curriculum Task Force developed a Public Relations Professional Career Guide which outlined five levels of professional growth for practitioners from entry-level technician to public relations executive. While the introduction to the guide stated one purpose of the outlined requirements was to familiarize educators "...with an overview of the knowledge and abilities that are required throughout a typical public relations career" it also stated that "they (students) should be encouraged to focus on learning and excelling in the basic principles and technical skills that are needed to enter (sic) public relations."[157] That entry-level technician role included research skills described "using computer database programs," "assisting with research," and "fact-finding and interviewing" as essential skills.[158] As practitioners advanced in their careers, the outlined research

duties became more sophisticated. Technician level 2, the typical next step for an experienced entry-level technician, listed "conducting research" and "determining and analyzing constituencies"[159] as expected skills, while Supervisor I, the third job rank, outlined "coordinating the design of research projects" as a major skill requirement.[160] The guide, however, did not go beyond identifying the skills and knowledge needs.

Three major public relations curriculum documents have outlined the attributes of public relations education: the 1975 Commission on Public Relations Education report, co-sponsored by the Association for Education in Journalism and PRSA; the 1981 Commission on Public Relations Education report, co-sponsored by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and PRSA; and the 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education report, also co-sponsored by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and PRSA. The sponsorships of these studies are important because the two sponsors also serve as the accreditation agency for public relations education within a mass communication and/or journalism program.

The changes in the core public relations curricula regarding research education mirrored the changes outlined by the profession. The 1975 report did not include research as one of the core public relations course requirements but did include an introduction to survey research as a related communication subject and identified statistics as part of a general education area in liberal arts and sciences.[161] The 1975 report also recommended subject matter in the form of specific courses.

The 1981 report concentrated on public relations graduate education but also reviewed and revised several of the 1975 report's undergraduate tenets. Research was one area reviewed and revised; the 1981 report found that statistical concepts would be more beneficial when included in broader courses; "statistics, for example, is more effectively studied within a framework of overall research methodology."[162] The Commission recommended that new public relations course requirements should include an introductory research methodology course "dealing with communication theories, processes, statistical analysis, and models."[163] This was an upgrade that reflected the importance of research knowledge and skill for future practitioners.

Ten years after the 1975 report, educators and practitioners began to focus solely on revamping the content and integrity of public relations programs. Based on original research conducted among 1,500 practitioners and educators, the Commission stated: "The reality is that public relations is taught. The Commission's concern was to improve the content of that education."[164]

The recommendations of the 1987 Report zeroed in on course content, rather than specific courses, and included specific content related to teaching research for planning and evaluation. Survey respondents questioned about research skills and knowledge indicated a strong preference for teaching public relations research/designs/processes/techniques (6.12 on a 7.0 scale); public opinion polling/surveying (5.92 on a 7.0 scale); and fact-finding/applied research (5.74 on a 7.0 scale).[165] Respondents also indicated a strong preference for practitioners with program effectiveness measurement skills (6.27 on a 7.0

scale), research planning skills (6.13 on a 7.0 scale); and evaluation tools and/or methods (6.12 on a 7.0 scale).[166]

The Commission report also stated that public relations research is justified because of the "actual or potential impact" on society. "It is research which provides the raw materials to be evaluated in the planning and policy-formulating stage of public relations management."[167] The report specifically outlined that one-half of the 15 semester hours that comprised the studies in public relations should be management-oriented, defined as research, planning and evaluation.[168] The recommended vehicle for attaining these skills is content area devoted to public relations research for planning and evaluation: "they need to know the process of public relations research for planning and evaluating programs of action..."[169] The report is specific in describing the types of research to be addressed because although many of the techniques and methods are similar to social science methods, "public relations research is not only fact-finding research, it is also evaluative research."[170]

> Three types of evaluative research are relevant to public relations. The first entails assessing the organization's environment,...generally called environmental monitoring and evaluation. The second involves techniques for evaluating various courses of action available...under the rubric of operations research. The third focuses on the performance of a program of action to see if it is attaining the sought-after goals or objectives...identified as performance evaluation.[171]

Thus the 1987 report provided the most specific guidelines for how and why public relations research should be incorporated into a public relations program. The 1989 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Task Force Report on Challenges & Opportunities in Journalism and Mass Communication Education included the tenets of the

1987 Report in its curriculum report.[172]

One recent attempt to study the implementation of the 1987 report was done by the Association for Communication Administration (ACA) in 1989 to determine how the commission's requirements were being met. The survey used course titles including the words "Public Relations" to assess how the core requirements, including research, were met. However, what these public relations courses specifically were was never addressed.[173]

Conclusion

The literature has shown that future public relations practitioners face a profession that is changing rapidly and demanding more sophisticated skills and knowledge to manage these changes. The ability to understand and conduct research has been identified as a key skill that all practitioners, from entry-level technician to top management counsel, must possess. The 1993 International Association of Business Communicators' (IABC) Excellence Study listed four top qualities of excellent public relations departments and practitioners:

(a) Practitioners function as strategic managers within the management group;

(b) Practitioners employ two-way communication;

(c) Practitioners support the organization's mission;

(d) Practitioners combine judgment and research.[174]

While one of the four characteristics specifically mentioned research, the other three are research-based operations. Given the range of public relations and related literature as a base, research appears to be a major communication trend, not a flash-in-the-pan issue.

During the last three decades, college and university public relations courses have become one of the main providers of training for future practitioners. Therefore, what these programs provide in research education for public relations is important. The 1987 *Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education* provides important guidelines for providing public relations skills and knowledge that meet the needs of the profession. This study proposes to see how the needs of the profession are being met while describing how the 1987 Commission's report is being implemented.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

General

This study was conducted to gather information about research instruction in undergraduate public relations courses and about public relations practitioners' use of research in their careers.

The population for the education portion of the study was all four-year colleges and universities that had a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter. One of the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) requirements to have a student chapter is that the institution offer "at least five courses in public relations" as outlined in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Bylaws.[1] One of these identified five content or course areas is research. Institutions with public relations courses but no PRSSA chapter were not included because they were under no obligation to follow the 1987 Commission's guidelines. Because the population included a relatively small number (179) institutions, all were included in the survey.

The population for the public relations practitioners' part of the survey was drawn from the 1994-1995 Public Relations Society of America directory. These practitioners are PRSA members and so are appropriate people to

survey for information on public relations education areas outlined by PRSA.

Several types of information were sought from each group of participants:

(1) educators were asked how public relations research was incorporated into their public relations courses, either as a separate course and/or components of other public relations courses;

(2) educators were also asked about their attitudes and values about public relations research;

(3) educators were asked general information questions regarding their educational and professional public relations background and experience as well as their experience with different types of research.

The following information was asked of practitioners:

(1) the current use of research in their public relations work;

(2) how they learned their research skills and knowledge;

(3) their values and attitudes about research for public relations .

The Populations

A list of United States colleges and universities with PRSSA chapters is included in Appendix A. Schools are listed alphabetically by school, and practitioners are listed alphabetically by name. Because the public relations research requirement can be addressed either in a separate public relations research course or incorporated into other public relations courses, each of the 179 schools was called to obtain the names of all faculty teaching public relations so all possible research curriculum combinations would be answered

by people familiar with the research component(s) of their courses. This also eliminated having one person in each school, such as the chairperson or public relations sequence coordinator, responsible for passing out surveys, collecting them, and returning them. Four hundred and seventy-one personalized surveys were mailed to educators at the 179 schools.

Practitioners were chosen by simple random selection from a random starting point in the PRSA directory. Each 35th person was chosen, resulting in 400 practitioners who received surveys. Practitioners in foreign countries, retired practitioners and associate members of PRSA were excluded from this study as the target was to survey practitioners who had full membership in PRSA and were assumed to be currently practicing. Practitioners from foreign countries were excluded because of the postal situation.

Cover Letters and the Survey Instrument

A week before the survey was mailed, a direct mail postcard alerting survey respondents that they had been chosen for this study was mailed and that the survey would follow in about a week. A copy of the postcard is included in Appendix B.

Different cover letters were written for educators and practitioners; the educators' letter focused on the value of their responses for public relations education, and the practitioners' letter focused on their perspective as "front-line" participants in research in their jobs. The cover letter for educators is included in Appendix C, and the practitioners' letter is included in Appendix D.

The educators' survey instruments included eight major sections:

Section A: How Research Fits Into Your Public Relations Program

Section B: Public Relations Research Course

Section C: Public Relations Principles/Introductory Course

Section D: Public Relations Writing or Production Course

Section E: Public Relations Case Studies/Advanced Public Relations Course

Section F: Public Relations Campaigns or Programs Course

Section G: Public Relations Values and Attitudes

Section H: About Your Program and Yourself

Section A: How Research Fits Into Your Public Relations Program.

This general information section was to be completed by the person most responsible for overseeing, either formally or informally, the public relations program in each educational institution.

1A. Is a research methods course required in your public relations program? This information was necessary to discover how many public relations programs satisfied the ACEJMC research requirement with some type of research course as opposed to how many incorporated the research requirement in other public relations courses.

2A. Check all of the research courses that satisfy the public relations research requirement. This information provided the range of courses that public relations programs use to meet the ACEJMC PRSSA chapter requirement.

3A. Stage at which a research course fits into the public relations

sequence. This information provided a way to assess how the research course either followed or preceded other public relations courses and how research knowledge may have been incorporated into public relations courses following research.

4A. Whether the public relations program offered a specific public relations research course. This information was necessary to accurately determine how many programs offered a specific research course for public relations.

5A. Reasons why no public relations research course was offered. This information was necessary to describe what educators in charge of public relations sequences or programs thought were reasons why a public relations research course was not offered.

6A. Concerns in using other departments' research courses. This information was necessary to describe educators' concerns about other types of research courses relation to public relations.

7A. Number of faculty teaching public relations full and part-time. This information was necessary to describe the programs under study.

8A. Number of public relations majors. This information was necessary to describe the programs under study.

Section B: Public Relations Research Course.

This section was answered by all faculty members who had previously taught or were currently teaching a public relations research course.

1B. Research course required or elective. This information was necessary to describe the status of the course within public relations programs.

2B. How many times a week and for how many minutes the course meets.

This information was necessary to standardize time frames between schools which had semesters and quarters so accurate time comparisons could be made.

3B. Where the public relations research course fit in the sequence. This information was necessary to describe how public relations research was taught in relation to other public relations courses in which the skills could be used.

4B. Ranking the objectives for the public relations research course. This information was necessary to determine what educators said was their emphasis in teaching research.

5B. How many clock hours were devoted to different research topics. The answers to this question provided a description of what topics were included in the course and how much time was spent on each topic.

6B. Check all types of research course evaluations and assignments. This information provided a description of the research activities provided in the class.

Section C: Public Relations Principles/Introductory Course.

Section D: Public Relations Writing or Production Course.

Section E: Public Relations Case Studies or Advanced Public Relations Course.

Section F: Public Relations Campaigns Course.

Each of these sections was completed by educators who had taught or were currently teaching the respective public relations course. These courses were selected because they encompass the areas required by ACEJMC for public

relations accreditation and for maintaining a PRSSA chapter.

Each of the sections had the same five questions:

1. How many times a week and the number of minutes the course met. This information allowed standard time frames for semesters and quarters to be calculated.

2. Whether the course was a required or elective course. This information was necessary to describe each course.

3. How many class hours were specifically devoted to research topics within each public relations course. This information was necessary to describe how research was taught within the context of other public relations courses.

4. How many assignments involve specific research activities. These answers provided descriptive information about student practice with research in each course.

5. Rank the objectives for including public relations research in each course. This information was necessary to determine what emphasis research was given in each of the courses.

Section G: Public Relations Values and Attitudes. Responses to these Likert scale items helped identify the attitudes of educators toward research in public relations programs and practice.

1G. Practical research experience is important in public relations undergraduate education.

2G. Public relations research is not different from other types of research.

3G. Undergraduate research instruction in public relations can be

addressed by lecture alone.

4G. Most entry-level public relations jobs do not involve research skills.

5G. To advance in the public relations profession practitioners must have basic research skills.

6G. Public relations academic programs are responsive to the research needs of the profession.

7G. Learning about research in school is preferable to learning about research on the job.

8G. Public relations students' attitudes toward research are influenced by an aversion to numbers.

9G. In public relations practice, academic research is just as important as practical research.

10G. In research, understanding information is more important than generating numbers.

Section H: About Your Program and Yourself... All educators were asked to complete this section which provided individual information about respondents and their programs.

1H. Courses based on semesters or quarters. This information allowed standard time frames for semesters and quarters to be calculated.

2H. Program accreditation by ACEJMC. This information allowed comparisons between accredited and non-accredited programs to be made.

3H. Check all types of research produced during the past 12 months. This information proved a description of the types of research produced by educators who were teaching public relations.

4H. Check all types of research used during the past 12 months. This information provided a description of the types of research used by educators who were teaching public relations.

5H. Full-time or part-time faculty member or graduate assistant. This information described the educators that were surveyed.

6H. Number of years of professional public relations experience, number of years of teaching experience, and number of years in present academic position. This information was necessary to make comparisons between types of research taught in public relations courses and years of educator experience in professional practice and teaching.

7H. Accredited communication professional. This information was necessary to make comparisons between educators who earned some type of professional communication accreditation such APR (accredited in public relations from the Public Relations Society of America) or ABC (accredited business communicator from the International Association of Business Communicators) and those who did not and that relationship to teaching public relations research.

A copy of the educators' questionnaire is included in Appendix E.

