

A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
PROFESSIONALS TOWARDS COLLEGE CURRICULA

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PREFACE

This study was concerned with an analysis of the types of knowledge public relations professionals want college students in public relations sequences to obtain. The primary objective was to determine if professionals desired knowledge beyond that offered within the liberal arts and sciences background currently required by the American Council on Education for Journalism, and recommended by the Association for Education in Journalism and the Public Relations Society of America. Specifically, professional attitudes towards Business courses were obtained and compared with attitudes towards Communications/Public Relations courses and Arts and Sciences courses.

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Finally, special gratitude must be given to my wife, Patsy, and daughter, Kathleen, for their understanding and sacrifices when the author returned to college after 23 years in the business world. This same appreciation is given to my sons, Taylor and Timothy, who managed to finish their senior year in college at the same time.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Although often thought of as the newest sequence to be taught in journalism schools, public relations courses at the university level date back almost 50 years.¹ With the beginning of the "publicity boom," J. F. Wright introduced a publicity course at the University of Illinois in 1920. Two years later, a publicity course was established at Indiana University.

The first course with the title "public relations" was offered in 1923 by Edward L. Bernays, a pioneer in the field.² Bernays taught the one-semester course in the Department of Journalism in New York University's School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance---but only for two years.

Across the nation, the University of Oregon first offered a course in publicity in 1927-1928, using a text entitled Principles of Publicity.³ The University of Minnesota offered its first public relations course in 1929, with a class in "press relations." By 1945, 21 institutions were offering courses in public relations.

From these early days into the post-war periods, public relations education posed many questions. One of the first was, "Where within a university should public relations be taught? Should it be within the journalism school or within the business school?"

Generally, public relations has been taught in journalism schools to provide students the basic skills of writing and editing. Yet as recent as 1976, argument arose again in a major public relations newsletter.⁴ The article quoted such public relations veterans as John Hill who believed that public relations education was not necessary for work in the field.

In the article, Albert Walker of Northern Illinois University noted that:

One of the problems in disagreement over a common discipline for public relations lies in a lack of understanding of what constitutes liberal arts education. Another is that many public relations practitioners are from the newspaper ranks and insist on that kind of preparation for public relations.⁵

Walker stated that the public relations major via a business school probably has more business courses than he needs, and missed news and feature writing, editing and graphics from a journalism curriculum.

Still the debate over public relations education continues. According to the leading professional journal in the field, "The training and matriculation of young public relations practitioners quite possibly is one of the two or three most pressing problems the profession has to face."⁶

Courses best suited for the "major" portion of a journalism/public relations degree were agreed upon at the 1975 annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ) when a report was presented, based on two years of work by the Commission on Public Relations Education. The study was jointly sponsored by AEJ and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

While it did not provide a "lock-step" curriculum, it was the basis used by AEJ and PRSA for measuring the quality of public relations

education.⁷ The report, entitled "A Design for Public Relations Education," outlined curricula in three main areas.

The smallest area, in number of courses, was specifically concerned with subjects which encompass public relations practice. The next largest area related to courses in the general field of communications. Both types are listed in detail in Appendix A.

The largest area represented the general liberal arts and humanities background recommended for all public relations students and was described only in broad detail in the report.

Inherent in the commission's report were several assumptions. The first of these was, "That the student should receive a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and humanities, with appropriate emphasis on education in communications and public relations."⁸ The report went on to say that its recommendations should conform in a general way to the accreditation requirements of the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJ).

In practice, ACEJ leaves it up to the visitation team to determine if a school is providing the basics required.⁹ The general ACEJ guidelines attempt to assure a broad background with the statement:

The liberal arts and sciences background of the student should include wide study in such fields as economics, English, history, languages, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and the sciences, as well as depth in one such field.¹⁰

At least half of the visiting ACEJ team members are practitioners themselves--in broad areas or in the specific sequence or sequences to be examined.¹¹ The team seeks to assure that accredited programs are taught by better-than-average teachers in better-than-average facilities. It checks to see if the school maintains good relations with the media

and institutions in its area and has their respect, maintains contact with alumni, and sets high standards for its faculty.¹²

At present, 15 public relations programs or sequences are accredited by ACEJ.¹³ However, more than 250 colleges and universities have public relations courses, majors or sequences, according to a directory published in 1979 by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education.¹⁴ The directory shows that 13 universities offer doctorates with public relations emphasis, 37 with master's degrees, and 61 with bachelor's degrees. More than 65 of the schools have chapters in the Public Relations Students Society of America.

The 1979 report showed that 130 schools offer only one public relations course, with another 18 offering only two courses. None of these schools is accredited. Of the 61 schools offering only a bachelor's degree, only one is ACEJ accredited. However, the report cautioned that the word "degree" often refers to a public relations sequence or emphasis rather than a public relations major per se. It said, "A university which has an emphasis in public relations does not necessarily have more public relations courses than one with two or more courses in public relations."¹⁵

Comments on Education

With completion of the AEJ/PRSA guidelines in 1975, there seemed to be complete agreement between both the professional and the academic worlds on what a public relations student should take during his college years. The source for the general guideline that around 75 percent of the classes should be in general liberal arts and sciences can be traced to the beginning of journalism education, when the first goal was to

produce reporters and editors for print media. Paul L. Dressel, a noted educator, commented:

The desirability of a liberal education for the journalist has seldom been seriously questioned, but questions of the relative importance of liberal education and know-how and the best means of achieving each of these have been and are sources of conflict.¹⁶

In the news-editorial field, an editor-and-publisher commented in 1975 that:

We want reporters who have an education in the liberal arts--an education broad enough so that the applicant is likely to bring some understanding to the areas of human activity which he or she will be covering for us.¹⁷

Yet, the growth of other programs or sequences within journalism schools has prompted other views. Dr. Dressel, in his 1960 report on liberal education and journalism, noted that advertising, for one, has gradually shifted from its role as a subsidiary of news-editorial to a sequence closely related to programs in business or commerce.¹⁸ Similarly, the public relations specialist is seen as needing a substantive knowledge of the field in which he works. Yet these new functions have not materially affected the liberal arts background generally required of the student. Dr. Dressel reported:

The major change has been in substituting a new set of professional courses more intimately related to the function or medium for a set having a different emphasis. . . . It is impossible to combine such a technical field with a liberal education and professional study in journalism and do all three well in the usual span of four years.¹⁹

One possible answer to this problem is to offer programs at the master's level only, but the 1960 study by Dressel detected "no discernible trend" in this direction:

Perhaps the chief difficulty in the way of the general acceptance of the graduate program in lieu of the undergraduate is found in the nature of the field. Salaries have not been such as to encourage extensive graduate study.²⁰

Since the professional study of journalism/public relations, plus study in the liberal arts, and in "specialized" fields such as government or business, cannot be done in four years, suggestions for a better defined minor in public relations seem in order, rather than just saying that 75 percent of the work should be in the arts and sciences.

A 1978 study at Northern Illinois University reported that "students should minor in business and take more graphics-oriented courses."²¹ In the study, 50 questionnaires were mailed to public relations graduates from the classes of 1968 through 1977. Responses were received from 86 percent.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of courses in preparing them for their public relations courses. Writing courses ranked the highest, followed closely by public relations classes. However, when asked what courses they needed, but did not receive, the respondents included (in order of importance) management, graphics, layout and design, marketing, and finance. The report ended with the comment, "Based on the survey findings, students should minor in business, which is difficult to do at the present time at Northern Illinois University."²²

The need for a better defined minor surfaced again in a 1977 survey conducted by Dr. Dennis L. Wilcox of San Jose State University. Polling 90 top-level public relations people in the San Francisco Bay Area to determine what they wanted in a recent graduate, Dr. Wilcox found, "The ideal applicant for a public relations job will have a four-year undergraduate degree with courses in newswriting, public relations, business and social sciences."²³ So, are employers finding the qualifications they want in the applicants they interview? Not according to a 1976 survey conducted by Thomas Kuby of Chagrin Falls, Ohio. A public relations

counselor, Kuby picked 100 practitioners at random from the Public Relations Register and found that 60 percent of those responding felt the students were lacking "real world experience, basic writing skills, good English usage, and exposure to fields other than journalism."²⁴

In a 1978 survey conducted by Public Relations Journal, Exxon's Paul Morgan, a senior public affairs adviser, was quoted as saying, "You can't be a good public relations person without all kinds of experience in business, organizations or government."²⁵ This would seem like an almost impossible requirement, but there is reason behind such comments. In a 1979 cover story report by Business Week, Kerry King, senior vice president of public affairs at Texaco, and PRSA's current president, said:

Many people still equate the field with media relations, product publicity, and promotion. Public affairs goes beyond that. The problem is that there are not enough PR men with the skills to deal with their peer groups on the executive and management levels. If you can't talk the language of the peer group, you're not accepted by the management.²⁶

Statement of the Problem

The problem facing journalism education today is that many of these comments seem to be in conflict with accepted educational practice. After all, it was just four years ago that AEJ and PRSA agreed on a liberal arts and humanities education as the foundation for a public relations student. Their report called for consideration of "satellite studies" as a "minor" or secondary area of emphasis:

The student aiming toward a degree in public relations should endeavor to take at least two courses in a field related to his special area of public relations interest.

