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PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS VERSUS THE MEDIA: THE ANALYSIS
OF STANDARDS

By
Stephen A. Kandik

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 1, 1999

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved June 9, 1999

ABSTRACT

Stephen A. Kandik
Public Relations Practitioners versus the Media: The Analysis of Standards
1999
Dr. Suzanne Sparks
Public Relations

This study determined how both the media and public relations practitioners perceived professional standards in the public relations field and how these perceptions could be changed. This study required the use of abstracting systems, the Internet, databases, journals and periodicals, in-depth interviews and e-mail surveys. Five in-depth interviews with journalists along with five in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners provided the information needed to create the survey instrument. Both journalists and public relations practitioners provided 99 responses to the survey. Data analysis included t-tests, and a factor analysis. The study proved that the media view the professional standards within the public relations field as insufficient. The study also proved that public relations practitioners disagree about professional standards within their field.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Stephen A. Kandik
Public Relations Practitioners versus the Media: The Analysis of Standards
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Dr. Suzanne Sparks
Public Relations

Public relations practitioners and the media hold a symbiotic relationship. Like all relationships, problems arise. This study proves that open and honest communication will improve the relationship between the media and public relations. This study showed that the media feel that public relations practitioners hold few professional standards. This study also showed that public relations practitioners view their colleagues as unprofessional and themselves as professionals.

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| List of Illustrations..... | iii |
| List of Tables and Charts..... | iv |
| 1. Introduction:..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Delimitations..... | 3 |
| Methodology..... | 4 |
| Terminology..... | 5 |
| 2. Literature Review..... | 6 |
| The Public Relations and Media Relationship..... | 6 |
| Professionalism in Communication..... | 9 |
| Media and Standards..... | 12 |
| Public Relations Standards and Ethics..... | 12 |
| Summary..... | 19 |
| 3. Methods..... | 20 |
| Data Collection..... | 22 |
| 4. Results..... | 23 |
| Demographics..... | 23 |
| General Findings..... | 23 |
| Hypothesis I: Findings..... | 28 |
| Summary..... | 31 |
| Hypothesis II: Findings..... | 31 |
| Hypothesis III: Findings..... | 38 |
| Summary..... | 40 |
| 5. Summary and Interpretation..... | 41 |
| Evaluation..... | 41 |
| Interpretation..... | 43 |
| Discussion..... | 45 |
| Implications and Further Research..... | 46 |
| Conclusions..... | 46 |
| References..... | 48 |
| Appendix..... | 51 |

List of Illustrations

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Background Graph..... | 25 |
| Figure 2: Spin Graph..... | 26 |
| Figure 3: Relationship Graph..... | 28 |
| Figure 4: Standards Graph..... | 29 |
| Figure 5: Advocate Graph..... | 30 |
| Figure 6: Leverage Graph..... | 31 |
| Figure 7: Liaison Graph..... | 33 |
| Figure 8: Leverage Graph..... | 34 |
| Figure 9: Conflict Graph..... | 35 |
| Figure 10: Errors Graph..... | 36 |
| Figure 11: Manage Graph..... | 37 |
| Figure 12: Research Graph..... | 37 |
| Figure 13: Advocate Graph (Self)..... | 38 |
| Figure 14: Advocate Graph (Other Practitioners)..... | 39 |

List of Tables and Chart

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1: | T-Test Table..... | 24 |
| Table 2: | Component Matrix..... | 27 |
| Table 3: | Spin Table..... | 29 |
| Table 4: | Message Chart..... | 32 |
| Table 5: | Advocate Chart..... | 34 |
| Table 6: | Organization Chart..... | 35 |
| Table 7: | PR Organization Chart..... | 36 |
| Table 8: | Organization Chart..... | 39 |
| Table 9: | Organization Chart (Other Practitioners)..... | 40 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Public relations practitioners share a controversial relationship with the media. As in any relationship, accurate and inaccurate perceptions exist. As public relations practitioners and the media need one another to fulfill their common goals of disseminating information and communicating with various publics, their relationship is significant.

News releases provide a channel in which public relations practitioners can communicate with the media. According to Morton (1995), public relations practitioners ranked news releases as their most important duty. However, the media do not believe that public relations practitioners use this form of communication effectively. They believe news releases disguise publicity as news. The media view public relations practitioners as adversaries ranking public relations as one of the least honorable occupations.

According to Leeper (1996), the media also believes public relations lacks an ethical base. The media does not recognize that public relations practitioners know what is newsworthy. However, according to Morton (1995), the media and public relations practitioners share the same belief as to what constitutes a newsworthy story.

Public relations practitioners also possess a perception of their role within the relationship. Cameron, Sallot, and Weaver-Lariscy (1998) suggest that 91 percent of

public relations practitioners view themselves as colleagues with the media. However, even public relations practitioners perceive their peer's standards to be insufficient. The significance of this problem affects the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners. This problem affects the number of messages the media choose to print released by public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners must consider the media as a public. According to Cameron et al (1998), "Future research might also examine the public's perception of professional standards in the field." This researcher believes in the importance of the media's perceptions of public relations professional standards since as gatekeepers their opinions determine what does and does not become news.

The media's perception of public relations practitioners affects the public relations field. Morton (1995) suggests that the media uses as few as three percent to 45 percent of the news releases they receive. This shows public relations practitioners that the majority of messages fail to get through the media gatekeepers. Remedying this problem could improve the chances of public relations practitioners getting their messages through to the public.

This researcher wishes to determine how both the media and public relations practitioners perceive public relations professional standards and how that perception could be improved, if necessary. This researcher will study the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners, professionalism in communication, and views of professional standards. This researcher will also try to find ways to improve the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners.

Delimitations

This researcher limited his questions to print journalists and public relations practitioners within the United States of America. This researcher limited his questions to print journalists because of their constant dealings with public relations practitioners through print news releases. The questioning will not include the mass public.

By studying this question, this researcher hopes to determine the status of the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners and how it can be improved, if necessary. By answering this question, public relations practitioners and the media can move ahead and enjoy a win-win situation, in which the public relations practitioners can work with the media in creating newsworthy stories.

This study's first hypothesis states: It is expected that the media will view the professional standards of public relations practitioners as insufficient. This researcher believes that the media will be the greatest critics of public relations practitioners.

According to Hallahan (1994), "The press chastises public relations for cluttering public communication channels, for failing to tell the whole truth, for incessantly putting a positive spin on stories, for failing to be responsive to inquiries, and for blocking access to newsmakers."

This study's second hypothesis states: It is expected that public relations practitioners will also view their own professional standards to be insufficient. This researcher believes that public relations practitioners will overcriticize their own work. This means that public relations practitioners will view other public relations practitioners' ethical and professional skills to be lower than their own professional standards.

This study's third hypothesis states: It is expected that public relations practitioners will find their own professional standards to be higher than those of their colleagues. According to Cameron et al (1998), "Practitioners view other practitioners as unprofessional and unenlightened as compared to themselves."

Preliminary research shows that the media views public relations practitioners as incompetent. The research also showed that public relations practitioners underestimate their own professional standards. According to Gold (1996), journalists lack ethics. According to Leeper (1996), this spills over into the public relations field. However, Morton (1995) found that journalists and public relations practitioners share the same opinions concerning identifying newsworthy information. Since the media fails to recognize these skills of public relations practitioners, they badmouth public relations.

The preliminary research also showed that the media believes that public relations practitioners lack effective writing skills, according to Morton (1995). Cameron et al (1998) found that public relations practitioners share this belief with the media. However, unlike the media, the public relations practitioners view themselves as colleagues with the media. The preliminary research shows that the media does not share this view with public relations practitioners in newsgathering.

Methodology

This researcher used various abstract systems, the Internet, databases, journals and periodicals to study the hypotheses. These sources provided many articles and studies relevant to this study. In-depth interviews and e-mail surveys also provided this researcher with the primary research needed to complete this study.

Terminology

Media: Print journalist

Media gatekeepers: Editors of newspapers

Public relations practitioners: Professionals whose career is to communicate and counsel companies/organizations.

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a computer oriented statistical analysis program.

Chapter 2

This researcher identified three main areas of concern. These areas address the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners, professionalism in communication and views of professional standards in public relations. These areas involve ethics, standards, and perceptions. Although discussions exist concerning the relationship between the media and public relations, there exists a need to improve that relationship.