The practitioners' questionnaire was organized into the following sections:

Section A: The Role of Research in Your Work

Section B: Public Relations Values and Attitudes

Section C: About yourself

Section A: The Role of Research In Your Work.

1. Within the last 12 months, the number of times practitioners conducted

research or contracted with outside research firms. This information was necessary to determine the sources of public relations research current practitioners were using.

2. Check all of the types of research conducted in the past 12 months. This information was necessary to describe the types of research practitioners conducted themselves.

3. Check all of the types of research used in the past 12 months. This information was necessary to describe the types of research practitioners used but may have not conducted themselves.

4. How practitioners learned to use research. This information described how and where current practitioners learned to use research, especially in relation to their formal education.

5. How practitioners learned to conduct research. This information described how and where current practitioners learned to conduct research, especially in relation to their formal education.

6. Whether practitioners conducted more research now than 12 months ago. This information was necessary where practitioners use of research was increasing.

7. Check all of the reasons practitioners and their staffs were doing more research now. This information described why practitioners said their research use was increasing.

8. Check all of the reasons practitioners and their staffs were not doing more research now. This information described why practitioners said they were not using research.

Section B: Public Relations Attitudes and Values. This section contained the same 10 Likert Scale statements outlined in the educators' questionnaire. The responses of the two groups were compared to discover differences between educators and practitioners and between accredited and non-accredited individuals about their perceptions of public relations research use and education involving public relations research.

Section C: About Yourself.

19. Years as a public relations practitioner. This information was necessary to determine differences between years of professional practice and research use and values.

20. Percentage of time practitioners perform each level of public relations work. This information was necessary to describe the activities of public relations practitioners and compare those levels to research use.

21. Type of public relations work performed. This information described the types of organizations in which public relations practitioners worked and was compared to research use.

22. Accredited or non-accredited status of practitioners. This information described the professional communication status of practitioners and was compared to use research use.

A copy of the practitioners' questionnaire is included in Appendix F.

Each survey questionnaire was given a number so the anonymity of participants would be maintained. When the surveys were returned, the participant's name was checked off a master list, and the number was removed from the survey. Participants were also asked to check a box on their

cover letter and return it with their survey if they wished to receive a summary of the study results. Returned letters were kept separate from the returned surveys so anonymity of participants would be protected.

Procedure

Both the educator and practitioner surveys were pretested for clarity and ease of completion by public relations faculty members generally regarded as leaders in the field of public relations education and who are also noted public relations practitioners, including Dr. Douglas Ann Newsom, Fellow, PRSA, Texas Christian University; Dr. Bob Carrell, APR, Texas Women's University; Dr. Don Stacks, University of Miami; Dr. Don Wright, Fellow, PRSA, University of South Alabama; and Dr. R. John DeSanto, APR, University of Central Oklahoma.

The postcard was mailed to all participants one week before the respective surveys and cover letters. The postcard was mailed the first week of February 1995, followed by the surveys the second week of February 1995. This time was selected because faculty had returned from their winter breaks and January terms, but had not become immersed in spring semester work. The time also coincided with schools on the quarter system as they were not yet in final examination times.

Analysis

General

The purpose of this study was to gather information about the nature and extent of public relations research instruction provided to public relations majors at accredited and non-accredited colleges and universities which have a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter. The study also surveyed practitioners to gather information about the nature and extent of their use of public relations research and to compare their attitudes and values about public relations research to those of educators teaching this type of research.

A sizable portion of the analysis was descriptive using percentages and means. Several comparisons, however, were of particular interest:

a. Extent of public relations research instruction as a function of program accreditation. Because all of the programs included in this study had PRSSA chapters, which requires that programs must offer courses which address five areas of public relations knowledge outlined in the 1987 ACEJMC accreditation guideline report, one could reasonably expect that programs with public relations research courses or strong research components in other key public relations courses would be accredited.

b. Extent of public relations research instruction as a function of educators earning some type of professional communication accreditation. Earning accreditation requires that individuals provide documentation of at least five full years of professional public relations experience, pass a rigorous written

and oral examination, and maintain their accreditation status through continuing professional activities. One could reasonably assume that educators who earned such accreditation might approach teaching research in different ways than non-accredited educators who possibly do not have as much professional affiliation as accredited educators.

c. Type of organization in which public relations practitioners were employed. A variety of organizations traditionally employ public relations practitioners, and one could reasonably expect that different types of organizations might use different and amounts of research.

Tables of Data

The following tables of survey results are included in the study report:

I. Number and Status of Faculty Currently Teaching Public Relations. This table aided in describing the survey population and the breakdown between full and part-time faculty.

II. Experience of Educators Teaching Public Relations. This information aided in describing the survey population by outlining how much teaching and professional public relations experience public relations faculty had.

III. Educators' Personal Accreditation Status. This information aided in comparing the content of accredited and non-accredited educators' classes.

IV. Educators' Research Production and Use During the Past 12 Months. This information aided in describing the background of public relations educators.

V. Number of Accredited Programs and Number of Educators Who Work in

Accredited Programs. This information aided in comparing the public relations program content of accredited and non-accredited schools.

VI. Number of Undergraduate Public Relations Majors Per Program. This table described the student population of public relations majors.

VII. Whether Some Type of Research Course Is Required for Public Relations Majors. This table aided in determining the number of public relations programs that required some type of research for their majors.

VIII. Point Where Some Type of Research Course Requirement Fits in the Public Relations Curriculum. This table aided in determining at where the research course fits into a student's public relations course sequence and provided a basis for comparing accredited and non-accredited programs.

IX. Research Courses Which Satisfy the Public Relations Research Requirement. This table aided in identifying what types of other university research courses met the public relations requirement and provided a basis for comparison between accredited and non-accredited programs.

X. Concerns About Using Other Departments' Research Courses to Fulfill the Public Relations Research Requirement. This information aided in discovering what concerns public relations educators had about other types of research courses and provided a basis for comparison between accredited and non-accredited programs.

XI. Whether a Public Relations Research Course Is Offered or Not. This table aided in identifying the number of public relations research courses offered and provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs.

XII. Reasons Why Public Relations Research Course Not Offered. This table aided in describing why public relations programs did not offer a course in research and provided a basis for comparing accredited and non-accredited programs.

XIII. Number of Public Relations Research Courses Taught. This table aided in describing whether a public relations research course offered was a requirement or elective for public relations majors. It also provided a basis for comparison between accredited and non-accredited programs.

XIV. Where the Public Relations Research Course Fits in the Public Relations Course Sequence. This table aided in describing where specific public relations research courses were located in public relations curricula and provided a basis for accredited and non-accredited programs.

XV. Class Hours Devoted to Topics in Public Relations Research Courses. This table aided in describing the types of research topics addressed and the number of hours devoted to each topic in public relations research courses and it provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs.

XVI. Types of Assignments in Public Relations Research Courses. This table aided in describing what research assignments students completed and provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs.

XVII. Required & Elective Public Relations Core Courses. This table aided in describing the curriculum status of other core public relations courses and provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs.

XVIII. Class Hours Devoted to Research in Core Public Relations Core Courses. This table aided in describing the number of class hours educators

taught research. It also provided a basis for comparing accredited and non-accredited programs and for comparing educators' number of years of professional public relations experience with class hours devoted to research.

XIX. Research Assignments in Core Public Relations Courses. This table aided in describing the variety of research assignments used in core public relations courses and provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs. It also provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited educators.

XX. Educators' Top-Ranked Objectives for Research Components in Public Relations Courses. This table aided in describing educators' course objectives for including research in public relations core courses. It also provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited programs and a comparison of accredited and non-accredited educators.

XXI. Time Spent on Public Relations Tasks. This table aided in describing the percentage of time practitioners spent on three levels of public relations tasks and provided a comparison between accredited and non-accredited practitioners.

XXII. Years of Public Relations Experience. This table aided in describing the experience of public relations practitioners.

XXIII. Practitioner Accreditation Status. This aided in comparing practitioners' use of research.

XXIV. Types of Public Relations Organizations In Which Practitioners Work. This table aided in describing the different types of public relations organizations represented in this study.

XXV. Whether Practitioners Increased Research Use In Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing practitioners' research use during the past year, and provided a basis for comparison of accredited and non-accredited practitioners.

XXVI. Reasons Why Practitioners Used More Research During the Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing why more research is conducted.

XXVII. Reasons Why Practitioners Did Not Use More Research During the Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing why practitioners said they were not using more research.

XXVIII. Percentage of Time Practitioners or Their Staffs Conducted Research During the Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing the amount of time practitioners or their staffs conducted research. It also provided a basis for comparison between accredited and non-accredited practitioners, a comparison between types of public relations work, and a relationship between the number of years of professional experience and time spent conducting research.

XXIX. Practitioners' Use of Outside Research Firms During the Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing practitioners' use of outside research firms and provided a basis for comparison between accredited and non-accredited practitioners. It also provided a basis for comparison among different types of public relations work and a basis for comparison between number of years of experience and use of public relations research firms.

XXX. Types of Research Practitioners Produced During the Past Twelve Months. This table aided in describing the different research methods

practitioners conducted themselves. It also provided a comparison between accredited and non-accredited practitioners and among types of public relations organizations.

XXXI. Types of Research Practitioners Used During the Past Twelve Months. This information aided in describing the different types of research used by practitioners.

XXXII. Ways Practitioners Learned to Produce and Use Research. This table aided in describing how practitioners gained their research knowledge and skills.

The following tables represented faculty and practitioner responses to Likert Scale items and depicted each group's attitudes toward different aspects of public relations research and education. The tables also provided a basis for comparing accredited and non-accredited programs and accredited and non-accredited educators and practitioners.

XXXIII. Agreement With The Statement That Practical Research Experience Is Important In Public Relations Undergraduate Education.

XXXIV. Agreement With The Statement That Public Relations Research Is Not Different From Other Types of Research.

XXXV. Agreement With The Statement That Undergraduate Research Instruction Can Be Addressed By Lecture Alone.

XXXVI. Agreement With The Statement That Most Entry-level Public Relations Jobs Do Not Involve Research Skills.

XXXVII. Agreement With The Statement That To Advance In The Public Relations Profession Practitioners Must Have Basic Research Skills.

XXXVIII. Agreement With The Statement That Public Relations Academic Programs Are Responsive To The Research Needs of the Profession.

XXXIX. Agreement With The Statement That Learning About Research In School Is Preferable To Learning About Research On The Job.

XXXX. Agreement With The Statement That Public Relations Students' Attitudes Toward Research Are Influenced By An Aversion To Numbers.

XXXXI. Agreement With The Statement That In Public Relations Practice, Academic Research Is Just As Important As Practical Research.

XXXXII. Agreement With The Statement That In Research, Understanding Information Is More Important Than Generating Numbers.

Endnotes

[1]"Public Relations Society of America Bylaws," Public Relations Journal, 1994-1995 Register Issue, (New York: Public Relations Society of America, June 1994): xxxi.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study used two questionnaires to obtain data about public relations research and how public relations research is used in professional practice. One questionnaire was sent to all public relations educators teaching in programs with an active Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter. This group was chosen because schools that have a chapter must provide instruction in five public relations areas, including research, as outlined by the 1987 report *The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education*[1] and incorporated into PRSA's bylaws about student public relations chapters.[2] One hundred seventy-nine schools have PRSSA chapters. All schools were included in the survey, and educators were identified by calling each school and asking for the names of educators teaching public relations. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about how public relations research was taught at the undergraduate level.

Of the 461 educators who comprised the survey population teaching public relations courses during the winter and/or spring academic term of 1995, 260

responded. Of those 260, three questionnaires were returned unopened, and 10 individuals returned their questionnaires because they said they did not teach public relations. That left 247 usable questionnaires for a return rate of 56.3 percent. Because of the size of the population, the initial return rate was considered satisfactory and no follow-up mailing to educators was done.

Another questionnaire was sent to 400 public relations practitioners who were asked about the use of research in their work. A random sample of 400 public relations practitioners drawn from the 1994-95 Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) directory were surveyed about the use of research in their public relations work. Fourteen of the questionnaires were returned marked "undeliverable" for a total of 213 responses, a return rate of 53.2 percent with one follow-up mailing. Of the 213 questionnaires, 199 were usable.

Description of the Public Relations Programs

Tables I, II, III, IV and V provide descriptive information about the educators and programs in this study. Respondents were asked to complete the general information section of the questionnaire if they identified themselves as the person considered to be the sequence coordinator or the person most responsible for overseeing the public relations curriculum in each of their respective schools. Thus, a variety of people including chairpersons, officially recognized or informally recognized public relations sequence or program coordinators, or educators who had taught public relations for a

number of years could complete the general program descriptive section if they felt qualified to do so.

Table I shows the number and status of faculty members that coordinators identified as public relations teachers during the 1995 winter/spring semester.

Table I
Number and Status of Faculty Currently Teaching Public Relations
N=194

		Faculty Status			
Number of faculty	N	Full-time		Part-time	
One to two members	132	73	62%	59	78%
Three to four members	50	38	32	12	16
Five to six members	7	3	3	4	5
More than six members	5	4	3	1	1
TOTAL	194	118	100%	76	100%

Table I shows that most public relations sequences in this study have one to four faculty members, with more than half having only one to two faculty members both full and part-time. Only a few programs have more than five to six faculty members teaching full or part-time.

Table II shows the responses educators gave to questions about their experience as public relations practitioners and as teachers.

Table II
Experience of Educators Teaching Public Relations
N=460*

Years	Public Relations Experience		Teaching Experience	
0 - 10	108	50%	126	52%
11 - 20	65	30	82	34
21 - 30	34	16	27	11
31 - 40	10	4	7	3
TOTAL	217	100%	241	100%

*Multiple responses as respondents answered both questions.