Thus, if he intends to enter the corporate public relations field, he should take courses in business administration. If he is aiming to work in government, then he should take appropriate courses in government and politics.

It is important that the college or university permit the flexibility in programming that is needed in order for a student to cross departmental or college lines to obtain these additional courses of study.²⁷

However, does a "satellite" grouping of only two courses meet the requirements of a true minor in college? Does it allow the public relations student to "speak the language of his peers?" Does an arts and sciences minor required of the news-editorial student apply to the public relations student?

Perhaps the most important question is whether the ACEJ requirement of a liberal arts education meets the needs of the "working and hiring" levels of the public relations profession. This was the basic and overall problem.

The profession's membership is diverse. As of May 1, 1978, PRSA had approximately 9,000 members, and was considered representative since it was the only professional public relations organization in the United States. Of these individual members, 49 percent worked within business or industrial firms.²⁸ The second largest group, 25 percent, worked for a counseling or public relations firm. About eight percent of the PRSA members worked for trade or professional associations, six percent for health or welfare organizations, five percent for educational institutions, and three percent were retired.

To summarize, the 1975 report from PRSA and AEJ did not research adequately the question of what a public relations student should take for a minor subject. Surveys among professionals in 1976, 1977, and 1978 included comments relative to the need for additional knowledge or skills. Much of this knowledge could be acquired within an arts and sciences framework if the student wanted to practice public relations

for government, health or welfare organizations, or educational institutions. Yet, PRSA figures indicated more than 60 percent of its professionals worked within or for business or industry. A heavy concentration of business courses is currently difficult to obtain, considering the "liberal arts and sciences" requirements of ACEJ.

A new approach with more flexibility in curriculum planning was indicated. This study concentrated on the value of a business minor for public relations students as perceived by working professionals in the public relations field.

FOOTNOTES

¹Allen H. Center and Scott M. Cutlip, Effective Public Relations (4th ed., Englewood Cliffs, 1977), pp. 677-680.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Albert Walker, "Best PR Curriculum? Journalism Is Soundest Route," Journalism Educator (July, 1976), pp. 51-52.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Leo J. Northart, "Editor's Notebook: The Special Report that Grew and Grew and Grew," Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), p. 7.

⁷William R. Toran, "Two-Year Study Proposes Changes to Upgrade, Standardize PR Courses," Journalism Educator (April, 1976), pp. 24-26.

⁸J. Carroll Bateman, "Standardized Public Relations Education?" IPRA Review (April, 1978), pp. 7-13.

⁹John Paul Jones, "Accreditation: A Watchdog for Higher Standards," The Quill (September, 1975), pp. 22-23.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, Public Relations Sequences and Courses in U.S. Colleges and Universities, 1979 (New York, 1979).

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Paul L. Dressel, Liberal Education and Journalism, Liberal Education Serials (New York, 1960).

¹⁷Ronald H. Einstoss, "You're Still Short of the Mark," The Quill (September, 1975), pp. 20-24.

18 Dressel.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Albert Walker, "Recent Public Relations Graduates Cite Need for Business, Graphics," PRSA National Newsletter (January, 1979), p. 2.

22 Ibid.

23 Dovie W. Nichols, "The Employers: What Do They Really Want?" Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), pp. 18-20.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 "The Corporate Image: PR to the Rescue," Business Week (January 22, 1979), pp. 47-56.

27 Commission on Public Relations Education, A Design for Public Relations Education (a study co-sponsored by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and the Public Relations Society of America, 1975), pp. 11-12.

28 Helen Daniels, membership computer records, Membership Department of Public Relations Society of America, internal memorandum to Rhea Smith, PRSA executive director, New York, May 1, 1978.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Opinions of Professionals

In 1975, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), which encompasses editors/writers of both internal and external publications, authorized a major research project entitled "Profile/75." Findings from the survey of 1,250 communicators were presented to the Public Relations Division of AEJ in August, 1975. The report stated:

. . . an attractive, tangential field does exist, that journalism graduates are drawn to it naturally, and that most schools of journalism could capitalize on existing courses by emphasizing business communications or even developing a sequence in the field.¹

A conclusion of the IABC survey was that business communications is as much a primary public relations duty as a supportive element in American industry's public relations departments:

. . . the schools could interest a greater percent of their majors in this career by emphasizing it more, and could possibly make their graduates more viable in the field by structuring a program which adds the management dimension to an existing strong skills program.²

A somewhat different view as to the type of education needed--in this instance, for news-editorial majors--was voiced later in 1975 by Ronald H. Einstoss, an editor, when he said:

Students should be given a broad enough education so that they have some understanding of the territory for which they will be responsible when they enter the profession. . . . J-schools should be turning out graduates who want jobs in

'general practice' of newspapering, rather than specialization, which will come later. One editor said: 'We're up to our eyeballs in specialists. What we need are ground-level reporters.'³

Translated over to the public relations major, this could indicate he should place the most emphasis on writing and editing skills necessary for entry-level jobs. Yet, a pioneer professional in the field, Edward L. Bernays, wrote:

Present day activities of higher education for public relations . . . stress skills in writing and communication . . . (adjustment to change) cannot be done by emphasis on words by themselves. It demands action . . . based on applied social science. . . . Actions speak louder than words. . . . Medical college students who want to become surgeons are not taught how to wield scalpels and knives before they are taught the basics about the human body. . . . To put emphasis on writing skills in public relations is comparable.⁴

In 1978, the Public Relations Journal surveyed companies and consulting firms throughout the United States, asking about what qualifications they sought in recent graduate or entry-level public relations people. The magazine reported:

Employers of entry-level PR persons have a pretty clear-cut idea of what they want and expect from an applicant. . . . Except for proven writing ability, the desired qualifications are similar to those demanded of applicants in most any profession.⁵

Although writing proficiency received the highest ranking, the Journal's survey stated employers also sought such qualities as organization, ability to speak well, pragmatism, flexibility, and understanding of general business practices. Other desired qualities included a knowledge of current events, awareness of societal trends, a broad range of academic disciplines, knowledge of how to think, and a basic knowledge of all media.

The Journal reprinted in detail the responses from 10 New York metropolitan area employers as "indicative of the variety of attitudes

found across the country." There were differences in opinion. Ruder and Finn, for example, looked for people with good liberal arts backgrounds. According to Mr. Finn:

I think a good public relations education can't hurt, but it's a hard subject to teach because the body of scholarly knowledge is limited and may not be particularly useful in the practice of public relations. . . . We have hired English, history, French and business majors, but if an individual from any of these disciplines doesn't have broad interests and sensitivity, all the training will be of little value.⁶

But, on another side of the entry-level qualities, the Journal reported that Burson-Marsteller placed emphasis on "doers":

We believe the real doers in college will be the real doers here. . . . A journalism background is preferred, but the firm looks favorably on business degrees. According to Bill Noonan of the firm, 'If an MBA was editor of a school publication, that's a terrific combination'.⁷

Another professional view on education was received by the College of Journalism at the University of South Carolina when it sent an outline for a survey course in public relations to a Houston firm. According to Edward Norton, senior vice president of Goodwin, Dannenbaum, Littman and Wingfield, Inc.:

The most common complaint we hear from employers and recent graduates alike is the failure to emphasize good writing in college academic programs. . . . A second shortcoming of college academic programs which we hear about is the lack of professional knowledge about the 'real world' by people at the teaching level in colleges. . . . So, if young people are agency oriented, they need to know how an agency gets new business . . . how an agency generates revenue through fees and commission, the importance of budgets and producing work profitably and within a budget. . . . If they are working elsewhere, they should know how to get a better job so they can introduce plans, how to put a proposal on paper and present it to decision makers, and how to sell it in a meeting or other situation. Probably a good speech course would help.⁸

Concerning the debate over whether public relations should be taught in journalism or business schools, one professional pointed out that ACEJ

could and would accredit programs in business schools:

According to J. Carroll Bateman, PRSA's current representative to ACEJ, 'The decision to make the requests lies with the deans and administrators of the schools of business, who so far have been unwilling to look to ACEJ'.⁹

In a 1978 Public Relations Journal article on management of public relations counseling firms, a number of counselors were asked what trends they saw for the 1980s. They concluded:

What's been happening in the last four years--and what will go on happening--is an invasion in the corporations by Masters of Business Administration (MBAs) with a frothy passion for numbers and measurements once foreign to public relations. Emphasis that used to be placed on a journalistic background is no longer there. Agency clients are demanding other disciplines, but communications is still the base of the PR agency business. . . . The opportunities for public relations . . . are unmatched, provided public relations and its humanists can strike a balance with the numbers men.¹⁰

This "fear" of MBA influence within clients served by public relations firms was disputed early in 1979 in a letter-to-the-editor in Public Relations Journal. The reply stated:

The most important and what will prove the most telling contributions by MBAs to public relations . . . will result from recognition by intelligent and competitive public relations counselors and clients that the best public relations programs are those closely tied to the client corporation's strategies, resources, policies, marketing efforts, competitive position and objectives.¹¹

Opinions of Educators

The rapid growth of public relations majors in college, and thus the importance of the courses offered, was highlighted in the most recent survey on journalism schools conducted annually by the Journalism Educator. The survey reported:

The numbers in the public relations area continue to surge, from 4,972 in 1977 to 6,253 in 1978. Students interested in public relations represent 9.6 percent of the total, up from

8.2 percent in 1977, 5.8 percent in 1976, and 5.4 percent in 1975.¹²

In round numbers, the survey reported that news-editorial majors comprised 29 percent of journalism students; broadcasts majors represented 14 percent; advertising students made up 13 percent; and public relations majors comprised 10 percent.

The nature of the college courses taken by the largest sequence, news-editorial, was outlined in 1974 in a study commissioned for the ANPA Foundation-AEJ conference on "Education for Newspaper Journalists in the Seventies and Beyond."¹³ The study was one of few which covered all subjects taken for undergraduate credit. Only a few records showed the students took course concentrations in other than the traditional liberal arts and science subjects. The article which summarized the report stated:

About 29.5 percent of the (news-editorial) graduates earned 25 more semester hours, roughly the equivalent of a major, in at least one discipline other than journalism. Another 34.5 percent of the graduates earned 20 to 24 semester hours in such a discipline and 27 percent earned 15 to 19 hours, roughly the equivalent of a minor. . . . The median graduate took 66 percent of his total four-year program in liberal arts and sciences courses and 25 percent in journalism and communications. The remaining 9 percent of the median graduate's work was in courses such as physical education, military science, marketing, etc., that are neither journalism nor the traditional arts and sciences.¹⁴

Unfortunately, the report did not explain whether the "major" or perhaps the "minor" in an area other than journalism was by student design or happened by "accident" within the 66 percent of his course work devoted to arts and sciences. In either case, the extremely heavy concentration in liberal arts and sciences reflected the accrediting requirements of ACEJ for sequences or programs taught within a journalism school.

The actual practice of public relations education as carried out by United States colleges and universities was outlined in detail in a 1975 report commissioned by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education. The survey said, "Currently the home department for public relations education is overwhelmingly journalism within the liberal arts college."¹⁵

The survey was conducted among 320 institutions identified as offering courses in public relations. Response was from 45 percent of the institutions. More than 60 percent of the public relations educational courses were located in journalism or mass communications departments. An additional 14 percent were found in departments or schools of communications (representing generally a merger of journalism with speech). Little more than 10 percent of public relations courses was located in a business college or department. Some education departments or colleges offered a class in some form of public relations. The report's author, Dr. Albert Walker, noted:

In most undergraduate programs, the student is required by the university or college to take about two-thirds of his work in the liberal arts. . . . Despite the fact that most public relations is taught in liberal arts colleges, there appears to be a strong emphasis on corporate public relations in the classroom. This is seen in the backgrounds of the guest speakers and authors of the most frequently used texts, if not in the backgrounds of the teachers.¹⁶

In its summary and conclusions, the 1975 foundation report said that public relations students were being "drilled primarily in writing, editing and print media skills."¹⁷ It further noted that education for public relations also meant back-up courses in English, literature, and the social and behavioral sciences, "with a few business subjects--very often too few."¹⁸ In its final observation, the study stated:

Public relations graduates are mainly communicators. They are getting little or no instruction in business management, marketing or finance. They are communicators, rather than business executives, by training, indoctrination and inclination. . . . It is true that most public relations programs recommend basic courses in management, marketing and finance. However, finance often requires one or two prerequisite courses in accounting. . . . In one sense, public relations education can be faulted for not including adequate instruction in business and finance. In another sense, it can be defended as providing organizations with communicators.¹⁹

The fact that many journalism/public relations majors do not intend to pursue a career in the field, but have plans to go on to another degree in business or law, also was noted by the report.

Students with no desire to enter a journalism profession, but who realized the importance of the media, also were recognized in 1975 by Dr. DeWitt C. Reddick, former dean of the University of Texas School of Communication.²⁰ Dr. Reddick noted that the consumer orientation of the modern age had created a concern on how to interpret the media. With all the challenges journalism education faced, he said:

Journalism education is of vital concern to all professional fields of journalism. Ways must be found for a continuous interaction between journalism teachers and professionals on newspapers, magazines, the electronic media, in advertising, public relations, and other communication fields.²¹

Demands being placed on journalism education also were covered in a 1975 article by Dr. John DeMott:

Today's student can obtain special training across an impressive spectrum of special areas--science and technology, the arts, education, politics, business, sports, religion, ecology. . . . More and more, journalism students are being encouraged to become double majors. The integration of journalism courses with other areas of learning is being continually improved through more cooperative projects of study, adventures in team teaching, and the cross-listing of courses.²²

This rather "optimistic" view of the flexibility of journalism education seems to be somewhat in contrast to the 1975 foundation report on public

relations education authored by Dr. Walker.

One educator, John D. Simpkins of Michigan State University, said the key to curriculum seemed to lie in "specifying the purposes most often encountered in the practice of public relations . . . the goals to be achieved."²³ Simpkins believed most public relations programs were aimed "at achieving change" and recommended a fifth year of education so the student could concentrate on a content area relating to industry or government, etc. Since universities appeared unable to control the nature of problems confronting the organizations to be served, Simpkins declared the curriculum planner needed to design programs based on professional community needs, faculty capability, and student interests.

Simpkins' emphasis on public relations which serves as "an agent of change" also placed more emphasis on non-journalism departments. He stated:

While all of these demands (by society) suggest curriculum positions, some seem more appropriate for university instruction than do others. Almost all of them suggest a strong interdepartmental or intercollegiate curriculum plan. . . . The public relations practitioner is likely to become increasingly involved in problem-solving processes . . . and the level of skills demanded goes beyond the rudiments of messages and media.²⁴

Educators concerned with a journalism sequence related to public relations, that of advertising, sometimes say their students do not get enough knowledge of the world of business. Two professors from Georgia State University have written that:

A thorough understanding of how the business system operates is essential, but advertising majors are not learning the doctrines of modern business philosophy and practice. . . . As a result, the product of an advertising curriculum has been what we might call 'technician oriented'.²⁵

The views of these two educators indicated that advertising majors need some knowledge of production, finance, marketing, personnel, accounting,

and research. They suggested two alternatives: (1) the advertising sequence should design its own special courses; or (2) some of the traditional editorial-required courses, such as history of journalism, should be set aside.

