TEACHING MEDIA RELATIONS BY TEACHING MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS:

PEDAGOGICAL PROCLIVITIES REGARDING DIALOGUE IN PR

by

JUSTIN EVANS PETTIGREW

Under the Direction of

BRYAN H. REBER

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the current state of media relations practice and how textbooks and professors view teaching media relations from a dialogic perspective. Theoretical advances are suggested, as are new ways to address media relations in the classroom. This work shows that both public relations professors and journalism professors are attentive to media relations in the classroom. This work also suggests a different way to view media relations from a more relational perspective, and from a more interpersonal approach.

INDEX WORDS: Public relations, Media relations, Media relations instruction, Public relations instruction, Dialogue, Dialogic theory, Relational dialectics, Relationship management, Public relations texts, Public relations professionals, Public relations professors, Journalism professors

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Judy and Jimmy. This would never have become a reality if it weren't for you. Through the good times and the bad, you pushed me farther than I thought I could go. Thanks and love to you both.

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INTRODUCTION

"The media are a powerful force, and they can do a lot for you – or against you. The determining factor may well be how much you know about the media professionals and appreciate their jobs, and how well you get to know them as people" (Bivins, in *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format, 2008).*

As evidenced by the history of PR practice, how practitioners interact with and relate to the media is constantly changing. Today's practitioners are dealing with journalists who have less time, less space, and less patience. In this author's experience, having lunch or coffee with reporters was routine practice five years ago. This no longer seems to be the case.

This work examines the state of media relations practice today from a relational perspective, and how public relations textbooks and educators are preparing students for forming relationships with members of the media. Dialogue is dynamic, as are the relationships between PR practitioners and journalists. This work provides a new perspective from which to view this ever-evolving relationship.

Impacts on the PR Practitioner/Journalist Relationship

Shaw and White (2004) stated that journalists' perception of media relations defines their perception of the entire public relations profession. Indeed, this work grew out of my own 12 years of conducting media relations in agency and corporate settings, and is grounded in the theories of relationship management, dialogue, and relational dialectics. Today's public relations environment consists of multiple platforms for message distribution and consumption, but practitioners are still largely dependent on the media for publicity.

Social media are having an impact. Research abounds on how the Internet and social media are affecting public relations practice (e.g., Bransford, 2002; Yang & Lim, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Taylor & Kent, 2010; Sweetser, 2010). However, there have been few, if any, studies to examine how social media is impacting how practitioners interact with journalists, beyond a cursory examination of corporate websites by Pettigrew and Reber (2010). Also, how have the drastic changes in the print journalism industry affected those relationships?

Journalists are more pressed for time and content than ever before. Public relations practitioners still fight to overcome a history of relationships with the press that has been more combative than collaborative. An argument now exists over whether the press release is "dead" (Skerik, 2011), something that would have been unthinkable as recently as five years ago. Certainly, its role is changing as a communications tool. Employers desire students who have a good working knowledge of all aspects of PR as potential employees (personal interview, 10/2012).

Clearly, the landscape has changed greatly from a practical standpoint. It may be that a different theoretical viewpoint helps to understand relationship building and maintenance between practitioners and the press. This work proposes introducing concepts from communications studies, primarily relational dialectics as defined by Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery (1996) to aid looking at media relations through a nuanced lens. Their work is based on the writings of Russian philosopher Mikhael Bakhtin (1895 – 1975). It is a more interpersonal approach, and adds to the body of relationship management literature by emphasizing the "relationship" concept rather than the "management" of relationships.

Dialogic "Theory" in Public Relations

In the public relations literature, dialogic "theory" (Kent & Taylor, 1998; 2002) has yet to reach true theory status. While its tenets are valuable, its use as a workable theory is lacking. This work does not suggest that dialogic theory can be developed to stand on its own, but it does attempt to incorporate concepts from dialogic theory and relational dialectics into a particular view of relationship management.

Kent and Taylor (2002) identified five principles of dialogic communication as it relates to public relations: *mutuality*, involving a spirit of collaboration and mutual equality; *propinquity*, or temporal flow; *empathy*; risk of vulnerability to the other party; and *commitment* to honest and forthright conversation. In relational dialectics, the individual is de-centered, resulting instead in a focus on the discourse between two parties (Baxter, 2007). Contrary to popularized understandings of the term, Bakhtin's dialogue is not some "saccharin-filled, consensual 'group-hug' affair" (Baxter, 2007, p.

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118). It refers instead to the ongoing tensionality of multiple, often competing voices. According to Bakhtin (1981), the use of language in general can be seen as "a struggle among socio-linguistic points of view" (p. 273), as a verbal-ideological struggle of different meaning-systems, or discourses (Baxter, 2007). Public relations practitioners and journalists approach a situation from very different perspectives. Dialogue, and dialogism, is oriented to the productive potential of talk in all of its forms, as a dynamic process. Emergent meanings that may result between practitioners and journalists are situated and unfinalizable; they are "semantic moments that punctuate the ongoing flow of discursive struggle" (Baxter, 2007, p. 119).

<u>Closing a Gap in Theory and Practice</u>

This research helps to close a gap in theory and practice in the public relations literature by advancing the work of Pettigrew and Reber (2010), in which they explored the potential of an additional tenet of "relationship initiation and enhancement" to existing dialogic theory tenets as they relate to corporate websites. This work moves beyond websites to explore the nature of PR practitioner/reporter relationships.

More specifically, this work represents a methodical process of research in four phases. Phase one involves interviews with public relations practitioners to provide insight on how they view the current state of media relations. Phase two is a systematic examination of textbooks for introduction to public relations, public relations writing, and newswriting classes to see what those texts have to say on the subject of media relations. The third phase of this research consists of a series of interviews with professors who teach public relations and journalism to explore their thoughts and

ideas about media relations and how it is taught in the classroom. The fourth phase of this work is a survey of public relations and journalism educators to provide quantitative data to support the interviews. After data collection and an analysis of the results from these four sources, L. Dee Fink's "Taxonomy of Significant Learning" (2003) will be used as a basis for examining how media relations is taught. This taxonomy complements a dialectical perspective, in that it goes beyond fundamental knowledge to address the human dimension of learning, and the integration of concepts into realms of life.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is organized in the following manner: after a thorough review of literature from the fields of public relations and rhetoric on the subject of dialogue and a dialogic perspective, research questions are posed and hypotheses are stated. A description of a method for data gathering follows, then the results of the research are presented and a discussion of the findings explores what those results may mean. Because there are always limitations in the scope and depth of any research project, a review of limitations and future directions for research to develop theory and enhance practice will be suggested.

The Core Factor in Media Relations Practice

There is a core factor in media relations practice: the development and maintenance of good relationships. A look at the current state of relationships between PR practitioners and journalists is the first topic this dissertation will address. To

provide a glimpse of the content in the chapters that follow, quotes from professionals, texts, and professors are provided here as a preview of the chapters that follow.

The State of PR Practice

> *"A lot of publications are losing people. We have seen, in the past few weeks, papers in Louisiana decimated. Also in Alabama, Dallas, Arizona and Los Angeles. What tends to go first is a lot of the feature style writing" (Skype interview with a corporate practitioner, 10/2012).*

> *"[Media relations] has changed dramatically in terms of outreach and connecting points. You are a little more on guard. My Facebook friends are media. Media people who I have built relationships with. So are my Twitter followers"(Skype interview with an agency principal, 10/2012).*

The first step in this research was a series of interviews with PR practitioners who practice media relations to help understand the current environment and how changes in industry and technology have affected relationships between PR people and members of the press. This provided foundational knowledge from practice to inform the subsequent phases of research. It also provided insight into the first research question stated in this work, which addresses the current state of practice.

From practice, this work then moves into several methods for examining various components of teaching media relations and relationships in public relations classes.

Textbook Analysis

"The changing role of traditional media requires public relations to build better and stronger relationships to compete for coverage" (Gary McCormick, in Guth & Marsh's *Public Relations: A Values Driven Approach, 2012*).

"If you want to build a relationship [with reporters], you have to follow up after the first 'date.' You need to bring something to the relationship. You need to create genuine interest" (Wilcox & Cameron, in *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics, 2012*).

In moving from practice to the teaching, the next step in this research was to examine how textbooks address the topic of media relations. This involved an extensive examination of popular textbooks for introductory PR classes, PR writing classes, and journalism writing classes. Texts provide a foundation for learning in the classroom, so it was important for this research to address what texts in PR and journalism are presenting about public relations, and media relations in particular, especially in regards to relationships.

Professor Interviews & Surveys

"Sometimes what we believe [as professors] does not necessarily equate to what we teach our students about the relationship between the media and public relations practitioners" (email exchange with a professor of journalism, 2/2013).

"I usually spend two days on media relations as a topic, but I try to weave

the importance of the press throughout my public relations writing course"

(telephone interview with a professor of public relations, 10/2012).

After a review of texts, professors of public relations and journalism were interviewed to gauge their opinions and attitudes about media relations and how they teach the subject in their classes. This provided rich qualitative data, which in turn informed and directed the questions of two surveys that composed the final phase of research for this dissertation.

In my teaching experience, I noticed that students were very fearful of the impending act of interacting with journalists. In my 12 years of professional experience, I found the same trepidation in entry-level employees at every organization I worked for, from local agencies to global corporations.

The PR professionals interviewed for this work reported that they spend anywhere from 30 to 90 % of their workweek practicing media relations. Many PR professors reported that they cover the topic in their classes in one to three days. This begs the question: are public relations students learning what they need to about media relations and media relationships in a rapidly changing environment to help the field, and to improve upon our sometimes contentious history with each other? Additionally, are students of journalism even being exposed to the potential value in having good

relationships with PR practitioners? These are the primary questions addressed in the chapters ahead.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Previous work in the area of public relations instruction is sparse. However, as mentioned earlier, much literature exists on the journalist-PR practitioner relationship. But the literature is divided. Some scholars propose the concept of "symmetrical public relations" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992) in dealing with all publics, which has long been central to the field due to the influence of its creators. This seems to be evolving into a more relational approach to research and practice (Grunig, 2001). Others see the relationship (particularly with the media) as one of framing and agenda setting (Sallot & Johnson, 2006; Zoch & Molleda, 2006). Still others view the relationship as one of relationship management, in various forms (Ledingham, 2006).

To some degree, the Grunig hegemony may have affected how persuasion was perceived in public relations research in the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1992, Grunig and colleagues published the book *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, which advocated that "two-way symmetrical" communication between an organization and its publics was the "most excellent" way to practice public relations (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 290). While the work sparked advances in theory development in PR, it did not advocate persuasion as a role of public relations. This was

later amended by J. Grunig (2001) who wrote that "persuasion is still a relevant concept in the symmetrical model" (p. 13). The difference is that the practitioner must sometimes persuade management and at other times must persuade a public: "If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the public's attitudes or behavior" (J. Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 23).

Many public relations texts have recognized the key role of persuasion in public relations. Marston (1979) describes public relations as "the use of planned persuasive communication designed to influence significant publics" (p. 3). Pfau and Wan (2006) use Moore and Canfield's (1977) characterization of the nature of public relations work as "the development of favorable public opinion" (p. 5), which places attitude formation and the maintenance at the forefront of public relations practice. According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994), the work of public relations involves "ethically and effectively pleading the cause of a client or organization in the forum of public debate" (pp. 450-451). Center and Jackson (1995) describe the goal of effective public relations as eliciting "mutually favorable behavior from the organization and its publics" (p. 3). This may involve getting publics to act or not to act, or attempting to win consent to let the organization act (Center & Jackson, 1995). Yet another description of PR states that "the goal of nearly all PR problem situations is to change attitudes and behaviors" (Robinson, 1969, p. x).

Regardless of the theoretical approach, a relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is at the core of media relations. How we teach students

about that relationship may have a lasting impact on these students as they graduate and enter practice. In this chapter, the literature on dialogue in public relations and communications studies will be examined as it relates to the practitioner-journalist relationship, and what has been written about public relations textbooks and teaching will be discussed. Furthermore, the next section of this chapter explores the role of persuasion in the reporter-practitioner relationship, as persuasion is key to a dialectical approach to communication (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Bakhtinian dialectics and Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) operationalization of Bakhtin's concepts are defined, and Kent and Taylor's (2002) tenets of dialogic communication are reviewed. Additionally, Fink's (2003) "Taxonomy of Significant Learning" is introduced as it relates to media relations instruction in the classroom.

The PR Practitioner/Journalist Relationship

Media relations seems to be an area of practice that is sometimes misunderstood by journalists and PR practitioners alike (White & Park, 2010).

The root of the journalist-PR practitioner exchange is the relationship between these two groups (Sallot & Johnson, 2006). Since the 1960s, more than 150 studies have examined some aspect of the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists (Cameron, Sallot & Curtin, 1997). This number has certainly grown since the publication of Cameron, et al.'s article. Much of the literature portrays the relationship between journalists and practitioners as adversarial (Sallot & Johnson, 2006). A number of studies claim that prejudice against public relations is not due to negative personal

experiences, but is rooted in journalism culture (Fedler & DeLorme, 2002). Books on

journalism reflect that notion. In Alex Jones' book, *Losing the News*, he writes:

> The main purpose of PR is to place information favorable to a client in a
>
> context of news so that it has more credibility than the same message
>
> might have if it were presented in the form of a paid advertisement or
>
> from a clearly self-interested source (2009, p. 84).

Social media may well be having an effect on the relationship between

practitioners and journalists, as practitioner interviews conducted for this research

indicate.

A study by Shaw and White (2004) examined whether academic programs in

journalism and public relations might be in part responsible for perpetuating

stereotypes and contributing to negative perceptions. In a study of professors, both

journalism and PR professors denied that the journalist-public relations practitioner

relationship is generally adversarial (Shaw & White, 2004). Both journalists and public

relations educators acknowledged that journalists depend on public relations-oriented

material due to "inadequate staffing levels in most newspapers" (Shaw & White, 2004,

p. 499). Public relations educators tend to agree on what courses make a good

undergraduate degree program in public relations (Hornaman & Sriramesh, 2003; the

Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). The Commission on Public Relations

Education is composed of public relations educators and practitioners who represent 15

professional societies in public relations and related fields of communication

(www.commpred.org). In 2011, The Institute for Public Relations' Commission on

Public Relations Education (CPRE) found that inconsistent curricula and degree requirements could be heightening confusion for students, educators, and employers.

Several studies illustrate this point. In a series of focus groups conducted over a two-year period at a major university with a well-established public relations program, public relations majors viewed public relations as only slightly less manipulative than did students majoring in marketing or other unrelated fields (Bowen, 2009). They included having to omit information, "spinning" information for positive coverage, and not disclosing accurate information in their description of PR practice (Bowen, 2009). Bowen concluded that public relations educators and professionals "are undermining their own credibility and the future credibility of the field" (2009, p. 409), and that the discipline itself is suffering from misunderstandings about "the very purpose, activities and ethical principles involved in public relations" (2009, p. 409).

A previous study by Bowen (2003) showed students majoring in public relations are often unaware of all that the field involves. Even at the end of taking an introduction to public relations class, some students maintained their negative stereotypes of the profession during their participation in focus groups (Bowen, 2003). Many respondents stated a belief that public relations "does not openly discuss damaging or potentially problematic issues with the public" (Bowen, 2003, p. 208).

Stacks, Botan and Turk (1999) surveyed public relations practitioners and educators to assess the congruence or divergence in their perceptions of public relations. They tested the statement "Overall, the general public understands what public relations is." Twenty-four percentof those surveyed "strongly disagreed" with

the statement, and 61% "disagreed", which meant a combined majority of 85%, expressed concern about the ambiguity of public relations in the minds of the public.