The Public Relations and Media Relationship

The media and public relations practitioners experience a delicate yet symbiotic relationship. Public relations practitioners provide the media with important sources of information. However, according to Achelpohl (1998), Douglas O'Brian, news anchor for WINS-AM in New York City and ABC Radio Networks, said, "As soon as I call, my crap detector goes off." Henderson (1998) suggested that 40-50 percent of all news articles originate with a public relations practitioner. However, according to Hallahan (1994) the increasing options in communications allow public relations practitioners to depend less on the media. Press coverage still legitimizes a product or client, giving an implied third party endorsement.

Conn (1997) said:

I formed a company with a public relations man. Our announcement identified

him as such and me as a journalist and said that our company would show that public relations and journalists could work together successfully for common objectives. Our partnership didn't even last a year. One reason for our early demise was my insistence, as a journalist, in telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Many journalists share this view of public relations practitioners. Marken (1997) mentioned that public relations practitioners could earn respect from the media if they understood their organization's product, technology, applications, marketplace, competition, channels of distribution, target audience, media and art and science of writing.

Views exist concerning how public relations practitioners can improve their relationship with the media. However, these views conflict with each other. According to Achelpohl (1998), James Fallows, editor of U.S. News and World Report, said, "Success with the media depends on preparation, rapport and truth. Above all we need to be credible." Public relations practitioners rely on the media to take their message to their target publics. Because of this, public relations practitioners need to view the media as an audience. According to Bodensteiner (1997), if public relations practitioners do not understand this audience, then their message will not reach target publics.

Understanding the media helps public relations practitioners develop a better working relationship. According to Achelpohl (1988), this understanding creates a realization with the public relations practitioner that his/her "make or break" story means nothing more to the reporter than just another story. However, according to Achelpohl (1988), Douglas O'Brian said, "The media is not your audience - it's the conduit to your audience."

Reasons exist for the strain in the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media. These reasons range from cluttering the communication channels, lack of honesty, accessibility and issue wearout. Hallahan (1994) said, "The press chastises PR for cluttering public communication channels, for failing to tell the truth the whole truth, for incessantly putting a positive spin on stories, and for blocking access to news makers."

Many editors accuse public relations practitioners of cluttering the communication channels. According to Conn (1977), one editor described public relations practitioners as always getting in his way. Public relations practitioners also clutter the communication channels by reading from pitch sheets. According to Marken (1997), public relations practitioners call editors and read from pitch sheets with little understanding of the product, technology, application or specific medium.

Public relations practitioners also strain the relationship with the media with a lack of complete honesty. Martinson (1997-1998) said on page 44 of the winter issue of *Public Relations Quarterly*, "Much of the negative comment about contemporary public relations could be significantly reduced if practitioners would...simply insist on full, honest disclosure."

Accessibility of public relations practitioners also concerns the media. According to Achelpoh (1998), John B. Coy, CAE, executive director of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientist, said, "I can't believe how many people in our industry court the media and then aren't there." Public relations practitioners also need to maintain their media networks. According to Marken (1997), public relations practitioners strain their relationship with the media by calling only when they need a story published.

Issue wearout helps to increase the strain between the media and public relations practitioners. Issue wearout may cause a journalist to tire of a story before the readers. This results from the bombardment of stories on an issue that the journalist receives from various sources, including public relations practitioners. According to Bodensteiner (1997), this phenomenon requires the public relations practitioners to prove the news value of a story to a journalist who believes readers lack interest.

This study will show where public relations stands with the media. It will also offer suggestions for how public relations practitioners can improve their relationship with the media, if necessary.

Professionalism in Communication

The next main area of concern in the literature review deals with professionalism in communication. The articles deal with ethics and communication standards of both the media and public relations practitioners. This researcher will first look at the literature concerning the media's ethics and communication standards.

Wagner (1997) suggests that the lack of a standard written ethical code among journalists is problematic. According to Freedman, journalists feel the increase in lawsuits proves the importance of ethics. Because the media tries to present clear, factual information, they need a code of ethics. The code requires clarity so that all the members of the media can follow it, even if it is as simple as, "I will always tell the truth."

Although no clear ethical code exists, many journalists follow some ethical guidelines. According to McManus (1997), many rules imply that journalists must

enlighten the public. The American Society of Newspaper Editors Statement of Principles states:

The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinions is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time. Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust. (p.6).

According to Gold (1996) journalists also believe they need to try to get the story right without opinion, to trust no one and to educate, raising readers citizenship, compassion and concern levels. Conn (1997) believes as a restaurant critic that he should dine in disguise refusing free meals or other benefits that jeopardize the integrity of his review.

However, because of a lack of a standard journalistic ethical code, a few journalists and media sources create problems. ABC's story on Food Lion serves as an example. ABC News investigated a grocery store chain named Food Lion. Producers for ABC applied for positions with Food Lion. With hidden cameras, the producers gathered footage for their story. In the story, ABC portrayed Food Lion employees violating many health standards. The media does reserve the right to go undercover as in the Food Lion story. However, according to Wagner (1997), ABC did not have a story on Food Lion since state and federal regulators gave Food Lion excellent remarks. Therefore, Food Lion filed a lawsuit against ABC. During the lawsuit, Food Lion revealed the ABC producers violating health codes. Because of this, Food Lion won the lawsuit.

The literature suggests a few rules the media need to follow when going undercover. The media must first approach the organization. If the organization appears to hide something, then the media can go undercover. After gathering information, the

media must confront the organization. According to Wagner (1997), ABC only gathered the information in their investigation.

ABC's unethical behavior became apparent after the discovery of footage refuting ABC's allegations appeared on the cutting floor. According to Wagner (1997), other footage showed the investigative reporters committing the acts they accused Food Lion of conducting.

Another questionable act by journalists involves Mike Wallace. One former Wallace interviewee accused Wallace of re-recording his voice after the interview. According to Wagner (1997), after the interview Wallace would rerecord his voice in a pleasant tone to use on the air. According to Freedman (1998), Steve Geimann, Chair of the Ethics Committee of the Society of Professional Journalists, said, "Changing the image of the scene contributes to the public distrust of journalism."

The Richard Jewell case provides another example of how an innocent man's image suffered because of a lack of a standardized media code of ethics. Richard Jewell discovered the bomb that exploded at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. A few days later investigators named Jewell along with several others as possible suspects. The media ignored the other listed suspects and focused its attention on Jewell. However, according to Wagner (1997), media critic Reed Irvine defended the journalists. According to Irvine, journalists must relay information from police sources to the public.

This study will not look into media ethics and standards. However, it will address the media's perception concerning standards and ethics within the public relations field.

Media Standards

This researcher next looked at information concerning the communication standards of the media. Conflicting views exist in the literature concerning the communication standards of the media. Some of the literature focused on an idealistic standard while others focused on the poorer standards in journalism.

The idealistic view focused on honesty in journalism. Journalists should not promote or sell items or ideas. According to Rosenburg (1998), journalists must find and disseminate the truth.

However, others feel that journalism lack standards. According to McManus (1997), profit seeking through corporate-owned media outlets erodes journalistic autonomy. Journalists must try to maximize audiences, to minimize cost and to refrain from embarrassing the advertisers and owners. Wagner (1997) suggests that journalists will ignore the truth to jump on a media bandwagon.

This researcher will not focus on media standards. However, the study will look at how journalists view public relations practitioners and their communication standards.

Public Relations Standards and Ethics

Next, this researcher examined the literature concerning the ethics and communication standards of public relations practitioners. The literature offers many views concerning the ethics and standards within the public relations field.

The literature suggests that two ethical theories exist amongst public relations practitioners. These theories are the traditional and situational ethical theories. The literature exhibited many different views concerning these theories. Many public

relations practitioners concern themselves with ethics. Public relations can help develop understanding between the organization and its publics by reducing conflict, if public relations is practiced ethically. According to Gruning (1993), unethical practice can make debate on issues almost impossible.

Martinson (1998) suggests that public relations practitioners examine the act, motive, and circumstance before determining the ethics of an action. The PRSA Code of Professional Standards bases its ethics on this theory. The code pledges, "to conduct ourselves professionally with truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to the public." However, according to Leeper (1996), this code means different things to different people.

Because of the discrepancies in meanings concerning the code amongst PRSA members, the code goes into more detail with a number of articles. According to Lordan (1997), the following articles provide an example of the detail added to the code:

- Article 2: A member shall exemplify high standards of honesty and integrity while carrying out dual obligations to a client or employer and to the democratic process.
- Article 4: A member shall adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims or unfair comparisons and giving credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.
- Article 5: A member shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall act promptly to correct erroneous communications for which he or she is responsible.
- Article 7: Members shall, as soon as possible, sever relations with any organization or individual if such relationship requires conduct contrary to the articles of this code.

These articles are clear and based on the traditional ethical theory.