The responses indicate that the majority of public relations educators in this study tended to have fewer than 20 years of public relations experience and fewer than 20 years of teaching experience. One hundred eight educators reported that they had fewer than 10 years of experience as public relations practitioners; 65 said they had between 11 and 20 years of public relations experience. One hundred twenty-six educators said they had fewer than 10 years of teaching experience; 82 said they had between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience. Very few educators had more than 30 years of public relations experience and/or thirty years of teaching experience. Educators in this study had an average of 13.3 years of professional public relations experience and 11.9 years of full-time teaching experience.

Table III shows the number of educators in this study who have earned some type of individual public relations accreditation.

Table III
Educators' Personal Accreditation Status
N=241

Status	Number	
Accredited	79	29%
Non-accredited	162	71
TOTAL	241	100%

In this study, fewer than one-third of the educators had either earned Accredited in Public Relations (APR) from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) or Accredited Business Communicator (ABC) from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Educators reported they also produced and used research in the their academic work and in their public relations work for clients and projects. Table IV summarizes the different types and amounts of research educators said they produced as original research during the past 12 months. In this study, research production means that educators actually conducted the research themselves.

The table also summarizes the different types and amounts of research educators used during the past 12 months. In this study, research use means that educators did not actually conduct the research themselves, for example, they may have hired a research firm to do it, or they may have purchased research from other sources.

Table IV shows the types of research educators either conducted themselves or used during the past 12 months.

Table IV
Educators' Research Production and Use
During the Past 12 Months
N=930*

Research Type	N	Produced		Used	
Published academic	318	124	28%	194	40%
Unpublished academic	276	151	34	125	26
PR client/project	317	160	36	157	33
Other	19	12**	2	7***	1
TOTAL	930	447	100%	483	100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied
**Book (1); popular journal (4); speech (1); computer program development (2)
***Computer (6); secondary data (1)

Slightly more than one-third (36%) of the educators said they conducted research for a public relations client or project in the past 12 months, while one-third (33%) reported using research for a client or project in the past 12 months.

Table V shows the number of programs that public relations coordinators identified as accredited programs. It also shows the number of educators who said they worked in accredited programs.

Table V
Number of Accredited Programs and
Number of Educators Who Work in Accredited Programs
N=416

Status	N	Accredited		Non-accredited		TOTAL
Number of programs	177	51	29%	126	71%	100%
Number of educators in programs	239	116	49	123	51	100%

Slightly less than one-third (29%) of the programs in this study are accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass

Communication (ACEJMC) while more than two-thirds (71%) of the programs are not accredited. However, the number of educators who returned their questionnaires shows that nearly one-half (49%) of them reported working in accredited programs while just over one-half (51%) said they did not work in an accredited program.

The number of public relations majors per program is presented in Table VI.

Table VI
Number of Undergraduate
Public Relations Majors Per Program
N=124

Majors	Number	
Fewer than 100	60	48%
101 - 200	49	40
201 - 300	12	10
More than 300	3	2
TOTAL	124	100%

Nearly one-half (48%) of the public relations programs in this study have fewer than 100 majors, while a small percentage have more than 300 majors. The majority of programs appear to be smaller in size rather than larger and range from fewer than 100 majors up to 200 majors.

Research in Public Relations Curricula

The next set of tables shows the results of information coordinators

provided about the general status of research instruction in their undergraduate public relations programs. The focus was on identifying whether public relations majors were required to take a research course of some type.

Table VII
Whether Some Type of Research Course Is Required for Public Relations Majors
N=126

Course	N	Accredited Programs		Non-Accredited Programs		TOTAL
Research course is required	80	34	43%	46	57	100%
Research course is elective	46	17	46%	29	54	100%
TOTAL	126	51		75		100%

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the coordinators said a research course of some kind was a requirement for students majoring in public relations. Slightly more than one-third (37%) said no research course of any type was required.

A difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and whether some type of research course was required. Public relations programs or sequences that were part of an accredited communication program were more likely to require some type of research course than were public relations programs that were not part of an accredited communication program (Chi-Square 7.382, df=1, <.05).

Table VIII shows the points in the curriculum at which programs require the research course be taken.

Table VIII
Point Where Some Type of Research Course Requirement Fits in the Public Relations Curriculum
N=134*

Research Course Position	N	Accredited Programs		Non-Accredited Programs		Total
Before campaigns course	29	16	55%	13	45	100%
Before adv./cases course	25	13	52%	12	48	100%
Any time during sequence	24	9	38%	15	62	100%
With the cases course	11	4	36%	7	64	100%
Junior or senior status	10	3	30%	7	70	100%
With campaigns course	9	3	33%	6	67	100%
With principles course	7	3	43%	4	57	100%
Other	7	3	43%	4	57	100%
Before writing course	6	1	17%	5	83	100%
With writing course	6	3	50%	3	50	100%
TOTAL	134	58		76		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied.

Of the programs which require some type of research course to fit into a sequence of public relations classes, 29 coordinators said that research should be completed before the campaigns course, and 25 said that students should complete the research requirement before they take advanced public relations/case studies. The other responses indicate that the research course requirement can be met at a variety of points in a public relations sequence.

A difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and the requirement to complete a research course before taking the campaigns course. Accredited programs were more likely to require research

before campaigns than non-accredited programs (Chi-Square 29.241, df=1, <.05).

A difference was also found between accredited and non-accredited programs and the requirement that a research course should be completed before taking the advanced public relations/case studies course. Accredited programs were more likely to require the completion of a research course before enrolling in an advanced public relations/case studies course (Chi-Square 7.142, df=1, <.05).

Table IX lists the courses considered satisfactory in fulfilling the research course requirement for public relations majors.

Table IX
Research Courses Which Satisfy the Public Relations Research Requirement
N=90*

Type of Course	N	Accredited Program		Non-Accredited Program		Total
Mass Communication Research	45	22	49%	23	51	100%
Public Relations Research	33	15	45%	18	55	100%
Speech Communication Research	12	4	33%	8	67	100%
Business/Marketing Research	11	6	55%	5	45	100%
Sociology Research	7	3	43%	4	57	100%
Math/Statistics Research	6	5	83%	1	17	100%
Psychology Research	4	3	75%	1	25	100%
Any research course	4	2	50%	2	50	100%
TOTAL	122	60		62		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied.

Although a variety of research courses were listed as acceptable courses for fulfilling the research course requirement, program coordinators most frequently checked the mass communication, public relations and/or speech

communication research courses used to meet this requirement.

One difference was found between accredited programs and non-accredited programs and the courses which students might take to complete the research requirement. Accredited programs were more likely to accept a mass communication research course as part of their public relations program requirements than were non-accredited programs (Chi-Square 8.761, df=1, <.05).

Table X shows the concerns program coordinators voiced about using other department's research courses to satisfy the public relations requirement.

Table X
Concerns About Using Other Department's Research Courses to Fulfill the Public Relations Research Requirement
N=146*

Concern	N	Accredited Programs		Non-Accredited Programs		Total
Not enough relation to public relations	80	32	40%	48	60	100%
Not enough hands-on practice	36	18	50%	18	50	100%
Too statistically oriented	18	10	56%	8	44	100%
Too theoretical	12	5	42%	7	58	100%
TOTAL	146	65		81		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied.

More than one-half of the respondents cited "not enough relation to public relations" as a concern while one-quarter of the respondents said a lack of hands-on research practice was also a concern.

A difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and their concern about not enough practice. Coordinators of accredited

programs were more likely to voice that concern than were coordinators of non-accredited programs (Chi-Square 8.861, df=1, <.05).

Table XI shows the responses to the question of whether or not a public relations research course was offered, and if it was not offered, whether it would be offered within the next year.

Table XI
Whether a Public Relations Research Course
Is Offered or Not
N=126

Research Course Status	N	Accredited Programs		Non-accredited Programs		Total
No; & no plans to offer w/i 1 year	51	17	33%	34	67%	100%
Public relations research course offered	47	24	51	23	49	100%
No; unsure about plans for PR research course	23	12	52	11	48	100%
No; but plans to offer one w/i 1 year	5	3	60	2	40	100%
TOTAL	126	56		70		100%

Forty-seven (37%) of the 126 program coordinators said their programs offered a public relations research course while 79 said their programs did not offer a research course specifically designed for public relations. Of those 79, only five indicated their programs were planning to add such a course within a year. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of the coordinators were unsure about plans to offer a public relations research course within a year.

There was a difference between accredited and non-accredited programs

and whether a public relations research course was offered. Accredited programs were more likely than non-accredited programs to have such a course (Chi-Square 10.170, df=1, <.05).

Reasons why programs do not offer public relations research courses are listed in Table XII.

Table XII
Reasons Why Public Relations Research Course Not Offered
Number=114*

Reason	N	Accredited Programs		Non-accredited Programs		Total
Other university research courses suffice	44	15	34%	29	66	100%
No room in curriculum	33	13	39%	20	61	100%
Lack of faculty to teach research	19	9	47%	10	53	100%
Cost	10	6	60%	4	40	100%
Lack of expertise to teach research	4	1	25%	3	75	100%
Other	5	2	40%	3	60	100%
TOTAL	115	46		69		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied.

Two reasons -- other university research courses were adequate and a lack of room in current public relations curriculum -- comprise the majority (67%) of the responses. There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited programs and the reasons why public relations research courses were not offered.

Public Relations Research Courses Offered

The tables in this section provide information about the public relations research courses taught during the 1995 winter/spring semester. Respondents who answered these questions included all educators who had taught or were teaching a public relations research course at that time. The rationale for including the entire population of educators teaching public relations was to get a comprehensive view of how the public relations research was taught and what types of topics were contained in class discussions and assignments. Thus, several educators teaching public relations research from the same institution might answer the same questions.

Table XIII shows the number of public relations research courses that were taught or had been taught by educators.

Table XIII
Number of Public Relations Research Courses Taught
N=69

Research Course Status	N	Accredited Programs		Non-accredited Programs		Total
Course required	59	32	54%	27	46	100%
Course is elective	10	5	50%	5	50	100%
TOTAL	69	37		32		100%

Regardless of program accreditation status, a majority of the educators said the course they taught was a required course in their program. A difference, however, was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and requiring that students take the public relations research course

(Chi-Square 18.592, df=1, <.05). Accredited programs were more likely to require a public relations course than non-accredited programs.

Table XIV points out the positions where the public relations research course is placed within public relations sequences.

Table XIV
Where the Public Relations Research Course
Fits in the Public Relations Sequence
N=90*

Position	N	Accredited Programs		Non-accredited Programs		Total
PR Principles course taken first	40	25	63%	15	37	100%
Any time during PR course sequence	20	9	45%	11	55	100%
PR Writing/Production course taken first	16	9	56%	7	44	100%
Adv. PR/case studies taken first	6	5	83%	1	17	100%
Research is first course	4	0	0%	4	100	100%
PR Campaigns taken first	4	2	50%	2	50	100%
TOTAL	90	50		40		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied

Responses indicate that the public relations research course appears to fit toward the middle of most programs' public relations coursework, after a public relations principles or introductory course yet before the advanced public relations/case studies course and the campaigns course.

A difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs

and requiring the principles/introductory course to be completed before research is taken (Chi-Square 20.115, df=1, <.05). Accredited programs were more likely to require an introductory or public relations principles course before research could be taken.

Another difference was between accredited and non-accredited programs and programs' requirements that a public relations writing/production course precede the research course (Chi-Square 4.650, df=1, <.05). Accredited programs were more likely to require students to complete a writing/production before taking research. Although there is a difference, the results are suspect because the number of programs which answered this question is small.

Table XV shows the number of class hours educators reported they spend on various topics in the research course.

Table XV
Class Hours Devoted to Topics in
Public Relations Research Courses
N=236*

		Hours Spent								
Topics	N	0-3		4-7		8-11		11+		Overall
Research design	48	4	8%	11	23	6	13	27	56	100%
Role of research	47	16	34%	19	40	8	17	4	9	100%
Data analysis	46	5	11%	10	22	14	30	17	37	100%
Research ethics	43	28	65%	9	21	5	12	1	3	100%
Research writing	42	11	26%	18	43	6	14	7	17	100%
Other	10	9	90%	0	0	0	0	1	10	100%
TOTAL	236	73		67		39		59		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied

More than 90 percent of the educators who taught a public relations

research course said they spent more than four class hours of 50 minutes each teaching research design; of these more than one-half said they spent more than 11 hours on that topic. Educators also devoted fewer than seven hours to the role of research, but did spend more than eight class hours on data analysis. More than two-thirds of the educators (69%) said they allotted fewer than seven class hours on research writing, and about two-thirds (65%) said they spent fewer than three hours on research ethics.

A Pearson correlation analysis failed to show any relationship between program accreditation and the number of class hours educators spent on research.

Table XVI shows the answers educators gave to the question of what types of learning experiences they provided or required in their public relations research courses.

Table XVI
Types of Assignments in Public Relations Research Courses
N=296*

Type of Assignment	N	Accredited Programs		Non-accredited Programs		Total
Examinations	59	33	56%	26	44	100%
Data analysis	55	30	55%	25	45	100%
Library research	54	30	56%	24	44	100%
Conduct original research	48	25	52%	23	48	100%
Database research	42	24	57%	18	43	100%
Term papers	38	22	58%	16	42	100%
TOTAL	296	164		132		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied

The numbers show that assignments appear to be fairly evenly distributed among the different types, with no one type of assignment more prevalent than another. There is no difference between program accreditation and the types of assignments made. There is also no relationship between the educators' years of professional experience and the types of assignments, nor is there any relationship between the educators' years of teaching experience and the types of assignments in the research course. There is also no difference between educators' professional accreditation status and the types of assignments they made in the research courses.