The Current State of Public Relations Education and Scholarship

In a paper presented at the Public Relations Division of what was then the Association for Education in Journalism, Cutlip and Bateman criticized the "unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education in USA colleges and universities" (1973, p. 1). In the same paper, they wrote:

> The need for qualified, competent, professional assistance in this
> field was never greater than it is today. Yet the heavy hand of the past –
> its publicity genesis – still dominates public relations practice today when
> our divided society cries out for communication, conciliation and
> community. Call it "public relations," "public affairs," "corporate
> communications," or whatever you will, the need for trained persons in
> this area is likely to increase in coming decades, as our society becomes
> even more complex.
>
> Yet, we have already witnessed and are witnessing today a dearth
> of professional public relations practitioners capable of operating at the
> higher executive levels in all institutions – public and private – where
> their counsel is needed. The number of qualified people in public
> relations is incapable of meeting the demand for competent practitioners.
> Generally speaking, most of those in public relations work today were

not specifically educated for this type of career. They are "retreads" from other fields of communication.

In the last quarter-century, more and more institutions of higher learning have turned their attention to public relations as a field of study. To a very considerable extent, courses in public relations are offered on an elective basis at the undergraduate level. Many of the courses, however, are taught by instructors who are not fully qualified in the theory and practice of public relations. (Cutlip & Bateman, 1973, pp. 1-2).

Wright (2011) argued that nearly four decades later, much remains unchanged in public relations education in the U.S. He stated that "even though the need for qualified public relations practitioners is greater than ever and counsel of qualified public relations experts remains essential at the executive level in the most successful organizations there continues to be problems" (Wright, 2011, p. 237). In 2007, Kalupa suggested that the standard model of public relations education in the U.S. is seriously flawed and does not work anymore. He praised the work of pioneers of public relations education such as Scott Cutlip, Alan Scott, Frasier Moore, Walt Siefert and others, but he criticized the model that housed public relations programs in journalism schools. He claimed that such a model is now more than 60 years old and is focused on one-way communication (Kalupa, 2007). Wright proposed that issues contributing to problems in public relations education and practice include a curriculum that focuses more on outputs than outcomes; that the field continues to be called by a variety of different names – rarely public relations; that most who work in public relations were

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not specifically educated in the field; that more and more colleges and universities are teaching public relations; and not all who do this teaching are fully qualified (Wright, 2011).

While Wright's arguments may hold some value, the nature of public relations education is changing. Many schools now house public relations in colleges or schools of communication rather than journalism. Some universities have even moved public relations into their business schools. It is telling, however, that there is only one university in the nation that offers an actual bachelor's degree of public relations.

CEOs of major U.S.-based agencies and their human resources officers "continuously indicate that some of the best future practitioners are graduates of university-based public relations degree programs that have faculty with a combination of academic and professional credentials" (Wright, 2011, p. 245). There rarely, however, seems to be much crossover in educational programs, crossover which would provide students in journalism or advertising tracks with a better understanding of the nature and function of public relations, and vice-versa (Wright, 2011).

There are several commissions that have set out to examine public relations education. The U.S.-based commissions that have examined public relations education have all been co-chaired by an educator and a practitioner, and all include educators and practitioners in their membership. Among other recommendations, these commissions suggest curricula for undergraduate and graduate study in public relations. Most of these recommendations are now required for "accreditation" by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC)

as well as for "certification" by PRSA. In order for a school to qualify for a Public

Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter, the college or university must

offer a sequence of at least five public relations courses, supplemented by additional

courses relevant to public relations. At the time of this writing, there were 330 active

chapters in the U.S. (PRSSA Annual Report, 2011). Schools can also become certified by

PRSA by qualifying for its "Certification for Education in Public Relations," a voluntary

program based on standards put forth by CPRE. In 2010, 28 schools were certified

worldwide. Another 30 were in various stages of the review process (CPRE, 2011).

CPRE is composed of educators and practitioners who represent 12 professional

societies in public relations and related fields of communication. Its 2006 report, "The

Professional Bond," was developed "to demonstrate, facilitate, and encourage the kind

of linking public relations education and practice that is the hallmark of any profession"

(CPRE, 2006). While the report found substantial agreement between educators and

practitioners on what a public relations undergraduate should learn, the report

concludes with a "Call to Action" which acknowledges the broad support for public

relations education by professional groups, but identifies that there is a "critical need

for similar action by individual practitioners and the firm, companies and organizations

with which they are associated and in which they are influential" (CPRE, 2006).

<u>What is in the Textbooks?</u>

Carolyn Cline (1982) compared public relations sections of introductory mass

communication textbooks with discouraging results. Her study showed "a confusion

about the relationship of advertising and public relations, a lack of historical

backgrounding, and a fierce anti-public relations stance hardly off-set by some

grudging acknowledgement of the existence of PRSA, codes of ethics and a few honest

practitioners" (p. 64). Only four of the texts dealt with the functions and duties of the

public relations practitioner (Cline, 1982).

More recent analyses of public relations textbooks generally agree that certain

characteristics define the practice of public relations (Byerly, 1993). They agree that PR

practices tend to be goal-oriented. PR involves the implementation of intentional,

strategic processes, and PR is generally carried out in campaigns by organizations

seeking to establish mutually beneficial relationships between themselves and their

publics within a complex environment (Byerly, 1993). Pratt and Renter (1989) examined

how a selected sample of introductory PR texts addressed ethics. While all of the texts

they examined contained the entire PRSA code of ethics, Pratt and Renter (1989) argue

that such a heavy reliance on the PRSA code may have stunted the development of

lively ethical debate in the texts. While all of the texts examined in their study agreed

that ethics ought to be a primary concern, they lacked the theoretical framework within

which to study ethics in a meaningful, fruitful and practical way (Pratt & Renter, 1989).

Defining the Field of Public Relations

It seems that the idea that a symmetrical *relationship* between an organization and

its publics provides a stronger ethical foundation for PR than symmetrical *models* which

favor primarily the goals of the organization (Byerly, 1993). This is reflected in the

definition of public relations advocated by Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994), which

holds that public relations is the "management function that establishes and maintains

mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its

success or failure depends" (p. 2).   In her paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Byerly (1993)

suggested a reformulated definition of public relations which focuses primarily on the

concept of public relations campaigns:

> Any intentional, managed campaign intended to negotiate the power
>
> relations between (or among) groups in society, or within the membership
>
> of a given organization for the purpose of either (1) maintaining or
>
> strengthening status quo institutional practices or of (2) reforming or
>
> radically altering those practices (p. 45).
>
> Byerly's definition emphasizes the importance of good practices and the

negotiation of power, but does not directly address the relationship-building-and-

maintenance function of public relations.

The development of a solid (and straightforward) definition of PR practice is an

ongoing process. The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) adopted a new

definition of public relations grounded in relationships in 2012 as a result of a PRSA-led

"Public Relations Defined" initiative. Based on a public vote of PRSA members, the

profession's choice for the modern definition of PR is:

> Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually
>
> beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Corbett,
>
> 2012).

This new, simple definition centers on the process of building relationships, focusing more on the relationships themselves and less on the "management" of those relationships.

The search for a "good" definition of public relations has been a long one. The four-model concept developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) laid the groundwork for major advances in theory development in public relations. However, the four models of public relations advocated by Grunig and Hunt in 1984: press agentry/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical are based in an historical progression of PR from its press-agentry roots. While Grunig underscored the importance of "building relationships with publics that constrain or enhance the ability of the organization to meet its mission" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992, p. 20), theory development in public relations has moved beyond Grunig's original concepts of types of practice to a more relational view of communication strategies (Hutton, 1999). Cancel, Cameron, Sallot and Mitrook (1997) developed a contingency theory of public relations, which suggests that a continuum of practice along an advocacy-accommodation scale is more appropriate than the discrete "four models" concept.

Relationship management, which focuses on the importance of relationships rather than practices, emerged as a reconceptualization of public relations theory (Ledingham, 2006). Grunig himself admitted in later writings that "symmetry" might not have been the best choice of name for the model of public relations he proposed as "Excellence" in public relations (Grunig, 1992). In later works, Grunig moved toward the development and maintenance of relationships as the central goal of public relations

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(J. Grunig & Huang, 2000), rather than placing public relations strategies into the "four boxes" that he initially advocated (J. Grunig, 2001). Grunig used interpersonal relationship literature to redefine his original concept of symmetrical public relations, citing Baxter's application of the theory of dialogism developed by Bakhtin (J. Grunig, 2001). In J. Grunig's chapter in Heath's *Handbook of Public Relations*, he states the following:

> Simultaneous fusion with the Other while retaining the uniqueness of one's self-interest seems to describe well the challenge of symmetrical public relations – or perhaps we should begin to say, dialogical public relations (2001, p. 28).

> L. Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) developed a general premise of how public

relations contributes to organizational effectiveness. They concluded that public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness "…when it helps reconcile the organization's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relations with strategic constituencies" (p. 86), including the press.

Building to Relationships

A relationship is defined by one's perceptions of the other's behaviors and feelings (Thomlison, 2000). A person can only infer another's experience. From an interpersonal communication perspective, relationship means the interdependence between two or more people (Coombs, 2001; O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann & Wiemann,

1995). Gollner (1984) contended that public relations and public affairs are the "management of interdependence" (p. 6). The concept of interdependence has been widely discussed in organizational literature (Hung, 2005). While much research has been done regarding organization-public relationships, little attention has been paid to the interpersonal relationships between PR practitioners and their dialogue with various publics. To provide some underpinning for the nature of dialogue, it is helpful to understand how dialogue builds from the individual through relationships through interactions. Hinde (1997) offers the following:

Individual Behavior – We ascribe properties to the self, partly on the basis of the observation of our own or other's behavior, which affects our future behavior (Hinde, 1997). The labels we apply to ourselves are based primarily on similarities or differences between others and ourselves, thus the self can only be seen in the social context in which it is embedded (Hinde, 1997). When we add a communication method, like social media, which requires changing our pattern of behavior, we still rely on social cues to redefine our role (Hinde, 1997).

Interaction – In the course of interactions each actor may shift ground a bit or adopt a slightly different role (Hinde, 1997). For the interaction to go smoothly, it may not be desirable to be entirely honest (Hinde, 1997). Rather, each participant conveys a view of the situation he or she feels the other will find temporarily acceptable (Hinde, 1997). At the same time, each individual is allowed to establish temporary rules regarding matters vital to him or her and allows the other to do the same (Hinde, 2007). Goffman (1959) called this a "working consensus".

Relationships – In a relationship, one picks up the role that is appropriate for the

partner in question (Hinde, 1997). These roles are constantly shifting (Hinde, 1997).

How does social media impact those roles? Do they remain the same? Familiarity

makes it unnecessary to think too much about how one should behave; does the

familiar tone of social media change certain relationships? Regardless, a number of

balances have to be delicately poised. Relationships are set in the context of other

relationships that make up the fabric of daily life (Hinde, 1997).

Relationship Management Theory

According to Ledingham and Bruning (1998), the view of public relations as a

management function represents a conceptual change from defining what public

relations *does* to what public relations *is*. However, the overwhelming focus on public

relations as a management function has overshadowed the focus on relationships in

relationship management theory. Grunig suggests that for public relations to be valued

by the organization it serves, practitioners should develop long-term behavioral

relationships between organizations and their key publics (Grunig, 1993). With the

exception of a few studies on how dialogue can help build organization-public

relationships (Bruning, Dials & Shirka, 2008), little has been done to explore just how to

build relationships through dialogue. Even more disheartening is the lack of attention

to interpersonal relationships in the relationship management literature. Only a few

scholars have addressed this topic (e.g. Toth, 1995; Coombs, 2001; Sallot, 2014). Toth

(1995) who suggested that public relations "should be considered interpersonal

communication because public relations practitioners work in buffer zone between an organization and its publics."

Dialogue in the Public Relations Literature

Before a discussion can be had about the current use of dialogue in public relations, it is important to examine how public relations scholars have conceptualized dialogue as essential to PR practice. It is also important to explore various definitions, their potential shortcomings, and how scholarship from other fields, primarily communications studies, can help us to better understand the concept of dialogue.

The concept of dialogue has its roots in many disciplines: philosophy, rhetoric, psychology and relational communication, among others. The term "dialogue" has appeared in the public relations literature for more than three decades (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001). Philosophers and rhetoricians have long considered dialogue as one of the most ethical forms of communication and as one of the central means of separating truth from falsehood (Kent & Taylor, 2002). According to Taylor et al. (2001), the concept of dialogue may now best capture the process and product of relationship building, given public relations' shift to a more relational approach. Dialogue seems to be taking a front-and-center role in the new global age of public relations.

Theologian Martin Buber is considered by most to be the father of the modern concept of dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2002). According to Buber, dialogue involves an effort to recognize the value of the "Other" – to see him/her as an end and not merely as a means to achieve a desired goal (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The concept that relationships ought to be at the core of public relations is often considered to have first

appeared in the work of Ferguson (1984). This perspective then advanced through rapid

adoption of a relational definition of public relations in leading texts, such as that of

Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994). The relational perspective then emerged as an area of

exploration for public relations scholars (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). Broom, Casey

and Richey (1997) reported the results of a graduate research seminar that examined the

literature of relationships from the fields of interpersonal communication,

psychotherapy, interorganizational relationships and systems theory. From their

research, they reported that relationships involve "properties of exchanges,

transactions, communications, and other interconnected activities" (Broom, Casey &

Richey, 1997, p. 94). They did not specify properties, however, that defined good

relationships (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). In a study conducted by Dozier, L. Grunig and

J. Grunig (1995), CEOs explained "public relations has value when it develops good

relationships with strategic publics – relationships that, in particular, helped the

organization withstand crisis" (p. 234). Both men and women also cited relationships as

the most important source of power in an organization for a public relations

professional (Berger & Reber, 2006; Aldoory, Reber, Berger & Toth, 2008).

<u>Defining Relationship</u>

Relationship refers to the interdependence between two or more people (O'Hair,

Friedrich, Wiemann & Wiemann, 1995). Relationships form, according to Broom et al.

(2000), "when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or

both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual

threats from an uncertain environment, or when there is either a legal or voluntary

necessity to associate" (p. 17). Relationship building can be seen as the central activity of public relations (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

The links that form relationships can be moral, economic, social, geographic or situational, but the common factor is that there is interdependence and interaction between the two parties because they need or want each other for some reason (Coombs, 2001). Hon and Grunig (1999) argued that "the most productive relationships…are those that benefit both parties in the relationship" (p. 11), and suggested that relationship maintenance requires access, positivity or making the relationship enjoyable, open, network building, along with other elements (pp. 14-15). Pearson (1989) concluded that dialogic exchanges "produce an intersubjectivity that blends shared and opposing views on key issues" (p. 44). "Although consensus might not result on every issue, sufficient agreement, or concurrence, allows parties to continue dialogue in cooperative competition" (p. 44). Disagreement gives motive and rationale for such exchanges to test which area of meaning achieves coordinated and mutually rewarding behavior (Pearson, 1989).

Public relations scholars examining the organization-public dialogue generally focus on either interaction, involving an organization and a public exchange information, or debate, where a public and an organization engage in a process of statement and counterstatement (Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008).

Dialogue in Public Relations

"Dialogue," "dialectic," "discourse," and a "dialogic relationship" have been described in the public relations literature with little consistency in their usage (Grunig

& White, 1992). Dialogue is sometimes used to describe communicating about issues

with publics. Grunig and White (1992) stated that "public relations might, for example,

set up a dialogue between tobacco companies, smokers, and antismoking groups" (p.

57). Heath uses the term dialogue from a rhetorical base, in what he calls rhetorical

dialogue, which consists of "statement and counterstatement" (Heath, 2000, p. 49). Kent

and Taylor (1998) refer to dialogic communication as "any negotiated exchange of ideas

or opinions" (p. 325). In presenting their concept of a dialogic theory of public relations,

Kent and Taylor described dialogue as a "communicative orientation" (2002, p. 25).