The PRSA Code also concerns itself with honesty and truthfulness. The ethical public relations practitioners must concern themselves with not only what they communicate, but also what they do not communicate. According to Martinson (1997),

public relations practitioners should not withhold information. Withholding information intensifies the violation of truth and accuracy allowing for the corruption of the communication channels. If practitioners cannot fully communicate the subject, they must ask themselves why they are even trying to communicate. Trying to communicate while withholding the complete truth will damage the practitioner's credibility. In order to ensure the disclosure of complete information, public relations practitioners should apply reversibility. This makes public relations practitioners ask themselves what information they need to understand the situation. The importance of this task allows public relations practitioners to achieve their goal of creating an understanding.

The act of persuasion does not fall under the umbrella of unethical behavior. According to Martinson (1997), attempts at persuasion must allow for informed consent. This occurs by communicating substantially complete information allowing others to accept or reject the ideas communicated.

Although PRSA created a code of ethics based on the traditional ethical theory, Leeper (1996) suggests that most public relations practitioners use the situational ethical theory. According to Martinson (1997), this theory states that ethical behavior depends on the situation. Leeper (1996) suggests that public relations practitioners can justify any act as ethically sound as long as they can keep their conscious clean. According to Martinson (1997), public relations practitioners who practice situational ethics look for ways to justify their actions.

The literature described many communication standards within the field of public relations. According to Cameron, Sallot and Weaver-Lariscy (1998), some of these

standards conflict with other standards showing the lack of consistency concerning professional standards in the public relations field.

Leeper (1996) proposes that public relations practitioners should work for the best interest of their client. This standard suggests that public relations practitioners should ask at any management meeting if they are doing the right thing. The bottom line for public relations practitioners is to act in the best interest of the organization.

Effective news releases set another public relations communication standard. According to Morton (1995), public relations practitioners view writing news releases as their most important duty. No clear percentage of failed news releases exists. However, some estimates suggest a range from 55 percent to 97 percent.

According to Morton (1995), to decrease this failure rate of new releases, public relations practitioners must write their news releases to appeal to the gatekeepers. However, to do this they must not assume that the gatekeepers think like they do, despite similar educational backgrounds.

However, other communication standards need consideration besides writing effective news releases. Morton (1995) suggests that public relations practitioners need to consider their effectiveness in changing the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of their publics. According to Weiner (1996), public relations intends to analyze, adjust, influence and direct the opinions of one group in the interest of another group.

Others in the field disagree with the earlier standard that public relations practitioners believe that they try to create an understanding, not persuasion. This idea requires the public relations practitioners to rely on substantial completeness. This idea requires the public relations practitioner to satisfy a reasonable person's requirements for

information. According to Martinson (1997), the public relations practitioner should not confuse this with sharing the whole truth. However, the public relations practitioner should not try to manipulate, deceive or persuade. These do not contribute to truthfulness or respect of the receiver.

The literature suggested other public relations communication standards. According to Weiner (1996), public relations practitioners should know how to research, conceive, speak, write, and produce messages targeted to diverse audiences using meetings, exhibitions, radio, television and teleconferences. Cameron et al (1998) suggests that public relations practitioners should have a well-defined body of knowledge through completion of some standardized course of study. Public relations practitioners also need to pass state examinations and certification from a state agency with jurisdiction. Public relations practitioners should belong to a professional organization. Public relations practitioners also need technical skills, intellect, and ethics. Public relations practitioners should have self-discipline and a desire to serve the public over themselves.

According to Lordan (1998), another important criterion to public relations practitioners concerns integrity. Lordan said, "As a college professor who teaches public relations, I often remind students to always tell the truth on philosophical and practical basis: Telling the truth is morally correct, and it maintains and reinforces the practitioner's credibility."

Weiner (1996) suggest that public relations practitioners need to become familiar with the industry jargon that associates, clients or others may use. Public relations

practitioners have trouble with this task. The public relations practitioner must limit his/her use of jargon because he/she can never guarantee that others will understand.

The literature also offered examples of activities where public relations practitioners abused the channels of communication. Martinson (1997) suggested that two ways exist in which public relations practitioners abuse communication. Lying and revealing a truth that others do not need to know abuses communication. The media will not require all of the facts all of the time. However, the public relations practitioner must remember his/her responsibility for his/her silences. Some things require disclosure while other things do not require disclosure. Morton (1995) suggested that public relations practitioners also abuse the media by sending news releases with little or no news value.

Many different opinions about public relations exist. According to Marken (1997), many outside the public relations field give the field little to no respect. According to Leeper (1997), many feel that public relations practitioners try to make an organization look better. However, the public relations practitioners recognize this and believe in the importance of truth.

Public relations practitioners also exhibit a lack of respect for their colleagues. Cameron et al (1998) suggests that public relations practitioners erroneously believe themselves to be more professional than their colleagues. Budd (1997) suggest that spinmeisters will affect the public relations field in the same way as ambulance-chasing lawyers affected the legal profession. Many public relations practitioners feel embarrassed when grouped with such practitioners.

According to Cameron et al (1998), the poor view public relations practitioners direct toward their colleagues traces its origins to the lack of professional standards in the

public relations field. However, public relations practitioners need to realize that their professional standards are higher than their colleagues think.

Reporters, editors and program directors lack awareness of the service public relations practitioners provide for their clients. According to Henderson (1998), the media referred to public relations in its proper sense only five percent of the time.

Although journalists lack an understanding of public relations, they hold strong opinions concerning the field. Morton (1995) suggested that journalists perceive public relations as the least honorable position. Conn said, "Like many editors and reporters, I have distrusted public relations since my first day as a young reporter on the *New York Times* more than 31 years ago."

According to the literature, public relations practitioners' writing concerns the editors. According to Marken (1997), editors wonder why the public relations practitioners write something that will end up in the trash. Morton (1995) suggested that media gatekeepers believe public relations practitioners write amateurish and promotional news releases for things that do not need promotion.

The media will agree with public relations practitioners that they work as partners in newsgathering. However, according to Morton (1995), the media do not perceive this relationship as close. Morton (1995) suggested that 78 percent of the media believe that public relations practitioners clutter the communication channels.

Journalists seem to hold a high level of distrust towards public relations practitioners. Conn (1997) suggested that the media perceive public relations practitioners as trying to cover up stories or place spins on stories that do not need covering up. According to Morton (1995), most journalists believe that public relations

practitioners do not help them gain accurate, complete or timely news. According to Morton (1995), 84 percent of journalists believe news releases to be publicity disguised as news.

This researcher will look into the communication standards and ethics within the field of public relations. However, this study will go beyond identifying the perceived standards within the public relations field. This researcher will also show how public relations practitioners can improve negative perceptions.

Summary

The literature addressed three main areas: the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners; professionalism in communication; and views of professional standards in public relations. Professionalism in communication dealt with the media and public relations ethics and communication standards. The literature also looked at public relations practitioners' views of their colleagues as well as the media's view of public relations.

The literature may look similar to this study. However, none of the earlier studies offered ways to improve the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners. This study will provide public relations practitioners with tips to improve their relationship with the media.

Chapter 3

This study requires an understanding of professionalism in communication. This researcher only concerned himself with the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners. This study was limited to public relations practitioners and print journalists in the United States of America. The study looked at what standards yield the most professionalism. This study also looked at how the media view public relations practitioners. This study also endeavored to find ways to improve the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media.

Five public relations practitioners participated in in-depth interviews. These interviews contained questions concerning communication standards, appropriate training, ethical standards, media relations and improving negative perceptions. This provided the researcher with qualitative data concerning the state of public relations today. The study also provided data concerning public relations practitioners' view of themselves and the professional standards of their colleagues. The interviews gave real examples as to why public relations practitioners view their field the way they do. The interviews helped create a guide as to how the researcher would create the survey instrument.

This researcher also conducted five in-depth interviews with the media. These interviews consisted of questions concerning communication standards, appropriate training, ethical standards, and their relationship with public relations practitioners. These interviews also provided real examples as to why the media view

public relations the way they do. These in-depth interviews also served as a guide for the creation of the survey instrument. The in-depth interviews gathered qualitative information allowing this researcher to query the media and public relations practitioners concerning what standards most promote professionalism.

Next, this researcher designed and distributed 99 e-mail surveys to public relations practitioners. This researcher chose the respondents randomly from the PRSA Blue Book. The 99 randomly selected public relations practitioners limited this researcher's error to plus or minus seven percent. The survey consisted of 11 questions concerning professional standards, ethical standards, relationship with the media and how it can be improved. The survey also consisted of eight demographic questions. The first 10 questions used a Likert scale. The survey asked some of the questions twice. The first time the respondents were asked about their standards. The second time the questions were asked, the respondents were encouraged to provide views about their colleagues. The surveys provided this researcher with quantitative data concerning standards and ethics as well as how public relations practitioners view their colleagues. This researcher chose an e-mail format because it is non-obtrusive and provides an immediate response. This allowed for the timely gathering of data.