The need for a more specific minor in college, as part of a broad-based journalism curriculum, was reviewed in 1977 by Stephen C. Hook when he said:

If the total college curriculum requirements do not interfere, I would like to see a journalism major augmented by a complementary area of study. For example, advertising students, in addition to editorial courses within the departmental major, would be required to get a second major or minor in marketing or business administration. . . . My second major recommendation is for more courses in communication management. . . . Who's going to construct personnel policies? Who's going to oversee the bookkeeper's work? Who's going to make recommendations on how to cut costs and increase revenue and return on investment?²⁶

The suggestion from the professors at Georgia State University that departments might design their own general survey courses was carried out in the area of economics by the University of Missouri at Columbia.²⁷

The Missouri journalism economics course comprises four areas: (1) basic economic concepts, sources, and background; (2) interpretation of corporate financial reports; (3) macroeconomics; and (4) application of basic economic concepts to current social issues.

A growing call for more training outside the journalism school does not mean, however, a trend towards moving public relations education elsewhere. In a 1977 survey of all members of the Public Relations Division of AEJ, 84 percent supported a link between public relations and journalism/communications, 10 percent favored an independent public relations program, and 6 percent preferred administration under business or other university units. An article on the survey stated that:

. . . a major part of PR work is based on journalistic skills--effective writing and editing, as well as graphics and news judgment . . . demands of competent PR practitioners when considering a fresh graduate for employment always include the common question, 'How well can he/she write?'²⁸

The article concluded its survey report by noting that while there was no definitive figures on the number of journalism graduates who change from media to public relations work, a conservative estimate might be that as many as 15 percent move into public relations. All told, then, possibly as many as 25 percent or more of journalism graduates eventually take jobs in public relations.²⁹

While basic writing and editing skills are necessary for entry-level jobs, the need for other areas of knowledge was covered in a 1979 Business Week article which reported:

Public relations men are striving to give an intellectual substance to what they do. They are moving away from the seat-of-the pants approach . . . and they are trying to adopt long-range planning and other apparatus of modern management. . . . Says Boston University's Otto Lerbinger: 'We now have a management-by-objectives mentality. MBO demands are being made of PR practitioners the same as with other top staff and line officers. CEOs used to be satisfied with press clippings.' Now they're saying, 'How is this helping?'³⁰

The most recent report on trends in public relations education came in the spring of 1979 via a nationwide study, involving 113 schools, done by Warren K. Agee of the University of Georgia.³¹ Commenting on changes or additions being made to public relations sequences, Agee reported that internship courses were by far the most popular addition, followed closely by a collective grouping of "other" courses such as public relations techniques, public relations evaluation, and public relations projects. Public relations campaigns, case studies, and graphic communications were tied for third place in the rankings.

Expanding on the current importance being placed on various courses,

Agee said:

News writing/reporting ranks well ahead of all other background requirements in terms of courses recently added and those projected for the near future. . . . A strong trend toward increased emphasis upon marketing and management studies is evident in the replies. Both are areas of background knowledge highly recommended by the PRSA Education Committee.³²

The best over-all conclusion from educators, perhaps, is one given by Professor Allen H. Center of San Diego State University, who said:

Employers are blaming educators because students aren't coming out of the university as finished public relations professionals. Professionals have to sit down with educators and give them the criteria for what is expected of students as employees. Competence in public relations must begin in the classroom and educators are responsive to what the market wants.³³

Theses on Public Relations

In 1964, a master's candidate at Ohio State sent a questionnaire to 4,020 members of PRSA--with a response rate of 52 percent.³⁴ Of the comments, 94 percent of the members thought public relations should be taught in college. Most would not hire a public relations beginner without a college degree. Ranking courses in the major segment of a degree as to their value, the PRSA members picked news writing as first and public relations as second. Feature writing, public speaking, and public opinion were the next highest ranked courses.

In 1967, a master's candidate at Ohio University looked into the suitability of the eight public relations sequences then accredited by ACEJ.³⁵ Questionnaires were sent to 299 randomly selected members of PRSA with a 73 percent return rate. Singled out by the respondents as the most important characteristics for a successful public relations man

were "a creative and imaginative mind and command of the English language."³⁶ When asked to select from the 25 courses then offered by the eight accredited schools, news writing, public relations principles, and human behavior and communication were the first three courses by a wide margin.

The general qualifications desired in new employees were researched in 1968 by a master's candidate from Ohio State University.³⁷ The personnel selection techniques of eight of the nation's largest corporate counseling firms were analyzed. Executives from the eight firms disagreed as to the relative importance of specifics. Some thought media experience was mandatory, while others placed emphasis on a broad liberal arts background. However, the eight counseling firms did emphasize the need for specialists in finance, law, and fashions--and the need for greater education in specialized backgrounds.

The history of the ACEJ accrediting process was studied in 1970 by a graduate candidate from Indiana University.³⁸ The study's conclusions saw a lack of agreement about journalism education standards and procedures plus opposition to sequential accreditation. All information came from a review of the literature, ACEJ minutes and correspondence.

The possible effect of journalism educators' background on how public relations was taught was researched in 1977 by a master's candidate at Northern Illinois University.³⁹ Questionnaires were sent to 300 institutions, with a return rate of about 30 percent. The general conclusion was that professional background of an educator bears "no noticeable effects" on the types of courses he teaches or advises his public relations students to take.

In 1977 another master's candidate at Northern Illinois University researched the perceptions of public relations education as seen by graduates of that school from 1968 through 1975.⁴⁰ Questionnaires had a 63 percent response rate. Analysis showed that the graduates ranked writing courses the highest in the skills needed, and that they were deficient in business studies. More specifically, respondents perceived significant deficiencies in subjects such as management, marketing, and finance. Another major deficiency seen was a lack of media experience or a public relations internship.

Conclusion

A conversation/interview with Dr. Frederick H. Teahan, PRSA's vice president of education, brought out a statement that "research on the best minor subjects for a PR student" had never been done to his knowledge, particularly as seen by public relations professionals.⁴¹ This viewpoint was reinforced by the search of the literature. General comments called for a "broad education" or work in "the social sciences" or knowledge of the "liberal arts"--with disagreement, sometimes, on what each of these means.

Thesis research reported on the principal items desired by public relations professionals. For the most part, these are communications-related courses. But for the total academic program, what does the professional market want? Several university professors believe that students "need to learn the doctrines of business." This study sought to discover if professionals agreed.

FOOTNOTES

¹International Association of Business Communicators, Case for an Emphasis in Business Communications: Findings From Profile/75. Paper presented by Gerald C. Stone to the Public Relations Division, Association for Education in Journalism (San Francisco, 1975).

²Ibid.

³Ronald H. Einstoss, "You're Still Short of the Mark," The Quill (September, 1975), pp. 20-24.

⁴Edward L. Bernays, "Education for PR: A Call to Action," Public Relations Quarterly (Fall, 1978).

⁵Dovie W. Nichols, "The Employers: What Do They Really Want?" Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), pp. 11-13.

⁶Ibid., p. 14.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Edward Norton, "Practical Guidance from the Field," Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), p. 21.

⁹J. Carroll Bateman, "Accrediting Degree Programs in Public Relations Education," Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), pp. 22-28.

¹⁰Edward Langley, "Preview: Managing the PR Firm," Public Relations Journal (December, 1978), pp. 10-12.

¹¹Jack D. P. Lichtenstein, "MBA Stereotyping Criticized," Public Relations Journal (February, 1979), p. 6.

¹²Paul V. Peterson, "J-Students Keep Coming: Enrollment Surges Again," Journalism Educator (January, 1979), pp. 3-8.

¹³Baskett Mosse and Galen R. Rarick, "J-Students Receive Academic Breadth in 4 College Years," Journalism Educator (April, 1974), pp. 35-36.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, Status and Trends of Public Relations Education in U.S. Senior Colleges and Universities: Report of Findings of Survey (New York, 1975).

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 DeWitt C. Reddick, "On Journalism Education: From a Variety of Voices, a Myriad of Grays, Introduction," The Quill (September, 1975), pp. 13-15.

21 Ibid.

22 John DeMott, "We're Doing a Better Job Than Ever," The Quill (September, 1975), pp. 16-19.

23 John D. Simpkins, "Theory, Strategy Get Priority," Journalism Educator (July, 1976), pp. 53-56.

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25 John S. Wright and Charles F. Steilen, "Ad Majors Should Be Learning More About Modern Business," Journalism Educator (January, 1976), pp. 49-51.

