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# Media Relations Practitioner's Attitudes toward the Effectiveness of their Undergraduate Public Relations Education

Mary Kenny

*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

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**MEDIA RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARD THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR  
UNDERGRADUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to the**

**Department of Communication**

**and the**

**Faculty of the Graduate College**

**University of Nebraska**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirement for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**by**

**Mary Kenny**

**December, 1993**

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## THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

### Committee

Name

Department

Robert E. Carlson      Communication

Marvin Peterson      English

Hugh P. Cowdin      Communication

Robert E. Carlson  
Chairman

11/29/93  
Date

**MEDIA RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARD THEIR UNDERGRADUATE  
PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION**

*MARY KENNY: UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA, 1993*

*ADVISER: ROBERT E. CARLSON*

The purpose of this study was to investigate public relations practitioners' attitudes toward their educational background as it relates to media relations practice.

A systematic, stratified sample of media relations practitioners was selected from the membership lists of Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators. A mailed survey was used to gather response data addressing the following research questions:

1. Do media relations practitioners express satisfaction with the undergraduate public relations education they completed?
2. Do media relations practitioners believe the undergraduate public relations education they completed prepared them for their roles as media relations practitioners?
3. Do media relations practitioners find it necessary to complete supplemental training beyond that offered in the undergraduate curriculum to gain competence in the field?
4. If responses from media relations practitioners indicate that the undergraduate public relations curriculum they completed did not effectively prepare them for the field, what components do they believe would provide an effective undergraduate public relations curriculum?

The study included 147 respondents. The results indicate that overall, media relations practitioners were not satisfied with their undergraduate education as it relates to media relations practice.

Two-thirds of all respondents said the courses they completed did not prepare them for their first roles as media relations practitioners. Fifty-eight percent said they did not have a thorough, working knowledge of the field when they began their first jobs, and 93 percent said they acquired the majority of their media relations skills through on-the-job experience.

Nearly 75 percent of respondents said they had found it necessary to complete supplemental training beyond that offered in the undergraduate curriculum to gain competence, and 89 percent had completed at least one media relations seminar in the last five years.

Three-fourths of all practitioners recommended that a separate, three-credit-hour course in media relations be required at the undergraduate level, and 88 percent suggested that a course be offered as an elective. Those who had completed the most undergraduate public relations course most strongly recommended a required or elective course in media relations.

Respondents also indicated that the most important components of a media relations course include understanding the concept of newsworthiness, understanding the role of the media, increasing organizational management's understanding of the media and understanding the organizational mission.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While working on this project I relied on the guidance, advice and knowledge of my thesis committee.

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Dr. Marvin Peterson's fresh perspective heightened my awareness and understanding of the meanings of truth and statistics.

Dr. Robert Carlson, chairman of the committee, unselfishly and enthusiastically gave generously of his time, energy, knowledge and encouragement from beginning to end.

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*TABLE OF CONTENTS*

**CHAPTER 1**

Introduction ..... 1

Survey of literature..... 2

1. Working definition of media relations ..... 3

2. Issues surrounding public relations curriculum ..... 8

Statement of Purpose ..... 13

**CHAPTER 2**

Methodology ..... 15

**CHAPTER 3**

Results ..... 18

**CHAPTER 4**

Discussion ..... 66

**CHAPTER 5**

Conclusions ..... 70

Limitations ..... 70

Recommendations for Future Research ..... 71

**APPENDIX A** ..... 73

**APPENDIX B** ..... 85

**REFERENCES** ..... 89



*LIST OF TABLES*

Table 1:	Representation of Females and Males In the Survey Sample .....	18
Table 2:	Number of Years Employed Full-Time as Media Relations Practitioner .....	19
Table 3:	Representation by Job Title .....	19
Table 4:	Level of Education Attained by Respondents .....	21
Table 5:	Type of Degree Earned .....	21
Table 6:	Date of College Graduation .....	22
Table 7:	Number of Undergraduate Public Relations Courses Completed .....	22
Table 8:	Representation Within Age Groups .....	23
Table 9:	Income Level of Respondents .....	24
Table 10:	Frequency of Involvement in Common Media Relations Responsibilities .....	25
Table 11:	Results of t-tests comparing responses of women and men to Section 1 - common media relations responsibilities.....	26
Table 12:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman- Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 1 by age .....	28
Table 13:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman- Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 1 by income.....	30
Table 14:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 1 by title .....	31
Table 15:	How media relations skills are acquired and general beliefs about the practice of media relations .....	33
Table 16:	Results of t-tests comparing responses of those who did and those who did not feel prepared in their first media relations job with all other Section 2 questions .....	36
Table 17:	Results of t-tests comparing responses to Section 2 questions by type of degree earned .....	37
Table 18:	Responses to Section 2 questions addressing preparedness by type of degree earned .....	39
Table 19:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman- Keuls procedures: Responses to Item 11 and Section 2 .....	41
Table 20:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman- Keuls procedures: Section 2 and responses to Item 15 .....	42
Table 21:	Results of t-tests comparing responses of women and men to Section 2 .....	44

Table 22:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' income .....	46
Table 23:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' ages .....	47
Table 24:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' job titles .....	48
Table 25:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 statements with the number of undergraduate public relations courses completed .....	50
Table 26:	Responses to Items 7 and 8 .....	54
Table 27:	T-tests comparing responses to Item 2-9 and Item 8.....	56
Table 28:	Responses to Item 4 .....	57
Table 29:	Responses to Section 3 .....	58
Table 30:	Overall responses to Section 3 .....	60
Table 31:	Results of t-tests comparing responses of men and women to Section 3 questions .....	61
Table 32:	One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 3 questions with income level .....	63
Table 33:	Highlights of Pearson correlation matrix comparing responses to Section 1 with responses to Items 3-1 through 3-12 .....	65

## CHAPTER 1

### *INTRODUCTION*

Media relations is a function of public relations that serves to heighten the various publics' understanding and awareness of an organization by establishing mutually rewarding relationships with the media and by serving as a liaison between organizational management and the media.

Media relations has come to be recognized as perhaps the most visible and vital of the public relations functions. Over the years, it has evolved from the practice of publicity -- a one-way communication to counteract negative public opinion ... into two-way communication -- mutual understanding of an organization and its publics.

Edward L. Bernays taught the first course in public relations at New York University in the 1920s. By 1945, only 21 universities offered courses in public relations. By 1992, more than 200 universities offered public relations programs.

However, it appears that the public relations undergraduate curriculum has not kept pace with the evolution in the field. Scholars note a lack of consensus among instructors on a significant body of public relations knowledge and a lack of preparedness among public relations graduates to meet the demands of the profession.

This study explores these professional and educational issues as they relate to the practice of media relations. Media relations practitioners, members of either Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) or the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), were surveyed to learn how media relations skills are acquired, what issues are relevant in their professional activities, if they felt their undergraduate

education adequately prepared them for their professional activities, and finally, what skills and knowledge can best be taught in the undergraduate curriculum in preparation for media relations practice.

### *Survey of Literature*

This survey will attempt to establish a definition of media relations as a function of public relations. Literature in relevant areas of the undergraduate public relations curriculum, including theoretical and practical approaches, as well as recommendations for the curriculum will be reviewed.

## **1. Working Definition of Media Relations**

Media relations can best be viewed as a function of public relations. Function is defined by Clay (1984) as something a program, individual or system does - an activity.

Hazelton and Long (1988) define public relations as a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals. Specifically, "public relations practitioners communicate in order to assist organizations in managing information exchange, identifying and solving problems, managing conflicts, and managing behaviors."

In "Public Relations Body of Knowledge: A Task Force Report," VanLeuven (1989) outlines "a codified body of knowledge defining the subject matter of the discipline ... to establish a framework for classifying its knowledge." The report defines the elements and functions of professional media relations practice and includes community relations, financial and investor relations, internal relations, public affairs, marketing, marketing support and fund-raising.

Awad (1985) also describes media relations as a specialty area of public relations, along with government relations and investor relations, but notes that "it would be a grave error to confuse any with the whole of public relations. In a large organization, these specialties are interdependent and mutually reinforcing strategies."

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985) note "a discernible trend toward specialization among PR firms - the foremost area is media relations."

Baskin (1989) reinforces the categorization of media relations as a function of public relations in a survey of 400 public affairs managers who described their activities in descending order of frequency. The primary functions, listed by 70 percent or more of

the respondents, are community relations, government relations, corporate contributions, and media relations. These topics are defined in textbooks as "public relations functions."

A survey of public relations practitioners conducted by Jacobson and Tortorella (1992) indicates the most widely cited specialties of public relations are media relations, publicity and special events.

The scope of the media relations function can be seen by looking at the goals and objectives of the total public relations program and at the reliance of the total public relations program on the media. According to Cutlip et al. (1985), the objective of most programs "is either to change or neutralize hostile opinions, to crystalize latent or unformed opinions, or to conserve favorable opinions by reinforcing them. The last is the primary effect of most communications programs. Practitioners rely largely on the mass media to accomplish these objectives."

The authors further credit the media's potency in forming the appearance of consensus. They write, "The news media, primary sources of information for active citizens, tend to mold opinions by the events they report, how they depict them, or the way they link symbols for emphasis."

Clay (1984) also describes the interrelationship and interdependence between an organization and the media. "Perhaps the most visible and vital of the public relations functions is media relations. Visible because through its media relations capability, the corporation discloses information to the target groups of all the public relations disciplines . . . . Vital because through this post, the organization interfaces with one of the most powerful manipulators of public opinion in our society."

The author stresses the importance of "establishing credibility and trust in establishing and maintaining a good working relationship with the press."

Clay's description of the media's power is echoed by Center and Jackson (1990). "The biggest misunderstanding in public relations concerns the mass media: what its role and power really is in modern society, and how important media relations is in building effective public relationships," they write.

According to Reilly (1985), "Estimates of news stories that originated at the source -- usually a PR firm or person -- range between 70 and 80 percent."

Although the beneficial aspects of this mutually dependent relationship seem obvious, there probably wouldn't be a public relations function known as "media relations" unless there was a history of problems between the two forces.

According to Cutlip et al. (1985), "Ever since public relations emerged early in this century, the practitioner and the journalist have functioned in a mutually dependent relationship, sometimes as adversaries, sometimes as colleagues cooperating in respective self-interest."

Awad (1985) offers less optimism for changing the situation. "The relationship between the journalist and the PR practitioner is and probably always will be an adversarial one."

Howard (1985) suggests that the emphasis in a media relations program should be "on the relations aspect -- working to build long-term relationships with the people who cover your organization. As is true with many good relationships, they are built only gradually, based on a variety of contacts over time, and strengthened by experiences that foster growing knowledge and respect."

Cutlip et al. (1985) address the theoretical bottom line of the goals of both practitioners and journalists. "Though the generalized relationship between journalists and practitioners may forever be characterized as adversarial, we must remember that both

professions share one basic tenet -- the First Amendment -- and in pursuit of protecting this license, we are united."

Historically, roles now filled by the media relations practitioner were those assigned to the publicist, press agent or "flack." In current literature, there are numerous references to the "evolving" role of the publicist to media relations practitioner.

Reilly (1985) uses the terms publicist and media relations interchangeably throughout his text. "Publicity," he writes, "which is often confused with public relations, is really just a tool of the larger PR concept. Publicity involves the placement of stories in the mass media and is an important element in the public relations process." He characterizes this message strategy as "uncontrolled" and notes that the "confusion of publicity with the broad concept of public relations is understandable. Public relations evolved from publicity. Much of contemporary practice -- often the most visible part -- is concerned with generating publicity."

Likewise, Cutlip et al. (1985) refer to placing stories in the media as the primary function of the publicist. But while concurring with Reilly's definition of publicity, the authors take the concept a step further. They write, "Historically, publicity is a one-way communication to counterattack negative public opinion. This has evolved and moved into two-way communication -- mutual understanding of an organization and its publics." Further, they note a "corrective action component," in which the practitioner counsels the organizational management in crisis or problem situations.