This researcher also sent 99 surveys to the media. This researcher compiled the journalists' list from a host of newspaper web sites. The 99 randomly selected journalists limited this researcher's error to plus or minus seven percent. The questions again used a Likert scale. The survey asked the media 10 questions concerning communication standards, ethical standards, their relationship with public relations practitioners and how it can be improved. The survey also asked the media nine demographic questions. The

survey provided this researcher with quantitative data concerning the media's perception about public relations. Again, e-mail was chosen for its non-obtrusive quality and immediacy in gathering data.

Data Collection

This researcher conducted the in-depth interviews over the telephone during February 1999. This researcher sent the surveys to respondents in March 1999 and received completed versions throughout March and April of 1999. This researcher used frequencies, factor analysis and t-tests using SPSS to analyze the data. The results appear in the following section.

Chapter 4

Demographics

Of the 198 journalists and public relations practitioners participating in the survey, 50 percent were journalists and 50 percent were public relations practitioners. Females comprised 51.5 percent of the respondents, and males comprised 48.5 percent of the respondents.

About 8 percent of the respondents finished some college. Almost 62 percent earned bachelors degrees. Another 27 percent of the respondents held masters degrees. Four percent of the respondents held doctoral degrees.

General Findings

This researcher ran a t-test to compare the views of the media and public relations practitioners toward standards. The chart on the following page represents the means for each variable within each group. “Message” refers to the belief that public relations’ major objective is to get their clients’ message out to the public. “Liaison” refers to the belief that public relations practitioners serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics. “Standard” refers to the belief that there are sufficient professional standards in

the public relations field. “Goals” refer to the belief that public relations practitioners should set goals and objectives before implementing a campaign. “Background” refers to the belief that a print and broadcast journalism background plays an important role in training public relations practitioners. “Spin” refers to the belief that public relations practitioners tend to spin a story. “Advocate” refers to the belief that public relations practitioners should advocate their client’s perspective at all time. “Leverage” refers to the belief that public relations practitioners use advertorial leverage to gain editorial coverage.

Table 1
T-Tests of media and public relations practitioners' views of standards

| | career | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|------------|--------|----|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| message | media | 99 | 2.6869 | 9.8319 | .9881 |
| | pr | 99 | 2.2626 | 1.2002 | .1206 |
| liaison | media | 99 | 1.9596 | 1.0872 | .1093 |
| | pr | 99 | 1.6364 | .8973 | 9.018E-02 |
| standard | media | 99 | 12.0101 | 27.6695 | 2.7809 |
| | pr | 99 | 4.0606 | 9.7057 | .9755 |
| goals | media | 99 | 5.8586 | 19.1381 | 1.9234 |
| | pr | 99 | 1.2828 | .8212 | 8.253E-02 |
| background | media | 99 | 2.8788 | 9.8232 | .9873 |
| | pr | 99 | 3.6970 | 9.7546 | .9804 |
| spin | media | 99 | 1.8182 | 1.1550 | .1161 |
| | pr | 99 | 4.0303 | 9.5911 | .9639 |
| advocate | media | 99 | 5.2323 | 13.5908 | 1.3659 |
| | pr | 99 | 4.0404 | 1.1860 | .1192 |
| leverage | media | 99 | 17.4040 | 34.6734 | 3.4848 |
| | pr | 99 | 4.8687 | 9.6263 | .9675 |

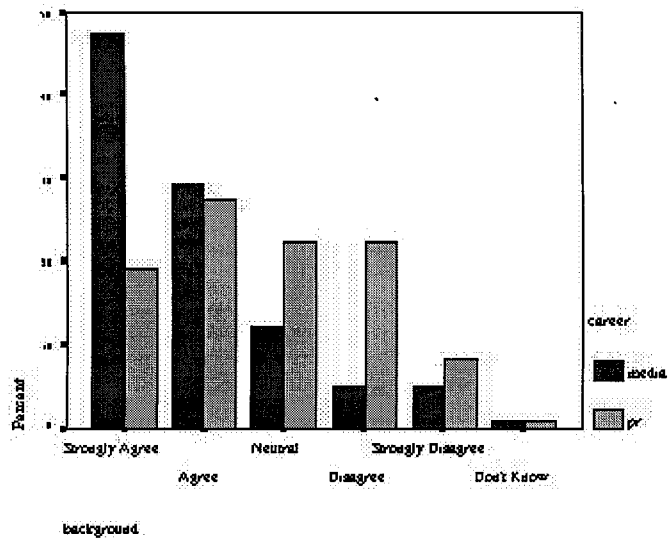
On most of the items tested the media tended to criticize public relations standards more than the public relations practitioners did. The T-tests show that public relations practitioners agree more than journalists that their major objective is to get their “message” out to the public. Public relations practitioners also agreed more than journalists that they serve as a “liaison” between the organization and its publics. Public relations practitioners disagreed that there were sufficient professional “standards” in the

public relations field. The journalists also disagreed that there were sufficient professional “standards” in the public relations field.

Public relations practitioners agreed that they should set “goals” and objectives before starting a campaign. The journalists disagreed with this statement. Journalists agreed more with the statement that a print or broadcast journalism “background” provides an important training role for public relations practitioners than public relations practitioners indicated. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

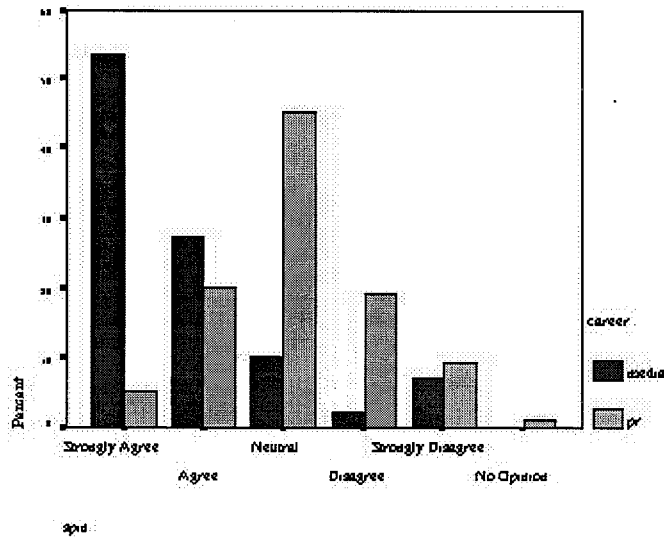
Public relations practitioner and journalist views of a journalism background.



Journalists also felt that public relations practitioners often “spin” a story while public relations practitioners disagreed with the statement. See Figure 2.

Figure 2

Public relations practitioner and journalist views of spinning.



Journalists felt that public relations practitioners do “advocate” their client's perspective at all times. Public relations practitioners disagreed with the journalists with this statement. Public relations practitioners disagreed with the statement that they should use advertorial “leverage” to gain editorial coverage. Journalists “did not know” if public relations practitioners used advertorial “leverage” to gain editorial coverage.

Public relations practitioners disagreed that their relationship with journalists is improving. However, journalists did not know if the relationship is improving. Journalists felt that open and honest communication would improve the relationship. Public relations practitioners felt that better organizational skills would improve the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media.

This researcher ran a factor analysis to discover how journalists feel about public relations practitioners and the standards they employ. This shows that not all journalists feel the same way about public relations practitioners. Journalists were grouped into components based on their answers to eleven questions on standards and the public relations/media relationship. The components or groups can be identified as follows.

Component one is comprised of journalists who feel that public relations practitioners lack professional standards. Component two is journalists found public relations practitioners loyal to their own organization rather than the public. Component three is comprised of journalists who feel that public relations practitioners are the organizations link to its publics. Component four is comprised of journalists who feel that public relations practitioners act as the voice of the organization they represent. See table 2.