26 Stephen C. Hook, "A Broad-Based J-Curriculum Would Serve Students Better," Journalism Educator (January, 1977), pp. 47-49.

27 Gerald E. Auten, "Missouri Economics Course Is Specifically for J-Majors," Journalism Educator (October, 1977), pp. 12-16.

28 William B. Toran, "Does PR Education Belong in the Journalism School?" Journalism Educator (January, 1978), pp. 35-38.

29 Ibid.

30 "The Corporate Image: PR to the Rescue," Business Week (January 22, 1979), p. 54.

31 Warren K. Agee, "Internships Way Out Front in PR Curricula Changes," Journalism Educator (April, 1979), pp. 6-12, 48-52.

32 Ibid.

33 Dovie W. Nichols, "Academe: Does it Produce an Employable Product?" Public Relations Journal (July, 1978), p. 19.

34 Daniel E. Costello, "Analysis of Public Relations Educational Requirements in the United States" (Unpub. M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1964).

³⁵Peter C. Lauer, "Are ACEJ Accredited Public Relations Sequences Meeting the Demands of the Practitioners?" (Unpub. M.S. thesis, Ohio University, 1967).

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Clyde Douglas Sherfey, "Personnel Selection Techniques of the Principal Corporate Public Relations Counseling Firms in the United States of America" (Unpub. M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 1968).

³⁸Earl Lewis Conn, "The American Council of Education for Journalism: An Accrediting History" (Unpub. Ed.D. thesis, Indiana University, 1970).

³⁹Sandra S. Christian, "A Study of Trends in Public Relations Higher Education" (Unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1977).

⁴⁰Charles A. Labotka, "An Analysis of Graduates' Perceptions of Public Relations Education at Northern Illinois University Between the Years 1968-1975" (Unpub. M.A. thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1977).

⁴¹Frederick H. Teahan, Personal Telephone Interview, New York, NY, April, 1979.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Subjects

Subjects of this study were public relations professionals who were members of PRSA. Due to individual interviews required, subjects were concentrated in metropolitan areas of the Southwest. They were divided among professionals who worked within a company or institution, and those who worked from without--i.e., in a public relations agency which also may handle advertising. Each company/agency was represented only once.

In addition to the Company or Agency attribute, subjects were categorized (after the interview) as members of a Large versus Small public relations staff. Specifically, the subjects included 32 professionals from Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Houston, Texas. The sample was equally divided between Company-versus-Agency and Small-versus-Large staffs. Where possible, the subjects were selected for variation in age and years of experience.

There were eight professionals in each of four categories: (1) Company/Large, (2) Company/Small, (3) Agency/Large, and (4) Agency/Small. In actual headcount, the subjects included 9 professionals from Oklahoma City, 10 from Tulsa, and 13 from Houston.

Instrumentation

Since the primary goal was to measure the attitude preferences of

individual professionals toward various areas of skill and knowledge, as represented by college courses, a factorially-structured Q-sort was employed. The sort contained cards, each bearing the name of a specific course, plus a brief description of its content.

The first category of courses comprised Communications and Public Relations studies as outlined by the AEJ/PRSA report, "A Design for Public Relations Education."¹ Titles of these courses are listed below. A full description of each course may be found in Appendix A. The courses are:

- Process of Communication
- Writing for Mass Media
- Copy Editing
- Graphics of Communication
- Advertising Principles & Practice
- Media Law & Ethics
- Feature Writing
- Basic Survey Research
- Communication Media Analysis
- Principles of Public Relations
- Publicity Media & Campaigns
- Public Relations Cases
- Public Relations Internship
- Management Communications
- Propaganda & Public Opinion
- Magazine Editing

The second category of courses comprised the "general education" courses in Arts and Sciences, as broadly recommended by AEJ/PRSA. Since this commission report described these courses in only a general way, specific courses required and/or recommended for a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism, public relations sequence, within Oklahoma State University's College of Arts and Sciences were employed. The courses were outlined on the "general requirements" study sheet used by the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Journalism and Broadcasting.² Where the study sheet indicated a range of choice for the public

relations student, the advice of the coordinator of advisement for the journalism school was employed to indicate the course(s) usually selected by a majority of public relations students.

Titles of the courses required or recommended by the College of Arts and Sciences or the School of Journalism and Broadcasting are listed below. A complete description of each course may be found in Appendix B:

Basic English Composition
Intermediate English Composition
English Literature & Critical Writing
Basic Creative Writing

Basic Biological Science
Intermediate Biological Science
Physical Geology
Fundamental Physics
General Mathematics

Modern American History
American Government
Public Administration
U.S. Economic Development

Basic Psychology
Basic Sociology
Philosophies of Life
Social Psychology
Psychology of Work & Industrial Behavior

Modern Western Humanities
Religions of Mankind
Basic French
Intermediate French
French Reading & Conversation

Basic Speech Communication
Elements of Oral Persuasion

It should be noted that the foreign language courses are recommended by AEJ/PRSA. Additionally, one course required by the OSU College of Arts and Sciences, elementary statistics, is to be found in the third category of college courses--those from the College of Business Administration. These courses represented the "manipulated" part of the independent

variable since their inclusion meant taking all of the classes represented in the Q-sort would require five years of college.

The classes selected for a Business minor are those required by OSU's College of Business Administration on its "Minor Declaration and Certification Form."³ The course titles are listed below. A complete description of each Business course may be found in Appendix C:

- Basic Economic Analysis
- Economics of Social Issues
- Beginning Accounting
- Intermediate Accounting
- Marketing
- Management
- Basic Finance
- Business Law

In addition to the 24 hours required for a Business minor, the Q-sort also included two "core courses" required of all OSU Business majors:

- Basic Statistics
- Data Processing

Finally, the third category of Business courses contained two classes of knowledge closely related to the field of public relations.

They were:

- Personnel Management & Industrial Relations
- Social Issues in the Marketing Environment

When all 53 courses were included in the Q-sort, they represented some 160 hours of college credit--36 hours beyond what was required for a bachelor's degree in the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU. These college courses were selected because they either were recommended by the AEJ/PRSA report, required by ACEJ accreditation guidelines, or represented the possibility of a Business minor for public relations students.

The college courses are relevant to the research problem. Variance in the nature of the courses was wanted, and the author assumes the

courses have systematic sources of variance with little unwanted or extraneous variance.

Field Research

In field research in the three Southwest metropolitan areas, the subjects were asked subjectively to evaluate the types of skills or knowledge required for successful public relations practice. They were advised that the 53 cards represented areas of knowledge which could be learned on the job, from another person, or in a college classroom.

The subjects were asked to sort the cards first into three general stacks of "Least Useful," "Neutral or Don't Know," and "Most Useful." They were cautioned that "Least Useful" did not mean of no use at all, etc.

The subjects then were asked to make a final sort of the courses into 11 different stacks--which represented a forced and quasi-normal distribution of the courses. Unknown to the subjects, each pile was assigned a value score for later interpretation. The subjects were told they could change their minds at any time regarding the stack in which a particular course should be included. The distribution for the Q-sort analysis was:

No. courses in pile	1	2	4	6	8	11	8	6	4	2	1
Score for each pile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Analysis of Data

From the above distribution, data on preference values were generated from 32 public relations professionals for 53 college courses.

Professionals were categorized into four groups: (1) Company-Small Staff, (2) Company-Large Staff, (3) Agency-Small Staff, and (4) Agency-Large Staff. Members of each group rank-ordered the 53 courses, each of which belonged to one of three types: (1) Communications-Public Relations, (2) Business, and (3) Arts and Sciences. This design called for a Type III variance analysis.⁴

Hypotheses

The research problem, combined with the search of the literature, brought the study to one hypothesis regarding course preferences:

Main Hypothesis--Public relations professionals will show a higher mean preference for Communications-Public Relations courses than for Business or Arts and Sciences courses. Professionals will show a higher preference for Business courses than for Arts and Sciences courses.

A second hypothesis, based on the assumption that there were different attitudes among professionals according to their environment, involved interaction:

Interaction Hypothesis--Professionals on Small staffs will show a higher preference for Business courses than those on Large staffs, but preference for Communications-Public Relations and Arts and Sciences courses will be similar, regardless of staff size.