Baskin (1989) supports the evolving role of the public relations practitioner. "As the tempo of corporate PR activities rises, the very nature of the profession is changing profoundly. What was once scorned as press agency and flackery and dismissed as a peripheral function of management is becoming a more consequential endeavor worthy of serious attention by serious management."



Hazelton (1988) acknowledges the difficulties the changes have posed for scholars. "The evolution of the public relations profession from a pure publicity function to a communication management function has produced conceptual and definitional debate among public relations scholars."

The conceptual and definitional debate noted among scholars by Hazelton can be partially resolved by studying Grunig's model of the four types of communicators.

Grunig (1987) describes four models of public relations practice. The public relations practitioner may execute two technician roles -- the "press agency model -- a program that does little more than strive for publicity in the mass media" -- or the "public information model that uses a journalist-in-residence approach to disseminate relatively objective information through the mass media and controlled media, such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail."

According to Grunig, the third model, two-way asymmetrical, uses methods to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants. The fourth, a two-way symmetrical model, "describes public relations efforts that are based on research and that use communication to manage conflict and to improve understanding with strategic publics. It is characteristic of excellent public relations programs." The third and fourth models require managers as well as technicians for successful implementation.

### **Summary**

Media relations is a function of public relations that serves to heighten the various publics' understanding and awareness of the organization by establishing mutually rewarding relationships with the media and by serving as a liaison between organizational management and the media. Practitioners serve in either a technician and/or managerial role. The primary function of the technician is to place stories about the organization in

the media. In a management capacity, the practitioner counsels management and plays a decision-making role in the strategic plan of the organization.

## **2. Issues Surrounding Public Relations Curriculum**

There has been ongoing debate regarding the efficacy of the current undergraduate public relations curriculum, noting the inability of undergraduates to perform tasks demanded of them in the work place.

As Wakefield (1988) notes, "The public relations field is now being flooded with students who think they are qualified for a field in which many of them are not prepared to compete - or perform - effectively."

According to Grunig (1989), many graduates go into public relations "with little education in the field."

Baskin (1989) contends that "the harsh reality is that many students have graduated as public relations majors with the majority of their course work in areas not well designed to prepare them for the business and organizational world in which they are seeking jobs." The author notes that students may receive training in writing and other areas of communication necessary to the technical function, but lack the understanding of the managerial, organizational and environmental context in which their skills must be applied.

Newsom and Files (1984) highlighted problems associated with public relations education, indicating that definitional problems lead to confusion about student career preparation. Newsom (1988) cited an inability to look at generic qualities of public relations as a major contributor to the problem, and asks, "How are definitions of public relations derived? Rather than emanating from a distinct disciplinary focus, persons who study, teach and practice public relations develop definitions from divergent areas of interest." The author notes that more often than not, responses will be quite different,

"reflecting unsuccessful efforts to define public relations from a common theoretical, pedagogical, and practical perspective. Perhaps conceptualizations of PR as a discipline are not possible because the profession has yet to develop a distinct focus with its own literature and methodology."

According to Wakefield (1988), "there currently is no formal coordination of what public relations programs ... are teaching or how and by whom they are being taught. The result has been rapid, often poorly developed, growth - and virtually no consistency - in public relations degree programs in speech communication."

Caudill (1990) cites the relative youth of the profession as a factor in the development of the curriculum. "Public relations, being a newer field and slightly foreign to many traditional journalism instructors, is still developing in terms of teaching goals and consensus on a significant body of knowledge."

The 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education was established to recommend changes in the undergraduate requirements for public relations education in an effort to develop "a more rational, interdisciplinary model for public relations education based on empirical research and trends in the public relations field" (Wakefield, 1988). The commission recommends study in a number of non-journalism/mass communication areas, such as speech communication, related studies in communication theory, public speaking and oral presentation, communication process and structure, conflict and conflict resolution theory, interorganizational theory, and decision making.

The commission notes, "If ACEJMC would systematically implement the recommendations of the 1987 Commission and bring its accreditation standards for public relations education into line with modern practice in the field, public relations students in journalism/mass communication programs would surely benefit."

According to Neff (1990), the 1987 Commission established that "six subject matter areas, NOT COURSES, should be represented in a public relations program. These subject matter areas covered: Principles: Practices and Theories of Public Relations; PR Techniques: Writing, Message Dissemination, Networks; PR Research for Planning and Evaluation; PR Strategy and Implementation; Supervised PR Experience; and Specialized Advance Study. "

Both Neff and Grunig (1989) suggest a curriculum that includes areas of specialization. Grunig states that specialized education in public relations "makes it more likely that practitioners will perform in a sophisticated and professional manner."

Grunig suggests that students should be trained for entry level jobs as communication technicians and that they should be introduced to "the management of public relations, to communication theory and research methods, and to the ethics of the two-way symmetrical model of public relations." Communication departments, ideally, "would also offer a range of specialized electives in public relations programs such as employee, media, community, financial or educational relations."

Wakefield suggests a comprehensive list of standardized core public relations courses that includes: introduction to public relations (3 hours), public relations techniques (3 hours), public relations research (3 hours), public relations cases and campaigns (3), supervised public relations experience (0-3) and specialized advance studies, where time and resources allow, including specialized PR areas such as marketing PR, public affairs, publicity and media relations, community relations, international public relations, financial and shareholder relations, consumer relations, employee relations, fundraising and membership development and public relations management."

Wakefield also suggests that although journalism skills are "important for entry-level job technicians -- interpersonal and group communication skills have come to be

recognized by public relations employers as more vital than journalism skills for successful public relations management. There is a wide range of additional speech communication specialization areas which enhance the public relations function."

Hazelton (1988) supports a broad-based, interdisciplinary approach to public relations education. "Any definition of public relations should provide a basic vocabulary that is germane to past, present and future applications, while providing direction for scientific investigations and theorizing. Ideally, definitions should be comprehensive enough to include all aspects of theory and practice and exhibit practical utility."

Hazelton criticizes most public relations textbooks as "compendiums of lists, rather than holistic, interdisciplinary descriptions of the public relations process. Further, many textbooks fail to emphasize the commonalities, particularly to communication, across all public relations endeavors. As a result, students are not provided an integrating device for understanding their education."

Hazelton suggests that if a unifying model, such as the open systems model, were adopted in undergraduate education, it would provide frameworks for categorizing and describing relationships among variables which are unique to the particular field of study. "Those who study public relations must describe its essential elements, functions, and processes in order to contribute to knowledge about public relations, social science and the profession," Hazelton notes.

And, an examination of public relations curriculum would not be complete without Grunig's (1989) suggestions for a program based on the four models of public relations practice. Grunig states that the "two-way symmetrical model should -- and will -- dominate the practice of public relations in the future." He suggests that educators "develop sequences, programs, or departments of public relations that are autonomous or

relatively autonomous from journalism, speech, or business if public relations education is to produce graduates that will serve organizations - and society - well in the future."

Some progress is being made. Wakefield and Cottone (1992) recommend revamping public relations curricula toward the interdisciplinary emphasis recommended by the *Design for Public Relations Education: Report of the 1987 Commission on Public Relations Education*, but predict that "such dramatic change ... is unlikely to occur in the near future." They do acknowledge that the certification option PRSA offers to institutions housing their student chapters is "a major step in the right direction."

### **Summary**

Undergraduate public relations curriculum has been the focus of intense study in the past 10 years. A variety of theoretical and practical approaches have been suggested, and a comprehensive recommendation of core classes was made by the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education. Scholars agree that no one approach has been effective in preparing students for the realities of the profession, and suggest focusing on courses stressing interpersonal communication, theory, management and electives in specialized areas.

Given the increasing importance of media relations as a function of public relations and the apparent lack of consensus among scholars as to the essential components of the undergraduate curriculum, it is hoped that a survey of media relations practitioners asking their opinions about their educational background and job preparedness will yield data useful to the development of specialized media relations curriculum development.

### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to investigate public relations practitioners' attitudes toward their educational background as it relates to media relations practice.

Two conditions surrounding the practice of media relations indicate further research in the area of educational background. First, media relations is increasingly recognized as "perhaps the most visible and vital of public relations functions" (Clay, 1984). It serves to heighten the various publics' understanding and awareness of an organization by establishing mutually rewarding relationships with the media and serving as a liaison between organizational management and the media. Further, it has evolved from what Cutlip (1985) calls the practice of "publicity -- a one-way communication to counterattack negative public opinion ... into two-way communication -- mutual understanding of an organization and its publics."

Second, it appears the public relations undergraduate curriculum has not kept pace with the evolution in the field. As Caudill (1990) notes, "Public relations, being a newer field and slightly foreign to traditional journalism instructors, is still developing in terms of teaching goals and consensus on a significant body of knowledge." Scholars note a lack of preparedness among public relations graduates to meet the demands of the profession (Baskin, 1989; Grunig, 1989; Wakefield, 1988) and informal interviews with media relations practitioners reveal that their college education must be supplemented with costly media relations and crisis communication training.

Therefore, it seems possible that data involving media relations practitioners' opinions toward their educational background and its role in preparing them for the field could contribute to understanding the effectiveness of the current undergraduate public

relations curriculum. A mailed survey instrument was used to gather response data addressing the following research questions:

1. Do media relations practitioners express satisfaction with the undergraduate public relations education they completed?

2. Do media relations practitioners believe the undergraduate public relations education they completed prepared them for their roles as media relations practitioners?

3. Do media relations practitioners find it necessary to complete supplemental training beyond that offered in the undergraduate curriculum to gain competence in their field?

4. If responses from media relations practitioners indicate that the undergraduate public relations curriculum they completed did not effectively prepare them for the field, what components do they believe would provide an effective undergraduate public relations curriculum?



## CHAPTER 2

### *Methodology*

A 21-question survey was developed, reproduced and mailed to 300 media relations practitioners in the U.S. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

The first three sections were intended to gather information about media relations practitioners' current responsibilities, how they gained expertise in the field, their general beliefs about the practice of media relations, their satisfaction with their undergraduate education, and what they believe are the most important components of an undergraduate media relations course.

The first section was intended to gather information on the specific responsibilities media relations practitioners perform in their day-to-day activities. The section included 20 statements and allowed for responses on a five-point scale to indicate frequency, from "always" to "never."

The second section, a five-point Likert-type scale, included 10 statements intended to gather information about the ways media relations practitioners gained expertise in the profession and their satisfaction with the preparation they received in their undergraduate college courses.

The third section asked respondents to rank the importance of teaching 12 media relations functions using a seven-point semantic differential scale ranging from "very important" to "not important."

Other questions were included in the survey to indicate educational background and supplemental media relations and crisis communications training.

In addition to the questions specifically dealing with undergraduate education and supplemental training, demographic information was also gathered, including age, sex,

salary level, year of college graduation, job title, number of years employed full-time in public relations and whether respondents had any experience working in the media prior to their first media relations jobs.

Subjects were invited to include any additional comments on a blank section of the final page (Appendix B). They were told that their responses would be held in confidence and that forms would be numbered to allow follow-up mailings to those who did not respond to the first mailing.

Subjects were chosen using a systematic stratified sample of media relations practitioners chosen from the 1992 Worldbook of International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and from the Public Relations Journal 1992-93 Register Issue.

One-hundred-fifty subjects were selected from each source for a total mailing of 300. The survey was pretested with eight media relations practitioners whose experience ranged from 18 months to 23 years. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

Knowing that the return rate of mailed surveys is often low, directions were taken from Dillman (1978) in preparing and mailing the survey.