Burkhart (1993) developed a normative theory of "consensus oriented public relations"

(COPR) which, according to Bentele and Wehmeier (2007) gives an interesting approach

to guide the work of practitioners. With Burkhart's approach, it seems to be possible to

reflect different dimensions and different phases of a practical communication process

between organizations and specific publics, and through reflection of this process to try

and develop more awareness about the process itself (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007). By

making the participants conscious of the different dimensions and phases of an

organization's process of communication it seems to be possible to improve the control

of such processes, not by one-directional communication, but through dialogue

between the participants of such a process.

This differs somewhat from the concept of "symmetrical public relations" in that

it seems to be possible to reflect different dimensions and different phases of a practical

communication process between organizations and specific publics, and through

reflection of this process to try to develop more awareness about the process itself

(Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007). However, only one case study is associated with this theory (Bentele and Wehmeier, 2007).

A relational approach, grounded in dialogic principles, requires that an organization tailor communication and organizational action to specific recipients based upon relational needs (Bruning, et al., 2008). Gronstedt (1997) noted that publics increasingly are active, interactive, and engaged, suggesting that organizations should develop strategies that are sympathetic to the type of relationship, the intensity of the relationship, and the commitment to the relationship. Most relationships involve interactions of diverse types, and those interactions affect each other (Hinde, 1997). Some of the most important characteristics of interpersonal relationships lie in both the affective/cognitive components, because peoples' behavior varies according to whom they are with, and because relationships have constantly emerging properties (Hinde, 1997).

In the existing literature, it seems that a theoretical shift has taken place, moving from an emphasis on public relations as managing communications to public relations as identifying communication as a tool for negotiating relationships (Botan, 1997; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000). In light of the growing emphasis on relationships in public relations, dialogue becomes a central focus in the creation of those relationships. These relationships may not always develop symmetrically, as dominant PR theory suggests it should (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). As Botan (1997) suggests, "dialogue manifests itself more as a stance,

orientation, or bearing in communication rather than a specific method, technique or format" (p. 202).

While symmetry focuses on the "use of research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviors of both organizations and their publics" (Heath, 2001, p. 12), dialogue centers on the actual communication transaction. That is, for a dialogic relationship to exist, parties must view communicating with each other as the goal of a relationship (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Even if a particular media story is "bad," practitioners should be able to counsel management on the fleeting nature of news and the importance of continued relationships. Communication should not be a means to an end, but rather an end in itself (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Instead of working towards an end goal, the communication itself is the end goal.

Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) suggested that reciprocity, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and mutual understanding were the key elements of an organization-public relationship. Center and Jackson (1995) posited that the desired outcome of any public relations activity should be enhanced organization-public relationships. Perhaps good dialogic communication strategies may be equally effective in dealing with online citizen journalists or bloggers. Schwab (2011) suggests that practitioners should develop relationships with appropriate bloggers *before* pitching them. Foust (2012) noted that if practitioners want to get through to bloggers and online journalists, they should focus on the "relations" part of public relations to access the bloggers who have the most influence.

Tenets of Dialogic Communication in Public Relations

To further define and offer understanding of the components of dialogic communication, Kent and Taylor (2002) created five tenets of a dialogic orientation:

Mutuality – an acknowledgement that organizations and publics are inextricably tied together. Mutuality is characterized by an "inclusion or collaborative orientation" and a "spirit of mutual equality" (p. 25). All individuals engaged in dialogue should "have positions of their own, and should advocate for those positions vigorously" (p. 25). Dialogue is premised on intersubjectivity and seeks to understand the positions of others and how people reached those positions. Participants in dialogue "should be viewed as persons and not as subjects" (p. 25).

Propinquity – dialogic propinquity means that "publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for publics, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to an organization" (p. 26). Propinquity is created by three factors: *immediacy* (that parties are communicating in the present about issues, rather than after decisions have been made), *temporal flow* (its focus is on a continued and shared future for all participants), and *engagement* (a respect of other discussant(s) and the risk of attachment and fondness).

Empathy – in dialogic communication, empathy refers to the atmosphere of support and trust that must exist if dialogue is to succeed. Dialogue involves *supportiveness*, creating a climate in which others are not only encouraged to participate but their participation is facilitated. Dialogue also presupposes a *communal orientation* between interactants, whether they are individuals, organizations, or publics. Empathy

also encompasses confirmation, or acknowledging the value of the voice of others in spite of one's ability to ignore it.

Risk – Although participants who engage in dialogue take relational risks, dialogic participants may also reap rewards. This tenet of dialogic communication includes *vulnerability*, in that through self-disclosure and risk, relationships are built and the possibility for exchange on the part of participants exists. Dialogic communication is, often, *unrehearsed and spontaneous*. This spontaneity assists in the sharing of individual beliefs, values and attitudes). Dialogic risk is often a difficult concept for public relations practitioners, but Kent and Taylor (2002) insisted that it "creates understanding to minimize uncertainty and misunderstandings" (p. 29).

Commitment – the final principle of dialogue includes the characteristics of genuineness, in that organizations and publics that deal truthfully with one another are much more able to come to mutually beneficial solutions. Commitment also calls for shared meaning, or working toward a common understanding. Commitment to interpretation means that efforts are made to grasp the positions, beliefs, and values of others before their positions can be equitably evaluated (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

One additional requirement for successful relationships proposed by Thomlison (2000) is *comfort with relational dialectics*. This involves recognizing and balancing the numerous opposing forces on relationships that generate tensions and require a "delicate balance if relational equilibrium is to be maintained" (Thomlison, 2000).

Bakhtin and Dialogism

Mikhael Bakhtin, the Russian intellectual responsible for dialogism as a modern area of study, was largely overlooked by scholars until well after his death (Bakhtin, 1986, ix). Much of Bakhtin's work was conducted in the study of literature, and the application of his work in social sciences is still emerging. To Bakhtin, the essence of dialogue is its simultaneous differentiation from, yet fusion with, another. Bakhtin spoke of utterances not as individual acts, but as links in a chain, a link bounded by both the preceding links and by the links that follow (1986). To enact dialogue, the parties need to fuse their perspectives while maintaining the uniqueness of their individual perspectives; the parties form a unity in conversation but only through two clearly differentiated voices (Bakhtin, 1986). At a philosophical level, the self is constructed in fusion with another, and self-consciousness is realized only by revealing oneself to another (Bakhtin, 1986). We essentially have no meaning except through our dialogue with one another (Bakhtin, 1986). Taken too far in this direction, Bakhtin tends toward the morose, but for the purposes of studying dialogue his ideas provide a meaningful way to examine the interplay of voices.

Like Karl Marx, Bakhtin viewed individual consciousness as fundamentally a social process rather than an autonomous awareness. Bakhtin used the tendencies of two forces, the centripedal (forces of unity) and the centrifugal (forces of difference) and their interplay on social interaction (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Unlike Marx, Bakhtin did not limit his conceptualization of the "social milieu" to the economic forces of production, nor did he conceptualize dialogue as emerging from the "real" world

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around us (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 22). For Bakhtin, the human experience was constituted by the social reality that all is communicative or symbolic interaction. The self is constructed out of two social necessities – the need to connect with another (the centripedal force) and the simultaneous need to separate from the other (the centrifugal force). The centripedal-centrifugal dialogue is the "indeterminate process in which the self is in a perpetual state of becoming as a consequence of the ongoing interplay between the fusion and separation from others" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 22). A number of scholars have adapted the dialectical view that openness and closedness function in ongoing interplay with one another (e.g., Rawlins, 1989; Altman & Taylor 1983; Altman, 1993, Hooks, 1994; Cruddas, 2007, to name a few).

In a view like Bakhtin's, there are no "clean slates" in relationships. Instead, all relationships are a "social birthright, are heirs to the living history of social existence," according to Baxter and Montgomery (1996, p. 47). From this viewpoint, the concept of power is important, but limited. One party may have power over another at a particular time; the other party may have power in another instance. This concept can be applied to relationships between PR professionals and journalists. Journalists may have the power to publish or not to publish information from a public relations professional in a given instance, but the public relations person may have the power to grant or withhold information in another.

Bakhtin asserted that linguistic matter constitutes only part of an utterance; there is the nonverbal part, which corresponds to the context of the enunciation (Bakhtin, 1981). This holds particular interest for a study of mediated communication, as the

vehicle, tone, time sent/received and situation is a necessary element of the message's structure. While this was not unknown before Bakhtin, he was the first to assert that the context was an integral part of the message itself. Therefore, every utterance has two aspects: that which comes from language and that which comes from the context of enunciation, which is unique. Language is situated in metalanguage, or what surrounds the utterance (Bakhtin, 1981). The message is not only in the words, but also in the enunciation. Enunciation takes a different form in mediated communication. Rather than traditional non-verbal clues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, the situation in which the enunciation is taking place, the "metalanguage" of communication via mediated channels is the "tone" of the message, the medium through which it is sent, the time of day, and other factors that are not present in the message itself.

A Relational Dialectics Approach

In relational dialectics, communications studies scholars Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery propose that a dialogic relationship tends to center around four key concepts: contradiction, change, praxis and totality (1998). Baxter and Montgomery also ground their concept of relational dialectics in tension. In relational dialectics, dialogue is a flow of meaning between people. Much of the literature in public relations grounds dialogue in interaction, but does not fully address the concept of tension implicit in the PR practitioner/reporter relationship. By addressing the tension inherent in the relationship, we can begin to see the importance of conflict as creating opportunities for dialogue.

As defined by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), dialogue involves both parties "shifting" in their views on particular issues or problems as dialogue occurs, but the end goal is not a completely changed viewpoint by one party. Rather, the statement-counterstatement process results in benefits to both parties over time. "Mutually beneficial" outcomes may be the result of the interplay fostered by dialogue that results in radically changed viewpoints that are completely different than either party intended at the onset of the dialogic exchange. The nature of dialogue in media relations can be enhanced by incorporating relational dialectics and the idea of conflict as implicit in the reporter-practitioner relationship.

Issacs (1999) defined dialogue as a conversation with a center, not sides. The aim of negotiation is to reach agreement among parties who differ (Issacs, 1999). The intention of dialogue is to "reach new understanding and, in doing so, to form a totally new basis from which to think and act" (Issacs, 1999, p. 19). Issacs took the concept of dialogue one step further: as a conversation in which people think together in relationship. Thinking together implies that one no longer takes his/her own position as final. One "relaxes their grip on certainty and listens to the possibility that results from simply being in a relationship with others – possibilities that might not otherwise have occurred" Issacs, 1999, p. 19).

Social experience, by its very nature of being social, is always discursive (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). By contrast, monologic approaches treat communication as one-sided and univoiced (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). As in an actual monologue, the focus is on sameness, a focus that creates a fiction of "consistency and completeness"

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(Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 45). In research, this can be seen in the preoccupation with the individual as the unit of analysis, while the other party is "merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 293).

Dualism

Dualism, in contrast to monologism, does acknowledge and give expression to countervailing forces in relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Dualistic approaches are characterized by simple, static polarities, each element of which is an anchoring point on a specific dimension (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Communication between relational partners reflects a choice of one polarity over another. Thus, the complexities of interpersonal interaction "are reduced to a series of binary opposites, a series of parallel monologues" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 46). Both of these approaches have value in certain situations (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998).

In relational dialectics, multiple points of view maintain their voices as they play with and off one another. Dialectics shifts the focus of scholars from the idea of "shared meanings" by examining the multiplicity of opposing perspectives (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 46). This is not to say that dialectical thinking is directed by the search for a "happy medium," rather it focuses on the "messier, less logical, and more inconsistent unfolding practices of the moment" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 46).

Communication events, relationships and even life itself are ongoing and unfinalizable, always "becoming," never "being" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 47). There are "no ideal goals, no ultimate endings, no elegant end-states of balance" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 47). Indeed, balance can be considered a state of non-dialogue.

In dialogue, the pendulum swings back and forth between parties, never achieving a final resting place.

For public relations, this view lends itself well when applied to creating and negotiating long-lasting relationships with reporters. While all interaction may not involve face-to-face dialogue, we are still relating to another human being, each with their own needs, desires and goals. Each party in the relationship has a job to do, and each party brings a voice to the interaction.

Key Assumptions of Relational Dialectics

The four key assumptions of relational dialectics: contradiction, change, praxis and totality, can be used to expand Kent and Taylor's (2002) tenets of dialogic communication in public relations to capture the tension inherent in reporter-PR practitioner relationships. These assumptions and their connection to Kent and Taylor's work (1998, 2002) will be a significant part of the discussion section of this dissertation.

Contradiction. The concept of contradiction holds a technical meaning in dialectical theory and refers to the "dynamic interplay between unified oppositions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). Central to the idea of relational dialectics is that communication plays a primary role in the ongoing experience of contradictions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Dialectics views the struggle of contradiction as a "dynamic and fluid process in which the struggle at one point in time sets in motion the nature of the struggle at a subsequent point in time" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). Here is a key point for dialogue between journalists and public relations practitioners: the

organic nature of dialogue involves more than different points of view. It involves

change.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) was insistent on the duality of the utterer and the

receiver. While we may individually hope for a desired outcome, the change may come

in the form of something entirely new to both parties through the exchange. The

usefulness of dialogism for public relations is that it moves from a focus on a particular

outcome and focuses on the process of ongoing exchange. Contradiction helps to

further define Kent and Taylor's (2002) idea of mutuality by recognizing that

relationships are composed of fusion with and, separation from, both centripedal and

centrifugal forces, both independence and interdependence (Baxter & Montgomery,

1996, p. 43). Among the opposing contradictions are:

- *Autonomy/Connection* – The principal contradiction. No relationship

  exists unless each party gives up some autonomy. This links to Kent

  and Taylor's (2002) idea of risk in dialogue. A relationship is lost by

  too much autonomy; the self is lost by too much connection. The most

  common way that those engaged in dialogue manage tension in the

  autonomy/connection contradiction is through cyclic alteration,

  where the two parties cycle back and forth between each other's

  viewpoints (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

- *Novelty/Predictability* – Relationships require both. In public relations

  practitioner/journalist relationships, both are important. Predictable

  interaction, like pitching a story to a reporter, is necessary. However,

novel interaction, such as a public relations person tipping a reporter

to a story unrelated to the practitioner's area of business or interest,

helps to enhance the ongoing nature of the relationship. This can

loosely be tied to Kent and Taylor's (2002) tenet of propinquity.

Topical segmentation is often a way for those engaged in dialogue to

manage any tensions that may arise. Based on the topic, parties may

choose to emphasize one topic over another (Baxter & Montgomery,

1996).

- *Openness/Closedness* – Openness creates vulnerability. It is interesting

  to note here that journalists and public relations professionals may

  guard their personal relationships with each other to avoid putting a

  face of "collusion" or "being in bed with" one another. Deep

  friendships may exist, but relational partners may be wary of

  discussing the friendship with others. Because of attitudes held by

  others, particularly those in journalism who may identify with a

  higher calling to "report the news no matter what," if personal

  friendships develop they may not be "shown" to the outside world.

  This can create tension, in that parties may have to balance

  professional norms with personal inclinations. Here again we see the

  concepts of mutuality, in that both parties understand that they are

  "inextricably tied together" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 25), and risk,

  because each party must be willing to accept unexpected and

uncontrolled outcomes. Topical segmentation is often used to manage tension in the openness/closedness dialectic (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

In an organizational context, there may be opposing "pulls" in which a journalist may expect an organization to act in his or her best interests but, at the same time, may resist the need that organization may have for certain types of private information. Dialectical tension can generate frustration, distrust, and disloyalty in both personal and organizational settings if both parties are not aware of and understand the nature of opposing views (Tomlinson, 2000).