Values and Limitations

The methodology used was based on a collection of known and accepted courses. In addition, the research technique was such that other individuals can repeat the study among different public relations

professionals. Being an ex post facto study, it was not possible to randomize either the sample or the courses.

The design had only partial external validity. The variables were representative of public relations or business education and public relations professionals. But the sampling procedure did not permit generalization of results to all public relations professionals.

FOOTNOTES

¹Commission on Public Relations Education, A Design for Public Relations Education (a study cosponsored by the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and the Public Relations Society of America, 1975), pp. 9-11.

²Oklahoma State University, Requirements for the Bachelor of Science Degree in Arts and Sciences, Journalism (Public Relations) (Stillwater, Major 1484, Fall Semester, 1978).

³Oklahoma State University, Minor Declaration and Certification Form. College of Business Administration (Stillwater, Fall Semester, 1978).

⁴E. F. Lindquist, Design and Analysis of Experiments in Psychology and Education (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 281-285. Type III is a combination of factorial and treatments-by-subjects designs. It shows the effects of two factors working independently and in concert, as well as differences in repeated measures on a third factor. In this study, type of institution and staff size were treated as subject groups and course categories as repeated treatments.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Characteristics of Subjects

The professionals interviewed, except one, were members of the Public Relations Society of America. The one exception was active in an organization for university information and development.

Average age for all 32 subjects was 47.4 years. Professionals working for companies/institutions ranged in age from 31 to 57 years. Subjects working for counselors/agencies varied in age from 30 to 62 years.

The average professional experience for all subjects was 21.5 years. This does not include possible earlier work in news media. Experience of company/institution people ranged from 9 to 32 years. Experience of subjects working for counselors/agencies varied from 7 to 39 years.

Staff size within a company/institution varied from 2 to 200 persons, with 22 staffers being the dividing line between Large and Small staffs. Staff size for counselors/agencies ranged from 3 to 90 persons, with 8.5 staffers being the dividing line.

More complete descriptions of the subjects as to type of Company or Agency involved and the title of the person interviewed are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS INTERVIEWED
BY GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, COMPANY DESCRIPTION
AND POSITION TITLE

Company	Job Title
<u>Houston</u>	
Large Natural Gas Company	Director, Public Relations
Large Public Relations Firm	President
Medical College/Hospital	Vice President, Public Affairs
Small Public Relations Agency	President
Major Manufacturing Company	Director, Public Relations
Large Public Relations Firm	President
Large Natural Gas Company	Vice President, Corporate Communications
Major PR/Advertising Firm	Executive Vice President
National Energy Company	Director, Public Relations & Advertising
Small Public Relations Agency	Director, Public Affairs
International Oil Company	Manager, Public Relations
Large Public Relations Firm	Chairman
National Chemical Company	Director, Public Affairs
<u>Oklahoma City</u>	
National Food Company	Director, Corporate Communications
Large PR/Advertising Firm	Vice President, Public Relations
Regional Energy Company	Director, Public Relations
Small Public Relations Agency	President
State-Wide Utility Company	Public Relations Director
Large PR/Advertising Firm	Public Relations Director
Small Public Relations Agency	Partner/Co-Owner
Major State University	Director, Public Information
Small PR/Advertising Agency	President
<u>Tulsa</u>	
PR/Opinion Research Firm	President
National Oil Company	Manager, Public Relations Services
Small PR/Advertising Agency	Vice President
State-Wide Utility Company	Vice President, Public Relations
Large PR/Advertising Firm	Director, Public Relations
State-Wide Insurance Company	Director, Public Relations & Advertising
Large PR-Advertising Firm	Vice President
Major Utility Company	Manager, Public Relations
Small Public Relations Agency	President
National Oil Company	Public Relations Manager

Note: The resignation of a company public relations director in Oklahoma City, scheduled for interview, required the addition of a similar professional in Houston.

Analysis of Attitude Scores

After each interview, the cards, Q-sorted into 11 stacks, were recorded according to a range of scores. Thus, the one course put at the bottom of Least Useful received a score of 1. The single course judged as tops in Most Useful received a score of 11. At the mid-point of the scale, 11 courses or cards received a score of 6.

The mean attitude of all 32 professionals towards each of the 53 courses is shown in Table II. The courses are arranged according to the major research groupings of Public Relations and Communications, Business Administration, and Arts & Sciences/General Education. To aid further in interpretation of Table II, the courses were subdivided into common groupings of study.

In reviewing Table II, it would seem the higher scores went to Public Relations/Communications, with the next highest scores accorded Business, and the lower scores given to Arts and Sciences.

But, there were some significant deviations or variations to this basic pattern. The 53 courses also are listed in Table III according to the absolute numerical rank of the mean attitude of all 32 professionals on each of the courses. Thus, it should be noted that Basic English Composition from the Arts and Sciences category received the highest preferences. The lowest preferences went to the three foreign language courses.

In Table III, the courses are subdivided according to the total number of classes which normally can be taken in a nine-month academic year. Thus, with 53 courses, the table contains a subgrouping of five academic years--one year beyond what is required for the normal Bachelor

TABLE II
 MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS ON
 COLLEGE COURSES BY MAJOR RESEARCH CATEGORY
 AND SUBGROUPINGS OF COURSES

Subgroup	Course	Mean Preference
<u>Public Relations and Communications Category</u>		
Communication Studies	Process of Communication	7.88
	Writing for Mass Media	8.84
	Copy Editing	7.75
	Graphics of Communication	7.16
	Advertising Principles & Practices	6.88
	Media Law & Ethics	6.47
	Feature Writing	7.72
	Basic Survey Research	7.19
	Communication Media Analysis	7.41
Public Relations Core Studies	Principles of Public Relations	8.59
	Publicity Media & Campaigns	7.91
	Public Relations Cases	7.66
	Public Relations Internship	7.75
PR/Communication Electives	Management Communications	7.88
	Propaganda & Public Opinion	6.97
	Magazine Editing	6.78
<u>Business Administration Category</u>		
Accounting & Math Related	Beginning Accounting	6.09
	Intermediate Accounting	4.72
	Basic Statistics	5.16
	Data Processing	4.72

TABLE II (Continued)

Subgroup	Course	Mean Preference
<u>Business Administration Category (Continued)</u>		
Economics	Basic Economic Analysis	6.03
	Economics of Social Issues	6.59
Finance and Law	Basic Finance	6.47
	Business Law	5.88
General Management	Management	7.19
	Personnel Management & Relations	5.66
Marketing	Marketing	7.38
	Social Issues & Marketing Environment	6.38
<u>Arts & Sciences/General Education Category</u>		
English	Basic English Composition	9.47
	Intermediate English Composition	6.44
	English Literature & Writing	4.75
	Basic Creative Writing	6.13
Social Sciences	Basic Psychology	6.22
	Psychology of Work & Behavior	5.88
	Basic Sociology	6.31
	Social Psychology	6.03
	Modern American History	5.50
	U.S. Economic Developments	5.59
	U.S. Government	5.91
	Public Administration	4.72

TABLE II (Continued)

Subgroup	Course	Mean Preference
<u>Arts & Sciences/General Education Category (Continued)</u>		
Natural Sciences & Math	Basic Biological Science	4.19
	Intermediate Biological Science	3.13
	Physical Geology	3.56
	Fundamental Physics	3.34
	General Mathematics	4.00
Humanities	Modern Western Humanities	5.06
	Religions of Mankind	4.00
	Philosophies of Life	5.56
Language Arts	Basic French	2.28
	Intermediate French	2.22
	French Reading & Conversation	2.09
	Basic Speech Communication	7.19
	Elements of Oral Persuasion	7.00

TABLE III

MEAN ATTITUDE SCORES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS IN
COLLEGE COURSES BY NUMERICAL RANKING AND
ACADEMIC YEAR SUBGROUPING