The first mailing, sent to all 300 subjects, included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a copy of the questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. Subjects were asked to respond within 10 days. Eight days later, a postcard was sent to all subjects, thanking those who had already responded and reminding others to return their forms. Copies of the cover letter, the postcard and the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis of the data began four weeks after the first mailing. Data from returned forms were coded and statistical tests performed on the UNO computer system using the SPSSX statistical package.

Descriptive information about respondents was obtained through frequency counts on various demographic characteristics.

To answer the four research questions, and to identify specific issues affecting respondents' feelings of preparedness for their first job, their satisfaction with the undergraduate education they received and their recommendations for undergraduate curriculum, parametric tests were performed on the data.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Results*

Of the 300 survey questionnaires mailed, 147 usable responses (49.8%) were received. Responses to Items 16-21 yield descriptive information about the respondents.

As Table 1 illustrates, 59.6% of the respondents were female; 40.4% were male.

TABLE 1. Representation of Females and Males in the Survey Sample.

	Frequency	Percent
Female	87	59.6
Male	59	40.4
No response	<u>1</u>	<u>--</u>
Total	146	100.0

The number of years respondents have worked full-time as media relations practitioners is highlighted in Table 2. The highest percentage of respondents, 38.7%, have worked full-time as media relations practitioners for between 5 and 10 years.

TABLE 2. Number of years employed full-time as media relations practitioner.

Category	Frequency	Percent
0-4 years	46	32.4
5-10 years	55	38.7
11-19 years	32	22.6
20 or more	9	6.3
No response	<u>5</u>	--
Total	147	100.0

The highest percentage of respondents (39%) describe their job title as "director."

Table 3 illustrates the responses according to job title.

TABLE 3. Representation by job title.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Director	57	39.0
Manager	51	34.9
Staff position	26	17.8
Public relations agency consultant	12	8.3
Independent consultant, other	--	--
No response	<u>1</u>	--
Total	147	100.0

The highest educational level reported by six (4.1%) respondents was "some college." Most respondents, 66%, received college degrees. Thirty-eight (25.9%) earned master's degrees and one (.7%) held a doctorate (See Table 4).

As Table 5 illustrates, the highest percentage of respondents, 32.2%, earned degrees in journalism, followed by 13% with English degrees. An additional 3.4% received degrees in public relations, 3.4% reported degrees in organizational communication, 3.4% received degrees in combined public relations/journalism and another 3.4% received degrees in broadcast journalism. Business degrees accounted for 4.1% of responses and another 4.1% received speech degrees.

TABLE 4. Level of education attained by respondents.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Some college	6	4.1
Undergraduate college degree	97	66.0
Master's degree	38	25.9
Doctorate	1	.7
Other	<u>5</u>	<u>3.4</u>
Total	147	100.0

TABLE 5. Type of degree earned.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Public relations	5	3.4
Journalism	47	32.2
Combined PR/Journalism	5	3.4
Speech	6	4.1
Organizational Communication	5	3.4
Broadcasting	5	3.4
English	19	13.0
Business	6	4.1
Did not complete an undergraduate degree	4	2.7
Other	44	30.2
No response	<u>1</u>	<u>--</u>
Total	147	100.0

The date of respondents' college graduation is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Date of college graduation.

Category	Frequency	Percent
1950-1959	7	4.8
1960-1969	23	15.8
1970-1979	54	37.0
1980-1993	59	40.4
Didn't complete	3	2.1
No response	<u>1</u>	<u>--</u>
Total	147	100.0

Subjects were also asked the number of public relations courses they completed as undergraduates. Seventy-two (50%) had no classes; 37 (25.7%) completed one to three classes and 33 (23%) completed four or more classes (See Table 7).

TABLE 7. Number of undergraduate public relations courses completed.

Category	Frequency	Percent
0	72	50.0
1-3	37	25.7
4 or more	33	23.0
Didn't complete undergraduate degree	2	1.4
No response	<u>3</u>	<u>--</u>
Total	147	100.0



Twenty-three (15.9%) respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30; 49 (33.8%) were between 31 and 40; 52 (35.9%) were between 41 and 50; 20 (13.8%) between 51 and 60; and, 1 respondent (.7%) was 60 or older (See Table 8).

TABLE 8. Representation within age groups.

Category	Frequency	Percent
20 to 30	23	15.9
31 to 40	49	33.8
41 to 50	52	35.9
51 to 60	20	13.8
61 and older	1	.7
No response	<u>2</u>	--
Total	147	100.0

Table 9 shows the annual income level of 10.7% of respondents was \$0 to \$20,000; 33.6% earned between \$20,001 and \$45,000; 29.3% between \$45,001 and \$65,000; and, 26.5% more than \$65,001.

TABLE 9. Income level of respondents.

Income Category	Frequency	Percent
\$0 to \$20,000	15	10.7
\$20,001 to \$45,000	47	33.6
\$45,001 to \$65,000	41	29.3
\$65,001 and over	37	26.5
No response	7	--
Total	147	100.1

**Research Question 1: Do media relations practitioners express satisfaction with the undergraduate public relations education they completed?**

The first section, comprised of 20 statements, was constructed to gain information about respondents' everyday job responsibilities using a five-point scale with responses ranging from "always" to "never" (See Table 10). It was anticipated that responses to these items would have a bearing on the attitudes expressed by respondents in Sections 2 and 3.

More than half the respondents, 58.5%, indicated that they always serve as liaison between their organization and the media (Item 1-5). Fifty-one percent indicated that they always develop the organization's publicity plans (Item 1-17), while another 58% indicated that they always develop and implement their organization's public relations plans. Two items received a response rate of more than 50% in the "never" category, including Item 1-11 (Produce video news releases) with a 55% response and Item 1-12 (Produce radio news service or radio feed to network affiliates), with a 52% response rate.

TABLE 10. Frequency of involvement in common media relations responsibilities.

Statement	A	F	S	R	N	No. Respondents
1-1 Write news releases	53	63	22	5	1	144
1-2 Facilitate interviews between your organization's experts and the media	60	62	22	3	0	147
1-3 Provide media training for members of your organization	20	33	53	38	3	147
1-4 Serve as organization spokesperson	39	54	33	17	4	147
1-5 Serve as liaison between your organization and the media	86	51	9	1	0	147
1-6 Serve as spokesperson during crisis communications	38	49	27	19	11	144
1-7 Serve as media relations consultant to management on ongoing basis	55	51	26	12	2	146
1-8 Coordinate news conferences	53	32	38	17	5	145
1-9 Develop media kits, press packets	65	39	32	10	1	147
1-10 Coordinate news service at organization	47	37	24	13	13	134
1-11 Produce video new releases	11	5	13	35	82	146
1-12 Produce radio news service or radio feed to network affiliates	7	7	15	36	77	142
1-13 Maintain regular contact with national media through phone calls, letters, news releases	35	36	24	37	18	145
1-14 Maintain regular contact with regional and local media through phone calls, letters, news releases	68	59	13	4	2	146
1-15 Schedule media tours or visits to facilitate face-to-face contact with regional and national media	18	36	41	33	18	146
1-16 Develop your organization's crisis communication plan	49	37	32	14	14	146
1-17 Develop your organization's publicity plans	75	49	17	6	0	147
1-18 Develop and coordinate distribution of op-ed items for print media using your organization's experts	34	24	49	25	15	147
1-19 Develop and implement organization's public relations plans	86	37	17	6	1	147
1-20 Other (please specify)	0	0	0	0	0	147

A = Always    F = Frequently    S = Sometimes    R = Rarely    N = Never

Demographic variables yield some statistically significant differences in responses to Item 1, most notably between men and women. As Table 11 illustrates, t-tests performed on responses of the 84 female respondents (Group 1) and 59 male respondents (Group 2) indicate that women are more likely to write news releases (Item 1-1), facilitate interviews between the organization's experts and the media (Item 1-2), coordinate news conferences (Item 1-8) and develop media kits and press packets (Item 1-9).

**TABLE 11.** Results of t-tests comparing responses of women and men to common media relations responsibilities.

Item	Gender	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
1-1 Write news releases	Women	84	1.73	-2.46	.015
	Men	59	2.08		
1-2 Facilitate interviews between organization's experts and the media	Women	87	1.66	-2.33	.021
	Men	59	1.96		
1-8 Coordinate news conferences	Women	86	1.17	-3.21	.002
	Men	59	1.15		
1-11 Develop media kits and press packages	Women	87	1.70	-3.63	.000
	Men	59	2.28		

**Responsibilities also appear to shift with respondents' age, income and job title.**

**One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures show that respondents between the ages of 31 and 50 are more likely to serve as spokespersons (Item 1-4) than those between the ages of 20 and 30. Similarly, respondents 31 and older were more likely to serve as crisis spokespersons (Item 1-6) than their counterparts in the 20-to-30 age group. Respondents age 31 and older also were more likely to serve as media relations consultants to management on an ongoing basis (Item 1-7) than those between 20 and 30 years of age (Table 12).**

TABLE 12. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Frequency of involvement in common media relations responsibilities from 1 = always, 2 = frequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = rarely, 5 = never.

Age:

Group 1: 20 to 30  
 Group 2: 31 to 40  
 Group 3: 41 to 50  
 Group 4: 51 and older

1-4 Responses to "Serve as organization spokesperson"

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	3	3.60	3.32	.0215	1 with 3, 2 1 with 2	1=2.86 2=2.18
Within group	141	1.08				3=2.07 4=2.38
Total	144					

1-6 Responses to "Serve as spokesperson during crisis communications"

Between groups	3	7.07	5.12	.0021	1 with 2, 3, 4	1=3.30 2=2.28
Within group	139	1.37				3=2.25 4=2.20
Total	142					

1-7 Responses to "Serve as media relations consultant to management on ongoing basis"

Between groups	3	7.82	8.04	.001	1 with 2, 3, 4	1=2.95 2=1.77
Within group	141	.97				3=1.92 4=2.0
Total	144					

Not surprisingly, as Table 13 shows, the job responsibilities of respondents with incomes of more than \$45,000 annually were significantly different than other groups in several categories. Those earning more than \$45,000 were more likely to provide media training for members of their organization (Item 1-3) and serve as spokespersons during crises (Item 1-6) than those in lower income brackets. Those earning more than \$65,000 each year were more likely to maintain regular contact with the national media (Item 1-13) and develop their organization's crisis plans (Item 1-6) than those earning up to \$45,000 annually. Respondents with an income of \$20,000 or less each year were the least likely to serve as an organization's spokesperson on an ongoing basis or in a crisis situation.

Table 14 shows that crisis planning (Item 1-16) and publicity planning (Item 1-7) were the major distinctions between respondents who described their job titles (Items 18-1 through -6) as "directors" or "managers" (Group 1) and those who described their positions as "public relations agency consultant," "independent consultant" or "other" (Group 3).

TABLE 13. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Frequency of involvement in common media relations responsibilities from 1 = always, 2 = frequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = rarely, 5 = never.

Income:

Group 1: \$0-\$20,000

Group 2: \$20,001-\$45,000

Group 3: \$45,001-\$65,000

Group 4: \$65,001 and over

1-3 Responses to "Provide media training for members of organization"

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	3	3.53	3.47	.017	2 with 3, 4 2 with 4	1=3.13 2=3.08
Within group	136	1.01				3=2.60 4=2.48
Total	139					

1-6 Responses to "Serve as spokesperson during crisis communications"

Between groups	3	9.12	6.81	.00013	2 with 4 1 with 3, 4	1=3.26 2=2.65
Within group	134	1.33				3=2.29 4=1.80
Total	137					

1-13 Responses to "Maintain regular contact with national media through personal phone calls, letters, news releases"

Between groups	3	8.92	5.29	.0018	1 with 4 2 with 4	1=3.06 2=3.21
Within group	134	1.68				3=2.63 4=2.11
Total	137					



TABLE 14. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Frequency of involvement in common media relations responsibilities from 1 = always, 2 = frequently, 3 = sometimes, 4 = rarely, 5 = never.