Table 2

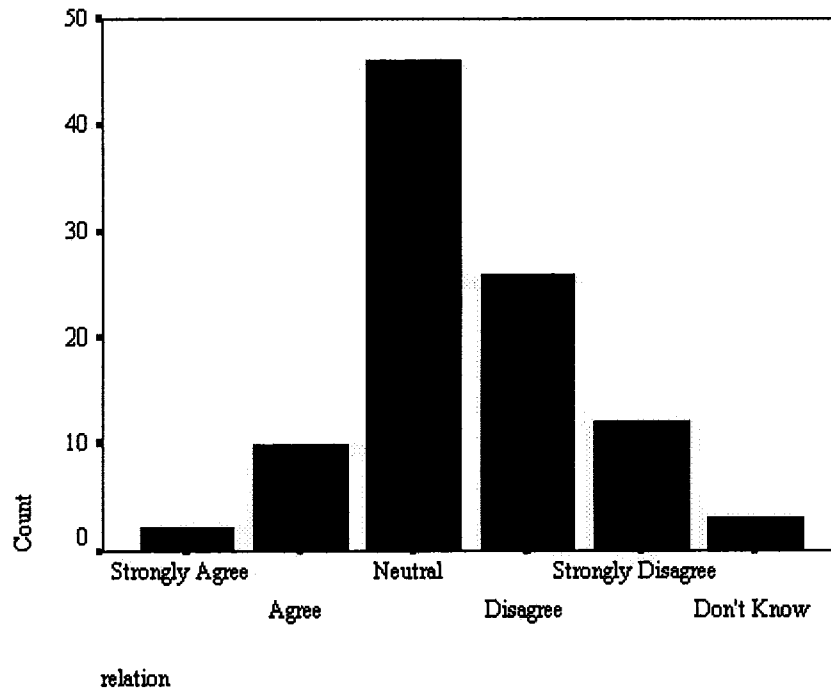
Factor Analysis of Journalists and their Feelings Toward Public Relations Practitioners.

| Variables | Component | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| message | -7.690E-03 | 9.753E-03 | .182 | -.562 | .267 |
| liaison | .468 | -.107 | .619 | .308 | .105 |
| standard | .515 | -.471 | -.287 | .199 | .384 |
| goals | -4.741E-02 | -9.897E-02 | -.253 | .422 | -.409 |
| background | .844 | -9.758E-02 | 6.908E-02 | -5.965E-02 | -.355 |
| spin | .414 | -8.034E-04 | .528 | -.427 | -2.704E-02 |
| advocate | .301 | .857 | -.212 | .102 | .294 |
| leverage | .487 | -.494 | -.347 | -2.121E-02 | .449 |
| info | .727 | -.169 | -.135 | -.122 | -.390 |
| relation | .718 | .661 | -.175 | 4.938E-02 | 1.959E-02 |
| improve | 4.968E-02 | 2.765E-02 | .531 | .585 | .191 |
| Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. | | | | | |
| a. 5 components extracted. | | | | | |

Journalists feel neutral towards the belief that their relationship with public relations practitioners is improving. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

Journalists' views of the media/public relations relationship



Hypothesis I: Findings

It is expected that the media will view the professional standards of public relations practitioners as insufficient. The findings supported this hypothesis.

The majority, 80.6 percent of journalists agreed with a statement that public relations practitioners tend to spin a story. See table 3.

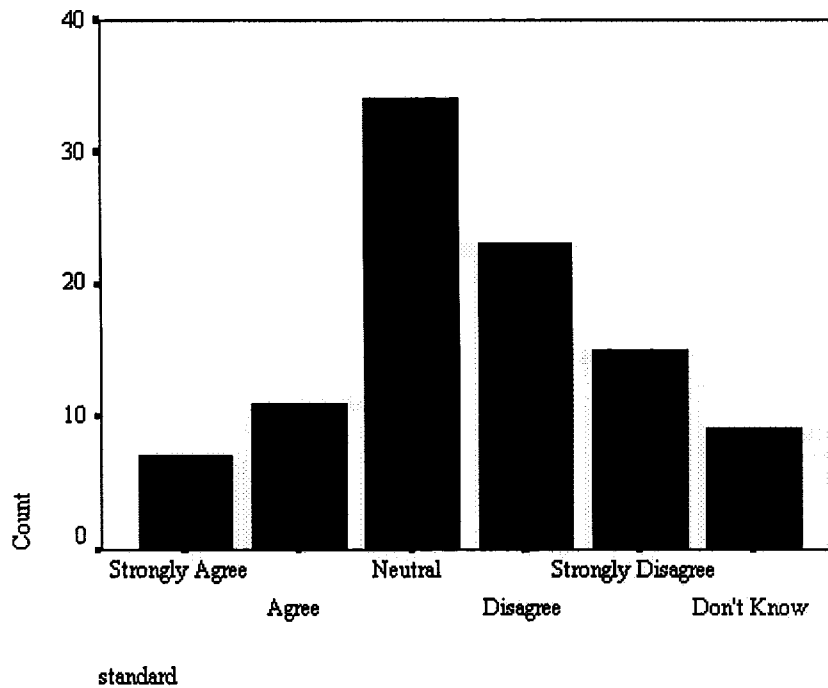
Table 3
Journalists' views of public relations practitioners spinning.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 53 | 53.5 | 53.5 | 53.5 |
| | Agree | 27 | 27.3 | 27.3 | 80.8 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 90.9 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 92.9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

More journalists, 38 percent, disagree with the statement that there are sufficient professional standards in the public relations field. See Figure 4.

Figure 4

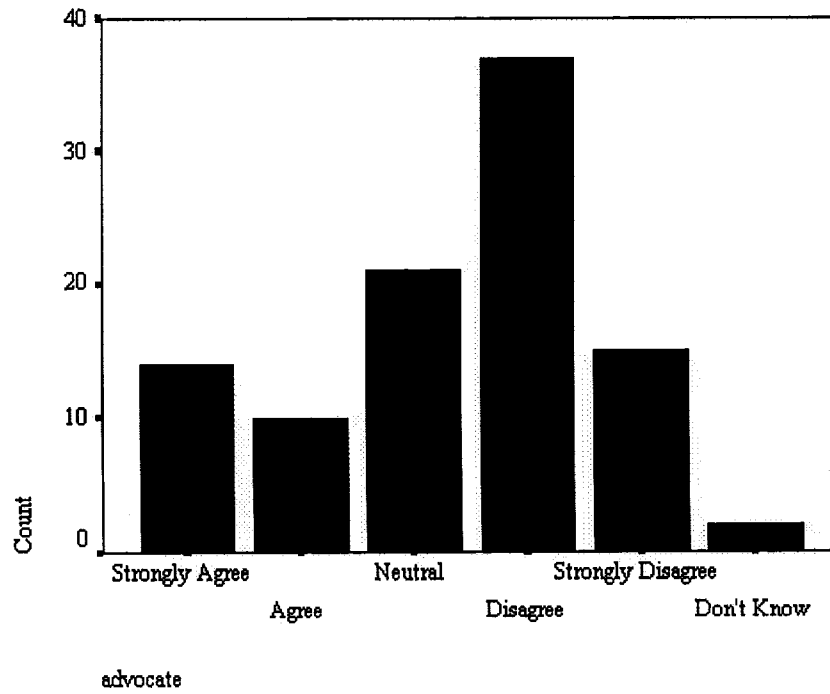
Journalists' views of public relations standards



The majority of journalists, 53 percent, also feel that public relations practitioners should not advocate their client's perspective no matter what it is. See figure 5.

Figure 5

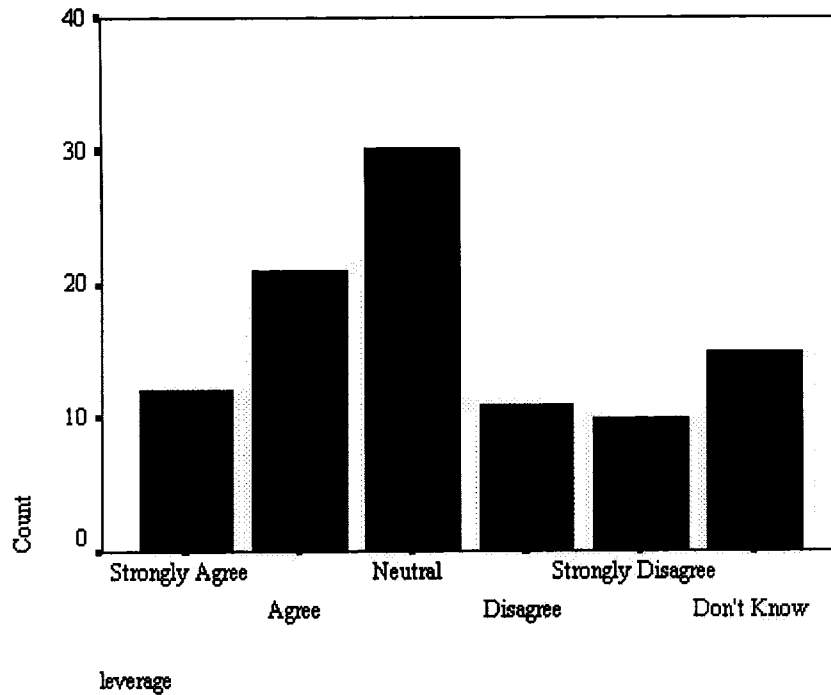
Journalists' views of public relations practitioners always advocating the client's perspective



Journalists also tended to believe that public relations practitioners used advertorial leverage to gain editorial coverage. See figure 6.