Change. Relationships are processes of change produced by the clash of opposing tendencies (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Change is inherent in contradiction because the interplay of voices and oppositions results in a system that is perpetually "in flux" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The basic oppositions or tensions that exist constitute the basis of change and development in the relationship. Change in the relational dialectics literature can be linked to the concept of commitment in Kent and Taylor's (2002) assumptions. Physicist David Bohm (1996) makes an important point: dialogue between parties may not last forever, just long enough to make a change. This does not mean that the parties themselves necessarily separate, although they may. However, the dialogic instance needs only to last long enough to shift the parties toward a different stance than before the dialogue occurred. These last two points are extremely important for students of public relations to understand. While dialogic exchanges may begin and end, the ongoing dialogue of a relationship is never really

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finished. It is important for students to learn that media relations should be an ongoing process. While media relations can be done in an isolated exchange, students should learn how to take that isolated exchange and attempt to build a relationship using dialogue. This reflects the tenets of empathy and risk in Kent and Taylor's (2002) conceptualization of dialogue.

Praxis. People function as proactive actors who make communicative choices in how to function in their social world (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). At the same time, however, they become reactive objects, because their actions become "reified in a variety of normative and institutional practices that establish the boundaries of subsequent communicative moves" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 13). Here we see Kent and Taylor's (2002) concept of propinquity, in that parties must be willing and able to articulate demands of the other.

Totality. From a dialectal perspective, totality is a way to think about the world as a process of relations or interdependencies (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Dialectal tensions are played out in relation to other tensions that exist in everyday life. Dialectical tension is "jointly owned by the relationship parties by the very fact of their union" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 15). There may be little commonality between participating individuals' experience of contradictions in a relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Totality can be linked to Kent and Taylor's (2002) concepts of commitment and mutuality.

Interpersonal dialectical processes involve the overt display of oppositional dynamics between people in a relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1983).

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Openness/closedness, predictability/novelty, stability/change and other dynamics

occur between participants in any exchange. There are also alternative ways to manage

dialogic tension, which will be discussed in the next section.

<u>Other Ways to Manage Dialogic Tension</u>

There are other ways parties engaged in dialogue may choose to deal with

tension. One of those is selection, in which both parties choose one end of the dialectic

over the other (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Another means of dealing with tension is

separation, in which a choice is made to value each end of the dialectic at different times

(Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This does not mean that one party is not heard, it simply

means that both parties choose to focus on different aspects of the dialogue at different

times. Parties may also choose to employ moderation, which involves trying to find

some middle ground in the issue at hand (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). One less

productive way to deal with tension is disqualification of either one person's viewpoint

or simply avoiding the issue, avoiding interaction, or avoiding a behavior (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1996). This is not a strategy for public relations in interaction with the

press, unless there is an ongoing contention between the interacting partners that both

choose to ignore.

Reframing is also used to manage tension.   A choice is made to change the way

the tension is viewed so that the two ends of the dialectic appear complementary

instead of contradictory (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Kent and Taylor 's (2000)

concept of commitment can be seen here as well. Both parties make a commitment to

see the problem differently. Sometimes this can result in problems being resolved in

ways that neither party had expected, and can result in a shift in thinking for both parties to something entirely new. All of these ways of managing tension can be valuable in teaching students a dialectical approach to media relations.

The Centrality of Contradiction and Role Conflict

In a dialectical perspective, the term contradiction is liberated from any negative connotations whatsoever. Contradictions, and therefore conflict, are inherent in social life and not evidence of a failure or inadequacy in a person, in a relationship, or in a social system. In fact, conflict is the basic driver of change, according to Baxter and Montgomery (1996). In public relations, conflict is usually associated with "something bad." This concept of conflict as inherent proposes a fundamental shift in thought for public relations. It is argued here that conflict is good for public relations, in that conflict results in change. The nature of dialectical contradiction compares in a superficial way to role conflict theory, which is a theory that has been used in the public relations literature to examine relationships between an organization and its publics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Role conflict is conceptualized as a condition in which a person faces role-related expectations, such as competing expectations associated with single roles (I am supposed to tell the truth but will lose my job if I do) or from competing expectations associated with two roles that a person occupies simultaneously (I need to finish this report tonight but if I do that I will miss Bobby's soccer game) (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). From a dialectical perspective, partners experience intra-role conflict to the extent that they perceive incompatible expectations associated with their "role" as a member of a relationship. For example, a dialectical

struggle between independence and interdependence is likely to involve incompatible

expectations for the relationship parties, some of which enhance partner autonomy and

some of which enhance partner interdependence (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Relational Dialectics vs. Role Conflict Theory

Relational dialectics goes beyond role conflict theory in three ways. First, role

conflict theory is not premised on the assumption that incompatibility is an inherent

feature of roles (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In dialogue, the interplay of opposites is

an inherent feature in society. Second, role conflict theory presumes that incompatibility

is a negative condition, while dialectics views the interplay between opposing forces as

neither negative nor positive (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Third, unlike role conflict

theory, dialectics views the struggle of contradiction as a dynamic

and fluid process in which the struggle at one point in time sets in motion the nature of

the struggle at a subsequent point in time (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

To use a hackneyed metaphor, dialogue is the dance we engage in on a daily

basis. Tension exists between parties because there are different viewpoints and ways

of approaching situations, different needs and desires. Change is inherent in any social

system. Stability and change form a dialectical unity.

Social Media and Relational Schemata

Social media may also necessitate changes in the concept of relational schemata

as proposed by Planalp (1985). Relational schemata are coherent frameworks of

relational knowledge used to derive the relational implications of messages. They are

modified by ongoing experiences in relationships. Planalp argued that these schemata

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could take the form of the general dimensions of a relationship, or of general expectations about appropriate behavior in particular situations, or expectations of concrete behaviors, and showed experimentally that relational knowledge guided memory for conversations (1985). Thus, in practitioner/journalist and professor/student relationships, perceptions of the rights and obligations of each party are crucial. Baldwin (1992) used the concept of relational schemata to suggest that they serve as a sort of script for expected interaction patterns. Such schemata may involve general beliefs about relationships of particular types as well as schemata concerning particular relationships.

<u>Tensions are Necessary – The Very Stuff of Relationships</u>

In a quick online search of "PR journalist relationships," many of the references that are made are couched in interpersonal language, the "love affair" or the "bad romance" or the "romantic dance" that the two professions do with one another. It is difficult to ignore the interpersonal element of the relationship that exists. In a study of reporters, Jeffers (1977), found that "newsmen" had different perceptions for PR practitioners "in general" and for the ones "with whom they work regularly" (Jeffers, 1977, p. 304). Jeffers found that "newsmen do believe that practitioners they come in contact with regularly are significantly more ethical than practitioners in general" (Jeffers, 1977, p. 304). In essence, he found that "familiarity breeds content" (not contempt, as the saying goes). Interestingly, in the same study, PR practitioners had more negative impressions of journalists they knew personally and more positive views

about journalists in general (Jeffers, 1977). One hopes this view has changed in the last 35 years.

A traditional concept of communication sees it as a transmission, representational, or informational. From a traditionalist viewpoint, communication functions to express one's attitudes and beliefs, to transmit those to others so that the self is understood, and to influence others' attitudes and beliefs so that they are comfortable with those of the self (Baxter, 2004).

Much of the research in PR has been about "managing" messages and relationships (e.g. Ledingham & Bruning, 2000; Lucarelli-Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss & Ragsdale, 2000; Ledingham, 2006). By contrast, an alternate view positions communication as constitutive (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This approach asks how communication defines, or constructs, the social world, including ourselves and our personal, and professional, relationships. From this standpoint, individuals and relationships are not analytically separate from communication; instead communication constitutes those phenomena. The self of dialogism is a relationship between self and other, "a simultaneity of sameness and difference out of which knowing becomes possible" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 22). "Self" cannot be a unitary, monadic phenomenon, according to dialogism. Instead, it is a fluid and dynamic relationship between self and the "Other". Becoming selves are not developing or progressing toward some idealized state of completion (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). We are always constituting ourselves. This approach does not contradict the notion of relationship management in public relations. It does, however, approach the idea of

relationships in public relations as a more fluid process. This relationship paradigm, examined through the lens of relational dialectics, provides a new way to explore the linkage between public relations, the media, and organizational goals. Looking at relationships in this way also supports the newest definition of public relations from PRSA, as it emphasizes building relationships themselves rather than managing those relationships (i.e.Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics)

More on Relational Dialectics

While much of the work in dialogue and dialectics has been in the relationship between couples, it can be expanded to professional relationships as well. Ledingham and Bruning (2000) wrote of dialectical relationships in PR as having four qualities, but their assertion that these "necessary qualities" (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) must exist does not address the inherent tensions that exist within each of them: balance, which is almost never possible; investment by partners, which is constantly in a state of ebb and flow; commitment, which is necessary for each party to do their jobs, but which also fluctuates; and trust, which also fluctuates. Relational dialectics provides a way to account for the constant tension that exists between journalists and reporters. Baxter (2004) presents several other concepts of relational dialectics that can assist in our examination of PR practitioner-journalist relationships.

Relational dialectics seeks to study not just the dyadic communication that takes place between two parties, but also the way those dyadic relationships exist in the social order that surrounds them (Baxter, 2004). At all points, people are communicating with

others about what the nature of a relationship should be. This is helpful in examining

relationships between the two groups as a whole, and can be seen in the mountain of

popular press that exists about the PR practitioner-journalist relationship. Each party

seems to delight in complaining about the other.

Another concept in relational dialectics is the idea of dialectical flux (Baxter,

2004). To engage in dialogue, participants must fuse their perspectives to some extent

while sustaining the uniqueness of their individual perspectives (Baxter, 2004).

Participants thus form a unity in conversation but only through two clearly

differentiated voices, or perspectives. Just as dialogue simultaneously involves unity

and difference, Bakhtin regarded all social life as a tension-filled unity of differing

tendencies (Baxter, 2004). Dialectics theory views communication in relationships as

the dialectical tension of contradictory verbal-ideological forces, or discourses (Baxter &

Montgomery, 1998). Relationships are built as much on the discourse of separation as

on the discourse of integration. The contradictory interplay can be enacted as a

discourse of rights versus obligations, for example, the right of a reporter to know what

is going on in a particular situation versus the obligation of the public relations

professional to protect the company. Relational dialectics transcends negotiation. The

interplay of relationships exists in ongoing flux. Negotiation occurs on particular issues

within the relationship, but the relationship is ongoing.

Montgomery and Baxter (1998) also discuss Bakhtin's idea of the aesthetic

moment. An aesthetic experience captures participants in the flow of the moment,

evoking a feeling that extends beyond judgments to the realization of completing

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something (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). Aesthetic experiences are not easily repeatable but are essential to punctuate the more mundane, task-driven endeavors. An aesthetic moment may occur in a journalist/PR relationship when both parties feel like they are being fully understood and trusted by the other, which can be a point at which the relationship is significantly enhanced.

Persuasion: What is its role?

Persuasion in PR stems from rhetorical tradition, which, at its best, is to know the strategies and forces that lead to co-created meaning (van Ruler, Betteke & Heath, 2008). In public relations, we are faced with conflicting views on the concept of persuasion as an integral part of dialogue in dealing with the press. The role of persuasion in public relations is the focus of considerable controversy (Pfau & Wan, 2006). Persuasion, which Pfau and Wan (2006) define as "the use of communication in an attempt to shape, change, and/or reinforce perception, affect (feelings), cognition (thinking), and/or behavior, plays a pivotal role in many public relations activities, particularly in those dealing with external publics" (p. 102). Hutton (1999) saw persuasion as an orientation, encompassing philosophies of PR that are proactive and oriented toward persuading audiences to think or act in ways that benefit the organization or client. The concept of persuasion is very much a part of everyday PR practice, while few academic definitions include persuasion as a basic tenet (Hutton, 1999). J. Grunig (1993) used the concepts of image management and advocacy to ground his work in identifying the role of public relations practitioners. According to Grunig (1993), "organizations do not have to tell everything about themselves as they manage the impressions others have of them" (p.

129). Grunig (1993) conceptualized the production component of PR as "the giving of messages rather than image making" (p. 129). Robert Heath, arguably the foremost expert on a rhetorical model of public relations, stated that persuasion in PR stems from the stance that "persuasion is not a dirty word in PR" and he insists that persuasion must be grounded in dialogue to be effective (1992).

With relational dialectics, persuasion becomes an integral part of dialogue, rather than a separate "tool" to be used. The conversation becomes more about change and growth, rather than winning one party over to the view of the other. The "mortal enemy" stance that has pervaded the public relations practitioner/ journalist relationship is allowed to evolve into something more than two parties who are basically dependent on one another (whether they want to be or not), attempting to persuade each other to the other's viewpoint.

A New Paradigm for Teaching?

In teaching students the relational and dialogic component of media relations, L. Dee Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning is proposed as a way to enhance and deepen students' understanding of and skills required to form and maintain appropriate, meaningful and beneficial relationships between journalists and practitioners.

A number of writers have suggested a "paradigm shift" in terms of how higher education views pedagogy. Barr and Tagg (1995) describe a paradigm shift in which institutions are thinking less about providing instruction (the teaching paradigm) and more about producing learning (the learning paradigm). Fink (2003) suggests that the

real need is not just to produce learning, but to produce *significant* learning (p. 18).

Fink's 2003 taxonomy goes beyond the traditional teaching tools of providing

foundational knowledge and application of concepts. He proposes connecting ideas

learned in the classroom to different realms of life, addressing the human dimension of

learning about oneself and others, caring, and learning how to learn (Fink, 2003). This

approach broadens a student's learning experience by helping them develop new

feelings, interests, and values, and, according to Fink, helps them become self-directed

learners and better students (Fink, 2003). The application of Fink's taxonomy to media

relations will be addressed in the discussion section of this work.

Additionally,,"Media storytelling" is a phrase suggested by Jeremy Lipschultz to

describe what journalists, public relations professionals, and social media practitioners

do in the current environment (2012, p. 410). In a curriculum for a media writing course,

students are learning blogging, photography, and audio and video skills that help them

tell compelling stories (Lipschultz, 2012).

In the next sections, the research questions and hypotheses for this study will be

stated and elaborated upon, and the methods for collecting the data will be

explained.The results of the study will follow along with a discussion of the analyzed

data will point toward conclusions that may be drawn and future research in this area.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

As has been stated earlier in this work, the wealth of published scholarship on the journalist-practitioner relationship is vast. However, with the exception of a few scholars who have published articles on the subject, there is a gap in the literature that examines how media relations is being presented to and learned by students who will soon enter the field. Since little research has been done from a PR and journalism education perspective to support the wealth of information that exists about the journalist/PR practitioner relationship, this study proposes a number of research questions and hypotheses that will be addressed in four phases.

While some of the hypotheses are addressed in the qualitative sections of this work, it is acknowledged that hypotheses can't really be "tested" by qualitative data such as that arising from the interviews in these studies. But there is substantial evidence from the literature to suggest a direction for findings, so hypotheses were posed and this research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to "test" them. The qualitative data, of course, really serves to reinforce predictable directions rather than statistically support hypotheses.

Public Relations Practice Today

Before addressing education, it is important to understand current public relations

practices. The reporter/PR practitioner relationship is at the center of media relations.

To better understand the nature of current public relations practice, the first set of

research questions are posed.

RQ1a: How, if at all, has the relationship changed between public

relations practitioners and journalists, following advances in

technology and changes in the journalism industry?

RQ1b: How do current public relations practitioners view the

journalist/PR practitioner exchange?

What's in the Texts?

The next questions deal with how public relations and journalism textbooks

address the subject of media relations. An initial review of select public relations and

journalism texts revealed that the texts addressed media relations in a variety of ways.

It would stand to reason that public relations texts would address media relations from

a much different perspective than journalism texts, which may not even cover the

subject of dealing with public relations professionals at all. Also, by examining public

relations and journalism texts, a better understanding of the similarities and differences

among texts can help to form a basis for more in-depth research with professors in both

areas, which relate to the next two phases of this work.

This leads us to the second set of research questions in this study.

RQ2a: How do public relations texts address media relations and the journalist/PR practitioner interaction?

RQ2b: How do journalism texts address media relations, if they do so at all?