Mean Preference	Course	Subgroup	
9.47	Basic English Composition	Academic Year	
8.84	Writing for Mass Media		
8.59	Principles of Public Relations		
7.91	Publicity Media & Campaigns		
7.88	Process of Communication		
7.88	Management Communications		
7.75	Copy Editing		
7.75	Public Relations Internship		
7.72	Feature Writing		
7.66	Public Relations Cases		
7.41	Communications Media Analysis		
<hr/>			
7.38	Marketing		Academic Year
7.19	Basic Survey Research		
7.19	Management		
7.19	Basic Speech Communication		
7.16	Graphics of Communication		
7.00	Elements of Oral Persuasion		
6.97	Propaganda & Public Opinion		
6.88	Advertising Principles & Practice		
6.78	Magazine Editing		
6.59	Economics of Social Issues		
6.47	Media Law & Ethics		
<hr/>			
6.47	Basic Finance	Academic Year	
6.44	Intermediate English Composition		
6.38	Social Issues & Marketing Environment		
6.31	Basic Sociology		
6.22	Basic Psychology		
6.13	Basic Creative Writing		
6.09	Beginning Accounting		
6.03	Basic Economic Analysis		
6.03	Social Psychology		
5.91	U.S. Government		
5.88	Business Law		
<hr/>			
5.88	Psychology of Work & Behavior		Academic Year
5.66	Personnel Management & Relations		
5.59	U.S. Economic Development		
5.56	Philosophies of Life		
5.50	Modern American History		
5.16	Basic Statistics		
5.06	Modern Western Humanities		

TABLE III (Continued)

Mean Preference	Course	Subgroup
4.75	English Literature & Writing	
4.72	Data Processing	
4.72	Intermediate Accounting	
4.72	Public Administration	Academic Year
4.19	Basic Biological Science	
4.00	General Mathematics	
4.00	Religions of Mankind	
3.56	Physical Geology	
3.34	Fundamental Physics	
3.13	Intermediate Biological Science	
2.28	Basic French	
2.22	Intermediate French	
2.09	French Reading & Conversation	

of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree. One interpretation was that courses ranked the lowest, and shown in the last academic year, should be dropped from the curriculum. But other solutions are possible, and will be discussed in Chapter V.

Analysis of Factors

The subject's employment with a Company or Agency determined the attribute variable: type of institution involved. His association with a Large or Small staff comprised another attribute variable: staff size.

The independent treatment variable was the type of college course included in the Q-sort. Each subject's mean preference for each course was the dependent variable. A three-factor correlated variance analysis was applied to the scores. Specifically, a Type III analysis was used

because subjects were categorized by type of institution and staff size and repeated their responses to three categories of college courses.

Since a Q-sort was used to obtain mean attitudes, the analysis did not show any differences between the types of subjects since all were asked to sort the same number of courses into the same number of stacks. Thus, the factorial analysis could show only differences between treatments (the courses) and possible interaction of types of subjects and treatments. Results of the factorial analysis are shown in Table IV.

The F-ratio of 64.20 reported highly significant differences in mean preference for the three types of courses. The F-ratios of 1.07 and .71 indicated that preference for a given type of course was not related to type of institution or size of staff in which the respondent worked.

The differential preference toward Public Relations versus Business versus Arts and Sciences courses was shown in two instances. First, the F-ratio of 64.20 exceeded the .001 probability level. If the study were repeated 1,000 times, using the same college courses with similar groups of professionals, 999 of the studies would be expected to yield similar results. Second, the relationship between preference and course type was strong. An Eta correlation from the data showed that more than 83 percent of the variation in mean attitude was explained by the nature of the courses. Therefore, there was a high-marked relationship between the types of courses and the preferences of professionals as to their usefulness in the practice of public relations.

To see further the fine points of the findings, one can look at the recorded mean preferences in Table V. The paradigm does not show any totals or main effects on the far right side since use of the Q-sort meant the total preference of people would be the same for all courses,

TABLE IV
 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TABLE--COMPOSITE OF ALL FOUR
 SUBJECT TYPES--ALL THREE COURSE TYPES

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Total	95				
Between Subjects	31	----			
Between Company-Agency	1	----			
Between Large-Small	1	----			
Interaction: C-A x L-S	1	----			
Between-Subjects Error	28	----			
Within Subjects	64	154.30			
Between PR-Bus-A&S	2	105.27	52.64	64.20	<.001
Interaction: Courses x C-A	2	1.76	.88	1.07	
Interaction: Courses x L-S	2	1.15	.58	.71	
Interaction: Courses x C-A x L-S	2	----	---		
Within-Subjects Error	56	46.22	.82		

except for slight numerical differences in rounding off individual scores. (The "average" mean attitude was 6.0.)

TABLE V
PARADIGM OF MEAN SCORES--BY CATEGORY OF COLLEGE
COURSES--BY COMPANY/AGENCY--BY SIZE OF
THE STAFF

	Categories	Public Relations	Business	Arts & Sciences
Company	Large	7.68	5.70	5.07
	Small	7.62	6.09	4.92
Agency	Large	7.69	6.07	4.88
	Small	7.21	6.20	5.13
TOTAL		7.55	6.02	5.00

Since the F-ratio for mean preference of courses within subjects was highly significant, tests were run on difference between the means. At the probability level of .001, the critical difference between the means should be larger than .74. The totals at the bottom of Table V, the main effects, all exceed this critical difference, and again, were significant at the .001 level. Within the table, there was no interaction since the scores for each of the four groups all flowed in the same direction--going from larger to smaller, left to right. All professionals ranked Public Relations as highest, Business knowledge as the next highest, and Arts and Sciences knowledge as the lowest.

Conclusion

Since the factorial analysis results would have been significant had they exceeded a probability level of only .05 for social science research, it was concluded that the value of Communications/Public Relations courses (the highest) versus Business courses (the next highest) versus Arts and Sciences courses (the lowest) was judged to be highly different. This was true of all public relations professionals interviewed, regardless of either the nature of the employer or the size of the staff.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Research Problem

In 1975, PRSA and AEJ issued a joint report outlining the Public Relations/Communications courses which should be offered for an accredited public relations sequence in colleges. The report was based on an assumption that the student should receive a well-rounded education in liberal arts and humanities. However, surveys in 1976, 1977, and 1978, plus the professional literature, have generated comments from public relations professionals regarding the need for additional knowledge, particularly in the area of business. At present, ACEJ requirements for journalism schools make it difficult, if not impossible, for the student to take a heavy concentration of business courses.

Research Findings

To evaluate the needs and attitudes of public relations professionals in a scientific manner, 32 professionals in three Southwest metropolitan areas were personally interviewed. Using a Q-sort, their opinions were gathered on a wide variety of college courses in three categories: Public Relations/Communications, Business Administration, and Arts and Sciences.

Correlated, factorial variance analysis of the subjects' mean preference scores showed a highly significant preference for Public

Relations/Communications courses over Business or Arts and Sciences courses. Analysis also showed a higher preference for Business courses than Arts and Sciences courses. Specifically, Public Relations courses earned a mean preference of 7.55; Business, 6.02; and Arts and Sciences, 5.00. This variance in preference for types of courses was significant at the .001 probability level, well beyond the level normally required for social science research.

The preferences held true for all subjects even when they were grouped into categories of working for a Company or Agency, and being associated with either a Large or Small staff. There was no significant variation in attitude between the subjects.

Conclusions

The research findings supported the main hypothesis that public relations professionals have a higher mean preference for Communications/Public Relations courses than for Business or Arts and Sciences courses--and a higher preference for Business courses than for Arts and Sciences courses.

The findings did not support the interaction hypothesis that professionals on Small staffs have a higher preference for Business courses than those on Large staffs. Preferences for the three types of courses were similar, regardless of staff size.

Research Recommendations

Since the sampling procedure did not permit either generalizing or projecting the results to the entire public relations profession--even though the results were significant at the .001 probability level--it

is suggested that this research be repeated in the future using the same college courses outlined in Appendixes A, B, and C with groups of public relations professionals of the same size and attributes from other metropolitan areas. This continuing research by the academic world, with people from the professional world, can lead to significant, beneficial, and long-lasting changes in the over-all curriculum for public relations students.

Curriculum Recommendations

With most colleges and universities requiring a minimum of 124 hours credit for a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree (even though many students acquire slightly more), accommodation of a Business minor, and/or heavy concentration in Business, means around 11 college courses would have to be eliminated from those included in the study. Recognizing that many Arts and Sciences courses are now required by state laws or other guidelines, the following recommendations are made:

1. Eliminate all three foreign language courses since they received the lowest preferences of all.
2. Cut the physical science requirements in half, leaving only two courses required.
3. Eliminate all three humanities courses.
4. Drop the two business courses not required for a minor, plus the lowest ranked minor course.