Research Components in Other Core Public Relations Courses

Because public relations is described as a required *area* rather than a required *course* in the 1987 ACEJMC guidelines for undergraduate education,[3] other core public relations courses play a part in teaching research.

The tables in this section highlight the responses educators gave about the research components in the traditional core public relations courses: principles or introduction to public relations; public relations writing and/or production; advanced public relations/case studies; and public relations campaigns.

Table XVII shows the required and elective status of each of the four core public relations courses in this study.

Table XVII
Required & Elective Public Relations Core Courses
N=565*

		Accredited Programs			Non-accredited Programs				
Course	N	Required		Elective	Required		Elective		Total
PR Principles	181	80	44%	3 2	89	49	9	5	100%
PR Writing	148	77	52%	5 3	53	36	13	9	100%
PR Cases	139	54	39%	9 6	61	44	15	11	100%
PR Campaigns	97	44	45%	2 2	42	43	9	10	100%
TOTAL	565	255		19	245		46		100%

*Multiple responses as one teacher may teach several classes

Nearly all of the core courses are required courses, regardless of whether the program is accredited or not. One difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and whether the public relations writing course was required or not (Chi-Square 5.200, df=1, <.05). Accredited public relations programs more often require a public relations writing course than do non-accredited programs.

Educators were also asked how many class hours they specifically devoted to research topics in the four core public relations classes. Table XVIII summarizes class hours devoted to research in those courses.

Table XVIII
Class Hours Devoted to Research in
Core Public Relations Courses
N=502*

		Hours								
Course	N	0-3		4-7		8-11		11+		Overall
PR Principles	171	64	37%	68	40	28	17	11	6	100%
Adv PR/Cases	126	27	21%	35	28	30	24	34	27	100%
PR Writing	117	54	46%	40	34	16	14	7	6	100%
PR Campaigns	88	10	11%	22	25	26	30	30	34	100%
TOTAL	502	155		165		100		82		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents answered all that applied

More than one-half of the educators said they spent fewer than seven class hours of 50 minutes each specifically addressing research topics in their principles course. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of the educators teaching public relations writing/production courses said they spent fewer than seven class hours on research topics. Educators in advanced public relations/ case studies and public relations campaigns, in comparison, spent more than seven hours on research topics in their respective classes.

One difference was found between educators in accredited programs and educators in non-accredited programs and the number of class hours spent on research topics in the public relations principles course (Chi-Square 6.55, df=1, <.05). Educators in accredited programs were more likely to spend more hours on research topics than educators in non-accredited programs.

There were no relationships between educators' years of professional public relations experience and the number of class hours devoted to research topics in any of the four core courses, nor were there any relationships between educators' years of teaching and the number of class hours devoted to research

topics in any of the four courses.

Table XIX summarizes the types of research assignments in the four public relations core courses. Educators were asked to check all the types of specific research assignments they assigned or used in their courses. Discussing research could include either in-class or out-of-class work, but the focus was mainly on talking about research; the main point of this assignment was probably to familiarize students with the language and process of research. Library research could mean any kind of material found in a library, but primarily focused on print-type materials such as books, journals and newspapers; the assignment would most likely be used to familiarize students with locating information. Original research assignments could include any project or client where the student was to conduct his or her own research to solve a problem; the main point of the assignment was likely to give students hands-on practice on conducting new research. Data analysis or interpretation could have included looking at data someone else had gathered or could have involved analyzing data that the student produced; the main point of the project, however, was probably to make sense out of data. Database research is a relatively new research process involving computers and electronic sources of information. The main object of this assignment might have been to involve students with both the hardware and software to access useful information.

Table XIX
Research Assignments in Core Public Relations Courses
N=1718*

Course	N	Type & Number of Research Assignments: Discuss Research		Library Research		Original Research		Data Analysis		Database Research		Total
PR Principles												
•Acc'd prog.	230	60	26%	58	25	46	20	41	18	25	11	100%
•Non-accd. prog	263	73	28%	60	23	55	21	49	18	26	10	100%
Adv PR/Cases												
•Acc'd prog.	230	50	22%	48	21	49	21	44	19	39	17	100%
•Non-accd. prog.	244	54	22%	55	23	53	22	50	20	32	13	100%
PR Writing												
•Acc'd prog.	242	53	22%	57	23	57	23	40	17	35	15	100%
•Non-accd. prog.	178	39	22%	46	26	36	20	34	19	23	13	100%
PR Campaigns												
•Acc'd prog.	149	32	21%	31	21	34	23	27	18	25	17	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	182	36	20%	38	21	42	23	37	20	29	16	100%
TOTAL	1718	397		393		372		322		234		100%

*Multiple responses as respondents completed all that applied

The numbers show that more assignments involving discussing research appear in the public relations principles and public relations writing/production courses than in the other courses. Research assignments also appear more evenly spaced out over the course of classes in advanced public relations/case studies and public relations campaigns classes. Assignments in research also appear overall to be evenly distributed in both accredited and non-accredited programs.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited programs and the types of research assignments used in the public relations principles/introductory course, in the advanced public relations/case studies course, in the public relations writing/production course, or in the public relations campaigns course.

There was also no difference between accredited and non-accredited educators and the types of research assignments they made in any of the four courses.

Table XX shows the educators' top-ranked objectives for each course.

Table XX
Educators' Top-Ranked Objectives for
Research Components in Public Relations Courses
N=621*

		Objectives									
Course	N	Understand Research		Use Research		Evaluate Research		Conduct Research		Overall
PR Principles										
•Accredited prog.	80	57	71%	19	24	4	5	0	0	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	103	73	71%	22	21	7	7	1	1	100%
PR Writing/Prod.										
•Accredited prog.	68	33	49%	34	50	0	0	1	1	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	57	14	25%	31	54	10	18	2	3	100%
Adv. PR/Cases										
•Accredited prog.	65	23	35%	35	54	1	2	6	9	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	74	26	35%	29	39	11	15	8	11	100%
PR Campaigns										
•Accredited prog.	47	12	26%	22	47	2	4	11	23	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	53	18	34%	17	32	7	13	11	21	100%
PR Research										
•Accredited prog.	38	20	53%	12	32	4	10	2	5	100%
•Non-acc'd prog.	36	21	58%	10	28	3	8	2	6	100%
TOTAL	621	297		231		49		44		100%

*Multiple responses as educators may have ranked more than one course.

Nearly three-fourths (71%) of the educators teaching public relations principles said understanding the role of research was the most important research objective for that course. In the public relations writing/production course the emphasis in accredited programs was almost evenly split between understanding the role of research and using research, while in non-accredited

programs the emphasis was on using research. In advanced public relations/case studies, educators ranked using research as the main objective, and in public relations campaigns educators also ranked using research as the top research objective. In public relations research, more than one-half of the educators (55%) said the top-ranked objective was understanding research.

One difference was found between accredited and non-accredited programs and ranking research objectives. Accredited programs were more likely than non-accredited programs to cite understanding research as the most important objective in the public relations writing/production course (Chi-Square 9.013, df=1, <.05).

Public Relations Practitioners and Research

Practitioners were also surveyed to find out more about their use of research on the job, how they learned to conduct and use research, and what they thought about research education.

Practitioners were asked to provide the amount of time they spent doing different types of public relations tasks; specifically the amount of time they devoted to counseling tasks, including planning, directing, implementing and evaluating projects; technical tasks, including carrying out public relations projects, writing and/or producing materials; and administrative tasks, including budgeting and personnel work. Table XXI shows the breakdown of practitioners' work according to those three levels.

Table XXI
Time Spent on Public Relations Tasks
N = 581*

Task Type	N	Average Amount of Time
Counseling	195	41%
Technical	193	42
Administrative	193	17
TOTAL	581	100%

*Multiple responses as respondents completed all that applied.

Respondents in this survey spent about the equal amounts of time performing counseling and technician duties, but were involved in fewer administrative-type activities.

Table XXII shows the years of experience public relations practitioners in this survey possessed.

Table XXII
Years of Public Relations Experience
N = 193

Years	N	Percent
0-5	24	12%
6-10	51	26
11-15	47	24
16-20	30	16
21-25	19	10
26-30	15	8
More than 30	7	4
TOTAL	193	100%

One-half of the respondents in this study had between six and 15 years of

public relations experience as practitioners, while another 12 percent had fewer than five years. Only a handful of practitioners had more than 30 years of public relations experience; those practitioners ranged from 32 to 50 years of practice with an average of 39 years.

Another question respondents answered was whether or not they had earned accreditation through the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Table XXIII shows that breakdown.

Table XXIII
Practitioner Accreditation Status
N = 197

Status	N	Percent
Accredited (APR)	77	39%
Not accredited	120	61
TOTAL	197	100%

About 40 percent of the respondents in this survey had earned accreditation, while more than one-half had not earned it. The percentage of practitioners in this study who are accredited is also indicative of at least five years of professional practice because one of the criteria to sit for the accreditation examination is completion of five years of professional experience.

Respondents were also asked about the type of public relations organization in which they worked. Table XXIV shows those responses.

Table XXIV
Type of Public Relations Organization
In Which Practitioners Work
N = 195

Organization Type	N	Percent
Corporation	73	37%
Agency	46	24
Non-profit	44	23
Government	16	8
Education	10	5
Other	06	3
TOTAL	195	100%

Practitioners in corporations provided the most responses to this survey (73), nearly one and one-half as many as agency practitioners who provided the second most responses (46). Non-profit organization practitioners contributed nearly one-quarter of the responses (44), while government, education and others comprised the rest.

Practitioners were asked whether they used more research in the past twelve months than they had in previous years. Table XXV shows their responses.

Table XXV
Whether Practitioners Increased Research Use in Past Twelve Months
N = 192

		Practitioner Status				
Research Use	N	Accredited		Non-accredited		Overall
Increased use	105	45	43%	60	57	100%
No increase	87	30	34%	57	66	100
TOTAL	192	75		117		100%

Fewer than one-half (43%) of the accredited practitioners said they increased their research use during the past 12 months while more than one-half (57%) of the non-accredited practitioners said they increased their research use. Slightly more than one-third (34%) of the accredited practitioners said they did not increase their research use, and two-thirds (66%) of the non-accredited practitioners said they did not use more research. The apparent differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Table XXVI summarizes the responses practitioners gave when asked why they used more research in the past twelve months.

Table XXVI
Reasons Why Practitioners Used More Research
During the Past Twelve Months
N = 332*

Reason	N	Percent
Research provides planning information	108	33%
Research helps measure results	99	30
Research allows program adjustments	78	23
Management requires research	31	9
Clients request research	13	4
Research provides accountability	3	1
TOTAL	332	100%

*Multiple responses as respondents checked all that applied.

Respondents cited planning and evaluating public relations effort as the most important reasons they used more research in the past 12 months. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents (23%) also cited research as important in making adjustments in public relations programs while programs are being conducted. Fewer than 10 percent of the respondents said that management

requires research or that clients request research.

Table XXVII summarizes practitioners' responses to the question of why they were not using more research.

Table XXVII
Reasons Why Practitioners Did Not Use More Research
During the Past Twelve Months
N = 245*

Reason	N	Percent
Cost	66	27%
Time constraints	58	24
Lack of people to do research	43	18
Clients don't want it	29	12
Management doesn't require it	26	11
Not sure how to do research	11	4
Current level of research is OK	6	2
Other departments do research	4	1
Projects don't require research	2	1
TOTAL	245	100%

*Multiple responses were possible as respondents checked all that applied.

Twenty-seven percent, slightly more than one-quarter of the respondents, cited cost as the number one reason for not doing more research. About one-quarter (24%) of the practitioners also said time constraints were a major reason for not doing more research. About one-fifth (18%) of the respondents said a lack of people to do research resulted in a lack of research, and 12 percent said management did not require research in their organizations.

Table XXVIII summarizes the responses of practitioners to provide the percentage of time they or their staff members spent conducting research

during the past twelve months.

Table XXVIII
Percentage of Time Practitioners or Their Staffs
Conducted Research During The Past Twelve Months
N = 162

		Practitioner Status				
Percentage of Time	N	Accredited		Non-accredited		Overall
Less than 25%	117	47	40%	70	60	100%
25-50%	42	18	43%	24	57	100%
51-75%	2	1	50%	1	50	100%
More than 75%	1	0	0%	1	100	100%
TOTAL	162	66		96		100%

This table shows that almost three-quarters (72%) of the practitioners in this survey spent less than 25 percent of their time conducting research in their day-to-day work. Another one quarter -- 26 percent -- said they spent between 25 to 50 percent of their time conducting research. Only a very few practitioners said they spent more than 50 percent of their time conducting research.

However, there was no difference between accredited and non-accredited practitioners and the percent of time spent conducting research.

Because not all research used by practitioners is done by practitioners themselves, respondents were also asked about their use of outside research firms during the past 12 months. Table XXIX shows those responses.