The third research question addresses the agreement of professors in public relations to the views expressed in public relations and journalism texts. Do texts address media relations as a strategic or tactical function? Do they address the reported adversarial relationship that exists between members of the press and their counterparts in PR? Traditional mass media models may lack the level of sophistication needed to understand, develop, maintain, grow and nurture relationships between PR practitioners and journalists. Are professors teaching directly out of textbooks, or are they using texts as a guide to express their own attitudes and experience? This can lead to a better understanding of the congruity of what is written and what is actually being taught.

RQ3: Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect professors' attitudes about media relations?

Professor Interviews

The analysis of introductory and writing public relations texts and basic reporting texts provides a basis for the next phase of this work, which consists of interviews with public relations professors and journalism professors to see how they view media relations. Here, we can explore how educators view the relationship

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between PR and journalism, and go deeper into how professors teach students how to practice media relations. The existing literature gives rise to the first set of hypotheses of this work.

H1a: Public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process.

H1b: Journalism professors view interactions between the press and public relations practitioners as necessary, but not as a dialogic process.

The attitudes and opinions of professors about how they teach can give insight into how well textbooks currently cover the topic of media relations. It may be that changes can be suggested in media relations curriculum to better reflect the views of those teaching it.

Since this work is grounded in the concept of dialogue, and since, for these purposes the interaction between journalists and PR professionals is thought of as a "relationship," the next research question addresses the tension that may exist in the reporter/PR practitioner relationship. With this research question, it can also be determined whether professors see the relationship between the two parties as rooted in tension. For this work, a dialogic approach to media relations is defined as an exchange between two parties in relationship that is rooted in tension and managing that tension. It is ongoing and its purpose is to create change, either in viewpoints or behavior. At the behavior level, a relationship implies first a series of interactions (dialogue) between two people, usually involving a verbal element (Hinde, 1997). These interchanges have

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some degree of mutuality, continuity, and are affected by interactions in the past (Hinde, 1997). This leads to a fourth research question.

RQ4: Do professors of public relations and journalism agree that media relations is rooted in tension?

Professor Surveys

The interviews with educators lead us to the final phase in this work, which consists of two surveys of educators, one of journalism professors and another of public relations professors. This provides quantifiable information from a greater number of respondents regarding how public relations and journalism instructors see media relations in their respective fields. Are educators teaching that relationships are part of dealing with the media, and that dialogue between practitioners and the press is a function of their job? This leads us to these additional hypotheses:

H2a: Professors' attitudes about relationships are reflected in what they teach in the classroom.

H2b: Professors' attitudes about dialogue are reflected in what they teach in the classroom.

The rationale for H3 and H3b came from discussions with professors before the start of this research. It seemed that the professors who were consulted spent more time on dialogue than a cursory examination of textbooks indicated, while journalism professors indicated that they didn't spend any time on working with PR professionals at all.

H3a: Professors of public relations teach a more dialogic approach

to media relations than PR textbooks reflect.

H3b: Professors of journalism address public relations in the classroom

minimally, if at all.

H3c: Journalism professors and public relations professors will differ

significantly in how they teach media relations.

Finally, based on the information gathered from a survey of the texts and

information from interviews and a survey, certain assumptions can be made of how

media relations is taught in the classroom. The final hypotheses address this subject.

H4:   A majority of public relations professors will agree with teaching

media relations through a dialogic lens.

H5:   There will be little to no consensus between public relations

professors and journalism professors when presented with a

dialogic view of the relationship between practitioners and

journalists.

H6:   Public relations professors and journalism professors will

acknowledge that persuasion is a part of the relationship between

reporters and public relations practitioners.

A New Taxonomy for Teaching Media Relations

Based on the research gathered from this study, it may be possible to suggest

changes or improvements in how educators address media relations with their

students. To further advance scholarship and provide practical application for the

research conducted here, Fink's taxonomy of significant learning (2003) will be used to explore ways that media relations might be improved in the classroom in the discussion section of this work.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

The method for this study followed a four-part process for triangulation by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

<u>Professional Interviews</u>

To answer research questions 1 a and b (*How, if at all, has the relationship changed between public relations practitioners and journalists, following advances in technology and changes in the journalism industry? And how do current public relations practitioners view the journalist/PR practitioner exchange?)*, fifteen interviews were conducted with public relations practitioners at both agencies and corporations to learn how they are currently forming and managing relationships with members of the press. The method of selection for the professionals was purposive in nature, and interviewees were either personal contacts of the researcher, the advisor, or were referred to the researcher in the first round of interviews. Fifteen was chosen as the target for interviews as it is considered to be an acceptable number for reaching saturation in qualitative interview research (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Indeed, after only 10 interviews, common themes began to emerge.

Interviews were conducted via Skype or by telephone, at the preference of the interviewee. One interview was conducted in person. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis of particular themes or conflicting views, using

the constant comparative method as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Five

professionals worked for worldwide agencies or local agencies with at least 20

employees. Two interviewees worked for agencies with between five and 15 employees,

and one interviewee had just started a firm with 20 years of corporate experience. All

held the title of account executive or higher. The seven corporate interviewees

represented major worldwide corporations, hospitals, cable and broadcast networks,

and major airlines. Titles ranged from manager of public relations or public affairs to

vice president of public relations. Years of experience of the interviewees ranged from

2.5 to 25 (M = 13.23). The interviews were conducted between August 14, 2012, and

October 25, 2012.

The interview protocol consisted of 14 questions. The interview protocol was

original to this study and reviewed by two members of the researcher's dissertation

committee. Questions explored the professionals' thoughts about dialogue with the

press, and how it has evolved over the past several years. The questions were designed

to address concepts from dialogic theory and relational dialectics as they related to

current practice. Questions were written so that the professionals could give an initial

answer, and then prompts were given to delve deeper into their thoughts. The

interviewees were also encouraged to contact the researcher if they thought of anything

else that might add value to this study.

Textbook Content Analysis

Following the professional interviews, a content analysis was conducted

of five "Introduction to Public Relations" texts and five "Public Relations

Writing" texts. This was done to answer RQ2a: *How do public relations texts*

address media relations and the journalist/PR practitioner interaction?

The decision to analyze introductory PR texts was based on the work of Cline's

(1982) examination of introductory mass communication texts, Byerly's (1993)

examination of introductory PR texts, and Pratt and Renter's (1989) study of

introductory PR texts. The decision to analyze public relations writing texts was based

on conversations with professors at three universities and a review of syllabi at the

researcher's home university, because a public relations writing course was the most-

mentioned class in which media relations instruction occurred.

To answer research question 2b (*How do journalism texts address media relations, if*

they do so at all?), a content analysis of 10 journalism writing textbooks was conducted.

The decision to analyze journalism writing texts only was based on information from a

professor at the researcher's home university who said that there were very few texts

that were actually "introduction to journalism" texts. The decision was reinforced by

the fact that a search for "Introduction to Journalism" texts on amazon.com revealed

few matches.

The actual texts for coding were selected using an amazon.com search with the

search terms "Introduction to Public Relations," "Public Relations Writing," and

"Journalism Writing." The search was conducted on June 6, 2012. Texts were selected

based on relevance and popularity (best-selling), with only those texts with multiple

editions chosen as part of the sample. A complete list of texts is included in the

Appendix.

Texts were content analyzed for how they approached media relations from both a strategic and tactical standpoint. The content analysis instrument was operationalized to look for words, phrases or concepts that addressed the dialogic nature of the relationship between reporters and PR practitioners. Words and phrases that address the reporter/PR practitioner relationship were recorded, as well as additional concepts that reflect how the text addresses the interaction between the two professions. Texts were also coded for elements of relational dialectics and the tenets of Dialogic Theory (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The coding instrument is included in the Appendix.

Intercoder reliability was established using two coders, the author and another Ph.D. student. Each coded three of the same texts. Initial agreement was 74 % on the quantitative items on the coding sheet. After reconciliation and additional coding, intercoder reliability was calculated with a Scott's pi of .87.

Professor Interviews

In the third phase of this research, interviews were conducted with public relations and journalism professors. This helped to answer RQ3: *Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect public relations educators' attitudes about media relations?* Interviews also helped to examine H1a and H1b (H1a: *Public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process.* H1b*: Journalism professors view interactions between the press and public relations practitioners as necessary, but not as a dialogic process)* and provide insight into RQ4 (*Do professors of public relations and journalism agree that media relations is rooted in tension?).*

Ten interviews were conducted with public relations professors and journalism professors, respectively, for a total of 20 interviews.

The interview instrument was designed to "draw out" the professors' attitudes and opinions about the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists, as well as determine how those professors communicated concepts about the relationship between the two parties to their students. The interview instrument consisted of 17 questions. Many of the questions were the same for both groups of interviewees, with some variation for each group of professors. All of the questions were designed to examine the professors' attitudes toward dialogue and teaching principles of dialogic communication and relational dialectics in the classroom. The interview instrument is included in the Appendix.

Interviewees were selected using a purposive method. A search was conducted based on a list of schools with PRSSA chapters obtained from prssa.org on October 8, 2012. Using a random number generator, every 7th school was chosen and a search was conducted in those schools for public relations and journalism professors. Interviews were conducted from October 12, 2012, through December 6, 2012. The public relations professors included three assistant professors, five associate professors, one full professor, and one senior lecturer. Of the journalism professors, two were assistant professors, five were associate professors, and three were full professors. The mean for years of teaching for public relations professors was 11.35. All of the public relations professors had some professional experience in the field. None of the journalism professors interviewed had been teaching for fewer than four years (M=11.6). All but

one of the journalism professors had experience working as s reporter, editor, or producer for a publication or broadcast news. One of the public relations professors still worked in corporate consulting on a regular basis.

<u>Professor Surveys</u>

The fourth and final phase of this research consisted of online surveys. This was done to help answer and support all of the research questions and hypotheses except for RQs 1 and 1b and RQs 2a and 2b. There were two survey instruments, one designed for public relations professors and one designed for journalism professors. The population for these surveys was public relations and journalism professors at universities and schools across the country. Purposive sampling was used to select a total of 781 public relations professors and 764 journalism professors that were invited to participate in the survey. Professors were chosen from schools that had Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapters. The schools were identified from a list obtained on prsa.org on December 16, 2012. Using a similar purposive method as the interviewee selection, every 7th school was chosen and a search was conducted for viable survey participants at that school, both in public relations and in journalism. This ensured that schools of all types were included, from large research universities to smaller colleges. The only requirement was that the school did meet the qualifications to support a PRSSA chapter. Additionally, a list of 120 email addresses from AEJMC- accredited schools was constructed. A target of 100 completed surveys was set as a goal for each professor group. This number provides a roughly ±10% confidence level based on the estimated universe for each group.

Two different web-based, self-administered surveys were employed for this portion of research. The surveys were pilot tested in a thorough review by the researcher, professors, and others with extensive professional experience. Questions were designed to incorporate themes from Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic theory and Baxter and Montgomery's (1998) concept of relational dialectics.

Public Relations Professor Survey

The survey directed at public relations professors consisted of 33 questions. The questions were developed by the researcher based on the literature reviewed and were refined by two members of the researcher's dissertation committee. Two of those questions pertained to the classes they taught and in what classes they addressed media relations. The next eight questions addressed the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists. Professors were asked to rate their responses to these questions on a five-point Likert-type scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (SD = 1 and SA = 5).

Public relations professors were also asked if they addressed working with journalists in their classes, and about the use of textbooks in their classes. Professors were then presented with five questions pertaining to their teaching methods regarding media relations. Five questions asked about the nature of the relationship between practitioners and journalists and the nature of conflict in the relationship. Professors were asked in what school or department they taught and about their view of persuasion in the PR practitioner/journalist relationship. The rest of the questions were demographic. Professional web-based survey technology Qualtrics was used to deliver

this study's instrument. Cover letter emails sent to the survey sample included this online survey address:

https://ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_77A0SckvhoczUAl. The recipients had the choice to either refuse or agree to take the survey. The consent form of the survey was presented as part of the invitation letter in the initial email. There were two follow-up reminders sent to professors in the sample, one about a week after the initial invitation and another a week after that.

<u>Journalism Professor Survey</u>

A shorter survey was created for journalism professors. The journalism professors were presented with 18 questions. These included one question pertaining to their teaching background, one question to determine whether they addressed public relations in any of their classes, one question about their professional experience, years teaching, a question about years at their current position, two demographic questions, and 12 items relating to how they view and teach students about the reporter/PR practitioner relationship with a 5-point Likert-type measurement scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"(SD = 1 and SA = 5).

Professors were also asked in which classes, if any, did they address working with public relations professionals, not just the 'profession' of public relations. Nine questions addressed their attitudes and opinions about relationships and dialogue between public relations professionals and journalists as well as whether they communicate those concepts to their students in their classes.

Qualtrics was also used to deliver this study's instrument. Cover letter emails for the sample included this online survey address: https://ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_54ENBqvuls8f9hb. The recipients had the choice to either refuse to take the survey or to participate. The consent form of the survey was presented as part of the invitation letter in the initial email. There were two follow-up reminders sent to professors in the sample.

The actual online surveys, the cover letters, (which include the consent forms) and the follow up-emails are included in the Appendix.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEWS

The results of the interviews of professionals provided valuable insight into RQs

1a and 1b: *How, if at all, has the relationship changed between public relations practitioners*

and journalists, given advances in technology and changes in the journalism industry? How do

current public relations practitioners view the journalist/PR practitioner exchange?

As additional demographic information to that provided in the methods section,

two interviewees had extensive (9-10 years) of experience as a reporter. Time spent on

media relations by the interviewees ranged from 30 % to 90 % of their workweek. This

included time spent in planning and preparing for dealing with reporters.

All of the interviewees indicated that they dealt with a variety of media. All

mentioned print, broadcast and radio outlets, two said that they dealt regularly with

international media, 12 worked with bloggers, and 10 indicated that they regularly

pitched stories to trade publication reporters.

Among the 15 professionals interviewed, all agreed that the media relations

landscape has changed quite a bit in the last five years. All 15 practitioners stated that

they are now using email as their primary means of initiating contact with a journalist,

as opposed to a telephone call. This was true particularly when the practitioner was

contacting a journalist for the first time. Some variation existed, however, based on the

length and nature of the relationship between the practitioner and the journalist being contacted. For more established relationships, practitioners were more likely to use the telephone to pitch a story.

Changes in Journalism

The professionals interviewed also agreed that changes in journalism have affected how they conduct media relations. A practitioner who worked for a local, one-office agency stated, "The dynamic has changed. It's so much of a transient nature where people are moving from place to place and it's hard to keep up with them" (personal interview, 10/2012). Another agency professional said, "You have no ability to control or monitor or put boundaries on where the message is going to. There is so much convergence" (telephone interview, 9/2012). Another noted that newspapers are shrinking and more stories are coming from wire services, which makes it more difficult to get stories into print. One corporate PR practitioner recalled a conversation from 2010 with a writer for an advertising trade magazine. While he was talking to the reporter, the reporter said, "I have just come from a meeting where a third of our staff got laid off. This time yesterday I was covering two beats, now I am covering five" (Skype interview, 9/2012). As the interview for this dissertation continued, the practitioner said, "I had this epiphany. After working on the media side [as a reporter], I always thought I had to think like a journalist…regardless of what I want or my company wants, what matters is what will sell to the journalist. Now I think it's more about balance, about helping everyone get their needs met" (Skype interview, 9/2012).

Another stated:

> Without question [journalism] has changed. We are at the time and place now where you can no longer communicate through a single channel with one stakeholder. I use the word 'stakeholder' because that is the point. You are communicating now if you are an executive at a business and you are conducting a press conference. You are no longer just talking to the people in the room, you are talking to folks who are Skyping or accessing the content online. Then some of your talk could be put on YouTube, tweeted, or put on Facebook. There is no longer…there is so much convergence. You can no longer get by on a single medium. The thinking on that is, when you are communicating and thinking about your message and how you want to communicate it, it has to be suitable for all of those channels and all of those different people out there circling in your orbit. You have no ability to control or monitor or put boundaries on where the message is going. That is different from 10 years ago (telephone interview, 9/2012).