Job title:  
 Group 1: director, manager  
 Group 2: staff position  
 Group 3: public relations agency consultant,  
 independent consultant, other

1-16 Responses to "Develop your organization's crisis communications"

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	2	6.33	3.92	.0219	3 with 1	1=2.07 2=2.38 3=2.81
Within group	142	1.61				
Total	144					

1-12 Responses to "Produce radio news service or radio feed to network affiliates"

Between groups	2	4.69	3.84	.0237	2 with 1	1=3.88 2=4.48 3=4.23
Within group	138	1.22				
Total	140					

1-17 Responses to "Develop your organization's publicity plans"

Between groups	2	2.95	4.43	.0136	1 with 3	1=1.49 2=1.68 3=2.00
Within group	143	.665				
Total	145					

One-way analysis of variance shows significant differences with Group 1, directors and managers, more likely than Group 3, public relations agency consultants and independent consultants, to cite the activities as frequent responsibilities. Group 2, a "staff position" category, and Group 1 also were more likely to serve as consultants to management than Group 3. Group 1 was more likely to produce radio news service or radio feeds to network affiliates (Item 1-12) than either of the other two groups, somewhat surprising since the task is thought of as a technical function.

The second section of the survey asked respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with 10 Likert-type statements (Items 2-1 through 2-10). The results are shown in Table 15.

Items 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-8 and 2-9 attempted to assess practitioners' feelings of preparedness and their views regarding the adequacy of their undergraduate courses in that preparation.

Most respondents did not believe they had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations when they began their first job in the field (Item 2-1). Sixty-seven (45.6%) respondents disagreed and 16 (10.9%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Fifteen (10.2%) strongly agreed, 33 (22.4%) agreed and 15 (10.2%) were neutral.

Only five respondents (3.4%) strongly agreed and 32 (21.8%) agreed that the undergraduate college courses they completed prepared them for their first role as a media relations practitioner (Item 2-2). Sixty (40.8%) disagreed and 35 (23.8%) strongly disagreed, while 14 (9.5%) respondents were neutral.

It appears that on-the-job experience plays a major role in acquiring media relations knowledge (Item 2-3). Eighty (54.4%) strongly agreed and 57 (38.8%) agreed that they acquired the majority of their media relations knowledge through on-the-job

TABLE 15. How media relations skills are acquired and general beliefs about the practice of media relations.

Category	SA	A	U	D	SD	No. Respondents
2-1 When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations.	15	33	15	67	16	146
2-2 The undergraduate college courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner.	5	32	14	60	35	146
2-3 I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience.	80	57	2	7	1	147
2-4 I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective be <u>included</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum.	73	56	9	3	5	146
2-5 I would recommend that a three-credit-hour course in media relations be <u>required</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum.	73	37	21	9	6	146
2-6 I believe media relations is a technical function of public relations.	43	60	20	16	7	146
2-7 I believe media relations is a management function of public relations.	58	61	17	9	1	146
2-8 In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job.	12	64	19	45	7	147
2-9 I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	24	85	16	18	4	147
2-10 I do <u>not</u> believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, college undergraduate course in media relations.	9	13	21	62	42	147

SA = Strongly Agree    A = Agree    U = Undecided    D = Disagree    SD = Strongly Disagree

experience. Seven (4.8%) disagreed, one strongly disagreed (.7%) and two respondents were neutral.

Respondents were close to evenly divided when asked if they were prepared to meet the challenges presented by their first media relations job (Item 2-8). Forty-five (30.6%) disagreed and seven (4.8%) strongly disagreed. Twelve (8.2%) strongly agreed and 64 (43.5%) agreed with the statement, while 19 (12.9%) respondents were neutral.

In addition to the statements to indicate feelings of preparedness, respondents were also asked their relative degree of agreement or disagreement about education issues. Most media relations practitioners found it necessary to supplement their education with media relations seminars (Item 2-9). Twenty-four (16.3%) respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 85 (57.8%) agreed. Eighteen (12.2%) disagreed, four (2.7%) strongly disagreed and 16 (10.9%) were neutral.

The majority of respondents believe some type of media relations course should be offered at the undergraduate level. Three items (2-4, 2-5 and 2-10) dealt specifically with recommendations for undergraduate curriculum. Seventy-three (50%) practitioners strongly agreed that a media relations elective should be included in the undergraduate curriculum, and 56 (38.4%) agreed. Five (13.4%) strongly disagreed, three (2.1%) disagreed and nine (6.2%) were neutral.

Most respondents agreed that a three-hour media relations course be required in the undergraduate curriculum. Seventy-three (50%) strongly agreed and 37 (25.3%) agreed with the statement, while six (4.1%) respondents strongly disagreed, nine (6.2%) disagreed and 21 (14.4%) were neutral.

Most practitioners believe it is necessary to develop a media relations class at the undergraduate level. Item 2-10 stated that it is not necessary to develop a specialized undergraduate course in media relations. Nine (6.1%) strongly agreed with the statement

and 13 (8.8%) agreed. Forty-two (28.6%) respondents strongly disagreed, 62 (42.2%) disagreed and 21 (14.3%) were neutral.

It appears that most practitioners also believe that media relations is both a technical and management function. Forty-three (29.5%) respondents strongly agreed and 60 (41.1%) agreed that media relations is a technical function (Item 2-6). Seven (4.8%) strongly disagreed, 16 (11%) disagreed and 20 (13.7%) were neutral. Fifty-eight (39.7%) strongly agreed and 61 (41.8%) agreed that media relations is a management function. One (.7%) strongly disagreed, nine (6.2%) disagreed and 17 (11.6%) were neutral.

Media relations practitioners who felt they had a thorough working knowledge of media relations when they began their first job also tended to believe their undergraduate education prepared them for the field, contrary to those who did not feel prepared. To further explore issues presented in Section 2, t-tests were performed using the responses to Item 2-1 (When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough working knowledge of media relations), comparing them to all other Section 2 responses. Respondents were divided into two groups: Group 1 included those who strongly agreed, agreed or were neutral; Group 2 included those who strongly disagreed or agreed.

Statistically significant results are seen in responses to Items 2-2 (The undergraduate courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner), 2-3 (I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience), 2-8 (In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job) and 2-9 (I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops). (Table 16).

TABLE 16. Results of t-tests comparing responses of those who did and those who did not feel prepared in their first media relations job with all other Section 2 questions.

Group 1 = strongly agreed, agreed, neutral  
 Group 2 = strongly disagreed, disagreed

Item	Group	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
2-2 The undergraduate public relations course I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner.	1	62	3.11	-4.61	.000
	2	83	3.96		
2-3 I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job . experience	1	63	1.85	3.76	.000
	2	83	1.37		
2-8 In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job.	1	63	2.14	-7.20	.000
	2	83	3.28		
2-9 I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	1	63	2.47	2.22	.028
	2	83	2.12		

In response to Item 2-2 (The undergraduate public relations courses I completed prepared me for my first job in media relations), Group 1's mean response was significantly higher at 3.96 than Group 1, with 3.11. Group 2 scored significantly higher in response to Item 2-3 (I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience) with a mean response of 1.85 compared to Group 2 with a 1.37 response. Responses to Item 2-8 (In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job) also revealed a significant difference between groups. Responses to Item 2-9 (I have felt it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops) showed Group 1 with a mean response of 2.4 and Group 2 with a mean of 2.1.

The type of degree earned by respondents did not seem to be a a major factor on responses to Section 2 questions, as illustrated in Table 17. T-tests were run to identify differences between those who earned degrees in journalism, public relations, combined journalism/public relations and broadcasting (Group 1) and those who earned degrees in speech, English, business and other (Group 2) and their responses to the Items 2-1 to 2-10. The only significant difference found was in response to Item 2-2 (The undergraduate courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner).

TABLE 17. Results of t-tests comparing responses to Section 2 questions by type of degree earned.

Group 1 = journalism, public relations, combined journalism/public relations, and broadcasting  
 Group 2 = speech, English, business and other

Item	Group	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
2-2 The undergraduate courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner	1	62	3.32	-2.47	.015
	2	36	3.88		

To further ascertain practitioners satisfaction with their undergraduate education, mean responses to Section 2 statements were calculated and visually compared to identify any possible relationship between feelings of preparedness for their first media relations jobs and the type of degree earned. (See Table 18). Because of the small and unequal cell sizes, statistical tests of difference were not performed, but a discussion of apparent differences seems worthwhile.

Those with speech degrees gave the most positive response to having a thorough knowledge of media relations when beginning their first jobs. Not surprisingly, those who earned business degrees responded most negatively.

As might be expected, those with a public relations degree were most likely to agree that the undergraduate courses they completed prepared them for their first jobs. And again, those with business degrees were least likely to agree.

Respondents with a combined journalism/public relations degree were most likely to agree that they acquired the majority of their media relations knowledge through on-the-job training. Most groups fell within the strongly agree to agree range.

Responses to Item 2-8 (In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job) again found speech majors most likely to agree. Somewhat surprisingly, the strongest negative response was from the combined journalism/public relations degree group.

Interestingly, respondents with a combined journalism/public relations degree were most likely to recommend that an undergraduate media relations course be required. Most responses fell between "strongly agree" to "agree."

Business degree-holders were most likely to have supplemented their education with a media relations seminar, with a 1.5 mean response. Speech majors were the least likely to have attended supplemental training, with a 2.5 mean.



TABLE 18. Responses to Section 2 questions addressing preparedness by type of degree.

Statement	PR	No. Cases	Jrn.	No. Cases	Jrn./PR	No. Cases	Spch.	No. Cases	Org. Com.	No. Cases	Bdest.	No. Cases	Eng.	No. Cases	Bus.	No. Cases
2-1 When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations.	3.20	5	2.85	47	3.6	5	2.33	6	3.6	5	3.2	5	3.05	19	4.33	6
2-2 The undergraduate courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner.	2.8	5	3.38	47	2.8	5	3.5	6	4.2	5	3.8	5	3.94	19	3.83	6
2-3 I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience.	2.0	5	1.48	47	1.20	5	2.0	6	1.6	5	1.8	5	1.89	19	1.33	6
2-5 I would recommend that a three-credit-hour course in media relations be required in the undergraduate curriculum.	1.6	5	1.68	47	1.20	5	1.83	6	2.0	5	2.2	5	2.11	18	1.83	6
2-8 In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job.	2.8	5	2.65	47	3.40	5	2.16	6	3.0	5	3.0	5	2.89	19	3.16	6
2-9 I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	2.20	5	2.40	47	1.80	5	2.50	6	1.80	5	2.40	5	2.10	19	1.50	6

In addition, one-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures were performed with responses to Item 11, the number of public relations classes completed, with the Section 2 questions. Significant findings are shown in Table 19.

It appears that respondents who had experience working in the media prior to their first media relations job felt much more prepared to meet the demands of the job and had greater feelings of competence than those without media experience (Table 20). Item 15 asked respondents to indicate any prior media experience. Group 1 includes 25 respondents who had prior experience in the radio/television broadcast industry; Group 2 includes 53 respondents with experience in the newspaper/magazine industry, and Group 3 includes 67 respondents with no prior media experience.

There were significant statistical differences between the mean responses of Group 3 and the other two groups to Item 2-1 (When I began my first media relations job, I had a through working knowledge of media relations). Similar results are seen in response to Item 2-8 (In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job). These results indicate that those without media experience felt less prepared in their first jobs than those with media experience. Though not technically significant at the .05 level, it is noteworthy that analysis of variance shows differences between Group 2 and Group 3 in their assessment of media relations as a management function. Group 3 strongly agrees to agree that it is; Group 2 falls between agreement and neutral.

TABLE 19. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Item 11, the number of public relations classes completed during undergraduate education, and Section 2 questions.