Figure 6

Journalists' views of public relations practitioners using advertorial leverage



Summary

When asked various practitioner standards, journalists found public relations practitioners lacking, supporting hypothesis I. Journalists believe public relations practitioners “spin” stories; use advertorial leverage; and always advocate their client’s perspective, even when inappropriate.

Hypothesis II: Findings

It is expected that public relations practitioners will also view their professional standards/codes of ethics as insufficient. To study self-perceived professional standards, this researcher queried the public relations practitioners on a number of professional standards. This study examined standards including:

- releasing messages to the public
- serving as a liaison between an organization and its publics
- setting strategies and goals
- advocating client's perspective
- using advertorial leverage
- serving organization before the public
- representing competing clients
- correcting erroneous information
- joining a professional organization
- communicating with top management
- using research skills.

Approximately 62 percent of public relations practitioners agree that the major objective of public relations is to get their client's message out to the public. Only 14 percent disagreed with the statement. This relates to the hypothesis because it refers to a standard in public relations. See table 4.

Table 4

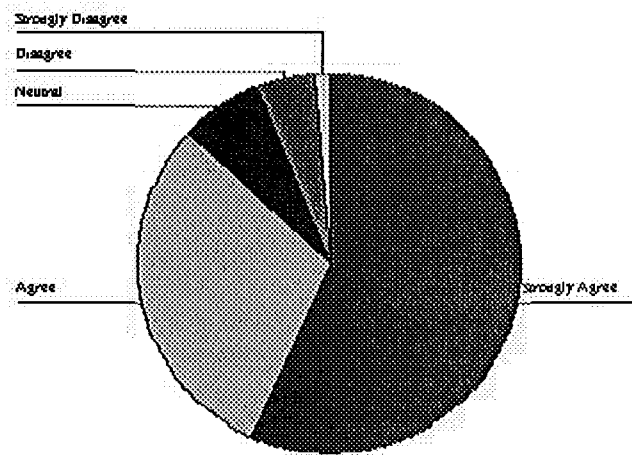
The major objective of public relations practitioners is to get their client's message out to the public.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 33 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| | Agree | 28 | 28.3 | 28.3 | 61.6 |
| | Neutral | 24 | 24.2 | 24.2 | 85.9 |
| | Disagree | 7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 92.9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The majority of public relations practitioners, 86.9 percent, agree that public relations practitioners serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics. See figure 7.

Figure 7

Public relations practitioners' views concerning their role as a liaison between the public and their clients



Approximately 72 percent disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners should advocate their clients' perspective no matter what it is. This contrasts with the journalists who indicated only 53 percent disagreed with the statement. See table 5.

Table 5

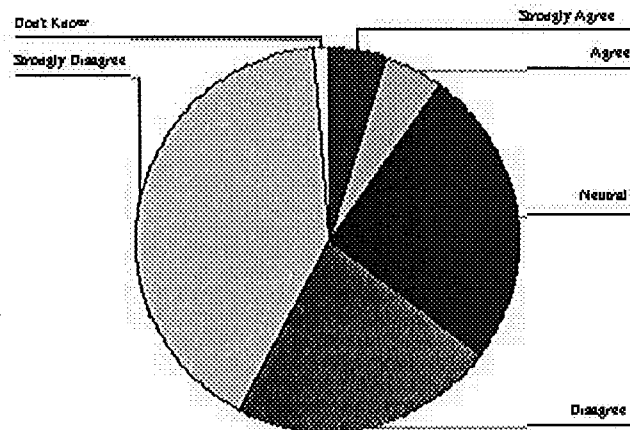
Public Relations practitioners should advocate their client's perspective no matter what it is.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| | Agree | 14 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 16.2 |
| | Neutral | 13 | 13.1 | 13.1 | 29.3 |
| | Disagree | 19 | 19.2 | 19.2 | 48.5 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 51 | 51.5 | 51.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Approximately 64 percent disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners believe in using advertorial leverage to gain editorial coverage. See Figure 8.

Figure 8

Public relations practitioners' views towards using advertorial leverage.



The majority of public relations practitioners, 69 percent, disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners should put the organization's needs above the public's needs. See table 6.

Table 6

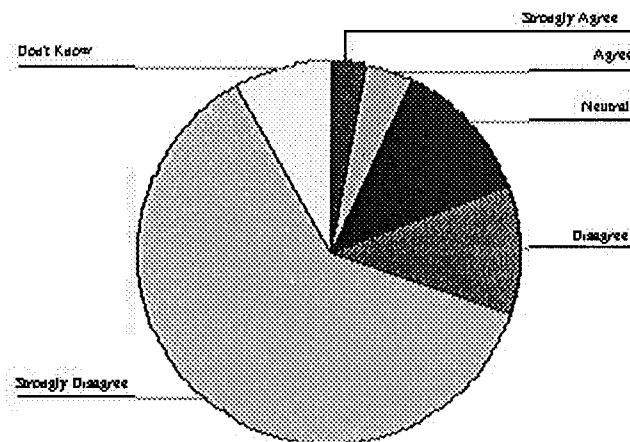
Public relations practitioners should put the organization's needs above the public's needs.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.2 | 11.2 | 14.3 |
| | Neutral | 17 | 17.3 | 17.3 | 31.6 |
| | Disagree | 33 | 33.7 | 33.7 | 65.3 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 34 | 34.7 | 34.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 98 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The majority of public relations practitioners, 73 percent disagreed with the statement that it is acceptable to provide two competing companies with public relations council. See figure 9.

Figure 9

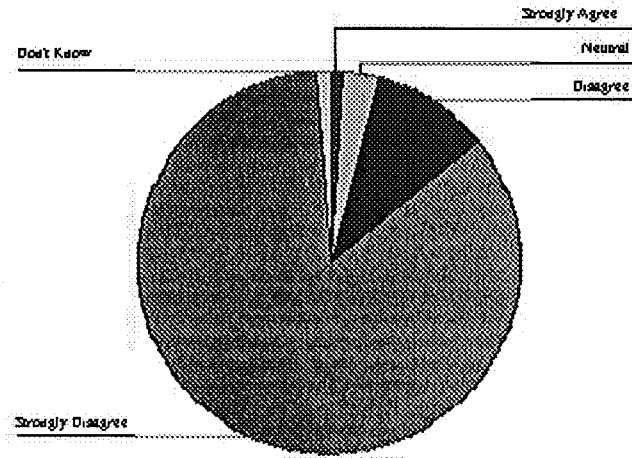
Public relations practitioners' views concerning serving two competing companies.



The majority of public relations practitioners, 95 percent, disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners do not have to correct any erroneous information they have released. See Figure 10.

Figure 10

Public relations practitioners' views concerning the correction of erroneous information.



About 60 percent agreed that public relations practitioners should belong to a major professional organization such as PRSA, IABC, etc. See table 7.

Table 7

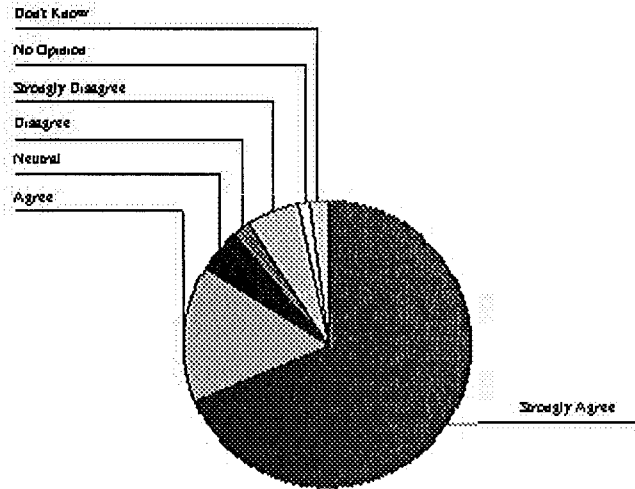
Public relations practitioners should belong to a major professional organization.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 43 | 43.4 | 43.4 | 43.4 |
| | Agree | 16 | 16.2 | 16.2 | 59.6 |
| | Neutral | 22 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 81.8 |
| | Disagree | 11 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 92.9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 7 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The majority, 83.8 percent, of public relations practitioners agreed that they have direct access to the top management of their organization. See Figure 11.