One agency professional summed it up this way:

> Over the past six or seven years, I have seen a lot of print guys go to online publications and a lot of [people] who write for major print things are now freelancers. A lot of people are not working [in print] and are just working on social media things. I'm also working with people to get things on Twitter before everyone gets on the bandwagon. The speed

has changed. The dynamic has changed. It is so much [more] of a

transient nature where people are moving from place to place and it is

hard to keep up with them. There are a lot more trend pieces. Now it's

'what can we get in 600-800 words' and then get on to the next thing. As

we are seeing tightening of the media outlets, there is less room for more

long-form stuff. It is trying find major trends and put clients in those

trends. I am always trying to keep an eye on things and take things to

reporters that don't involve my client so that they are coming back to me

for things that might work for my client. It is a lot of relationship

building. (personal interview, 9/2012).

<u>Changes in Technology</u>

Technology has also had an impact on how practitioners conduct media

relations. All 15 professionals agreed that social media applications have changed the

way they conduct media relations in some way.

"It's changed dramatically in terms of outreach and connecting points," said one

practitioner:

You are a little more on guard. My Facebook friends are media.

Media people who I have built relationships with. So are my Twitter

followers. You have to be a little careful about who you are taking shots

at. If you are making comments about different things, they can see it.

You could be making fun of a reporter and they could be a Facebook

friend or a friend of a Facebook friend. You have to be more sensitive

(Skype interview, 9/2012).

Younger professionals tended to use Facebook and Twitter more than those with

more experience, with the exception of one small agency owner who stated that he had

many reporters with whom he interacted on Facebook. "Email over the past few years

has become so ubiquitous. You want to get through to them with instant messaging or

other services if you can" (Skype interview, 8/2012). Another of the younger

professionals interviewed said, "I have begun following journalists on Twitter. You can

see what they are reporting on, or even communicate with them that way" (telephone

interview, 10/2012). Seven other professionals agreed that following reporters on

Twitter was a way to learn more about the stories the reporters were working on, but

that they would not use Twitter to initially pitch a story.

One younger professional made this comment:

Most journalists are on Twitter, and some prefer to be

communicated with that way. I know you know about Cision and have

used it. I think agencies should have access to all those tools which are

helpful. A lot of journalists in their Cision profile will write that they

want to be contacted on Twitter. Twitter gives you an easy quick way to

find out what journalists are covering without having to read and search

through their old articles. That is good too, but a quick overview can be

found on Twitter. That might not be someone's initial thought [for

research], but it's helpful to look there (telephone interview, 10/2012).

Another more seasoned practitioner stated:

Twitter is good when there is a close relationship. There is a

blogger [name] she does the [name] blog. I follow her, and might tweet

her and say, 'Hey, if you like this, you might like that…' but I wouldn't

do that for most people. I don't do it very often (telephone interview,

9/2012).

Most respondents were vague when they were asked to recount how many times

per day or week they used different types of communication tools, (Table 5.1), but all of

the respondents did use various means of communication to interact with and initiate

contact with journalists. Email was the overwhelming choice for attempting to engage a

journalist with whom the practitioner had never dealt before. Telephone was a close

second. Email and telephone were still the primary means of contact when the

journalist was attempting to engage a reporter. Twitter, texting, Facebook, and Google+

were all mentioned as ways for a practitioner to engage a journalist with whom the

practitioner had an existing relationship. "Texting, unless you have a very close

relationship with someone, seems too personal for me," said one interviewee. Five

others agreed with her about the personal boundary texting may cross. Table 5.1 also

illustrates the difference in method of media contact between agency professionals, who

may be engaging new journalists more often, versus corporate professionals, who may

have more established relationships with certain reporters. In addition to the differences

in agency and corporate contact methods, differences may also be based on what kind

of product or service entity that the PR professional is representing, e.g. pitching Turner

Classic Movies vs. Hot Pockets vs. Lindsay Lohan vs. a change in company leadership.

It should also be noted here that some tactics are simply more relational than others. For example, releasing news on a social media platform can be considered more relational than sending out a press release.

Table 5.1: Contact Methods, Agency vs. Corporate

Method of Contact	Agency (N=7)	Corporate (N=8)
Email	6 primary, 1 secondary (75% of the time, 30-40 email pitches a day)	6, (4-5 email pitches a day) 2 secondary
Telephone	1 primary 4 secondary 1hr/day 10/day	2 primary, 4 secondary 2/week 3-5 week
Text	3 no 3 rarely 1 yes	1xweek 5 no 2 occasionally
Facebook	2 yes 1 no 1 often (along with Skype, Google+)	5 yes 3 no
Instant Message	2 yes 5 no	6 yes 1 no
Twitter	3 monitor 3 pitch 1 no	3 monitor 2 pitch 3 no
HARO/Profnet	3 yes (1 without success) 2 no 2 rarely	8 no
Surface mail	6 no 1 yes (product for consideration)	5 yes (product for review, 1 1xwk) 3 no

Only one agency professional said that they use surface mail, and that was for sending products to reporters for gift guides or special sections. Two of the corporate professionals used surface mail to send out material for review by critics because they requested the material that way.

Agency professionals tended to use Help a Reporter Out (HARO) or ProfNet more than their corporate counterparts, but most met with limited success.

> ProfNet got too expensive. HARO is not bad, but I don't get as much out of it as I used to. I don't know why. It seems like some of the national reporters don't use it. I see lots of freelance reporters using it and you also see a lot of anonymous stuff on there (Skype interview, 9/2012).

Corporate professionals reported that they did not use those services, but they tended to have more established relationships with the reporters they dealt with. "I used to use them when I was at [another company], but they've fallen off my list" said one corporate professional (telephone interview, 10/2012).

The Blogosphere

Bloggers are becoming increasingly important to practitioners. "You are seeing younger people more on the blog side, writing less formally. You are getting from them a little more give and get. They are usually a little more appreciative" (telephone interview, 9/2012). All but one agency professional said that they regularly pitch bloggers, but she did engage them occasionally on behalf of a client. It was the same with corporate professionals, with only one responding that they did not pitch bloggers,

but that was due to a small staff and was something they were planning on doing in the near future.

Blogs were especially of importance to practitioners when reaching out to special interest groups. "I think of them as journalists and treat them as such," said one corporate respondent. "We have some mommy bloggers who we work with regularly who I might just pick up the phone and call, but generally, I rely on email" (telephone interview, 9/2012).There were differing opinions, however, on blogs and bloggers themselves. One practitioner said this:

Media databases say that you deal with a blogger the same way

you do a journalist. Maybe they think they are journalists, and some of

them are, but blogs were made to express opinion. That is great as long as

we recognize it. They don't reach a huge audience, unless specialized

(Skype interview, 9/2012).

The same interviewee expressed frustration over contacting bloggers. "They don't always list their contact information. Many of my blog contacts come from other bloggers. I guess that's how the blogosphere has developed. It is almost as if they don't want to be contacted" (Skype interview, 9/2012). Another stated:

I will go on blogs and find something I can latch on to and write to

them about that. It is very, very time consuming. I have to be truly

interested in what they are saying so that I can relate to this or that and

start a relationship that way. I tell them all along that I am a PR person

and that I agree or disagree about what they write (telephone interview, 10/2012).

One corporate PR person placed high importance on blogs for their product:

We are shifting our focus. We have great relationships with people at blogs. [Name] who used to be at [print publication] left to start his own blog. We have to make sure that we are following those people who are influential and important. We definitely have to zig and zag with it (telephone interview, 10/2012).

Journalists Contacting PR Professionals

It seems that the one-way street that has characterized the PR/journalist relationship continues. All but two of the respondents indicated that reporters rarely reached out to them for information, unless there was a major announcement or an established relationship. The professionals who stated that they got at least 40-50 emails a day from journalists worked for major corporations. For all but four respondents, it was an "it depends" scenario. One respondent recalled an instance with a reporter who was working on a trend story who knew the practitioner represented a major golf manufacturer, so he emailed and requested high-resolution images of the company's product. Another respondent mentioned a crisis situation in which they got more calls than they could handle. The two who stated that journalists "almost never" contacted them were with small independent firms. The seven corporate practitioners indicated that they received more calls than did the eight agency professionals interviewed. Of

the corporate respondents, five said that journalists reached out to them primarily by email, two indicated that they usually received phone calls.

Cell phone numbers are becoming more prominent in communication with journalists. One corporate practitioner stated, "I now have my cell number on my email signature. Now that is standard. Cell phone numbers are not golden anymore. People expect to have it" (Skype interview, 9/2012). Five other practitioners stated that they included their cell phone numbers in any communication with journalists.

The practitioners interviewed were also making themselves more "findable" via the web. "My name is attached to press releases, regardless of where they are going," stated one practitioner (telephone interview, 8/2012). "When I got here, we did not have an online news room. I put that up. We are getting ready to re-launch it. One of the things we did was put our contact information out there," stated another (Skype interview, 9/2012).

Technology and Relationships

All of the professionals interviewed said that relationships were central to their media relations practice. In fact, the concept of relationships was a central theme throughout the interviews.

I consider many of my contacts friends," said an agency practitioner. "They are the ones who know if I am calling them, I am not necessarily calling to pitch a story. If I am calling to pitch a story, I know [the reporter's] beat and I know the tip will help them whether or not it will help my clients. If you see something, if you are in PR and are in the

world interacting with people and see interesting things happen, make

sure the story gets told, whether it is your client or not. That is part of the

relationship-building process, making sure reporters do their job and

move up the ranks. They are appreciative of you and know that you

aren't going to come back to them and ask them to write this story

because you have a quota to hit (personal interview, 9/2012).

Five of the seven agency professionals and all but one of the corporate

professionals agreed that new technologies have had an impact on their relationships

with reporters. One agency principal said:

I think there are always going to be media folks that don't like or

trust reporters. But I do think that [reporters] are realizing they need PR

people to do their jobs and do them faster. I think reporters are looking at

PR people saying, 'I need to have a good relationship with this person

(Skype interview, 8/2012).

A corporate PR professional said this:

Time becomes more of an issue. I am much closer to a smaller

group of journalists because we all commiserate on what is going on. I

have been on that side of the business and I feel for these guys. Most of

them really care, they are talented, and they really want to do a great job,

but they are buried. The few times you can get on the phone or see these

people, over a drink or something in New York, people start pouring

their guts out (Skype interview, 9/2012).

"Now anyone can pitch a reporter," said another agency professional:

Now everyone has Oprah's contact information. Because technology and the way everything is so open, transparent, and available, anyone can pitch the Oprah show. It is not just PR people who are pitching, it is bloggers, and people off the street who are not really in this business (telephone interview, 10/2012).

"I don't know that [because of technology] the relationships have shifted," said another agency principal:

The people I had strong relationships [when I worked for a corporation] I still have relationships now. No matter how you look at it, you are servicing a product and giving them more outlets to hate or like a product. Either they like it or they don't (Skype interview, 10/2012). Another corporate professional said:

In a lot of ways I think [relationship building] is harder. It is hard to see people in person; it is hard to get people on the phone. Everything is done electronically. I guess in some sense you are getting to know them better, but it is not as personal (telephone interview, 11/2012). She added:

When I first started at [company name], you would go to a conference or wherever and you would go get drinks and hang out with [reporters] and really spend time with them. Press tours are still wonderful for that. You actually get to have face-to-face conversations

with people which is awesome. In general, though, it is easy to connect with someone, but harder to build that true rapport with them. People are spread so thin and getting to know them through a computer is not the same (telephone interview, 8/2012).

"Now, instead of dealing with 10 people, we are now dealing with 30 people," said another corporate PR person (Skype interview, 9/2012).

When asked if new technologies like Facebook and Twitter have made relationship building easier or more difficult, the responses were mixed. Three agency professionals said that new ways of interacting with journalists had improved their ability to form and maintain relationships, while six of the seven corporate professionals said that it was more difficult to form and maintain relationships than before.

"To me, the bread-and-butter is still email and phone calls. But, as I mentioned, I never connect with [name] except on Twitter. [Technology] has helped in that regard," said an agency practitioner (Skype interview, 8/2012). Another seasoned agency professional stated:

> I am a big believer in personal connection. I don't tweet a lot. Facebook some. I don't have time. A lot of reporters say, 'send me stories on Twitter,' but if you have a great story, you aren't going to put it on Twitter (telephone interview, 10/2012).

A corporate professional had this to say about technology and its affect on pitching:

I think the demands on a reporter's time also provides more opportunities to get news out there. It might not rise to the level of a full feature story but it might end up as a blog post or they may tweet about it. It does provide more opportunities, I think (telephone interview, 10/2012).

Another corporate employee said:

The relationships haven't changed, but the advent of social media has presented a challenge. There is not only the immediacy factor, but in an interactive social media world, once the story is out, there is no way to stop it. In the old days it might have been pulled back, but it is really tough in an interactive world (Skype interview, 9/2012).

<u>Planning vs. Pitching</u>

Two professionals mentioned the importance of planning in pitching a story. "It is all about trying to get the big headline when you can," said an agency practitioner. "The realities of the shift from print to digital are manifesting themselves in a lot of different ways. Now, it is about being informed" (telephone interview, 9/2012). Another corporate respondent said:

I spend maybe 25 % of my week pitching, but that is the actual interaction. The planning is separate from the execution. When I was in radio one of my anchors said it this way: it is like letting the air out of a tire. You spend an hour blowing it up and five minutes letting the air out (Skype interview, 9/2012).

Planning also involved doing research differently. Instead of looking at what stories reporters have written, professionals are employing social media tools to research reporters. "Occasionally I go trolling to see who is writing things," said one respondent:

> Sometimes I come across a writer who is writing about things that may have been of interest to us, if we knew about it. I reach out to them and introduce myself. I do that primarily on Twitter. I tell them what we do and if they ever need anything or run another story we are here. There are Twitter directories that show who is covering what now (Skype interview, 10/2012).

Other Factors Affecting Relationships

Many of the agency professionals said that forming relationships with reporters depended on the client they were representing. "Big brands certainly have a leg up," said one respondent:

> I experience it with my clients, when you have a worldwide brand, people will talk to you. If you have a brand that is lesser known, it's harder. If you have a completely unknown brand, I think you have a better chance because you have something to talk about (Skype interview, 10/2012).

"I think the discussion is totally different if you work for a board of education or a water department," said one respondent:

There is stuff in local dailies that is so clearly…if it were coming

from a corporation, it would not go in. The boards of education are just

putting out their story. It is PR driven, not news driven. Because it is

coming from where it's coming from, it's printed (telephone interview,

9/2012).

"Reporters vary in age from 22 to 70. That impacts how you are going to reach

them," stated another interviewee. "Older reporters are not going to be interacting with

you on Twitter, unless they are being told to. The younger media, you reach them by

email or Twitter or Facebook" (Skype interview, 10/2012). "In my internships I had no

clue how to go about media pitching," said a more recent graduate:

We had written press releases and such in class, but no one ever

sat down and said, 'Don't send them a novel on the first note.' Quick,

short and to the point. Media pitching was never really explained, but it

is a lot of what my clients are asking. I think it's good to know social

media tools, but it was never explained how to deal with a reporter

(telephone interview, 9/2012).

Another interviewee mentioned using contacts from their time in the news

industry:

Right now I have someone coming to Atlanta, and I am calling old

friends and colleagues at [news outlet]. I say I have the number one

global economist from company X. I take trips to New York and spend a

few days in the newsroom and meet people I have talked to on the phone

and nurture those relationships. The other day I went to a farewell party

for a news anchor because I worked there for four years. I met the

assignment news editors. I met another prime-time anchor. I met the new

sports editor. I then sent them two- or three-line emails saying it was nice

to meet them and that we should get coffee. The best part of my job is

that I am still in news, but now it is a lot of work to keep relationships

going (telephone interview, 10/2012).