Group 1: no public relations classes  
 Group 2: 1-3 public relations classes  
 Group 3: 4 or more public relations classes

2-4 Responses to "I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective in media relations be included in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	2	6.03	7.39	.0009	2 with 3 1 with 3	1=1.94 2=1.72 3=1.21
Within group	138	.815				
Total	140					

2-5 Responses to "I would recommend that a three-credit-hour course in media relations be required in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."

Between groups	2	7.57	6.52	.002	2 with 3 1 with 3	1=2.09 2=2.02 3=1.30
Within group	138	1.161				
Total	140					

2-10 Responses to "I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, undergraduate course in media relations."

Between groups	2	9.69	8.48	.0003		1=3.47 2=3.83 3=4.39
Within group	139	1.14				
Total	141					

**TABLE 20.** One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Section 2 questions and responses to Item 15, "Prior to my media relations position, I had full-time reporting/editing experience in:

Group 1: the radio/television broadcast industry  
 Group 2: the newspaper/magazine industry  
 Group 3: no prior media experience

**2-1 Responses to "When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough working knowledge of media relations."**

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	2	14.48	11.08	.000	3 with 1, 2 3 with 2	1=2.68 2=2.90 3=3.71
Within group	142	1.30				
Total	144					

**2-8 Responses to "In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job."**

Between groups	2	5.35	4.59	.0117	3 with 1 3 with 2	1=2.44 2=2.58 3=3.07
Within group	142	1.16				
Total	144					

**2-7 Responses to "I believe media relations is a management function of public relations."**

Between groups	2	2.33	2.92	.0568	2 with 3	1=1.8 2=2.09 3=1.70
Within group	141	.798				
Total	143					

The demographic variables in response to Item 2 statements yield significant statistical findings most notably, again, between women and men (Table 21). In general, men were more likely to agree that they had a thorough working knowledge of media relations when they began their first job, that the courses they completed prepared them for their first job in media relations, and that they felt prepared to meet the challenges presented in that job. Women respondents showed a higher degree of disagreement with the statement that it is not necessary to develop a specialized undergraduate course in media relations and were more inclined to agree that media relations is a technical function of media relations.

TABLE 21. Results of t-tests comparing responses of women and men to Section 2 questions.

Item	Gender	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
2-1 When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough working knowledge of media relations.	Women	86	3.40	2.09	.038
	Men	59	2.98		
2-2 The undergraduate college courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner.	Women	87	3.77	2.16	.032
	Men	58	3.34		
2-8 In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job.	Women	87	3.0	2.58	.011
	Men	59	2.52		
2-10 I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized undergraduate course in media relations.	Women	87	4.03	3.49	.001
	Men	59	3.38		

The higher the respondents' income, the more significant the differences in responses to Section 2 questions. Significant differences were seen in responses of those with incomes of \$65,000 or more and all other income levels to Item 2-4 (Table 22).

The higher income group was less likely to strongly agree that an elective in media relations be offered at the undergraduate level, with a mean response of 2.10, while those who earned \$20,000 annually or less were most likely to agree with the statement. The high income group was also more likely to agree that a specialized class in media relations was not necessary, showing significant statistical difference between the \$20,000 and less group with a mean of 4.53 and the \$20,000 to \$45,000 group with a 3.91 mean.

The high income group also differed with the \$45,000 to \$65,000 bracket in response to Item 2-5 (I would recommend that a media relations class be required at the undergraduate level) with the higher income group mean of 2.29, the lower, 1.68.

TABLE 22. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' income.

Group 1: \$0-\$20,000  
 Group 2: \$20,001-\$45,000  
 Group 3: \$45,001-\$65,000  
 Group 4: \$65,001 and over

2-4 Responses to "I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective in media relations be included in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	3	3.55	4.68	.0038	4 with 1, 2, 3	1 = 1.33 2 = 1.70
Within group	135	.760				3 = 1.45 4 = 2.10
Total	138					

2-5 Responses to "I would recommend that a three-credit-hour course in media relations be required in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."

Between groups	3	3.53	3.10	.0287	4 with 3	1 = 1.46 2 = 1.86
Within group	135	1.13				3 = 1.68 4 = 2.29
Total	138					

2-10 Responses to "I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, undergraduate course in media relations."

Between groups	3	5.996	5.09	.0023	2 with 4 1 with 4	1 = 4.53 2 = 3.91
Within group	136	1.177				3 = 3.78 4 = 3.29
Total	139					



Age did not have a major influence on responses to Section 2 statements. The only significant statistical difference was seen in responses to Item 2-7 (I believe media relations is a management function of public relations) with means of 1.73 for Group 1 (ages 20 to 30), 1.77 for Group 2 (ages 31 to 40), 1.80 for Group 3 (41 to 50) and 2.40 for Group 4 (51 and older) (Table 23).

TABLE 23. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' ages.

Group 1: 20 to 30  
 Group 2: 31 to 40  
 Group 3: 41 to 50  
 Group 4: 51 and older

2-7 Responses to "I believe media relations is a management function of public relations."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	3	2.21	2.82	.0409	4 with 2, 3 4 with 3	1 = 1.73 2 = 1.77 3 = 1.80 4 = 2.40
Within group	140	.784				
Total	143					

As shown in Table 24, the only difference between job title and Item 2 responses was noted in response to Item 2-8 (In my first media relations job I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job). Significant differences were seen between those in the "staff

position" category, with a mean response of 2.92 and respondents in the "consultant/independent agency" category, with a mean response of 2.44.

**TABLE 24.** One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 with respondents' job titles.

Group 1: director, manager  
 Group 2: staff position  
 Group 3: public relations consultant,  
 independent consultant, other

2-8 Responses to "In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	2	3.35	2.78	.0648	2 with 3	1 = 2.44 2 = 2.92 3 = 2.44
Within group	143	1.20				
Total	145					

**Research Question 2:** Do media relations practitioners believe the undergraduate public relations education they completed prepared them for their roles as media relations practitioners?

It was thought that the number of public relations courses completed in undergraduate school would have an effect on respondents' feelings of competency and preparedness. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures were performed with responses to Item 11 and Items 2-1 through 2-10, with some surprising results (Table 25). The questions in which there were significant differences were Items 2-2, 2-4, 2-5, 2-6, 2-9 and 2-10.

Group 1 included respondents who took no public relations courses; Group 2, between one and three courses; and, Group 3, four or more courses. There were no significant differences among groups in response to Item 2-1. All three fell between the neutral and disagree range in response to having a thorough working knowledge of media relations when starting their first jobs.

Only one-fourth of respondents believe their undergraduate college courses prepared them for their media relations careers. Responses to Item 2-2 (The courses I completed prepared me for my first role in media relations) are shown in Table 15. Sixty disagreed and 35 strongly disagreed, while 14 respondents were neutral.

As might be expected, there were significant differences between those who had no courses and the other two groups in response to Item 2-2. Group 1, with no public relations courses, indicated the highest mean response of 3.9, followed by Group 2 with 3.48 and Group 3 with 3.09.

Noteworthy are the responses to Items 2-4 (I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective in media relations be included in the undergraduate curriculum) and 2-5 (I would recommend that a separate three-credit-hour course be required in the undergraduate public relations curriculum). The respondents who completed the most public relations courses most strongly indicate that a media relations course should be required or offered as an elective. Results show significant differences between Groups 1 and 2 and Group 3. Group 3 also indicated the strongest disagreement to Item 2-10 (I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized college undergraduate course in media relations).

TABLE 25. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 2 statements with the number of undergraduate public relations courses completed.

Number of courses:

- Group 1: no public relations classes  
 Group 2: 1-3 public relations classes  
 Group 3: 4 or more public relations classes

2-1 Responses to "When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	2	2.20	1.49	.228		1=3.40 2=3.00
Within group	138	1.47				3=3.15
Total	140					

2-2 Responses to "The undergraduate courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner."

Between groups	2	7.73	6.12	.0028	1 with 3	1=3.90 2=3.48
Within group	138	1.26				3=3.09
Total	140					

2-3 Responses to "I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience."

Between groups	2	.282	.428	.652		1=1.65 2=1.51
Within group	139	.660				3=1.54
Total	141					

TABLE 25. (Continued)

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
<b>2-4 Responses to "I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective in media relations be <u>included</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."</b>						
Between groups	2	6.03	7.39	.0009	2 with 3 1 with 3	1 = 1.94 2 = 1.72 3 = 1.21
Within group	138	.815				
Total	140					
<b>2-5 Responses to "I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour course in media relations be <u>required</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum."</b>						
Between groups	2	7.57	6.52	.002	2 with 3 1 with 3	1 = 2.09 2 = 2.02 3 = 1.30
Within group	138	1.16				
Total	140					
<b>2-6 Responses to "I believe media relations is a technical function of public relations."</b>						
Between groups	2	9.45	8.50	.0003	1 with 3 1 with 2	1 = 2.54 2 = 1.97 3 = 1.69
Within group	138	1.11				
Total	140					
<b>2-7 Responses to "I believe media relations is a management function of public relations."</b>						
Between groups	2	1.05	1.29	.276		1 = 1.97 2 = 1.86 3 = 1.66
Within group	138	.80				
Total	140					

TABLE 25. (Continued)

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
2-8 Responses to "In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job."						
Between groups	2	1.26	1.01	.364		1=2.91 2=2.59 3=2.81
Within group	139	1.24				
Total	141					
2-9 Responses to "I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops."						
Between groups	2	3.25	3.72	.026	2 with 3 1 with 3	1=2.38 2=2.37 3=1.87
Within group	139	.872				
Total	141					
2-10 Responses to "I do <u>not</u> believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, college undergraduate course in media relations."						
Between groups	2	9.69	8.48	.0003	3 with 1 3 with 2	1=3.47 2=3.83 3=4.39
Within group	139	1.14				
Total	141					

Surprisingly, there were no significant differences among groups in response to feeling prepared to meeting the challenges of the first job in media relations. In fact, the mean response of 2.81 for the group with the most undergraduate courses (Group 3) was closer to the mean response (2.91) of the group with no courses (Group 1) than to Group 2, with a mean response of 2.59.

T-tests were also performed to see if there were any significant differences in response to the Item 2 questions between respondents who said they completed an undergraduate course in media relations (Item 13-1) and those whose colleges offered a course but did not complete it (Item 14). Only 14 respondents indicated that a separate course in media relations was offered as part of their curriculum. Of those 14, only four completed the class. T-tests between the groups revealed no significant differences.

Does a background working in the media have a bearing on responses to Item 2-2? One-way analysis of variance was performed and no significant statistical differences were found between those with media experience and those without.

Only one demographic variable -- sex -- revealed statistical significance in response to Item 2-2. As noted previously, the mean score of women in response to the statement was 3.77; men, 3.34. (See Table 20 ).

**Research Question 3:** Do media relations practitioners find it necessary to complete supplemental training beyond that offered in the undergraduate curriculum to gain competence in their field?

Apparently, yes. Three questions dealt specifically with supplemental seminars in media relations. Item 2-9 (I have felt it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops), a Likert-type statement with a five-point "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" scale, and Items 7 (Please indicate the number of media training

seminars, if any, you have attended during the last five years) and 8 (Please indicate the number of crisis communication management seminars, if any, you have attended during the last five years).

As previously noted, responses to Item 2-9 (see Table 15) indicated that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement. Twenty-four, (16.3%), strongly agreed, and 85 (57.8%) agreed. Sixteen (10.9%) were neutral, with 18 (12.2%) disagreeing and 4 (2.7%) strongly disagreeing.

As seen in Table 26, only 16 (11%) of the 147 respondents had not taken a media relations seminar in the past five years. Twenty (13.6%) respondents had attended one, 36 (24.7%) two, 28 (19.2%) three, 15 (10.3%) four, and 30 (20.7%) had completed five. Two responses were missing.