Table XXIX
Practitioners' Use of Outside Research Firms During
The Past Twelve Months
N = 124

	Practitioner Status				
Number of times	N	Accredited		Non-accredited	Overall
Less than 5 times	104	44	42%	60	58	100%
5-10 times	18	7	39%	11	61	100%
More than 10 times	4	1	25%	3	75	100%
TOTAL	126	52		74		100%

A majority of practitioners said they used outside research firms fewer than five times during the past 12 months. Only 18 of the 126 practitioners said they used an outside firm between five and 10 times, while only four practitioners used a firm more than 10 times.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited practitioners and the use of research firms, nor was there any difference among the different types of public relations organizations and the use of research firms.

Table XXX shows the types of research practitioners said they conducted or produced during the past 12 months. In this study, conducted or produced research means that practitioners or their staffs actually did the research work themselves rather than having someone conduct the actual research and just using the results.

Table XXX
Types of Research Practitioners Produced
During The Past Twelve Months
N=829*

Type of Research	Produced	
	N	Percent
Focus groups	96	12%
Mail surveys	94	11
Market research	89	11
Media evaluation	86	10
Phone surveys	83	10
Library research	74	9
Communication audits	70	8
In-depth interviews	67	8
Database research	64	8
Academic research	36	4
Pretesting	25	3
Environ scans	22	3
Posttesting	14	2
Other	09	1
TOTAL	829	100%

*Multiple responses because respondents were asked to check all that applied.

If practitioners in this study conducted research, focus groups (12%) were the type of research they most often did, followed by mail surveys (11%), market research (11%), media evaluation (10%) and telephone surveys (10%). Fewer than 10% conducted a variety of other types of research.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited practitioners and the types of research practitioners or their staff members conducted during the past 12 months.

Table XXXI shows the types of research practitioners said they or their staffs used during the past 12 months. In this study, using research means that practitioners or their staffs did not actually conduct or produce the research work themselves, but used the results of someone else's efforts.

Table XXXI
Types of Research Practitioners Used
During The Past Twelve Months
N=541*

	Used	
Type of Research	N	Percent
Mail surveys	78	14%
Media evaluation	70	13
Focus groups	58	11
Communication audits	55	10
Phone surveys	53	10
Library research	46	9
In-depth interviews	45	9
Market research	44	8
Database research	37	7
Pretesting	18	3
Environmental scans	14	3
Academic research	8	1
Posttesting	8	1
Other	7	1
TOTAL	541	100%

*Multiple responses because respondents were asked to check all that applied.

Mail surveys (14%) were the most used research type that practitioners who had people outside of their departments conduct for their use. Practitioners also had outside sources do media evaluation (13%), focus groups

(11%), communication audits (10%), telephone surveys (10%), library research (9%), in-depth interviews (9%), market research (8%) and database research (7%) for their use.

How practitioners learned to produce and use research is shown in Table XXXI.

Table XXXII
Ways Practitioners Learned to Produce and Use Research
N=691*

		Learning Situations								
		Undergrad. education		Graduate education		On-the Job		Professional education		
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
Learned to use research	397	82	21%	55	13	182	46	78	20	100%
Learned to produce research	294	39	13%	49	17	151	51	55	19	100%
TOTAL	691	121		104		333		133		100%

The place where the greatest number of practitioners indicated they learned to conduct and use research was on-the-job; about one-half (46%) said they learned to use research on-the-job while slightly more than one-half (51%) said they learned to produce or conduct research on-the-job.

Practitioners also listed undergraduate education (21%) and continuing, professional education (20%) as places where they learned to conduct and use research. Fewer practitioners (13%) said they learned how to conduct and/or use research through graduate education.

Practitioners also said they learned to conduct research through continuing, professional education (19%), graduate education (17%), and undergraduate education (13%).

Attitudes Toward Public Relations Research

A five-point Likert scale examined educator and practitioner attitudes toward various aspects of public relations research education, and its relation to public relations practice. For each of the following tables, the range of values is from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "strongly disagree," and 5 meaning "strongly agree."

In addition to calculating the mean score for educators and practitioners, the means between educators and practitioners were compared for differences between both groups with respect to their professional status as educators or practitioners as well as their professional accreditation status.

Table XXXII shows fairly strong agreement between both practitioners and educators with the statement that practical research experience is an important part of public relations education.

Table XXXIII
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That Practical Research Experience Is Important In Public Relations Undergraduate Education
N=436

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	4.40	4.30	4.35
Educator	4.70	4.60	4.65
TOTAL	4.55	4.45	4.50

The overall mean score of 4.5 indicates agreement between practitioners and educators and between accredited and non-accredited individuals about the importance of practical research experience in undergraduate public relations education. An analysis of variance shows that there is a difference (F-Ratio = 17.9, df=1, <.00) between the mean scores of practitioners (4.4) and educators (4.6), indicating that educators agree slightly more than practitioners that practical research experience is important in undergraduate education. Overall, there is still strong agreement between all groups. There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited individuals regardless of profession, nor was there any interaction between profession and accreditation status.

Table XXXIII shows the attitudes of practitioners and educators and their agreement with the statement that public relations research is not different from other types of research.

Table XXXIV
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That Public Relations Research Is Not Different From Other Types of Research
N=432

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	3.00	3.20	3.10
Educator	2.80	3.10	2.95
TOTAL	2.90	3.15	3.025

Although there is no difference between the mean scores of practitioners and educators, an analysis of variance did find a difference (F-Ratio = 4.4, df = 1, <.00) between accredited and non-accredited people. Accredited people, regardless of whether they were educators or practitioners, appeared to disagree more than non-accredited people that public relations is not different than other types of research. While the difference is statistically significant, all four scores are somewhat undecided about agreement or disagreement with the statement.

There was also no interaction between profession and accreditation status.

There was general agreement between practitioners and educators and between accredited and non-accredited individuals with the statement that undergraduate public relations research cannot be addressed by lecture alone. Table XXXIV shows the responses to that statement.

Table XXXV
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That Undergraduate Research Instruction Can Be Addressed By Lecture Alone
N=433

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	1.80	1.70	1.75
Educator	1.70	1.80	1.75
TOTAL	1.75	1.75	1.75

As the means indicate, all respondents disagreed to some extent that research instruction can be adequately addressed by lecture alone. There were no differences between the means for practitioners and educators, for accredited and non-accredited individuals, nor was there any interaction between profession and accreditation status.

Table XXXV asked respondents for their attitudes about whether entry-level public relations jobs involve research skills.

Table XXXVI
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That Most Entry-level Public Relations Jobs Do Not Involve Research Skills
N=436

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	2.90	2.80	2.85
Educator	2.40	2.40	2.40
TOTAL	2.65	2.60	2.625

An analysis of variance found a difference between practitioners and

educators and agreement with this statement (F-Ratio = 17.4, df=1, <.00). Educators disagreed more with this statement than did practitioners.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited people about entry-level public relations job skills; a score of 2.6 is midway between undecided and disagreement with the statement. There was also no interaction between type of profession and accreditation status.

Table XXXVI looks at the agreement with the statement about advancement in the public relations field and its relation to research skills.

Table XXXVII
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That To Advance In The Public Relations Profession Practitioners Must Have Basic Research Skills
N=436

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	4.10	4.00	4.05
Educator	4.60	4.40	4.50
TOTAL	4.35	4.20	4.275

While most people agreed with this statement, there is a difference about the extent of agreement between practitioners and educators (F-Ratio = 32.7, df = 1, <.00). Educators believe more strongly than practitioners that advancement in the profession requires research skills, while practitioners do not indicate as strong an agreement with the statement.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited respondents regardless of profession nor was there any interaction between profession and

accreditation status.

Four hundred thirty-five responses were received to the question of whether public relations programs are responsive to the research needs of the profession.

Table XXXVIII
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That
Public Relations Academic Programs Are Responsive To The
Research Needs of the Profession
N=435

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	2.80	2.90	2.85
Educator	2.70	3.00	2.85
TOTAL	2.75	2.95	2.85

There was no difference in the attitudes between practitioners and educators on this statement, but there was a difference between accredited and non-accredited individuals (F-Ratio = 4.8, df=1, <.00). Both non-accredited practitioners and educators were undecided about this statement, while accredited practitioners and educators disagreed with this statement, indicating that they felt public relations academic programs are not responsive to the profession's needs.

Table XXXVI shows practitioners and educators do have a difference in attitudes about where research should be learned, but accredited and non-accredited individuals do not.

Table XXXIX
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That Learning
About Research In School Is Preferable
To Learning About Research On The Job
N=431

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	3.00	2.90	2.95
Educator	3.70	3.80	3.75
TOTAL	3.35	3.35	3.35

Educators much more strongly agreed than practitioners that learning about research in school is preferable to learning about research on the job (F-Ratio = 53.0, df=1, <.00). Practitioners were undecided while educators agreed that research should be learned in school.

There was no difference between accredited and non-accredited individuals about this statement.

Table XXXIX asked participants about student attitudes toward numbers.

Table XXXX
Agreement With the Statement That Public Relations Students'
Attitudes Toward Research Are Influenced
By An Aversion To Numbers
N=435

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	3.10	3.30	3.20
Educator	3.80	3.90	3.85
TOTAL	3.45	3.60	3.525

There is a difference between educators who agreed that students' attitudes are influenced by an aversion to numbers and practitioners who are more undecided than in agreement with the statement (F-Ratio 46.7, df=1, <.00). There was not a difference between the means of accredited and non-accredited individuals.

Table XXXX shows the difference between profession, accreditation status, and interaction between the two with the statement about academic research being just as important practical research in public relations practice.

Table XXXXI
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That In Public Relations Practice, Academic Research Is Just As Important As Practical Research
N=421

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	3.20	3.10	3.15
Educator	2.50	3.10	2.80
TOTAL	2.85	3.10	2.975

Practitioners tended to be undecided about this statement while educators disagreed that in practice academic research is as important as practical research (F-Ratio = 9.4, df=1, <.00). Accredited individuals, regardless of profession, also tended to disagree with this statement while non-accredited individuals were undecided whether academic research is just as important as practical research (F-Ratio = 4.1, df=1, <.00).

There was also interaction between profession and accreditation status and

this statement (F-Ratio = 9.9, df = 1, <.00). Accredited practitioners (mean score 3.2) were between undecided and agreement with the statement. Non-accredited practitioners (mean score 3.1) and non-accredited educators (mean score 3.1) were undecided whether academic research was just as important as practical research in practice. Accredited educators (mean score 2.5) were between disagreement and being undecided about the statement that academic research is just as important as practical research in public relations practice.

Table XXXXI asked about understanding information and generating numbers in research.

Table XXXXII
Extent of Agreement With The Statement That In Research, Understanding Information Is More Important Than Generating Numbers
N=418

	Accreditation Status		
Profession	Accredited	Non-accredited	Overall
Practitioner	4.30	4.30	4.30
Educator	4.40	4.30	4.35
TOTAL	4.35	4.30	4.325

As the means indicate, practitioners and educators both agree that understanding research information is more important than generating numbers. And accredited and non-accredited individuals also agree with that statement. There was no difference between any groups on this statement.

Endnotes

[1]The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education, (New York: The Public Relations Society of America, 1987): 25.

[2]Public Relations Society of America Bylaws, Article XVII, Public Relations Journal, 1994-1995 Register Issue (New York: Public Relations Society of America, June 1994): xxxi.

[3]The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education, 25.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Nearly every textbook in public relations is built around the Four-Step Process of research, planning, implementation and evaluation. While research is identified by textbooks and by a variety of people in the public relations literature as the first consideration of practitioners in nearly every public relations action, little research has been conducted about how public relations undergraduate educators incorporated research education in their programs. In other words, how do students learn about public relations research?

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways public relations educators said they taught research throughout their public relations curricula, discover how current practitioners were using research, and compare the attitudes of educators and practitioners about public relations research education and use.

Three questions guided this study: (1) What is the course context in which public relations research is taught, either as a stand-alone course devoted to

public relations or in the content of other core public relations courses? (2) What teaching methods and learning experiences are provided in research for public relations students? (3) To what extent does public relations research education match the needs of the profession?

Four hundred sixty-one educators teaching public relations were mailed questionnaires asking them how they included public relations research in their undergraduate public relations programs. They were also asked about their attitudes toward public relations research education.

Four hundred practitioners were also surveyed using a mail questionnaire to find out how they learned about research, how they use research in their profession, and the extent to which they agree that public relations education meets their needs.

The questionnaires were mailed in mid-February 1995 to accommodate both semester and quarter schedules, and respondents were encouraged to return the questionnaires as quickly as possible. Fifty-six percent of the educators and 53 percent of the practitioners responded.

The research question about the course context in which public relations is taught was answered in two ways: (1) a majority of the public relations programs in this study (63%) required their public relations majors to take some type of research course. Forty-seven (37%) of the 126, public relations coordinators who participated in this study said their programs had a research course devoted to public relations research and 86% of those said it was a required course for their majors.

If a research course devoted specifically to public relations was not

available, students took other types of research courses, especially communication-related courses in mass or speech communication. While 63 percent were required to take research, 37 percent were not required to it.

(2) All of the educators teaching the four core public relations courses of principles, writing/production, advanced public relations/case studies, and campaigns, incorporated some amount of research in their classes. The amount and type, however, varied with the educator.

Teaching methods and learning experiences devoted to research also varied within the courses. The emphasis in the public relations research course was on assignments that presented students with opportunities to conduct research and analyze data rather than on assignments that developed concepts like ethics.

Experiences in the four core public relations courses varied. Public relations principles and writing, generally considered classes at the beginning level, did not spend as much class time on research as teachers in advanced public relations/case studies and campaigns, generally considered senior-level public relations courses. The principles and writing classes also did not have as many hands-on research assignments as did the two advanced classes.