Another interviewee said:

I take some idea of what the client thinks is news and I make it

into news. Sometimes it is not news. I then call a friend in the press and

ask them if it would be something they would be interested in, and then

modify the pitch to make sure it is what people are looking for (telephone

interview, 9/2012).

Overview of Findings

Coming back to the original research questions these interviews were designed

to answer, media relations is being practiced differently now that more social media

tools are available and the pool of "traditional" journalists has gotten smaller. Public

relations professionals are blurring the lines somewhat in terms of professional and

personal relationships, which can be argued is a good thing. Certainly, dialogue is

central to the relationship.

Changes in technology, particularly social media, has provided valuable contact

points for PR professionals, particularly those newer to the industry or for professionals

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reaching out to a journalist they've never dealt with before. Still, direct contact via email and telephone is preferred.

Interdependence was certainly an apparent theme in the interviews with PR professionals. Journalists and PR professionals need each other to do their jobs, and to do them well. Mutual understanding of each party's role in the exchange is important, as is mutual respect.

The interviews with professionals also revealed that they are using concepts from relational dialectics. While practitioners and journalists are certainly not giving up the "self" of their professions, during the interaction with each other they are certainly occupying the same time and space (Baxter, 2004). These results also illustrate the organic nature of dialogue beyond different points of view. Dialogue also involves change for both parties. This goes hand in hand with the lessening of the adversarial nature of the relationship that has occupied both practice and folklore since PR's inception as a profession. Each party has a job to do, but as technology and lack of time and resources are becoming increasingly important issues,
perhaps both parties are learning that they need each other more than they once thought.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS OF TEXTBOOK CONTENT ANALYSIS

Addressing Media Relations

Moving from a look at the current state of media relations in practice, research question two a turns to public relations texts to see how public relations introductory texts, public relations writing texts, and journalism writing texts address media relations.

RQ2a: How do public relations texts address media relations and the journalist/PR practitioner interaction?

The content analysis of public relations writing texts and introductory public relations texts revealed a variety of ways in which both kinds of texts addressed media relations. Some books devoted entire chapters to the subject, and some did not address working with members of the press at all.

Interestingly, while all five of the introductory texts examined listed "media relations" in their indexes, two of the writing texts did not. *Effective Writing Skills for PR* (Foster, 2008) did not include any reference to media relations, and *Public Relations Writing: Principles and Practice* (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005) addressed media relations

only in a chapter on newswriting for the press. This was surprising, given that (as a prelude to the next section of this work reporting the results of professor interviews), most professors identified a public relations communication class or some derivation of such a class as the platform they used for most of their instruction about media relations.

The two texts mentioned above did discuss written tactics for reaching the media. Two of the writing texts, *Public Relations: Writing and Media Techniques* (Wilcox & Reber, 2013) and *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format* (Bivins, 2008) devoted entire chapters to media relations and/or working with journalists. Two of the introductory texts, *The Practice of Public Relations* (Seitel, 2011) and *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice* (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth, 2012), also had complete chapters dedicated to media relations, and one devoted a significant section of a chapter on government and public affairs to media relations.

Media relations appeared in the table of contents in three writing texts, listed as media relations and placement, working with journalists and bloggers, and media pitches. Media relations was also present in four of the introductory texts' table of contents, listed as external media and media relations, media relations, media queries, media placements, framing and media tours, and social and traditional media relations.

Three writing texts used the terms audience or public to describe the press, while one used the term "partners" in addition to audience. Four introductory texts referred

to the media as an audience or public while one used "gatekeepers" when describing

journalists.

<u>Media Relations Tactics</u>

In terms of specific tactics for reaching the media, Tables 6.1 and 6.2 give a

breakdown of tactics addressed in writing and introductory PR texts. In addition to the

items that were included in the code sheet, video news releases (VNRs) were mentioned

as an additional tactic by two writing texts. Two writing texts also mentioned

placement firms. One referred to newswires, radio news releases, editorial board

meetings and press junkets as additional ways to reach the media. One recommended

pitch letters, position papers, prepared statements, events, and public service

announcements.

Table 6.1: Tactics for Reaching the Media In PR Writing Texts

Book Title	News Releases	Multimedia News Releases	Press Kits	E-Press Kits	Media Alerts	Photos	Press Conferences	Email pitches	Media Catching	Online Newsrooms	Interviews	Media Tours	Facebook	Twitter	Press Parties	Profnet/ HARO
Effective Writing Skills for PR				X		X				X						
Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format	X		X		X	X	X			X	X				X	
Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public Relations Writing: Principles and Practice	X	X	X		X	X		X		X		X	X	X		
Public Relations Writing: Form and Style	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	

Table 6.2: Tactics for Reaching the Media In PR Introductory Texts

Book Title	News Releases	Multimedia News Releases	Press Kits	E-Press Kits	Media Alerts	Photos	Press Conferences	Email pitches	Media Catching	Online Newsrooms	Interviews	Media Tours	Facebook	Twitter	Press Parties	Profnet/ HARO
Public Relations: A Values-Driven Approach	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		
Cutlip & Center's Effective Public Relations	X		X				X					X				
Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Practice of Public Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice	X															

In the introductory texts, one book referred to VNRs, one mentioned YouTube and blogs, and one, *Public Relations: A Values Driven Approach* (Guth & Marsh, 2011) was almost entirely focused on social media, discussing mainly independent endorsement and push technology. That text did have a "memo from the field" breakout box with Gary McCormick, Director of Partnership Marketing at HGTV:

The changing role of traditional media requires public relations to build better and stronger relationships to compete for coverage. In addition, we will have to understand how to identify, prioritize, and develop the relationship with social media outlets to provide balance and enhance our efforts for awareness with growing audiences that increasingly segment their input from the media (p. 23).

Practitioner/Journalist Relationships

Three writing texts discussed the importance of relationships in the practitioner/journalist exchange, as did four of the introductory texts.

Excerpts from those texts include:

The media are a powerful force, and they can do a lot for you – or against you. The determining factor may well be how much you know about the media professionals and how well you get to know them as people (Bivins, 2008, p. 64).

Close and mutually respectful relationships with the media will also help to ensure that your organization is always treated fairly by the media, especially in circumstances where you have no control. Reporters

who know they can rely on you to provide accurate, timely cooperation when asked and who recognize that you do not waste their time with spurious releases unrelated to their interests, audiences or local areas are likely to approach you for a story if they hear something positive. Perhaps more important, they may warn you or ask for your comment before printing something negative. Ensuring that your organization receives fair treatment may be as close as you can come to controlling media content (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005, p. 227).

That same text followed with, "There are times when even the best relationships in the world are not going to get your release published" (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005, p. 229).

And in *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice*, a quote from James L. Fetig, a former press secretary for President Bill Clinton:

It all comes down to relationships. I trust reporters I know and I don't trust reporters I don't know. Most of us have long-standing relationships with journalists that are based on mutual trust. My advice to PR professionals is to know the journalists who cover their industry well and develop mutual credibility (Lattimore, et al., p. 184).

In their text *Public Relations: Writing and Media Techniques*, Wilcox and Reber (2013) refer to the concept that relationships between public relations professionals and reporters as being "symbiotic" and based on mutual respect for the other's work. They

state that "one definition of public relations is that it is the building of relationships between the organization and its various publics, including journalists" (p. 92).

However, only three writing texts and three introductory texts included specific tactics for relationship building. In terms of social media, no writing text and only one introductory text mentioned connecting on Facebook or Twitter as a tactic for creating and maintaining relationships with the press. Only one writing text mentioned blogging. Three writing texts addressed the importance of learning the reporters' beats, as did one of the introductory texts. One writing text mentioned "introducing yourself before an actual pitch," as did two introductory texts. One writing text and one introductory text used attending professional meetings like local press club luncheons as a way to establish and maintain relationships with reporters. Only one writing text suggested having meals with reporters. One introductory text compared relationships with reporters to a dating relationship, and two writing texts and two introductory texts stressed the importance of pitching only newsworthy information to the press.

One text gave several specific pointers for building relationships with the press:

Call a journalist with whom you will be working. Introduce yourself. Suggest a time to come to the newsroom and talk about some newsworthy story ideas. Reach out through your Facebook pages and Twitter accounts to include journalists in your networks – and follow them on their blogs and tweets and status updates.

Sometimes an indirect approach is required. Belonging to the local press club, attending meetings of the Society of Professional Journalists, or

becoming involved in community activities in which journalists are also invited are ways of getting to know media counterparts.

Once relationships are established, protect and cherish them. Do not squander valuable relationships by using them for small favors or one-shot story placements. Do not ruin a relationship by a expecting a reporter to always do what you want. Take no for an answer (Lattimore, et al., p. 184).

Having up-to-date websites with contact information was another means of relationship-building in two writing texts and two introductory texts. Being "on-call" 24/7 was stressed as important in two writing texts and two introductory texts. "Establishing mutual credibility" between the two parties was discussed in three writing texts and three introductory texts, and "establishing mutual dependency" was mentioned in two writing texts and two introductory texts. One writing text suggested complimenting a reporter on well-written stories not relating to the practitioner's business or client, as did one introductory text.

Relationship Tensions

As relational dialectics suggests, tension is a part of any relationship. Three writing texts and four introductory texts addressed the tension inherent in the PR practitioner/reporter relationship. One noted that "The relationship between the media and the establishment – that is, public relations people – should be one of friendly adversaries rather than of bitter enemies. Unfortunately, that is not always the case" (Seitel, 2011, p. 172).

"These relationships [between PR practitioners and reporters] although mutually beneficial, remain adversarial at their core, because journalists and practitioners are not in the same business and often do not have the same communication goals" (Broom, 2009, p. 252) also illustrates how these texts addressed tension.

Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques (Wilcox & Reber, 2013) provided a section on "Areas of Friction" between public relations practitioners and journalists, with a list of complaints from journalists about public relations personnel. These included poorly written press releases, shotgun distribution of press releases, lack of access to people, sending trash and trinkets, not taking "no" for an answer and not getting to the point of a release or pitch quickly enough.

Most of the texts that addressed tension also provided suggestions for managing the tension in the PR practitioner/reporter relationship. Three of each kind of text mentioned "establishing trust with honesty" as a way to manage tension, and two writing texts and one introductory text referred to adhering to the PRSA code of ethics as a way to lessen tension. Three writing texts and three introductory texts reminded students that it was important to remember that ultimately the reporter controls what is written or said about an organization or a client. Two writing texts and two introductory texts encouraged students to try and establish "mutual dependency" with reporters with whom they may regularly work, which was also identified by the interviews with professionals. Two writing texts provided suggestions for dealing with crisis situations, as did two introductory texts. Six texts (three writing and three introductory) stressed the importance of planning in the PR pitching process.

Only two writing texts and one introductory text addressed persuasion as part of the practitioner/reporter relationship, but in different contexts. In *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics*, Wilcox and Cameron (2012) address persuasive communication as another way of describing "win-win" outcomes, as having an "agenda" or plan prepared for communications, as well as the ethical dilemma that may arise from making a persuasive argument. Quotes from that text include: "The dominant view of public relations is of persuasive communication on behalf of clients;" "Persuasion can be used to change or neutralize hostile opinions, crystallize latent opinions, positive attitudes, and conserve favorable opinions;" and "Journalists often look for conflict in a story; public relations people strive for accommodation and conflict resolution" (p. 240).

Another text that mentioned persuasion did so in the context of persuasive communication with all audiences, focusing particularly on persuasive writing, stating that, "A persuasive message must be personally relevant to the audience. Otherwise they will ignore it" (Wilcox & Reber, 2013, p. 41).

Public Relations Writing: Principles and Practice (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005) said this about persuasion, using it as more of a job requirement:

> To persuasively express your organization's position, it is critical
>
> that you understand your opponent's position. Public relations writers
>
> should be able to write to both sides of many issues, although their
>
> employer's position will be what they publicly present. This is not to
>
> imply that they break any rules of ethics. Rather, it recognizes that if you

can predict the argument that will support your opponent's position, you will have an edge in formulating effective rebuttals. And remember, no matter how ardent you are in supporting your current employer, in your next job you may find yourself arguing the opposite side. The more you know about an issue, the more you become an expert in the field and the more likely it is that you will be sought after by other organizations (p. 329).

<u>Examining Kent and Taylor's Dialogic Tenets</u>

Since Kent and Taylor's (2002) concept of dialogic communication forms much of the theoretical foundation of this work, textbooks were coded for their five tenets of dialogic communication. Books were examined for the presence of mutuality (evidenced by language that suggested that organizations and publics are inextricably tied together), propinquity (language that suggests that journalists should be consulted about what matters to them), empathy (creating an atmosphere of support and trust), risk (language that suggested self-disclosure, or vulnerability to the other party), and commitment, or working toward shared meaning through dialogue.

All five of the introductory texts examined and three of the writing texts contained some reference to the concept that journalists and public relations practitioners must find ways to work with each other.

One intro text in particular linked the concept of **mutuality** with mutual dependency:

Perhaps nothing is more important to successful publicity as the relationships established between public relations practitioners and journalists. Public relations practitioners should take the time and make the effort to establish good personal relations. As well, mutual dependency tends to increase when public relations practitioners deal with specialized reporters who cover their industry, when the issues are more complex, and when the reporter is given enough time and space to thoroughly cover the story (Lattimore, et al., 2012, p. 205).

Another intro text said this:

Public relations practitioners serving businesses stand in the middle. They must interpret their companies and clients to the media, while showing their CEO and other high-level officials how open, friendly media relations can serve their interests. One major interest that executives have is corporate reputation, and this is often tarnished or enhanced by the type of media coverage that an organization receives (Wilcox & Cameron, 2012, p. 448).

To introduce media relations, one chapter opened this way:

This chapter explores the symbiotic relationship between publicists and journalists from several perspectives. First, we explore how publicists and journalists depend on each other. Then, we examine the various complaints and pet peeves that public relations professionals and journalists have about each other (Wilcox & Reber, 2013, p. 87-88).

Three writing texts and two introductory texts addressed the concept of propinquity in their discussions of media relations. "Learn all you can about the media outlets and the individuals with whom you will be dealing with on a regular basis," wrote Bivins (2008, p. 65).

> If you get a chance to meet them in person, do so. Again, be brief, keep it professional, and don't get away without asking them what you can do to make their jobs easier. Talk to journalists about what matters to them. Remember, this is a two-way relationship (Bivins, 2008, p. 65).

An introductory text reminded students to consider what a journalist goes through on a daily basis, and to keep that in mind when formulating pitches or interactions (Seitel, 2011). A writing text did not address **propinquity** in terms of directly asking a journalist what matters to them, but called for significant research into journalists' beats and desired means of contact before reaching out to them (Wilcox & Reber, 2013).

Three writing texts and two introductory texts addressed the concept of **empathy** or creating support and trust in dealing with journalists. Only two writing texts and one introductory text addressed **risk** and the idea of **commitmen**t in the journalist/PR practitioner relationship.

Wilcox and Reber (2013) said this about **trust**: "The working relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is based on mutual cooperation, trust and respect" (p. 90). Their text also affirmed the value of the media as "third-party

endorsers of information" (p. 89), which suggests that some trust must be present in order for journalists to believe what public relations professionals are pitching them.

In his writing text, Bivins (2008) stressed the importance of always being honest. "It takes a lot of hard work to build credibility, and nothing builds credibility like honesty. It only takes one mistake to ruin months of credibility building" (p. 66). One writing text suggested tips for pitching with a "keep at it" approach. Newsom and Haynes (2011) suggest that one pitch isn't enough and that the opportunities for placement increase with "meticulous media-follow up and re-pitches" (p. 196). The book even suggests that 25 % of stories occur after the sixth to eighth pitch. It may take that long to establish trust with a reporter, according to Newsom and Haynes (2011).

Two writing texts and one introductory text addressed the concept of risk. Those same texts addressed commitment in the reporter/PR practitioner relationship. Bivins (2008) said this about risk: "Don't assume that reporters are out to get you. If you've established a good working relationship with them, they are probably going to seek out your help, not try to assassinate you" (p. 67).