**TABLE 26.** Responses to Items 7 and 8: "Please indicate the number of media relations seminars (Item 8 "crisis management seminars"), if any, attended during the last five years."

No. courses	<u>Media Relations</u>		<u>Crisis Communications</u>	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
0	16	11.0	31	21.2
1	20	13.7	57	39.0
2	36	24.7	38	26.0
3	28	19.2	13	8.9
4	15	10.3	2	1.4
5 or more	30	20.7	5	3.4
No response	<u>2</u>		<u>1</u>	
Total	147	100.0	147	100.0



Although 21.2% of respondents never attended a crisis seminar, 39% of respondents had attended one, and 26% had attended two, higher percentages than the responses to the media relations seminar question. Nearly 9% of respondents had attended three seminars, 1.4% attended four and 3.4%, five.

Given the responses to Item 2-9, a 74% agreement, it appears that supplemental training has been necessary for well over the majority of respondents. Likewise, 89% of respondents have attended additional media training seminars and more than 78% have attended crisis communications seminars.

Did the type of undergraduate degree completed by respondents have an effect on whether or not respondents felt it necessary to attend additional training? T-tests were performed between Group 1 (journalism, public relations, combined journalism/public relations degree) and Group 2 (other degrees) with no statistical difference being revealed. The mean response of Group 1 was 2.33; Group 2, 2.02. This indicates that the type of degree earned did not have a big effect on respondents decision to supplement their education.

T-tests were also performed between two groups and their responses to Item 2-9 (I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops) and Item 7, the number of media relations seminars attended (Table 27). A highly significant difference is shown between the two groups.

T-tests were also run with Item 8 (the number of crisis management seminars attended) and the two groups, again with highly significant differences being discussed. The difference in cell sizes should be noted when interpreting this question, with 109 respondents in Group 1 and 37 respondents in Group 2.

There were no statistically significant findings among any of the demographic variables.

TABLE 27. Results of t-test comparing responses to Item 2-9 and Item 8 (media relations seminars).

Group 1 = strongly agreed or agreed

Group 2 = strongly disagreed, disagreed or neutral

Item	Group	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	1	109	4.09	5.30	.000
	2	37	2.54		

Results of t-tests comparing responses to Item 2-9 and Item 9 (crisis management seminars).

I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	1	109	2.55	2.85	.005
	2	37	1.94		

**Research Question 4:** What components do media relations practitioners believe are necessary to provide an effective undergraduate curriculum?

As noted previously, several questions specifically addressed the issue of adding a media relations course to the undergraduate curriculum. Respondents were asked if a course should be added either as an elective or a requirement. They also were asked to agree or disagree with a statement that an additional course was not necessary (Item 2-9). (See Tables 21 & 24).

Item 4 asked respondents to indicate the most appropriate answer to the following question: "If a college's public relations program does not stand alone as a separate department, I believe it should be housed within the scope of: the journalism department; the speech department; combined journalism/speech department; the business/marketing department; other." The majority of respondents, 51.3%, believe the journalism department is the most appropriate (Table 28).

TABLE 28. Responses to: "If a college's public relations program does not stand alone as a separate department, I believe it should be housed within the scope of the following department:"

Department	N	Percent
Journalism	74	50.3
Speech	22	15.0
Combined Journalism/Speech	33	22.5
Business/Marketing	16	10.9
No response	<u>2</u>	<u>1.4</u>
Total	147	100.0

In addition to those questions, a semantic differential scale (Section 3) containing 12 possible components of an undergraduate media relations class was included. Subjects were asked to rank the importance of each component based on a scale ranging from 1, indicating "very important," to 7, indicating "not very important." The statements and the mean scores are included in Table 29.

TABLE 29. Responses to Section 3, semantic differential item, "The following statements indicate possible components of a media relations course for undergraduate students. Please place a check mark on the scale following each question to indicate your opinion of the relative importance of teaching each function."

Scale:

1 = very important

7 = not important

Item		Mean
3-6	Understanding the concept of newsworthiness	1.39
3-4	Understanding the role of the media	1.43
3-8	Understanding your organization's mission	1.53
3-7	Increasing management's understanding of media relations	1.55
3-2	Media relations as a management function	1.62
3-5	Establishing relationships with the media	1.64
3-12	Developing publicity plans	1.94
3-1	Media relations as a technical function	1.96
3-11	Developing crisis plans	2.02
3-3	Conducting mock interviews	2.12
3-10	Training management as spokespersons	2.56
3-9	Basic notions of communication theory	2.72

As illustrated in Table 30, a number of responses are particularly noteworthy and were deemed "very important" by a majority of respondents. Seventy percent of respondents indicated that understanding the role of the media (Item 3-4), as well as understanding the concept of newsworthiness (Item 3-6), were very important components of an undergraduate media relations course. Nearly 60% said that increasing management's understanding of the media was very important, with 57.8% indicating that understanding the organizational mission was very important. Only 23.1% of respondents believed understanding basic notions of communication theory were "very important."

TABLE 30. Overall responses to Section 3, semantic differential item, on components of an undergraduate course in media relations. Scale: 1 = "very important" to 7 = "not important"

	Very Important		3	4	5	6	Not Important		Total
	1	2					7	7	
3-1 Media relations as a technical function, i.e., writing news releases, public service announcements.	N 63 % 43.4	42 29.0	29 20.0	8 5.5	1 .7	1 .7	1 .7	1 .7	145
3-2 Media relations as a management function, i.e., developing and implementing crisis plans.	N 84 % 57.9	43 29.7	12 8.3	3 2.1	2 1.4	0 0	1 .7	1 .7	145
3-3 Conducting mock interviews with students serving as organization spokespersons and reporters in role-playing situations.	N 58 % 40.0	41 28.3	25 17.2	17 11.7	1 .7	1 .7	2 1.4	1.4	145
3-4 Understanding the role of the media.	N 103 % 71.5	26 18.1	12 8.3	2 1.4	0 0	0 0	1 .7	.7	144
3-5 Developing relationships with the media.	N 82 % 56.9	42 29.2	14 9.7	4 2.8	1 .7	0 0	1 .7	.7	144
3-6 Understanding the concept of "newsworthiness."	N 104 % 72.2	31 21.5	6 4.1	1 .7	1 .7	0 0	1 .7	.7	144
3-7 Increasing management's understanding of the media relations function.	N 88 % 60.7	41 27.9	13 8.8	1 .7	1 .7	0 0	1 .7	.7	145
3-8 Understanding organizational mission, goals and objectives in developing media relations programs.	N 85 % 58.6	50 34.5	6 4.1	3 2.0	0 0	0 0	1 .7	.7	145
3-9 Understanding basic concepts of communication theory.	N 34 % 23.4	34 23.4	38 25.9	26 17.7	7 4.8	3 2.0	3 2.0	2.0	145
3-10 Training organization's management as media spokespersons.	N 32 % 22.2	44 30.6	41 28.5	15 10.4	8 5.6	2 1.4	2 1.4	1.4	144
3-11 Developing crisis communications plans.	N 54 % 37.2	51 35.2	26 17.9	13 9.0	0 0	0 0	1 .7	.7	145
3-12 Developing publicity plans.	N 55 % 37.9	53 36.6	30 20.7	6 4.1	0 0	0 0	1 .7	.7	145

An examination of the demographic variables reveals significant statistical differences in two of the groups, sex and income.

T-tests reveal that women place higher importance than men on the concept of newsworthiness, understanding the organizational mission and developing publicity plans (Table 31).

**TABLE 31.** Results of t-tests comparing responses of men and women to Section 3 questions.

Group 1 = women  
Group 2 = men

Item	Group	N	Mean	Value of t	2-tailed p
3-1 Media relations as a technical function.	1	87	1.75	-2.86	.005
	2	57	2.28		
3-8 Understanding the organizational mission, goals, and objectives in developing media relations programs.	1	87	1.27	-2.15	.034
	2	56	1.57		
3-6 Understanding the concept of newsworthiness.	1	87	1.40	-2.44	.016
	2	57	1.73		
3-10 Training organization's management as media spokespersons.	1	86	2.38	-2.08	.039
	2	57	2.84		
3-12 Developing publicity plans.	1	87	1.79	-2.48	.014
	2	57	2.19		

One-way analysis of variance performed between income groups showed significant differences between several groups on three questions. Two income groups, those who make less than \$20,000 and those who earn between \$45,000 and \$65,000 indicated mean responses of 1.6 and 2.01 respectively to Item 3-3 (conduct mock interviews), while the mean response of those who earn more than \$65,000 annually was 2.6 (Table 32).

Two groups differed significantly in their response to Item 3-4 (understanding the role of the media). The mean response of those who earn between \$20,000 and \$45,000 was 1.54, while those in the \$45,000 to \$65,000 group placed more importance on the function with a mean response of 1.17.

Finally, two groups showed differences in responses to Item 3-10 (training management as media spokespersons). Those who earned more than \$65,000 annually place less importance on this function with a 3.05 mean response than do those in the \$45,000 to \$65,000 group with a mean of 2.42.



TABLE 32. One-way analysis of variance with Student-Newman-Keuls procedures: Responses to Section 3 questions with income level.

Income:  
 Group 1: \$0-\$20,000  
 Group 2: \$20,001-\$45,000  
 Group 3: \$45,001-\$65,000  
 Group 4: \$65,001 and over

3-3 Responses to "Conducting mock media interviews with students serving as organization spokespersons and reporters in role-playing situations."

Source	DF	MS	F	p	Sig. Diff. Pairs	Means
Between groups	3	4.92	3.31	.022	4 with 1 4 with 3	1 = 1.6 2 = 2.0 3 = 2.0 4 = 2.63
Within group	135	1.48				
Total	138					

3-4 Responses to "Understanding the role of the media."

Between groups	3	1.52	2.13	.098	2 with 3	1 = 1.60 2 = 1.54 3 = 1.17 4 = 1.58
Within group	134	.713				
Total	137					

3-10 Responses to "Training organization's management as media spokesperson."

Between groups	3	4.07	2.41	.069	4 with 3	1 = 2.40 2 = 2.34 3 = 2.42 4 = 3.05
Within group	134	1.68				
Total	137					

A Pearson correlation matrix was constructed to measure: associations between current job responsibilities (Items 1-1 through 1-20); feelings of preparedness for their first jobs; recommendations for undergraduate courses (Items 2-1 through 2-10); and, all Section 3 questions. Significant correlations were noted between most items, with highlights of these correlations noted in Table 33.

Significant correlations are seen between all Section 3 questions and Item 2-5, the recommendation for a required course in media relations. Similarly, the recommendation for a media relations elective was significantly correlated with all Section 3 questions but two.

There is a significant negative correlation between Item 2-10 (I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, college undergraduate course in media relations) and almost every Section 3 question.

Supportive of Grunig's model of public relations as both a management and a technical function are the significant correlations seen with Item 3-1 (Media relations as a technical function) and Item 3-2 (Media relations as a management function). Responses to Item 3-1 correlate significantly with what are commonly considered technical functions of media relations, developing media kits (Item 1-9), developing contacts with the media (Item 1-14) and producing video news releases (Item 1-11). Similarly, significant correlations are seen between respondents who stressed the importance of teaching media relations as a management function and what are considered management responsibilities of media relations practitioners, such as training management as spokespersons (3-10), and developing crisis plans (3-11) and publicity plans (Item 3-12).

TABLE 33. Pearson correlation matrix comparing responses about job responsibilities and general beliefs about media relations with responses to Questions 3-1 through 3-12.