Figure 11

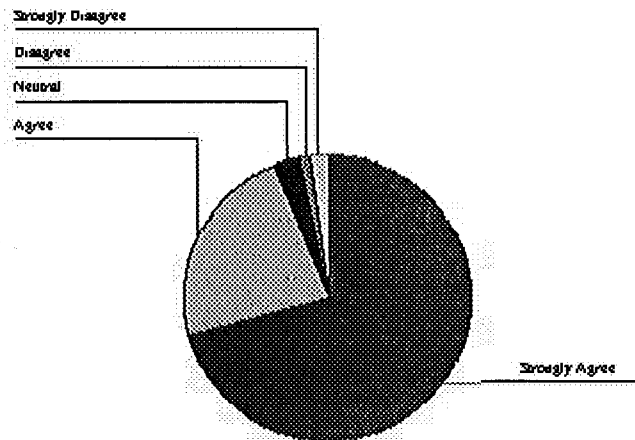
Public relations practitioners' views concerning their relationship with top management



The majority, 93.9 percent, agreed that research skills help the public relations practitioner understand the issues facing the organization and its publics. See figure 12.

Figure 12

Public relations practitioners' views concerning the importance of research skills.



The results show that public relations practitioners feel that their professional standards and ethics are sufficient. The data did not support the hypothesis and contrasts distinctly with the journalists' views of public relations standards.

Hypothesis III: Findings

It is expected that public relations practitioners will find their own professional standards to be higher than those of their colleagues.

The majority of public relations practitioners, 70.7 percent disagree with the statement that public relations practitioners should advocate their client's perspective no matter what it is. However, only 23.3 percent felt that other public relations practitioners would disagree with this statement. See Figure 13 and 14.

Figure 13

Advocate (Self)

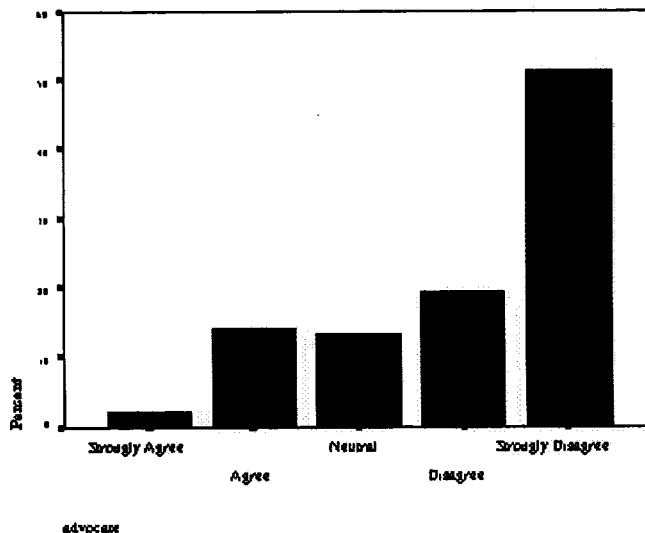
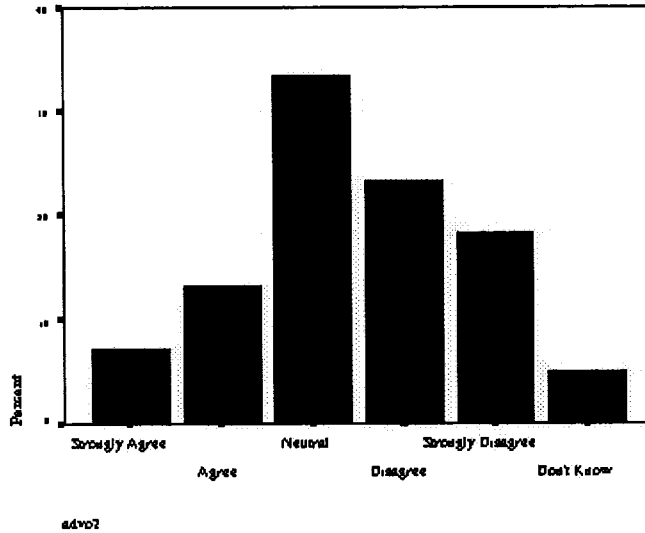


Figure 14

Advocate (Other Practitioners)



The majority of public relations practitioners, 68.7 percent disagreed with the statement that public relations practitioners should put the organization's needs above the public's needs. However, only 35.4 percent of the respondents felt that other public relations practitioners would disagree with the statement. See table 8 and 9.

Table 8

Public relations practitioners should put the organizations needs above the public's needs.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 14.1 |
| | Neutral | 17 | 17.2 | 17.2 | 31.3 |
| | Disagree | 33 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 64.6 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 35 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 9
Other practitioners in our field would.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 6 | 6.1 | 6.1 | 6.1 |
| | Agree | 19 | 19.2 | 19.2 | 25.3 |
| | Neutral | 34 | 34.3 | 34.3 | 59.6 |
| | Disagree | 25 | 25.3 | 25.3 | 84.8 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 10 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 94.9 |
| | Don't Know | 5 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 99 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Summary

The data supports hypothesis I and III. However, the data did not support hypothesis II. This means that the media view public relations practitioners' professional standards as insufficient. Public relations practitioners view their colleagues as less professional than themselves. However, public relations practitioners view themselves as professionals. The T-test also showed this.

This study also pinpointed four groups of journalists who feel differently about public relations practitioners. The first group felt that public relations practitioners lack professional standards. The next group felt that public relations practitioners hold their loyalty to their organization and not the public they serve. The third group felt that public relations practitioners are the organization's link to the public. The final group felt that public relations practitioners serve as the organization's voice.

Chapter 5

Evaluation

Results suggest a lack of consensus about professional standards among journalists and public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners also lack consensus concerning professional standards within the public relations field. These results suggest that public relations practitioners identify themselves and their field differently than the image they portray to the media. The media perceive public relations practitioners to possess few professional standards. Public relations practitioners appeared to underestimate their peers' responses. However, both the media and public relations practitioners agreed on the most useful way to improve the relationship between the media and public relations. Both groups feel that open and honest communication provides the most useful way to improve or strengthen a relationship between the media and public relations. However, other suggestions to improve this relationship include organizational skills, doing homework and having an understanding for each other's role.

The media feel that honesty is important. Journalists feel that public relations practitioners often spin their stories. The research supports this. However, the research also showed that public relations practitioners feel that they do not spin their stories. This problem can be fixed if public relations practitioners view themselves as journalists. This will allow them to see what information is important to the journalist and his/her story.

Journalists also feel that public relations practitioners need better organizational skills. One journalist complained that public relations practitioners spend a lot of time courting the media. However, whenever journalists need public relations practitioners, they are not around or they do not have the information the journalist needs. Along with this, another journalist felt that public relations practitioners should set up set times for faxing and telephone calls concerning regularly scheduled events.

Public relations practitioners can improve their relationship with the media by doing their homework. Many editors and journalists complained that a large portion of their mail from public relations practitioners ends up in the trash without ever being opened. One journalist wondered why public relations practitioners waste their time writing material that ends up in the garbage can. If public relations practitioners learned what interests each reporter and editor then they could save their time and energy by sending just that information.

Another solution the in-depth interviews provided for improving this relationship involved understanding one another's role. Public relations practitioners could improve their relationship with journalists if they took the time to understand the pressures and deadlines their reporters face. By understanding these pressures, public relations practitioners can take steps to make the reporters' job easier and improve the relationship at the same time.

Public relations practitioners possess a different identity than the media view them as having. The image-identity problem results from the definition of professional standards in the public relations field. This researcher's findings show that public relations practitioners disagree with each other concerning professional standards. This

researcher's findings suggest that public relations practitioners perceive themselves to possess higher professional standards than their colleagues. One may infer from the results that this lack of consensus concerning professional standards adds to the poor image of public relations.

However, improvements can occur in the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media. The findings suggest that both journalists and public relations practitioners feel that open and honest communication would improve their relationship.

Interpretation

Results supported the first hypothesis: It is expected that the media will view the professional standards of public relations practitioners as insufficient. Public relations practitioners saw themselves as holding a higher ethical and professional standard than the media perceived them to possess.

Public relations practitioners' standards include releasing their client's message to the public, serving as a liaison between the organization and its publics, correcting erroneous information, serving management, and using research skills. Public relations practitioners believe these standards to be important. However, the media do not recognize this. Public relations practitioners need to show the media that these standards are important to them. Because the media do not view these standards to be sufficient, the journalists and editors ignore many public relations practitioners' statements.