Whether education meets the needs of the public relations profession appears to be a statement with mostly undecided answers. Practitioners and educators agreed that practical public relations education was valuable and that students needed to have practice opportunities in research to really learn it. They also both agreed that research skills were necessary for practitioners to advance in the field.

Practitioners and educators, however, either disagreed or were undecided about whether public relations research was any different from other kinds of research, or whether entry-level public relations jobs even required research. The two groups also disagreed about whether learning about research on the job or in school was preferable.

Summary and Conclusions

Description of Research in the Public Relations Curriculum

Sixty-three percent, (n=80) or nearly two-thirds, of the 126 public relations coordinators in this study said their public relations students were required to take some type of research course as part of their public relations majors. That left 37% (n=46) of public relations students who were not required to take a research course as part of their major program of study.

Forty-seven programs (59%) of the 80 who required some type of research indicated they offered a research course specifically for public relations. Of the 80 programs who required research, public relations students in 33 programs (41%) were required to take other types of research courses to meet their public relations research requirement.

Mass communication and speech communication courses were the most-often mentioned courses which satisfied the research requirement for the 33 programs if a public relations research course was not available. Twenty-six percent of the coordinators said a public relations research course satisfied the requirement, 36 percent said a mass communication course did, and 10

percent said a speech communication course was satisfactory.

Whether the public relations component was part of a program accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) appeared to be a factor between programs offering public relations research courses and those that did not. Accredited programs were more likely to require two things that non-accredited programs did not: (1) that a research course of some type be required of all public relations majors; and (2) that a mass communication research course be the course that satisfied the research requirement if a public relations research course was not offered.

That program accreditation appeared to be related to which programs require public relations students to take research or which offer public relations research courses may be explained by the 1987 report on undergraduate public relations education. The report identified five course areas, one of which was research, as necessary components of undergraduate public relations education.[1] Accredited mass communication programs, more so than non-accredited mass communication programs and speech communication programs, would pay attention to these guidelines because they are used for reviewing programs.

Programs that did not offer public relations research courses cited three reasons why they were not offered: (1) Other university courses were satisfactory alternatives to a public relations research course; (2) There was no room in their curriculum for a public relations research course; and (3) There was a lack of faculty to teach public relations research.

Many communication programs include different emphases; for example, mass communication may include advertising, broadcasting and journalism in addition to public relations. So resources must be balanced among the different program components, and public relations must compete for its share of courses and faculty. Courses which can serve more than one program component are valuable. The responses of the public relations coordinators in this study indicated that research may be regarded as one of the all-purpose courses. The danger, however, is that within a general communication research course not all areas of communication practice are equally addressed. Without examining each mass communication course for content, it is impossible to know how much of the research course is applicable to public relations' research needs.

Description of Faculty Teaching Public Relations Courses

Educators in this study had an average of 13.3 years of professional public relations experience and 11.9 years of full-time teaching experience. This suggests that educators teaching public relations at some time were involved in the profession. It also suggests that educators teaching public relations may have been hired from the professional ranks because of their professional experience. One would expect that the professional orientation would also be evident in class research assignments and in course objectives.

Of the 247 educators who responded, 79 (29 percent) had earned professional accreditation of some type. The majority were Accredited in

Public Relations (APR) through the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), although several were Accredited Business Communicators (ABC) through the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). This is another way some educators maintain professional contact.

Educators in this survey also demonstrated a variety of research production and use during a 12 month time period from winter 1994 to winter 1995. Thirty-six percent of the educators said they conducted research for a public relations client or project, while 33 percent used research for a client or project. At the same time, 62 percent of the educators said they either produced published or unpublished academic research. This is an indication that public relations educators are active researchers for both academic and professional purposes. One would expect that this research production would transfer to classroom research activities.

Description of Public Relations Research Courses Offered

If a public relations research course is offered, as 47 programs in this study indicated, 59 (86%) of the educators who taught it said it was a required course, while only 10 (14%) said it was an elective course.

Program accreditation appeared to be a factor here. Accredited programs were more likely to require the public relations research course than were non-accredited programs. Accredited programs were also more likely than non-accredited programs to require students to complete a public relations principles course and a public relations writing course before taking public relations research.

The difference between accredited and non-accredited programs and requiring the public relations research course and requiring principles and writing as pre-requisites might be a reflection of the 1987 guidelines which do not apply to programs outside of mass communication. Programs other than mass communication which were surveyed in this study, including speech communication and business, did not indicate any pre-requisites nor did they as frequently require the research course as did accredited mass communication programs.

While the accredited programs in this study appeared to be different than other types of programs, one should be cautious about extending these differences to all public relations programs because the number of programs that said they offer a public relations research course was somewhat small. Only 47 of 126, 37 percent, of the programs in this study offered the course; without knowing how many of the programs who did not respond to this survey address research, conclusions should be considered tentative.

Of the 69 educators who said they taught a public relations research course, more than 56 percent said they spent more than 11 of 48-semester hours on research design. About two-thirds (67%) said they spent more than 8 of a 48-hour semester class on data analysis. Research ethics and research writing were the two topics on which educators said they spent the least amount of time. The emphasis, then, appeared to be on learning to conduct research and apply the results. This also suggested that the 1987 guidelines may have had some effect on what educators emphasize within the course. It also suggested that educators may believe that topics such as ethics and

writing should be or are addressed in other public relations courses while learning to conduct and use research is the heart of public relations research.

Educators also assigned a variety of learning experiences in the public relations research course, although no one assignment type was prevalent over others. Examinations, data analysis projects, library research projects, and conducting original research projects were the most common types of assignments.

Although there was no relationship between educators' years of professional public relations experience and the types of assignments, or the accreditation status of educators and the types of assignments, the assignment count indicated that students were exposed to a variety of hands-on learning experiences. What counting assignments does not provide is how in-depth or comprehensive these assignments were.

Description of Research Components of Core Public Relations Courses

Because a majority (63%) of public relations majors get their basic research knowledge and skills from a non-public relations course, how research is applied to public relations becomes a critical part of other required public relations courses. Four other public relations courses are generally considered standard courses in public relations curricula: public relations principles, required by 93 percent of programs in this study; public relations writing/production, required by 88 percent of programs in this study; advanced public relations/case studies, required by 83 percent of programs in this study; and public relations campaigns, required by 88 percent of programs in this

study.

Overall, educators in the principles and writing/production courses, which are generally taken as the first set of public relations courses, did not spend a majority of time on research topics. Seventy-seven percent of the educators in principles said they spent fewer than seven of 48-semester class hours on research, and 80% of educators teaching public relations writing said they spent fewer than seven of 48-semester hours on research.

In comparison, educators teaching advanced public relations/case studies and public relations campaigns spent greater amounts of time on research. In public relations campaigns, nearly two-thirds (64%) of the educators said they spent more than eight of 48-semester class hours on research. This seemed logical because campaigns is the generally the most-senior level public relations course where all of the public relations concepts and skills are used in public relations situations.

In advanced public relations/case studies, however, the amount of time spent on research was fairly evenly distributed among class hours; 28 percent said they spent between four and seven hours on research, 27 percent said they spent more than 11 class hours on it, 24 percent said they spent between eight and 11 class hours, and 21 percent said they spent fewer than three class hours on research topics.

In the four public relations core courses, knowing only the number of class hours educators reported spending on research does not indicate the content of those hours so it is impossible to say what topics were addressed and in what depth. The only finding is that some research assignments are included in each

course.

From the data in this study, no reason seemed apparent for the differing amounts of class time spent on research in the advanced public relations/case studies course. One might speculate that the type and scope of a program in which advanced public relations is located might be a factor. For example, if a program has a limited number of public relations courses, advanced public relations/case studies may be the capstone course, and educators might spend more time teaching research. If a program had both advanced public relations/case studies and campaigns courses, educators might not spend as much time on research because students would take two courses instead of one.

The orientation of the course instructor may also have some influence on the amount of research included in advanced public relations/case studies courses. If, for example, full-time practitioners taught this course more frequently than full-time educators, the course might include more or less research. Without knowing the background of course instructors, however, it is not possible to know if this has any influence on research content.

Each of the educators who taught the four public relations courses said they included some type of research assignments in their courses, including research discussion, library research, data analysis, database research, and original research projects. As students progress through the four courses, the data suggests forms of research assignments, such as discussing research and doing library research, may be included in other activities, such as producing original research projects. While the data indicate

that students progress from simple to more complex assignments, it should be noted that not all programs required all four public relations courses, and so not all students may have equal opportunities to practice research skills. Also, without knowing how detailed or complex the assignments are, it is not possible say anything more than educators are providing public relations majors with a variety of practice opportunities involving research.

Depending on the public relations course taught, educators had different objectives for the research components. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the educators teaching research in public relations principles said having students understand the role of research in public relations was their top-ranked objective. In advanced public relations/case studies, 46 percent of the educators ranked using research as their top objectives, and in public relations campaigns 47 percent of the educators also said using research was their number objective.

In public relations writing, 54 percent of the non-accredited programs ranked using research as their number one objective, while accredited programs were evenly split between understanding the role of research (49%) and using research (50%). This difference between accredited programs may be related to the number of public relations classes programs offered. For example, if a program offers writing and either advanced public relations or public relations campaigns, educators may combine using research with writing. Without knowing the content and depth of each research assignment, it is not possible, however, to know what the difference between accredited and non-accredited programs means.

Overall, however, educators' objectives for including research in other public relations courses appears to either be having students understand the role of research or having them actually use research in their work.

Description of Practitioners In This Study

In this survey, practitioners said they spent an average of 41 percent of their time on counseling, or senior-level practitioner activities including strategy and planning; 42 percent of their time on technical type tasks, such as writing, editing and implementing projects; and 17 percent of their time on administrative work such as budgeting and personnel. What the data show is that practitioners who answered this survey do not fit into one "type" of public relations work, but rather perform all three types of duties in varying degrees.

Practitioners in this study also had a variety of years of experience; more than 50 percent reported they had between six and 15 years of practice, and about one-quarter (26%) had between 16 and 25 years of experience. Only 12 percent had five or fewer years of experience. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents said they had earned accreditation through the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and 61 percent had not.

More than one-half (51%) of the practitioners said they learned to conduct or produce research themselves on the job, and 46 percent said they learned to use research on the job. This is not surprising since the 1987 guidelines were not implemented until the early 1990s and a majority of practitioners in this survey were already out of school and practicing by that time. Only the 12 percent of respondents who had five or fewer years of experience may have

been in undergraduate public relations programs influenced by the guidelines.

Practitioners about equally cited professional education (19%) and graduate education (17%) as places they learned to conduct research themselves. One-fifth (20%) said they learned to use research information through professional education and 13 percent said they learned to use it in graduate education.

Practitioners also indicated that undergraduate education was not a research-learning place for many of them, either. Only 13 percent of the respondents said they learned to conduct research in undergraduate education, and about one-fifth (21%) said they learned to use research information from undergraduate instruction.

Thus it appears that practitioners do not get a great deal of research instruction from either graduate or professional, continuing education. Both are voluntary, and practitioners may feel that on-the-job research experience is just as valuable as formal education, or other factors such as time constraints or cost which may prevent them from enrolling in advanced educational opportunities. This suggests that including research in undergraduate curricula will be even more important for future practitioners.

How Practitioners Use Research

Practitioners who said they used more research within the past 12 months said it helped in planning, implementing and evaluating public relations efforts. This mirrors the objectives the 1987 guidelines set for teaching research.

Practitioners who said they did not use more research within the past 12 months said three reasons prevented them from doing more research: a lack of

money, time and people.

Without knowing how much research either group had done previous to the 12 month-period about which they reported, it is not possible to say how important the differences are between the two groups. It may be that those using more research are just beginning to use research, while those not using more research had already reached their research capacity given their staff limitations, budgets and time frames.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of the practitioners in this study said they or their staffs spent less than 25 percent of their time conducting their own research, and fewer than 82 percent hired an outside firm to do research for them during the past 12 months. This may be related to the time, money and staff factors practitioners identified as reasons why they did not conduct or use research.

Practitioners or their staffs who did conduct research themselves used a variety of methods and techniques. Twelve percent of the practitioners conducted focus groups, 11 percent conducted mail surveys and market research, and 10 percent did media evaluation and telephone surveys. The majority of practitioners said they spent less than 25 percent of their time on research, and the types of research projects practitioners said they completed during the last 12 months may suggest that not much research is being done. However, without knowing how extensive these research projects were, it is not possible to say whether research was given short shrift or not.

Similarly, practitioners who used data gathered by other people said they most frequently used mail survey (14%) data during the past 12 months.

Thirteen percent said they also used media evaluation, 10 percent said they used focus groups, 10 percent said they used telephone survey research, and 10 percent said they used communication audit data. Because the extent of the research and the projects in which they were used is not known, it is not possible to say more than practitioners did report using research data during the past 12 months.

Agreement Between Educators and Practitioners About Research Education

Practitioners and educators generally agreed that practical research experience is important in undergraduate education; that research cannot be adequately taught by lecture alone; that to advance in the profession, practitioners must have research skills; and that understanding information in public relations is more important than generating numbers.

Both groups were also undecided about several things. Practitioners and educators were undecided whether academic research was as important as practical research in public relations practice. One explanation for this lack of agreement or disagreement might have been how educators and practitioners define "academic" and "practical" research. Without commonly understood definitions, agreement may be difficult.

Educators and practitioners were undecided about whether public relations research is different from other types of research. This may also indicate that the definitions of "research" are varied, and without a commonly expressed meaning, the question is ambiguous.