Statement	Ques. 3-1	Ques. 3-2	Ques. 3-3	Ques. 3-4	Ques. 3-5	Ques. 3-6	Ques. 3-7	Ques. 3-8	Ques. 3-9	Ques. 3-10	Ques. 3-11	Ques. 3-12
1-9 Develop media kits, press packets.	.1826*											
1-11 Produce video news releases.	.1889*											
1-14 Maintain regular contact with regional and local media.	.1839*											
2-4 I would recommend a separate, three-credit-hour elective be included in the undergraduate p.r. curriculum.	.2480**	.2632**	.2393**	.3396**	.2558**	.2003**	.2733**	.2020*	.1874*	.2459**		
2-5 I would recommend a three-credit-hour course in media relations be required in the undergraduate public relations curriculum.	.2460**	.1708*	.2384**	.3016**	.2573**	.1720*	.2339**	.1663*	.1651*	.2469**	.2038**	.1970*
2-6 I believe media relations is a technical function of public relations.	.2654**								.1727*	.1787*		
2-10 I do not believe it is necessary to develop a specialized, college undergraduate course in media relations.	-.2828**	-.2188**	-.2223**	-.2377**	-.2161**	-.1768*	-.2439**	-.1763*	-.1709*	-.2089*		
2-7 I believe media relations is a management function of public relations.	.4546**								.1804*	.1899*	.1697*	
2-9 I have found it necessary to supplement my media relations skills with seminars and workshops.	.1719*						.1754*					
2-3 I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience.	.1888*						.1835*					
2-1 When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations.												-.2383**
2-8 In my first media relations job, I felt prepared to meet the challenges of the job.												-.1648*
Ques. 3-1 Media relations as a technical function, i.e., writing news releases, public service announcements.			Ques. 3-3	Conducting mock interviews with students serving as organization spokespersons and reporters in role-playing situations.				Ques. 3-8	Understanding organizational mission, goals and objectives in developing media relations programs.			
Ques. 3-2 Media relations as a management function, i.e., developing and implementing crisis plans, strategic planning, counseling top management.			Ques. 3-4	Understanding the role of the media.				Ques. 3-9	Understanding basic concepts of communication theory.			
			Ques. 3-5	Developing relationships with the media.				Ques. 3-10	Training organization's management as media spokesperson.			
			Ques. 3-6	Understanding the concept of "news-worthiness."				Ques. 3-11	Developing crisis communication plans.			
			Ques. 3-7	Increasing management's understanding of the media relations function.				Ques. 3-12	Developing publicity plans.			

\* p<.05

\*\* p<.01

## CHAPTER 4

### *Discussion*

In general, the study findings support Wakefield's contention that the public relations field is "flooded with students who think they are qualified for a field in which many of them are not prepared to compete - or perform - effectively."

The first and second research questions asked if media relations practitioners expressed satisfaction with the undergraduate public relations education they completed, and if they felt their undergraduate courses prepared them for their first jobs, respectively. Responses indicate that overall, media relations practitioners were not satisfied with the undergraduate education they completed as it relates to media relations practice.

Although half of those surveyed completed no public relations courses, nearly two-thirds of all respondents said the courses they completed did not prepare them for their first roles as media relations practitioners. Further, more than 93 percent said they acquired the majority of their media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience.

Well over half the practitioners said they did not have a thorough, working knowledge of media relations when they started their first jobs. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between those who had no public relations courses and those who had one or more courses.

Perhaps more significantly, those who completed the most courses most strongly recommended a required or elective course in media relations, and most strongly favored developing a specialized course. There are several possible explanations for these results. Perhaps a media relations course was not available in the practitioners' undergraduate curriculum. Or, perhaps the public relations courses the respondents completed did not specifically address media relations issues. It may also suggest that those with a broad

base of public relations knowledge recognize a void in the area of media relations education.

Because such a high number of practitioners agreed that they acquired the majority of their media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience, it raises a question as to whether media relations can effectively be taught in a classroom setting. However, because such a small number of respondents (14) indicated that a separate media relations course was offered as part of their undergraduate curriculum and less than a handful of those respondents (4) completed the class, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of a separate media relations course based on this data.

Three-fourths of all practitioners recommended that a separate, three-credit-hour public relations course be a requirement in the undergraduate public relations curriculum, and 88 percent suggested that it be offered as an elective. These findings suggest that the availability of such a course may be an effective method of media relations preparation.

It is also noteworthy that media relations practitioners with prior media experience indicated a greater sense of preparedness in meeting the challenges of their first media relations job, as well as a higher level of agreement with having a thorough, working knowledge of media relations than those without prior media experience. Several former reporters took advantage of the comments section of the questionnaire to offer their views on media background and subsequent employment in media relations. One practitioner wrote, "The best preparation, by far, for a career in public/media relations, is a few years on a newspaper. No college course could replace the experience or provide as detailed a look at how the media, in all its forms, gathers and reports the news." (See Appendix B for additional comments.) However, no significant differences were found between those with prior media experience and those without in their recommendations for a required course in media relations.

A surprising result was the difference seen in feelings of preparedness and competency among respondents according to the type of degree earned. Respondents who earned speech degrees indicated greater feelings of preparedness in meeting the demands of the profession and a more thorough working knowledge of media relations than those who earned either journalism or public relations degrees.

The third research question asked if media relations practitioners found it necessary to complete supplemental training beyond that offered in the undergraduate curriculum to gain competence in the field. Nearly three-fourths of all respondents said they had found it necessary to supplement their education with a media relations seminar during the last five years. More than 89% of all respondents had attended at least one media relations seminar during the last five years, and more than three-fourths had attended at least one crisis management seminar. Although a portion of respondents may have attended the seminars simply to update their skills, the fact that a large percentage indicated that they found it "necessary" should not be ignored. There were no significant differences among any of the groups studied, suggesting that regardless of the type of degrees earned, the number of undergraduate courses or prior media experience, a majority of respondents did not feel sufficiently prepared for their roles as media relations practitioners.

These study findings -- a lack of preparedness for their first jobs, the recommendations for a specialized elective or required course in media relations, and overall agreement that media relations knowledge was primarily acquired on-the-job -- suggest that there is a void in the public relations curriculum, and lend support to both Neff and Grunig's suggestions that undergraduate public relations curriculum offer electives in areas of specialization, at least in media relations.

The fourth and final research question asked what components media relations practitioners believe would provide an effective media relations course. More than two-thirds of the respondents said that understanding the role of the media, as well as understanding the concept of newsworthiness were very important components of a media relations course. These concepts also lend support to the comments of respondents with prior media experience who emphasized the importance of understanding the workings of a newsroom.

As noted previously, 70 percent of respondents agreed that media relations is a technical function of public relations, while at the same time, 80 percent agreed it is a management function. In other words, respondents view media relations as both a technical and management function of public relations, a notion supportive of Grunig's model. There also was a significant correlation between those who indicated strong agreement with statements that media relations is a technical function and a management function on the Likert-type statements with their responses that those concepts be included in a media relations course.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Conclusions*

Data gathered from 147 subjects who practice media relations indicate that they did not feel their undergraduate education prepared them for their roles as media relations practitioners. Some findings of this study indicate ways in which media relations education can be made more effective.

The results of this study suggest, first of all, that there is a need for an increase in media relations education. Based on the responses, public relations courses offered at the undergraduate level are not providing adequate preparation or addressing issues specific to media relations. This is particularly evident from responses of practitioners who took four or more public relations courses, yet felt inadequately prepared in their first jobs.

Ideally, as the findings suggest, a separate, three-credit-hour course in media relations should be developed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this area of specialization. Possible components of such a course are included in the study.

Another method of increasing the awareness and understanding of media relations at the undergraduate level may be to incorporate a media relations track or internship into an existing public relations course. The media relations portion of the curriculum could be comprised, in part, of the components suggested in the study.

### *Limitations*

The study was limited primarily by the number of respondents who completed no public relations courses at the undergraduate level. An assumption was made when the sample population was selected that a majority of respondents would have completed at least one public relations course in college. This assumption was based on the fact that



the sample was selected from PRSA and IABC, organizations whose members specialize in public relations and communications. As it stands, only 51% of the survey respondents completed undergraduate courses in public relations. Because significant importance is placed on feelings about the effectiveness of undergraduate public relations education, a more well-balanced picture of the effectiveness of undergraduate public relations education may have been compiled if more respondents had public relations educational background.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

Because the purpose of this study was to investigate public relations practitioners' attitudes toward their educational background as it relates to media relations, it is strongly recommended that efforts be made to include more respondents with undergraduate public relations course work for future studies, perhaps by acquiring lists of public relations graduates through colleges and universities.

Future studies may investigate the number of colleges and universities that offer specialized courses in media relations. Given that only four respondents completed an undergraduate media relations course, it may be of interest to see if and where such courses are now offered and what the components of those courses are.

Another possible area of research would include an evenly divided sample to study differences between those who have completed a course in media relations and those who have not.

There were several surprising results seen in this study. One was the difference seen in feelings of preparedness and competency among respondents according to the type of degree earned. Specifically, respondents who earned speech degrees indicated greater feelings of preparedness in meeting the demands of the profession and a more thorough working knowledge of media relations than those who earned either journalism or public

relations degrees. Future studies may include an investigation of the coursework and skills required to complete these degrees to identify significant differences.

Another surprising result was the difference between men and women and their responses to questions dealing with feelings of preparedness and competency. Women also place a higher value on the concepts of newsworthiness, organizational mission and developing publicity plans. Though not specifically related to undergraduate curriculum, further study of these results may be relevant to gender issues in communication research.

**APPENDIX A**

2

University of  
Nebraska at  
Omaha

74

June 28, 1993

Public relations practice and education has changed tremendously since Edward L. Bernays taught the first public relations course at New York University in the 1920s. Similarly, media relations has come to be recognized as one of the most visible and vital functions of the profession. However, few studies have explored how media relations practitioners gained their knowledge and expertise in this specialty area.

The question is an important one in the field of public relations practice and education, and I am pursuing some potential answers through my research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Your experience as a media relations practitioner can add to the body of knowledge about this vital function of public relations. The enclosed questionnaire is intended to gather information about how media relations practitioners gained their knowledge of media relations and how they put that knowledge to practice.

Your participation in this study is earnestly sought. Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided by July 8, if possible. The names of participants in this study will be held in confidence, but a numbering system will be used initially to help me identify forms that have not been returned. After the responses have been returned, the numbering system will be dropped completely. All data will be treated confidentially at all times.

If you have any questions about this survey, I will be happy to answer them. Please feel free to write, or to call me at (402) 556-6514 between 8 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your assistance,

Sincerely,

Mary Kenny  
UNO Graduate Student

July 5, 1993

Last week, a questionnaire was mailed to you seeking your views on media relations knowledge and experience.