One public relations respondent reported, "I think PR practitioners could do a better job. I suppose standards could accomplish this." However, a public relations practitioner stated that standards exist especially for those who belong to one of the major

organizations such as PRSA or IABC. However, the professional standards practiced by non-member practitioners depend on their own ideas and values. The practitioner went on to say that active members of professional organizations read material concerning standards sent to them by their professional organization to reinforce their standards. Active members also have to adhere to these standards in order to belong to the professional organization.

Results did not support the second hypothesis: It is expected that public relations practitioners will also view their own professional standards as insufficient. The results showed that most public relations practitioners felt their professional standards to be sufficient.

Results supported the third hypothesis: It is expected that public relations practitioners will find their own standards to be higher than those of their colleagues. Public relations practitioners held their own professional standards higher than their colleagues. Public relations practitioners believed their colleagues possessed the same professional standards as themselves in only a few instances. This shows that public relations practitioners hold their colleagues in comparatively poor esteem.

Public relations practitioners need to support each other as well as encourage ethical practices in order to improve their credibility and overall relationship with the media. If public relations practitioners do not support and trust each other then how can the media?

Discussion

This study showed how the media and public relations practitioners view their relationship. The study also provided a way in which the media and public relations practitioners can improve their relationship. Because of this study, public relations practitioners and the media can take some action to improve this difficult yet important relationship.

The study also provided insight into what public relations practitioners think of themselves and their colleagues. In order for public relations practitioners to improve their image, they must first address the problems within their field. If public relations practitioners view each other as unprofessional, then how can the media or any other group view public relations positively?

Two areas in this study show a major disparity between the public relations practitioners and the journalists. The first area of concern deals with setting goals. Journalist feel that public relations practitioners do not need to set goals and objectives before starting a campaign. However, public relations practitioners feel that this step holds great importance. In order to change this public relations practitioners need to show the reporters that their job requires more skills than reporting news about their organization to the public. Many journalist do not realize that part of the public relations practitioner's role is to counsel management as well as carry out research tasks.

Another area of concern within this study showed a great disparity between the views journalists hold towards spinning versus those held by public relations practitioners. Most journalists feel that public relations practitioners spin stories. However, many public relations practitioners feel that they do not spin stories. For this

problem to be corrected public relations practitioners need to view themselves as journalists. When this happens the public relations practitioners can determine what the journalist needs to complete the story. Public relations practitioners also need to provide the journalist with contact information of other sources to help make his/her job easier. Ensuring honesty within their communication can also help to improve this disparity.

Implications and further research

The findings show that the relationship between the media and public relations is not in jeopardy. The relationship possesses room for improvement. Public relations practitioners also need to stop criticizing their colleagues. If public relations practitioners hope to create an image similar to their identity, they need to support each other.

Future research in the public relations field should look more closely at the relationship between the media and public relations. Researchers could focus on the actions public relations practitioners take that destroy their image. The emphasis should focus more on the steps public relations practitioners need to take to improve their relationship with the media.

Conclusions

This study revealed the views the media hold toward public relations. Although the media view public relations practitioners negatively, hope exists to improve this relationship. This study showed that open and honest communication could improve the relationship between the media and public relations. It also showed that better

organizational skills, doing their homework, and understanding each other's role will also improve the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners.

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the study discovered the views of the media toward public relations and the views public relations practitioners hold of one another. Second, methods to improve the expected negative relationship of media and public relations practitioners were provided. Because the relationship that exists between the two groups holds great importance and both groups need each other to do their jobs well, the public may suffer from a lack of concise and accurate information if they cannot work together.

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Appendix

Media In-depth Interviews

1. How do you define PR?
2. What is the PR Practitioner's role in an organization?
3. Do you feel PR Practitioners serve as a liaison between an organization and the public? Why or why not?
4. What is your view of current professional standards in the PR field?
5. What is your opinion concerning the importance of research skills to the PR practitioner?
6. What is the appropriate training for a PR practitioner?
7. How do you perceive ethics in the PR field?
8. What are some of the experiences you have had where ethics came into play positively? Negatively?
9. What are some of the experiences that led you to question the ethical standards in PR?
10. Do you feel PR practitioners advocate their client's perspective, no matter what it is? Why or why not?
11. How do you perceive the state of the relationship between the media and PR?
12. In your opinion what can be done to improve the relationship between PR and the media?

PR In-depth Interview

1. What is your view of current professional standards in the PR field?
2. What is your opinion concerning the importance of research skills to the PR practitioner?
3. What is the appropriate training for a PR practitioner?
4. How do you perceive ethics in the PR field?
5. What are some of the experiences you have had where ethics came into play positively? Negatively?
6. What are some of the experiences that led you to question the ethical standards in PR?
7. Do you feel PR practitioners advocate their client's perspective, no matter what it is? Why or why not?
8. How do you perceive the state of the relationship between the media and PR?
9. In your opinion what can be done to improve the relationship between PR and the media?
10. Do you feel other PR practitioners have the same standards of professionalism that you do?

Media Survey

Hello,

My name is Steve Kandik. I am a student at Rowan University in southern New Jersey. I am researching the views journalist and public relations practitioners hold toward public relations. I need your help. In return, I will send your responses to public relations practitioners so they can do a better job. Please e-mail your answers to:

Kand6193@rowan.edu

For all the questions please indicate from 1 to 5, where 1 is “strongly agree” and 5 is “Strongly disagree.” Remember there is no right or wrong answer. You can e-mail

your answers to:

Kand6193@rowan.edu

For all the questions in this section please indicate from 1 to 5, where 1 is “Strongly agree” and 5 is “Strongly disagree.”

1. The major objective of public relations practitioners is to get their client’s message out to the public.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | | | | | Strongly Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

2. Public relations practitioners serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | | | | | Strongly Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

3. There are sufficient professional standards in the public relations field.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | | | | | Strongly Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

4. A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives before implementing a campaign.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | | | | | Strongly Disagree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

12. Sex:

1. Male 2. Female

13. Age:

1. <31 2. 31-40 3. 41-50 4. >50

14. Race:

1. Caucasian
2. Hispanic
3. African American
4. Asian American
5. Native American
6. Other _____

15. Education:

1. Some College
2. Bachelors degree
3. Masters degree
4. Doctoral degree

16. Degree in:

1. Journalism 2. English 3. Communications 4. Other _____

17. Years practiced journalism

1. <3 2. 4-10 3. 11-25 4. >25

18. Annual Income

1. <\$20,000
2. \$20,000-\$50,000
3. \$51,000-\$100,000
4. >\$100,000

19. Paper's circulation

1. <300,000
2. 300,000-500,000
3. 500,000-1,000,000
4. >1,000,000

6. Public relations practitioners tend to spin a story.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

6b. Other Practitioners in our field would:

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

7a. Public relations practitioners should advocate their client's perspective no matter what it is.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

7b. Other Practitioners in our field would:

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

8a. Public relations practitioners should use advertorial leverage to gain editorial coverage.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

9a. The situation must be considered before making an ethical decision.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

9b. Other Practitioners in our field would:

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

10a. Public relations practitioners should put the organizations needs above the public's needs.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
1 2 3 4 5

16. I have direct access to the top management of my organization.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
 1 2 3 4 5

17. Research skills help the public relations practitioner understand the issues facing the organization and its publics.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
 1 2 3 4 5

18. The relationship between public relations and the media is improving.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree
 1 2 3 4 5

For the following section, please indicate the best answer. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. I am only concerned with your opinions.

19. Which one of the following would best improve the relationship between the media and public relations?

1. Learn each other's job
2. Public relations practitioners only send newsworthy information
3. Open and honest communication
4. Public relations practitioners having better organizational skills

20. Sex:

1. Male 2. Female

21. Age:

1. <31 2. 31-40 3. 41-50 4. >50

22. Race:

1. Caucasian
2. Hispanic
3. African American
4. Asian American
5. Native American
5. Other _____

23. I work in a/an:

1. Corporate setting 2. Government - Nonprofit 3. Agency 4. Other _____

24. Education:

1. Some College
2. Bachelors degree
3. Masters degree
4. Doctoral degree

25. Degree in:

1. Journalism
2. English
3. Communications
4. Other _____

26. Years practiced public relations

1. <3
2. 4-10
3. 11-25
4. >25

27. Annual Income

1. <\$20,000
2. \$20,000-\$50,000
3. \$51,000-\$100,000
4. >\$100,000

28. Do you have an APR accreditation by PRSA?

1. Yes
2. No