Educators and practitioners differed on the question of whether entry-level public relations jobs required research skills. Practitioners (mean=2.85) were more undecided about this, while educators (mean=2.40) tended to disagree that entry-level jobs do not require research skills. Several things may account for this difference: (1) educators may rely on the literature to tell them what the profession requires, and research is a hot topic right now. On the other hand, practitioners indicated they learned research on the job. About four-fifths did not appear to have taken any public relations courses or seminars after their undergraduate education; perhaps they think that research is something practitioners can acquire on the job because they did so.

There was also disagreement whether learning about research in school is preferable to learning about research on the job. Educators (mean=3.75) tended to agree that learning should take place in school, while practitioners were undecided (mean=2.95). This suggests two things: (1) practitioners in this study learned about research on the job and may be undecided about school because they do not know what is being taught there and they did not learn about research there; or (2) educators think school is the best place because that is their job.

Overall, the two groups were undecided about the statement that public relations education is responsive to the needs of the profession. This may be as simple as a matter of definition because "needs" could mean anything from training competent practitioners to conducting research to answer specific public relations problems. It could also be as complex as bringing education and practice together to develop more cooperative learning opportunities for

current and future practitioners.

The data in this study indicate that once practitioners have completed an undergraduate degree and are on the job, nearly four-fifths do not participate in any type of continuing education, either through professionally sponsored activities, such as seminars, or through formal education, such as graduate classes. The reasons for this lack of on-going education were not part of this study, but they may provide insights into how education could better serve professionals. Information from the profession would also help educators keep their classroom public relations education relevant to the profession.

Recommendations

The data in this study indicated that both educators and practitioners have opportunities to build relationships which would benefit both by providing professional support for public relations education and providing well-educated practitioners for the profession.

Educators could...

Public relations educators could take a more active role in public relations education by:

- Becoming more involved in general mass communication or speech communication research courses that currently provide research education for public relations students. Educators could design teaching units that address the application of research to public relations practice for incorporation into

general communication research courses. They could also work to team teach research so students would get the public relations perspective.

- Including more public relations research opportunities in all public relations classes. The first step of the Four-Step Process, research, is the foundation for the following three steps; without a solid foundation, planning, implementation and evaluation become guess-your-best situations.
- Offer continuing professional education for current practitioners through seminars, sharing research, and other types of learning situations. All teaching does not consist of traditional students in traditional classrooms.
- Involving practitioners in providing real-life projects for students. Practitioners would have the opportunity to present a situation to students who could apply their knowledge and skills in hands-on, problem-solving experience essential to good practice. Practitioners have the experience of guiding future practitioners through a road test of what "real" practice may be like.

Practitioners could...

Public relations practitioners could take a more active role in public relations education by:

- Inviting more educators to participate in internships and other sabbatical-type learning opportunities to keep abreast of what is happening in the profession. Too often educators seem to learn about trends and changes in public relations practice solely through the literature or other secondhand sources removed from actual practice.
- Bringing research concerns to educators for their input. Educators

generally possess a range of research skills and often have access to resources like graduate students and computer centers that can help in setting up and carrying out research projects.

- Volunteering to provide hands-on, practice opportunities for public relations students in courses that range from principles to campaigns. Practitioners and students can both benefit; practitioners from providing students with real-life experience from a professional viewpoint, and students from the opportunity to build relationships with professionals that can lead to internships and employment.
- Taking an active role in public relations student activities, especially in PRSSA chapters by serving as professional advisers.

The recommendations for educators and practitioners stress communication and interaction. Without that, each group could isolate itself from the other; educators must be concerned with changes in the profession, and practitioners must realize that public relations education is often an untapped resource with many skills, including research, of use to the profession.

Further Study Could...

This study has suggested a number of public relations research areas that merit further study.

One part of this study focused on educators who taught public relations research either as a stand-alone course or as a component of other core public relations courses. Other than asking several descriptive questions about the

number of years of professional public relations experience and whether educators earned some type of professional accreditation, little else was known about the educators. A follow-up study could be conducted to further explore the preparation and expertise of educators teaching public relations research. For example, rather than asking whether an educator is a part-time or full-time instructor, those teaching public relations could be asked whether they are a practitioner teaching public relations part or full-time or an educator practicing public relations part or full-time. As public relations programs grew, many teachers moved from teaching journalism to teaching public relations. This orientation might also affect how educators approach public relations education. Another useful question would be the highest degree public relations educators have earned rather than asking how many years the person has been in his or her academic present academic position.

It would also be helpful to know the types of professional research skills, methods and knowledge public relations educators have used in practice and to see if that carries over into their research teaching. Years of practical and educational experience could be compared to types and depth of research instruction in their curricula. This information could then be incorporated in future curriculum planning.

Looking at public relations educators/practitioners is only one way to assess what comprises public relations education. Another way is to study recent public relations graduates working at their first public relations job to see how well their public relations research education prepared them for the research needs of their first job. Including practitioners with one to three years

of public relations experience could provide a picture of how well public relations research formal education meshes with working-world expectations. Other questions to ask beginning practitioners include what they wished they had learned about research in school, and what they learned about research in school that was most beneficial to them. Public relations education has become a staple of many communication programs, and one useful way to find out how relevant the product is, is to ask the recipient.

Another recipient of public relations research education are employers. A useful study might be to ask them about the research skills and knowledge they expect new practitioners to bring with them to their first jobs. Employers could also be asked to evaluate the research skills and knowledge of the first-time practitioners they are now hiring. This information would be valuable in several ways: (1) it could be shared with public relations educators who could be encouraged to find ways to incorporate those skills and knowledge into their courses; and (2) it could be shared with future practitioners who could be encouraged to take courses that encompass the skills and abilities employers consider essential for good practice.

Such information would also be useful for public relations program accreditation teams to use when they evaluate programs for relevance to the profession.

This study attempted to describe the public relations research content of both separate research courses and components of other public relations core courses. Further study could be done on the content of both types of courses by performing a content analysis of undergraduate public relations course

syllabi and comparing the content to what educators said they taught. While syllabi vary in completeness and depth, they could, however, provide another way to describe what takes place in the classroom. An added caveat would be to ask educators to include a handout of their favorite assignment involving research so an overview of the types of assignments could be assembled and compared. Such information would add depth to the knowledge about the research content of public relations courses.

This study found that mass communication and speech communication courses often satisfy the research requirement for public relations majors. Another appropriate study would be to examine the course content of these research courses to see how much time is devoted specifically to public relations research applications as outlined in the 1987 report. Because both types of courses are designed to address a variety of areas within each discipline, whether these research courses provide appropriate preparation for public relations majors is unknown. This study could be further enhanced by conducting an analysis of the course syllabi to see how much time is specifically devoted to public relations topics and applications.

Another way to study how public relations research is presented is to conduct a content analysis of current public relations textbooks for their presentation of knowledge and skills. Most texts have at least one chapter devoted to research; how research is integrated into the rest of the text on public relations might contribute to the description of how public relations research is taught.

Concluding Comments

The 1987 report *The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education* stated that the Commission's curriculum recommendations "are focused on course content, and not courses by specific name."[2] The intent, therefore, is that content identified by the Commission should be covered in each college and university as it sees best to do so. Research for planning and evaluation is one of the five areas recommended as core elements of a program,[3] and how public relations programs address the research requirement is up to them.

The 1987 report also listed respondents' top choices for topics and skills that should be included in public relations research education, including public relations research, design, processes, techniques, measuring program effectiveness, and reporting on the results of public relations efforts.[4]

This study attempted to describe just how schools with PRSSA chapters met those requirements. In general, it appears that schools are teaching research for public relations in two ways: (1) either through a separate research course requirement, or (2) through research components in a variety of public relations courses.

It is also apparent that many current practitioners learned about research on the job or through continuing professional education rather than in formal educational settings. One might speculate, however, that future practitioners will have learned at least the basics of research in their undergraduate public relations courses, so further study of this topic is essential to helping develop

curriculum.

The public relations literature of the past ten years stressed the need for practitioners to use research to better plan, monitor and evaluate public relations projects because public relations will have to continue to prove its worth to clients.

The literature also points out that public relations will have to be accountable for its own existence in all types of organizations. While research is the first step in developing that professional accountability, it is almost always the basis for most public relations project planning, implementation and evaluation.

The 1987 report was the first major public relations educational report to identify research as one of the five essential areas of undergraduate public relations education, and the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) bylaws incorporate the five areas as five courses required of colleges and universities to acquire and maintain PRSSA chapters.

In many communication departments or schools, public relations sequences or programs have become the fastest-growing, most often-chosen majors for students. The integrity of public relations as a major field of study begins with programs offering curriculum that incorporates the professional and theoretical knowledge practitioners need to succeed in the field. One way to insure that curriculum is beneficial to students and practitioners is to involve education with the profession on a cooperative, on-going basis.

Endnotes

[1]The Design for Undergraduate Public Relations Education, (New York: Public Relations Society of America: 1987): 25.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 5

[4]Ibid., 10-11.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

DIRECT MAIL POSTCARD

I'd like you to bend my ear for 10 minutes, & I guarantee (😉) I'll take every word seriously!

In about a week, you'll receive an opportunity to add your public relations knowledge and experience to other practitioners and educators nationwide in a unique study of public relations education. This is your chance to contribute valuable information to benefit the profession and professionals alike. Sharpen those pencils...and watch your mail for your chance to enter this sweepstakes where everyone "wins" by contributing.

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APPENDIX C

EDUCATORS' COVER LETTER

Like Ed McMahon in a sweepstakes month, here's the survey you were waiting for. This sweepstakes operates a bit differently than most ... you contribute your expertise, and everybody, including you, wins.

As a public relations educator, your responses about how public relations research is incorporated into your curriculum are timely, appropriate and important to this research project. By completing this questionnaire you are:

- contributing to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Body of Knowledge;
- providing information about public relations research education never before explored; information that will be presented at PRSA's 1995 convention in Seattle, Washington.

The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete; you only need to answer the sections relevant to your teaching and/or coordinating duties. Please follow the survey instructions to determine which sections you should answer. The number in the survey corner is simply to keep track of respondents; as surveys are returned, the numbers will be crossed off the master list and cut off the surveys to assure your anonymity.

If you would like to receive a copy of my research results, please check this box ❑ and return this letter along with your completed survey.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my adviser, Dr. Charles Fleming, at (405) 744-6354. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure: Survey; self-addressed, stamped, return envelope

APPENDIX D

PRACTITIONERS' COVER LETTER

Remember how nervous Dobie Gillis's friend Maynard G. Krebs became when the word "work" was mentioned? Public relations appears to have its own version of "work" that makes some students and practitioners alike a little nervous — it's called research. While it may make some people a little disconcerted, public relations research is taking on a new importance for both educators and practitioners. In fact, the Public Relations Society of America is planning a special forum on research and strategic planning for its national conference next fall in Seattle, Washington.

As part of my doctoral dissertation on public relations research, I am surveying a select group of practitioners to find out how they use research in their jobs, how they learned it, and how they feel about it. And, as Maynard would say, you're "just lucky" because you are one of the selected practitioners to add this information to the profession's Body of Knowledge. Your responses and identity will be confidential; the number in the corner of the survey is for response-keeping purposes only and will be removed from the survey when I receive it.

In addition to surveying a sample of practitioners, I am also surveying all colleges and universities with Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapters to see how they are teaching public relations research. The Report of the 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education laid out guidelines for teaching research, and I hope to see how those guidelines are being met. By taking about 10 minutes of your time and completing this survey, you will be helping the profession, public relations practitioners and public relations educators.

Please check this box ❑ if you wish to receive a summary of the survey results and return this letter with your completed survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. Otherwise, I plan to present the results in Seattle at the 1995 PRSA convention. Perhaps I'll see you there.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me or my adviser, Dr. Charles Fleming, at (405) 744-6354. Thank you for your cooperation — which is the only way this survey will "work!"

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX E

EDUCATORS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Public Relations Research Survey Directions

Your duties as a public relations educator will determine what sections of this survey you complete. From the options listed below, choose the one that best fits your department position and answer the corresponding sections of the survey. The survey takes about 10 to 15 minutes of your time to complete.

Here's How The Questionnaire is Organized:

In General ...

Section A - How Research Fits Into Your Public Relations Program
Section G - Public Relations Values and Attitudes
Section H - About Your Program and Yourself

On Specific Courses ...

Section B - Public Relations Research Course
Section C - Public Relations Principles/Introductory Course
Section D - Public Relations Writing or Production Course
Section E - Public Relations Case Studies or Advanced Public Relations Course
Section F - Public Relations Campaigns or Programs Course

Here's What You Should Fill Out, Based On Who You Are:

Administrative Position	Teaching Status	Complete Section ...
Public Relations Sequence Coordinator	Don't now nor never have taught PR courses	Sections A, G, H
Public Relations Sequence Coordinator	Have taught or am now teaching PR courses	Sections A, G, H Sections B - F, depending on teaching experience
None	Have taught or am now teaching PR courses	Sections G, H Sections B - F, depending on teaching experience

The number in the corner of this survey is for tabulation of the surveys as they are received. When your completed survey is received, the number will be removed from the survey and your name will be removed from the list so your anonymity will be maintained.

Please return this survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. ***Thank you!***

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Section A : How Research Fits Into Your Public Relations Program ...

Complete this section if you are the generally-recognized public relations coordinator for your program. If you are not, skip to Section B.