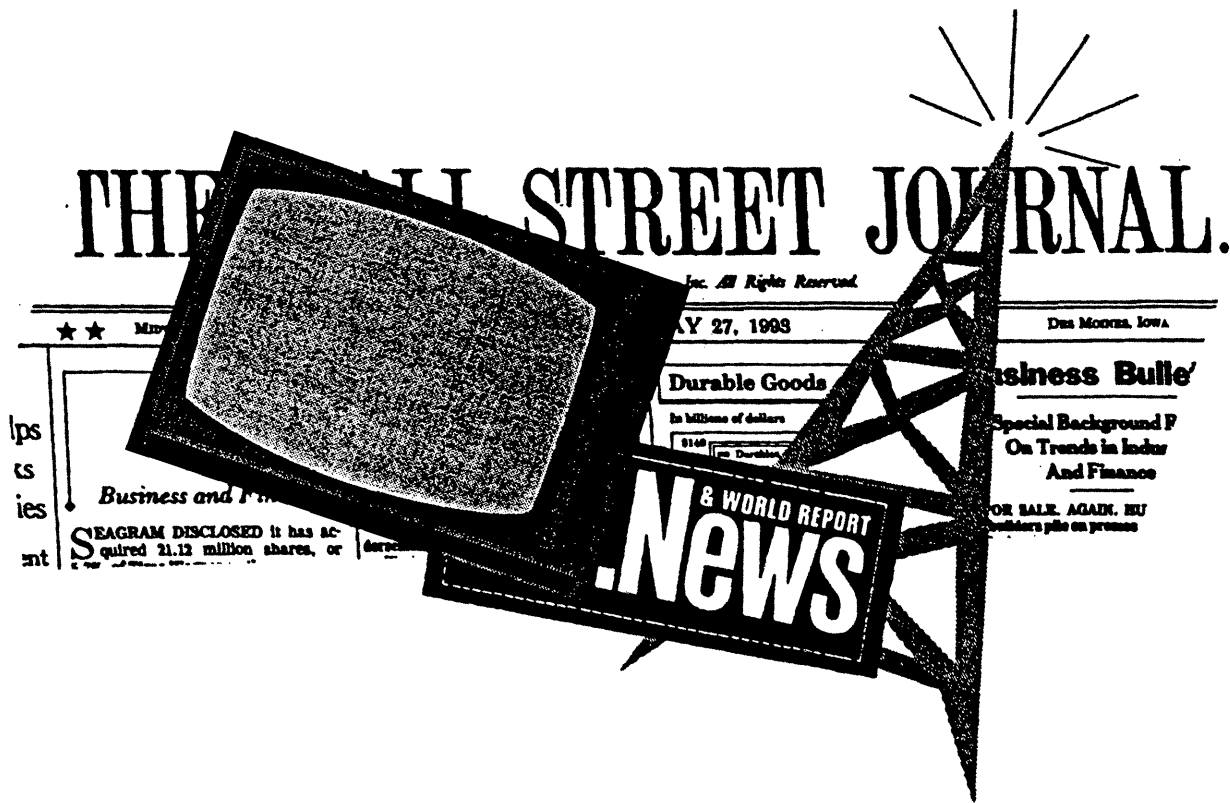
If you have already completed and returned it, please accept my thanks. If not, please do so today. Because the survey was sent to only a small sample of media relations practitioners, your response is important if the results are to represent opinions accurately.

If by chance you did not receive a questionnaire, or if it was misplaced, please call me collect at (402) 556-6514 and I will send you another right away.

Sincerely,

Mary Kenny  
UNO Graduate Student

# How Media Relations Practitioners Acquire Their Skills



This survey is designed to discover the ways in which media relations practitioners acquired the skills necessary to perform their jobs. The personal information we are asking will help us with statistical analysis but will not be used in any manner to identify individual respondents.

*First, we would like to know what your job responsibilities are, and how often they are performed. Please complete this section by indicating the frequency of your involvement in the activity.*

1. The following may be commonly considered responsibilities of the media relations practitioner. Please indicate the frequency of your involvement in each function by making an "X" in the appropriate box.

		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1-1	Write news releases.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-2	Facilitate interviews between your organization's experts and the media .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-3	Provide media training for members of your organization.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-4	Serve as organization spokesperson.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-5	Serve as liaison between your organization and the media .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-6	Serve as spokesperson during crisis communications .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-7	Serve as media relations consultant to management on ongoing basis.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-8	Coordinate news conferences.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-9	Develop media kits, press packets.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-10	Coordinate news service at organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-11	Produce video news releases .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-12	Produce radio news service or radio feed to network affiliates .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-13	Maintain regular contact with national media through personal phone calls, letters, news releases.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-14	Maintain regular contact with regional and local media through phone calls, letters, news releases.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-15	Schedule media tours or visits to facilitate face-to-face contact with regional and national media .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		<i>Always</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
1-16	Develop your organization's crisis communication plan.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-17	Develop your organization's publicity plans .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-18	Develop and coordinate distribution of op-ed items for print media using your organization's experts.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-19	Develop and implement organization's public relations plans.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-20	Other (please specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. We would also like to know how you gained your expertise as a media relations practitioner and your general beliefs about the practice of media relations. Please complete this section by making an "X" in the box that most accurately describes your beliefs.

		<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
2-1	When I began my first media relations job, I had a thorough, working knowledge of media relations. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-2	The undergraduate college courses I completed prepared me in my first role as a media relations practitioner. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-3	I acquired the majority of my media relations knowledge through on-the-job experience. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-4	I would recommend that a separate, three-credit-hour elective in media relations be <u>included</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-5	I would recommend that a three-credit-hour course in media relations be <u>required</u> in the undergraduate public relations curriculum. ....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





		Very important					Not important	
3-9	Understanding basic concepts of communication theory .....	___	:	___	:	___	:	___
3-10	Training organization's management as media spokespersons .....	___	:	___	:	___	:	___
3-11	Developing crisis communication plans .	___	:	___	:	___	:	___
3-12	Developing publicity plans .....	___	:	___	:	___	:	___

**4. Please circle the number to the left of the most appropriate answer for the following question:**

"If a college's public relations program does not stand alone as a separate department, I believe it should be housed within the scope of :

- 4-1 the journalism department
- 4-2 the speech department
- 4-3 combined journalism/speech department
- 4-4 the business/marketing department
- 4-5 other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

*The following questions relate to the size of your organization's public relations or public affairs department. Please circle the number to the left of the most appropriate answer.*

**5. Please indicate the number of personnel employed in your department.**

- 5-1 1-2
- 5-2 3-6
- 5-3 7-10
- 5-4 11-15
- 5-5 16-20
- 5-6 21 or more

**6. Please indicate the number of personnel in your department whose primary responsibility is media relations.**

- 6-1 0
- 6-2 1-2
- 6-3 3-4
- 6-4 5-6
- 6-5 7-8
- 6-6 9-10
- 6-7 11 or more

*The following questions pertain to continuing education in media relations.*

**7.** Please indicate the number of media relations training seminars, if any, you have attended during the last five years. Please circle the number to the left of the most appropriate answer.

- 7-1 0
- 7-2 1
- 7-3 2
- 7-4 3
- 7-5 4
- 7-6 5 or more

**8.** Please indicate the number of crisis communications management seminars or workshops, if any, you have attended during the last five years.

- 8-1 0
- 8-2 1
- 8-3 2
- 8-4 3
- 8-5 4
- 8-6 5 or more

*The following questions pertain to your educational background. Please choose the most appropriate answer.*

**9.** Please indicate the highest grade level you have completed.

- 9-1 high school diploma
- 9-2 some college
- 9-3 undergraduate college degree
- 9-4 master's degree
- 9-5 doctorate
- 9-6 other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

**10. I received an undergraduate degree in:**

- 10-1 public relations
- 10-2 journalism
- 10-3 both journalism & public relations
- 10-4 speech communication
- 10-5 organizational communication
- 10-6 broadcasting
- 10-7 English
- 10-8 business
- 10-9 I did not complete an undergraduate degree
- 10-10 other (please specify:\_\_\_\_\_)

**11. Please indicate the number of public relations courses you completed during your undergraduate education. Include courses such as public relations, corporate communications, public relations case studies, organizational communication and public relations research.**

- 11-1 0
- 11-2 1-3
- 11-3 4-6
- 11-4 7-9
- 11-5 10-12
- 11-6 more than 12
- 11-7 I did not complete an undergraduate degree

**12. Please indicate the year closest to the year that you received your undergraduate college degree.**

- 12-1 prior to 1940
- 12-2 1940-1949
- 12-3 1950-1959
- 12-4 1960-1969
- 12-5 1970-1979
- 12-6 1980-1993
- 12-7 I did not complete an undergraduate degree

**13. Did your college's public relations undergraduate curriculum offer a separate course in media relations?**

- 13-1 yes
- 13-2 no

**14.** If you answered yes to the previous question, did you complete the course?

14-1 yes

14-2 no

*The following question pertains to your work experience, if any, in the news media. Please circle the number to the left of the most appropriate answer(s).*

**15.** Prior to my media relations position, I had full-time reporting/ editing experience in (circle all that apply):

15-1 the radio broadcast industry

15-2 the television broadcast industry

15-3 print/newspaper industry

15-4 print/magazine industry

15-5 I have no prior experience working in the news media.

*The following questions pertain to the number of years of public relations experience you have.*

**16.** Please indicate the number of years you have worked full-time in the public relations field.

16-1 0-2

16-2 3-4

16-3 5-7

16-4 8-10

16-5 11-15

16-6 16-19

16-7 20 or more

**17.** Please indicate the number of years you have worked full-time as a media relations practitioner.

17-1 0-2

17-2 3-4

17-3 5-7

17-4 8-10

17-5 11-15

17-6 16-19

17-7 20 or more

**18.** Please indicate the title that most accurately describes your role.  
Circle more than one if necessary.

- 18-1 director
- 18-2 manager
- 18-3 staff position
- 18-4 public relations agency consultant
- 18-5 independent consultant
- 18-6 Other (please indicate title:\_\_\_\_\_)

**19.** The following question pertains to your salary range. Please circle the number to the left of the figure closest to your annual income.

- 19-1 less than \$10,000
- 19-2 \$10,001 - \$20,000
- 19-3 \$20,001 - \$30,000
- 19-4 \$30,001 - \$45,000
- 19-5 \$45,001 - \$65,000
- 19-6 \$65,001 - \$100,000
- 19-7 more than \$100,000

**20.** My sex is:

- 20-1 female
- 20-2 male

**21.** My age is:

- 21-1 20-30
- 21-2 31-40
- 21-3 41-50
- 21-4 51-60
- 21-5 61 or older

Thank you very much for your help completing this questionnaire. Please use the back page if you would like to make additional comments of your own that would add to our understanding of media relations practice and education.

*If you would like to receive a summary of our results, please put your name and address on the return envelope (not on this questionnaire). Return to Department of Communication, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 60th and Dodge St., Omaha NE., 68182-0112.*

**APPENDIX B**

### *Additional Comments*

The following comments about media relations practice were provided by survey respondents in the "Additional Comments" section of the questionnaire.

"I think all PR degrees should be offered through a school of journalism. I did not have any paid journalism experience. However, I was required to take lots of journalism classes and work for the (university's) newspaper, experience that was very valuable in my job search."

"I think the importance of PR as a branch of the communications department is greatly overlooked. Persons I have seen graduate with a PR degree through the business area have no skills in writing, publicity, media relations, etc. These skills are essential in PR. Most of the business graduates end up (working) in marketing. I wish a greater distinction would be made between the two fields."

"Since my degree included little or no actual coursework in media or public relations (although I majored in marketing) I'm not sure what is generally being taught in those areas. However, having learned the hard way through on-the-job trial and error, and with no one with experience to advise me on a regular basis, I've found that people within my organization usually have no clue how to present a good public image. To me, that's a large issue. In an ideal world, I'd suggest that business students -- not just journalism students -- be required to take at least one course in PR/media relations."



"My gut reaction is that there might not be enough material to fill up a three-credit course in media relations; however, depending on how it's structured -- and its relation to other course offerings -- it could be very worthwhile. If and when you prepare such a course, perhaps you could offer a mini-version for corporate and association folks, possibly through IABC or PRSA."

"An organization has so much to gain with effective public relations, and there are so many aspects to the practice of media relations, as evidenced by this questionnaire, that there needs to be specific courses geared toward it."

"Although my career is in PR, I have found my journalism background to be most helpful compared to colleagues with a basic PR degree. My superiors have appreciated my working knowledge of the media. They respect my opinions and decisions regarding media action and media needs since I have spent time on the media side."

"To be effective in media relations, it is very important to have worked in the media for several years!"

"I never sought a career in public relations ... I trained to be a newspaper reporter, which I was for six years. It became clear at that point I would have to find something that paid more. It's kind of embarrassing, but I did do it for the money.

"However, I have found in the five years since then, that the best preparation -- by far -- for a career in public/media relations is a few years on a newspaper. No college course could replace the experience or provide as detailed a look at how the media, in all its forms, gathers and reports the news."

"I would strongly suggest that built into any media relations course would be an opportunity to intern, job shadow or somehow gain firsthand knowledge of the demands of a media relations position."

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