These courses are specifically listed in Table VI.

It was recognized that there are many possible avenues to building more flexibility to accommodate a Business minor for the public relations student. The course deletions outlined in Table VI are one approach

which does leave the social sciences intact, plus one-half the physical sciences.

TABLE VI
COURSES FOR POTENTIAL ELIMINATION--BRINGING TOTAL
COURSES DOWN TO A FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM

Course	Preference Score
Basic French	2.28
Intermediate French	2.22
French Reading & Conversation	2.09
Intermediate Biological Science	3.13
Fundamental Physics	3.34
Religions of Mankind	4.00
Modern Western Humanities	5.06
Philosophies of Life	5.56
Intermediate Accounting	4.72
Data Processing	4.72
Basic Statistics	5.16

Concluding Statement

The original educational desire to give the reporter for print media a "well-rounded arts and sciences background" was established for good reason and cause. However, results of this study indicated the public relations student was denied the same opportunity for a broad education. With more than 60 percent of his job opportunities being with business or industry, he cannot take full advantage of the business courses offered at his university.

The debate over where within a university to teach public relations and what courses to offer for the major part of the degree has been settled. Now, attention should be turned to deciding what would be the best choice of minors for the student. Certainly an option to take a minor in Business was indicated.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COURSES

- PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION:** Basic factors affecting humans through communication. Models of communication. Writing and editing techniques in print, broadcasting and other media.
- WRITING FOR MASS MEDIA:** Determining news values. Basic reporting/writing of news copy for both print and electronic media. Basic copy practices.
- COPY EDITING:** General copy editing and design principles for print and electronic media. Selection and processing of news. Grammar, style, readability and clarity for reader interest.
- GRAPHICS OF COMMUNICATION:** Various forms of printing, type design. Copy fitting, layout fundamentals. Trends in color and typography. Production of reports, leaflets, brochures and booklets.
- ADVERTISING PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE:** Advertising functions and economic aspects. Budgets and rate structures. Appeals and themes. Preparation of copy and art. Advertising research.
- MEDIA LAW & GRAPHICS:** Legal rights and restrictions--including constitutional guarantees, libel, invasion of privacy, financial reporting. Government regulation of print and broadcast media.
- FEATURE WRITING:** Writing of newspaper features plus business and trade magazine special articles. Sources, analysis of reader appeal, feature structure and style.
- BASIC SURVEY RESEARCH:** Theory and practice of public opinion survey techniques. Planning, design, sampling, field operations and analysis of data for experimental and survey research.
- COMMUNICATION MEDIA ANALYSIS:** Methods of investigating the content, audience and effects of press, radio, television and motion pictures. Evaluation as communication vehicles. Development of budgets, presentations.
- PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS:** Concept of public relations as management function in business, industry, education and other institutions. History and practice of public relations. Professional groups, ethics and accreditation.

PUBLICITY MEDIA & CAMPAIGNS: Use of public media to achieve motivation of target audiences. Materials and tools used in publicity. Development of specialized materials to gain reaction and support.

PUBLIC RELATIONS CASES: Typical public relations problems in industry, labor, education, government, social welfare and trade associations. Planning and preparation of campaigns. Application of techniques.

PUBLIC RELATIONS INTERNSHIP: Actual work experience as intern with public relations department or agency. Includes analysis of problems, drafting of plan, implementation, and evaluation of results.

MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS: Problems in organizational communications, written and spoken. Use of memos, speeches, reports. Handling of good news, disappointing news, persuasion and education.

PROPAGANDA & PUBLIC OPINION: History of propaganda. Use of motivational tools to achieve public response. Demographic publics. Sociological and psychological aspects of audiences. Use of opinion polls in political analysis.

MAGAZINE EDITING: Functions in editing and producing corporate and government publications. Processes of editing, layout and production for general and special magazines.

APPENDIX B

GENERAL EDUCATION/ARTS AND SCIENCES COURSES

BASIC ENGLISH COMPOSITION: The fundamentals of explanatory writing with emphasis on structure, development and style of the material.

INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH COMPOSITION: Explanatory writing with emphasis on writing techniques and style with use of intensive writing and practice.

ENGLISH LITERATURE & CRITICAL WRITING: The short story, the novel and poetry of English. Written critical experience and discussion concerning literature.

BASIC CREATIVE WRITING: Literary composition. Techniques and style of readings and writing in fiction, poetry and drama.

BASIC BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE: Ecological principles; populations; man and environment. Genetics and reproduction. Concepts of evolution, selection, adaption and specialization.

INTERMEDIATE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE: Cellular organization and function in the environment. Energy relationships. Maintenance of living systems. Life coordination and behavior.

PHYSICAL GEOLOGY: Composition and structure of the earth. Modification of its surface by internal, external processes. Mineral resources, sources of energy, environmental aspects.

FUNDAMENTAL PHYSICS: Theories on matter and antimatter. Basic building blocks of matter. How the universe began. How matter is created from energy in machines. How stars generate energy and die.

GENERAL MATHEMATICS: Theories of set math, logic, calculus and probability. Based on use of algebra.

MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY: Development and history of the U.S., including the growth of industry and its impact on society and foreign affairs, from 1865 to the present.

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Organization, processes and functions of the national government of the United States.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: Principles of public administration, including organization, decision making, government public relations and administrative responsibilities.

U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Changing patterns of human material resource utilization in the United States. Market forces, structural and institutional changes which affect the economy's growth.

BASIC PSYCHOLOGY: Principles, theories, vocabulary and applications of the science of psychology.

BASIC SOCIOLOGY: The science of human society. Emphasis on concepts which assist in understanding the social influences of day-to-day life.

PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE: Ethics and social philosophy. Moral decision-making, the good life, social values, freedom and responsibility.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: Social basis of personality development and behavior, including environment, self and group, motivation. Techniques used in measurement of employee attitude and opinions.

MODERN WESTERN HUMANITIES: Key ideas and values of Western culture as shown in literature and fine arts of Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romantic and Modern periods of man.

RELIGIONS OF MANKIND: Modern world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam with understanding of the general nature of religion and its dimensions.

BASIC FRENCH: Pronunciation, grammar and reading of the French language.

INTERMEDIATE FRENCH: Advanced work on pronunciation, grammar and reading of the French language.

FRENCH READING & CONVERSATION: Reading and review of French texts and materials. Practice in reading and conversations with French language.

BASIC SPEECH COMMUNICATION: Principles and techniques of preparing for, participating in and evaluating communication in conversations, group discussions and public speaking.

ELEMENTS OF ORAL PERSUASION: Principles and concepts of interpersonal and public persuasive encounters. The nature of persuasion, audience analysis and ethics of persuasion. Designing/participating in oral encounters.

APPENDIX C

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION COURSES

BASIC ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: Elementary principles of price theory and national income theory as used in analyzing economic issues and recommending appropriate economic policy.

ECONOMICS OF SOCIAL ISSUES: Economic understanding of social issues--such as inflation, unemployment, poverty, environmental quality. The economist's approach to social problems and contribution of economics to solutions.

BEGINNING ACCOUNTING: Basic concepts, processes and information used in accounting as applied to manufacturing and service firms.

INTERMEDIATE ACCOUNTING: Use of accounting information within partnerships and corporations for decision-making in financial matters and production control.

MARKETING: Knowledge of marketing strategy and decision-making--including consumer behavior, marketing institutions, competition and the law as applies to marketing.

MANAGEMENT: Management principles and techniques of analysis. Decision-making as applied to management systems, organizations, interpersonal relationships and production.

BASIC FINANCE: Operational and strategic financial matters--including allocation of funds, asset management, information systems, financial structure and analysis of the financial environment.

BUSINESS LAW: Basic legal concepts and principles. The law of contracts and agency. Interaction of law with the business and political environment.

BASIC STATISTICS: Key concepts and methods for sampling, estimation, probability and testing--such as analysis of variance, correlation, regression and chi-square.

DATA PROCESSING: Business data processing concepts and terminology. Knowledge, in a business-oriented language, of computer hardware/software components, file structure and computer programming.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: Human resources management. Policies and practices used in personnel administration. Relation of a worker to his employer, plus the functions of a personnel department.

SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE MARKETING ENVIRONMENT: Social and legislative considerations as they relate to consumerism trends, governmental issues and the marketplace.

VITA ²

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