1A. Is a course in research methods required in your public relations program?
Yes ____ **(Go to Question 2)** No ____ **(Go to Question 4)**

2A. Please check all of the kinds of research courses that satisfy your public relations requirement:
____ Any research methods or theory course taught on campus
____ Specifically approved course(s) taught in certain departments:
Please check all departments that qualify: ____ Business/Marketing ____ Education ____ Mass Communication
____ Mathematics/Statistics ____ Psychology ____ Sociology ____ Speech Communication
____ Other: _____
____ A public relations course dedicated to public relations research

3A. By which stage of the public relations program must students have completed the research course?
As a prerequisite for: ____ Principles ____ Writing/Production ____ Case studies/Advanced ____ Campaigns
Concurrently with: ____ Principles ____ Writing/Production ____ Case studies/Advanced ____ Campaigns
____ Any time during coursework ____ Other: _____

4A. Does your department offer a public relations research course?
____ Yes **(Go to Question 6)**
____ No, and no plans to offer one within a year.
____ No, but plans to offer one within a year.
____ No, but unsure about plans to offer one within a year.

5A. If your department does not offer a public relations research course, please check all of the reasons why you think it is not offered now:
____ Cost ____ Lack of expertise to teach research ____ No faculty to teach research
____ No room in curriculum ____ Other university research courses suffice
____ Other: _____

6A. Please check all of the things you see as concerns in using other departments' research courses:
____ Not enough direct relation to public relations ____ Too theoretical
____ Too statistically oriented ____ Not enough hands-on practice
____ Other: _____

7A. Number of faculty currently teaching public relations: Full-time ____ Part-time ____

8A. Number of declared majors in your undergraduate public relations program:
____ Less than 100 ____ 101-200 ____ 201-300 ____ More than 300

Section B: Public Relations Research Course

Complete this section if you have ever taught or currently teach a public relations research course. If you haven't, skip to Section C.

1B. The research course is ____ required ____ an elective for all public relations majors.

2B. The research course meets ____ times a week for ____ minutes per class session.

(Next page, please)

3B. Please check the place where the research course fits into your sequence:

____ This course must be taken before any other public relations undergraduate course.

____ This course requires public relations prerequisites: please check all that apply.

____ Principles ____ Writing/Production ____ Case Studies/Advanced ____ Campaigns

____ The research course can be taken at any time in the sequence.

4B. Please rank in the order of importance these objectives for this course — use "1" for the most important; "2" for the second most important, and so on.

____ Evaluating research for its strengths and weaknesses ____ Understanding the role of research

____ Using research in public relations situations ____ Producing original public relations research

____ Other: _____

5B. Please indicate with a number how many academic clock hours (50 minutes per hour) are devoted to these research topics:

____ Role of research in public relations ____ Research ethics ____ Research/design methods

____ Interpreting/analyzing data ____ Research writing

____ Other: _____

6B. Please check all of the types of evaluation and assignments required in the research course:

____ Examinations ____ Term paper ____ Library research ____ Database research

____ Analyzing/interpreting research ____ Conducting original research

____ Other: _____

Section C: Public Relations Principles/Introduction Course

Complete this section if you have ever taught or currently teach a public relations undergraduate principles course whose purpose is to familiarize and/or introduce students to the profession. If you haven't, skip to Section D.

1C. This course meets _____ times a week for _____ minutes per session.

2C. This course is _____ required _____ an elective for all public relations majors.

3C. Indicate with a number how many academic clock hours (50 minutes per hour) in this course are devoted primarily to research? _____

4C. Please indicate with a number how many course assignments involve each of the following research activities:

____ Discussing research ____ Doing library research ____ Doing an original project

____ Doing database research ____ Analyzing/interpreting research

____ Other: _____

____ Other: _____

5C. Please rank in order of importance these objectives for including public relations research in this course; use "1" for the most important; "2" for the second, and so on.

____ Evaluating research for its strengths and weaknesses ____ Understanding the role of research

____ Using research in public relations situations ____ Producing original public relations research

____ Other: _____

(Next page, please)

Section D: Public Relations Writing or Production Course

Complete this section if you have ever taught or currently teach a public relations undergraduate course whose purpose is to produce written and/or graphic communication materials; it may also be called public relations techniques or publications. If you haven't taught this course, skip to Section E.

1D. This course meets _____ times a week for _____ minutes per session.

2D. This course is _____ required _____ an elective for all public relations majors.

3D. Indicate with a number how many academic clock hours (50 minutes per hour) in this course are devoted primarily to research? _____

4D. Please indicate with a number how many course assignments involve each of the following research activities:

_____ Discussing research _____ Doing library research _____ Doing an original project
_____ Doing database research _____ Analyzing/interpreting research
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____

5D. Please rank in order of importance these objectives for including public relations research in this course; use "1" for the most important; "2" for the second, and so on.

_____ Evaluating research for its strengths and weaknesses _____ Understanding the role of research
_____ Using research in public relations situations _____ Producing original public relations research
_____ Other: _____

Section E: Public Relations Case Studies or Advanced Public Relations Course

Complete this section if you have ever taught or are currently teaching an undergraduate course whose primary emphasis is on public relations strategy and tactics. It may also be called advanced public relations, and it may also be combined with public relations campaigns. If you have never taught this course, skip to Section F.

1E. This course meets _____ times a week for _____ minutes per session.

2E. This course is _____ required _____ an elective for all public relations majors.

3E. Indicate with a number how many academic clock hours (50 minutes per hour) in this course are devoted primarily to research? _____

4E. Please indicate with a number how many course assignments involve each of the following research primary activities:

_____ Discussing research _____ Doing library research _____ Doing an original project
_____ Doing database research _____ Analyzing/interpreting research
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____

5E. Please rank in order of importance those objectives for including public relations research in this course; use "1" for the most important; "2" for the second , and so on.

_____ Evaluating research for its strengths and weaknesses _____ Understanding the role of research
_____ Using research in public relations situations _____ Producing original public relations research
_____ Other: _____

(Next page, please)

Section F: Public Relations Campaigns

Complete this section if you have taught or are currently teaching campaigns as a separate undergraduate course. If you have never taught this course, skip to Section G.

1F. This course meets _____ times a week for _____ minutes per session.

2F. This course is _____ required _____ an elective for all public relations majors.

3F. Indicate with a number how many academic clock hours (50 minutes per hours) in this course are devoted primarily to research? _____

4F. Please indicate with a number how many course assignments involve each of the following research activities:

_____ Discussing research
_____ Doing library research
_____ Doing an original project
_____ Doing database research
_____ Analyzing/interpreting research
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____

5F. Please rank in order of importance these objectives for including public relations research in this course; use "1" for the most important; "2" for the second, and so on.

_____ Evaluating research for its strengths and weaknesses
_____ Understanding the role of research
_____ Using research in public relations situations
_____ Producing original public relations research
_____ Other: _____

Section G: Public Relations Values and Attitudes

All respondents should complete this section; please indicate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements by circling one abbreviation for:

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

1G. Practical research experience is important in public relations undergraduate education.
SA A U D SD

2G. Public relations research is not different from other types of research.
SA A U D SD

3G. Undergraduate research instruction in public relations can be addressed by lecture alone.
SA A U D SD

4G. Most entry-level public relations jobs do not involve research skills.
SA A U D SD

5G. To advance in the public relations profession practitioners must have basic research skills.
SA A U D SD

6G. Public relations academic programs are responsive to the research needs of the profession.
SA A U D SD

7G. Learning about research in school is preferable to learning about research on the job.
SA A U D SD

8G. Public relations students' attitudes toward research are influenced by an aversion to numbers.
SA A U D SD

(Next page, please)

9G. In public relations practice, academic research is just as important as practical research.
SA A U D SD

10G. In research, understanding information is more important than generating numbers.
SA A U D SD

Section H: About Your Program and Yourself ...

All respondents should complete this section.

1H. Courses in our department are based on _____ semesters _____ quarters.

2H. Is your program accredited by ACEJMC _____ Yes _____ No _____ Planning to be _____ Don't know

3H. Please check all of the types of research you have produced during the past 12 months:
_____ Published academic research
_____ Unpublished academic research
_____ Research for a public relations project/client
_____ Other: _____

4H. Please check all of the types of research you have used during the past 12 months:
_____ Published academic research
_____ Unpublished academic research
_____ Research for a public relations project/client
_____ Other: _____

5H. Are you a full-time faculty member _____ a part-time faculty member _____ a graduate assistant _____

6H. Number of years of professional public relations experience _____
Number of years of teaching experience _____ Number of years in present academic position _____

7H. Are you an APR? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return this survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you!

About the survey author ...

- Born and reared in Lake Wobegon (St. Wendel), Minnesota.
- Two years experience as a newspaper reporter and editor.
- Eight years experience as a public relations practitioner, including time in Florida travel and tourism, county government, and corporate consulting work.
- Teaching experience at St. Cloud State University, the University of South Dakota, and Oklahoma State University.
- Next goal: To teach public relations and collect cats.

APPENDIX F

PRACTITIONERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: The Role of Research in Your Work ...

1. Within the last 12 months, please indicate how research figured into your job. Please check all that apply:

____ You conducted in-house research (please indicate the portion of your time or your staff's time spent doing research)

____ Less than 25% ____ 25- 50% ____ 51-75% ____ More than 75%

____ You hired an outside firm to do research for you (please indicate the number of times you or your staff hired an outside firm)

____ Less than 5 times ____ 5-10 times ____ More than 10 times

____ I did not use and/or produce research during the past 12 months; **(please skip to Question 4).**

2. Please check all of the types of research you or your staff members have used in the last 12 months:

____ Focus groups ____ Mail surveys ____ Telephone surveys
____ Market research ____ Pretesting ____ Posttesting
____ Academic research ____ Delphi studies ____ Library research
____ In-depth interviews ____ Rolling research ____ Media evaluation
____ Environmental scans ____ Database research ____ Communication audits
____ Other: _____

3. Please check all of the types of research you or your staff members have produced during the past 12 months:

____ Focus groups ____ Mail surveys ____Telephone surveys
____ Market research ____ Pretesting ____ Posttesting
____ Academic research ____ Delphi studies ____ Library research
____ In-depth interviews ____ Rolling research ____ Media evaluation
____ Environmental scans ____ Database research ____ Communication audits
____ Other: _____

4. How did you learn to use research information? Please check all that apply:

____ Undergraduate studies ____ Graduate studies
____ On-the-job experience ____ Continuing professional education
____ Other: _____

5. How did you learn to produce original research? Please check all that apply:

____ Undergraduate studies ____ Graduate studies
____ On-the-job experience ____ Continuing professional education
____ Other: _____

6. Are you including more research in your work now than you did 12 months ago?

____ Yes **(please go to Question 7 and skip Question 8).**
____ No **(please skip to Question 8).**

7. Please check all of the reasons you or your staff members are doing more research:

____ Management requires it ____ It provides information for planning programs
____ It helps measure program results ____ It allows for program adjustments
____ Some clients insist on research and will pay for it
____ Other: _____

8. Please check all of the reasons you or your staff members are not including research:

____ Cost ____ Time constraints ____ Not sure how to do it
____ Lack of people to do it ____ Management does not require it
____ Some clients do not want research and will not pay for it
____ Other: _____

(over, please)

Section B: Public Relations Values and Attitudes

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements by circling one abbreviation for: **Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).**

9. Practical research experience is important in public relations undergraduate education.
SA A U D SD

10. Public relations research is not different from other types of research.
SA A U D SD

11. Undergraduate research instruction in public relations can be addressed by lecture alone.
SA A U D SD

12. Most entry-level public relations jobs do not involve research skills.
SA A U D SD

13. To advance in the public relations profession practitioners must have basic research skills.
SA A U D SD

14. Public relations academic programs are responsive to the research needs of the profession.
SA A U D SD

15. Learning about research in school is preferable to learning about research on the job.
SA A U D SD

16. Public relations students' attitudes toward research are influenced by an aversion to numbers.
SA A U D SD

17. In public relations practice, academic research is just as important as practical research.
SA A U D SD

18. In research, understanding information is more important than generating numbers.
SA A U D SD

Section C: About yourself ...

19. Years as a public relations practitioner _____

20. In your current job, please indicate the percentage of time you spend doing each of following functions:
_____ Planning, directing, implementing and evaluating projects.
_____ Carrying out public relations projects, writing and/or producing materials.
_____ Budgeting, personnel and other administrative tasks.

21. Type of public relations work currently doing:
_____ Corporate _____ Not-for-profit _____ Non-profit _____ Government
_____ Agency _____ Other: _____

22. Are you an APR? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return this survey in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. ***Thank you!***

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VITA

Barbara Huls DeSanto

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES: THE STATE OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH EDUCATION

Major field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in St. Wendel, Minnesota, August 18, 1950, the daughter of Ernest and Irma Huls.

Education: Graduated from Holdingford High School, Holdingford, Minnesota, in May 1968; received Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communications from St. Cloud State University in 1982; received Master of Science degree from St. Cloud State University in 1991; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1995.

Professional Experience: Taught at the University of South Dakota (1992-93) and St. Cloud State University (1990-91, and 1992-93). Earned Accredited in Public Relations (APR) in 1993; public information director for Lee County, Florida, 1987-89; assistant director of tourism publicity for Lee County, Florida, 1985-87; newspaper reporter and editor 1983-85.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 02-02-95 **IRB#:** AS-95-041

Proposal Title: THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES: THE STATE OF UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH EDUCATION

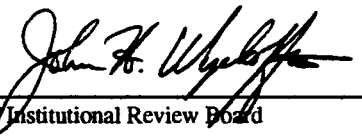
Principal Investigator(s): Charles A. Fleming, Barbara J. DeSanto

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:  Date: February 10, 1995

Chair of Institutional Review Board