Lattimore, et al., explained that risk is a very real part of media relations practice.
Every media contact is an opportunity to get feedback, to tell your story,
to create a positive response to your organization. Of course there are
dangers, but what opportunity presents itself without risk? And what
opportunity can be taken without preparation? (2012, p. 193).

In the same text, the authors explain commitment this way:

> Meeting the media is an opportunity, not a problem; therefore
> defensiveness is not appropriate. The attitude of an interviewee toward
> the journalist should be one of hospitality, cooperation, and openness. At
> the same time, the interviewer need not be the person in control. Have
> your own agenda (Lattimore, et al., 2012, p. 194).

Bivins (2008) approached commitment as attempting to develop shared meaning. "Give media people what they want, not what you want. Ideally, they can be the same thing. The key, of course, is to make your information newsworthy, following the criteria of consequence, interest, timeliness, proximity and prominence" (p. 67).

Some texts provided some seemingly misleading or even false information about dealing with journalists, such as this comment by Treadwell and Treadwell (2005). "The better you know the editors, reporters, and correspondents who will act as gatekeepers for your releases, the better you will be able to position press releases to pass through those gates more easily" (p. 227). While the statement is true in its most base sense, it seems to lead the reader to believe that a closer relationship with editors and reporters might "grease the skids" for publication of news items (p. 229). They do go on to say, however, that there are times when "even the best relationships in the world are not going to get your release published" (p. 229).

Journalism Texts

From an examination of public relations texts, this chapter now turns to journalism texts to examine how, if at all, these books address the practice of public

relations, and media relations in particular. To restate research question 2b: *How do journalism texts address media relations, if they do so at all?*

Addressing Media Relations

Only one of the 10 journalism writing texts analyzed included "media relations" as an index item. However, six of the journalism texts referred to public relations in the index, either with a chapter on the practice of PR or a section of a chapter on PR as a profession. According to one journalism professor, this is because some smaller schools rely on journalism texts to provide an introduction to public relations writing in the absence of an entire class on the subject, or in the absence of a public relations program (personal conversation, 10/2012). Titles of chapters in books that dedicated entire chapters to the subject of PR included "Journalism and Public Relations" (Bender, Davenport, Drager & Fedler, 2012), "Public Relations" (Harrower, 2012), "Writing News Releases" (Mencher, 2010) and "Working in PR" (The Missouri Group, 2011).

Media Relations Tactics

Nine of the journalism texts referred to press releases, five mentioned press kits, two mentioned photos, and three included press conferences. Three mentioned online newsrooms as a source for basic information, and two referred to Facebook and three referred to Twitter as a means of finding news stories. Only one, *News Reporting and Writing* from The Missouri Group (2011) listed media relations in its index. Table 6.3 provides an overview of the tactics each text provided for interaction with public relations practitioners.

Table 6.3: Tactics for Reaching the Media in Journalism Writing Texts

Book Title	News Releases	Multimedia News Releases	Press Kits	E-Press Kits	Media Alerts	Photos	Press Conferences	Email pitches	Media Catching	Online Newsrooms	Interviews	Media Tours	Facebook	Twitter	Press Parties	Profnet/HARO
News Reporting and Writing	X		X			X	X				X	X				
Reporting for the Media	X			X												
Writing for Mass Media	X						X			X						
Writing and News Reporting: A Coaching Method	X	X	X										X	X		
Reporting and Writing Basics for the 21st Century	X		X							X	X			X		
Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing	X															
Writing and Reporting the News	X	X	X										X	X		
Elements of News Writing	X															
Journalism: Principles and Practice																
Inside Reporting	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X					

<u>Practitioner/Journalist Relationships</u>

As an overall sample, all of the texts referred to public relations more as a career choice than addressing working with public relations professionals as part of a reporter's job. *Reporting for the Media* (Bender, et al., 2012) did provide a good description of the reporter/PR practitioner relationship:

> While public relations practitioners need journalists to be interested in their stories, journalists in turn need practitioners for story ideas and as sources. The best practitioners know their client or organization well, locate information quickly and arrange interviews with experts and top executives. Public relations practitioners use these skills to build trust and a working relationship with reporters (p. 535).

Three of the journalism texts did not address the subject of public relations at all. Of the texts that did, most presented public relations in a favorable light, with a few exceptions. *Journalism: Principles and Practice* (Harcup, 2009) called public relations practitioners "hired prize fighters" (p. 21), and referred to them as "gatekeepers", "spin doctors," and a "necessary evil" of reporting (p. 21). That same text had this to say about the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners: "Although many press officers have good working relationships with journalists, based on trust or even grudging respect, the fact remains that they are working *to different agendas*" (Harcup, 2009, p. 20).

In *Writing for the Mass Media* (Stovall, 2002), the text focuses on public relations as rooted in media relations:

In most organizations, one of the chief responsibilities [of public

relations professionals] is that of media liaison. The PR person is called on

to help find out information about the organization that would be useful

to the news reporter in putting together a story (p. 339).

Relationship Tensions

Three journalism texts addressed the tension inherent in the journalist/PR

practitioner relationship. The texts primarily addressed the issue from an ethical

perspective. Those same texts provided suggestions for managing tensions, including

establishing trust with honesty, establishing mutual dependency, and planning for

interactions.

Examining Kent & Taylor's Dialogic Tenets

Only three of the journalism texts contained material that could relate back to

tenets of dialogic theory. In *Reporting for the Media*, Bender, Davenport, Drager and

Fedler (2008) state that "public relations professionals and journalists need each other"

(p. 535), which addressed mutuality. That same text addressed the tenet of propinquity

with "PR practitioners identify the proper news departments and the people in charge

of the departments before sending out a release" (p. 537).

Stovall (2012) obliquely addressed the tenet of propinquity by saying that PR

professionals should do research to find out if what they're writing or pitching is of

interest to a journalist.

<u>Overview of Findings</u>

To be sure, textbooks provide a foundation for instruction in the classroom. What educators choose to take from those textbooks and use in exercises, examples, activities and assignments is up to the professor teaching the class. A good number of the public relations texts examined provided tactical information for reaching the press. Few went further to talk about the human aspect of the reporter/practitioner interaction. Additionally, several texts spoke of the importance of relationships, but few texts provided suggestions for forming and maintaining those relationships. It is unrealistic to think that texts can provide intricate instruction on relationship formation and enhancement. Some of the texts examined seemed to lack reference to anything beyond basic fundamental instruction on "getting the word out" to journalists. In most of the texts, there was no reference to the tactical nuances of relationship building like offering exclusives, complimenting reporters on well-written stories regardless of their subject, providing news tips not related to a practitioner's client or company, or recognizing the value of an occasional email just to "check in" with a reporter, all of which are important in building relationships and engaging in dialogue, according to professionals.

Journalism texts were sparse in their inclusion of material that addressed working with public relations professionals. Most of the journalism writing texts were focused on news gathering and writing news stories, and if public relations practitioners were mentioned, they were referred to most often as "a source."

From this examination of texts, this work now moves to the next phase of research: conversations with public relations professors to see how they address media relations and relationships with reporters in their classes.

CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS OF PROFESSOR INTERVIEWS

Public Relations Professors

All 10 of the interviewees currently taught or had taught public relations writing or some derivation of that class sometime in the last two years. Three of the interviewees said that they spent one or two days covering media relations in their PR writing classes, or in their strategic communication class, which was taught by one professor. Four professors indicated that they dedicated two to three days specifically to media relations in their PR writing courses, but that they tried to incorporate media relations into the entire course. One professor had developed a curriculum and taught a class devoted completely to media relations. The six professors who taught introductory classes said they spent anywhere from one to three complete class periods on the topic of the media and media relations. In the PR writing classes, three professors said that they spent anywhere from two weeks to five weeks devoted to media relations. All of the professors said they tried to incorporate media relations throughout their PR writing classes.

Teaching Media Relations as Dialogue

Findings from public relations professors provided qualitative support for H1a*: Public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process.*

H4 (*A majority of professors will agree with teaching media relations through a dialogic lens*) was also supported by the interviews.

All 10 of the public relations professors stressed the importance of a relationship between journalists and public relations professionals. All but one of them described the relationship as "dialogic" almost immediately when asked about practitioner/journalist relationships. The one that disagreed possessed significant professional experience, and did not immediately agree with the concept of the relationship as dialogic. That professor had a more "it depends" attitude:

It depended on the journalist and it depended on my media relations person as well. It depended on the editorial practices of a particular medium. As you might expect, there were some, and this is from the PR side, there were some journalists that were not interested in opening a dialogue. They were interested in one side of info and one side of a story and they were not interested in the relationship that could be built if there was a dialogue, a conversation about more than just pressing info. Not all of them, but there were some (telephone interview, 1/2013).

Another professor used their professional experience to describe how they treat media relations in the classroom this way:

There are two different ways of teaching [media relations]. Some professors teach it the way it is "supposed" to be. In my case, I just have to say how it is done in real life. I always say that a relationship between a PR person and journalist is supposed to be a professional relationship first

of all, but it is also supposed to be a friendly relationship because they can

be professional friends. I always start with the fact that if you want to

work with someone you know them personally. You have to be in a

normal relationship with a person to work successfully…remembering

that it is a professional relationship first. You have to protect your

company and you have to be assertive if you need to be. (telephone

interview, 10/2012).

Of the professors interviewed, three seemed to possess a disconnect between

what the professor actually thought about media relations and what the professor was

teaching in the classroom. When asked the question about what an "ideal" relationship

looks like between a practitioner and a journalist, one interviewee actually remarked,

"What do I think it looks like or what do I teach" (telephone interview, 10/2012)?

Another, when asked about the ideal relationship, said, "I would say it would be a

symmetrical one in which the practitioner is generating materials that are of use to the

journalist and where the journalist then becomes a potential outlet for the practitioner's

employer" (telephone interview, 9/2012). However, the respondent followed up with,

"What is actually being done is very asymmetric. It is pushing info out to journalists. [In

explaining media relations to my students], news outlets are one channel that we can

distribute information [to]. I then go into a discussion of how to make the information

useful for the journalists" (telephone interview, 9/2012).

 The professor who taught the class devoted to media relations developed the

course because of her professional experience in PR. "Every single job I had, one of my

primary jobs was media relations. Surveys of PR practitioners always have media relations right there at the top of what they do" (telephone interview, 11/2012). She went on to say, "I don't think you can take one chapter on it in a textbook and do it justice. Our students go on camera and do mock interviews, they do the whole gambit. I think it is very important to have a class for it" (telephone interview, 11/2012).

Supporting H1a, all but one of the professors stressed the importance of ongoing dialogue with journalists, and tried to teach that concept in their classes. "I always explain to students that the journalists are the lifeline of a media relations professional. You have to know the journalists in the city you are working in. You have to know them and how to get them to cover what you want [them to cover]" (telephone interview, 11/2012).

An initial answer to RQ4 (*Do professors of public relations and journalism agree that media relations is rooted in tension?*) was found in how the public relations professors described the relationship between practitioners and journalists in their classes (this RQ will also be addressed in the survey results). Respect of journalists was a concept that threaded its way through all of the interviews. Describing the relationship, one professor said, "It is respectful; not a friendship but a partnership. You can trust one another and count on one another, but are respectful of the job the reporter has to do" (telephone interview, 11/2012). She added, "Your news isn't always good news. [Reporters] are respectful of the PR person and know that their job is to advocate for their client and there are some things you just can't share at the moment" (telephone interview, 11/2012).

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Another professor said this in how she explains the reporter/practitioner relationship to her students:

We go back into the history of how journalists were going after big business, but then the journalists were hired by those big businesses. The first PR practitioners were journalists because they understood the news and how to write. I tell my students that media is one of your publics, it's not just your donors, consumers, or employers. Media is part of your target audience. You need to foster that relationship, just like you do others. You need to start the minute you get hired, by introducing yourself and making yourself available. Understanding that there are a lot of people competing for their time and their story. You have to suck it up and move on and don't be offended if they don't use your story or if it doesn't come out right, it is an ongoing relationship (telephone interview, 12/2012).

That same professor said that she took her students to a newsroom or broadcast station to talk to the director and tell the students why they hate what some PR practitioners do. "They start reeling it off. I then let my students know up front that this is not what you want to do. I try to create that relationship with my students early on and get them to sit down and have a dialogue with the media" (telephone interview, 12/2012).

When asked about the concept of the journalist/practitioner relationship as being rooted in tension, responses were mixed. Six of the professors responded that the journalist/practitioner relationship was rooted in tension, while four of them did not. Much of the reasoning behind both views, however, was historical and technological.

One professor expressed her views on the conflict between the two professions this way:

> I talk about history and how it started that way. A lot of it was our fault. Making it more entertainment than news. We need to understand what news is and make sure that is what we give to journalists. We both have jobs to do, and different methods to go about it. Historically, I don't think all PR practitioners understood what news is. Today, we do a better job of it, and we are much more educated and know what news is better than before. But it started a long, long time ago (telephone interview, 12/2012).

Another said, "I think it was, but I don't think it is anymore" (telephone interview, 11/2012). The advent of social media has "changed the nature of the game," said one interviewee (telephone interview, 10/2012). When put in the context of the relationship being a "series of negotiations," eight professors agreed that the statement was a good description, whether or not they agreed that the relationship was based in conflict. Two did not. One said:

I think negotiation would imply that someone is right and someone

is not right. Someone is going to gain something; I always refer to it as a

balancing act. They need to put forth a fair message and we need to

advocate on behalf of our client" (telephone interview, 11/2012).

The Role of Textbooks

From the interviews, RQ3 received mixed responses (*Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect educators' attitudes about media relations?).* All but one of the professors used texts for their introductory and writing classes. Five of the professors had no say in the texts they used. Six professors used or had used one of the introductory texts coded for this study, and eight professors used or had used one of the writing texts. One professor said her approach in her writing class was 60 % textbook and 40 % handouts, guest speakers, and other supplementary materials. Three agreed that the texts they used were laid out in a way that helped them incorporate media relations throughout the semester in their writing classes. One said they used a text that none of the professors who taught PR writing at their institution liked. This was a text that they had no choice in using. All of the professors incorporated outside information to supplement the texts they used in class, both in their introductory and writing classes. Since all of the professors interviewed had some professional experience, they used their experiences as illustrations for their classes. Five did say that it was difficult to find a text that was up-to-date on practicing media relations in the age of social media.

<u>Theoretical Grounding</u>

When asked about a public relations theory that described their view of media relations, many of the professors were stumped. One mentioned game theory, three professors mentioned relationship management, one mentioned persuasion theory, one said "we don't have any" (telephone interview, 10/2012) and four said either "no" or skimmed over the question. One did admit that, "she'd never really thought about it" (telephone interview, 11/2012).

One professor said this:

> To me, it is all about the relationship. We harp on that with our students. That is our definition. It is relationship management. It is what we do. We are bridging between the publics and the institutions we serve. There is one theory, and I don't like it, but I think it is PR that talks about being strategic management and being mutually beneficial. I understand that your client is your number one priority and you have to make sure they get their needs met. But I don't think they can get their needs met unless there are mutually beneficial *relationships* with all of the publics that we serve. There's a distinction between outcomes and relationships (telephone interview, 12/2012).

All of the professors agreed that creating ongoing dialogue was important or "critical" to the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners. However, the question, "What would you say to the concept that PR should focus on long-lasting relationships first, outcomes second," responses were mixed. Six professors agreed with

the concept, while two did not. Two had no clear or definite answer to the question. One said, "In my opinion, there is a direct relationship. The better the relationship, the better the outcome" (telephone interview, 10/2012).

All of the professors agreed that persuasion plays a role in the journalist/PR practitioner relationship. "We are constantly trying to sell people on our ideas and perspectives" said one (telephone interview, 11/2012). Another said, "Persuasion is not propaganda. You have to be very transparent. I think the number one thing is to make sure you're working for a company of high integrity and that you believe in" (telephone interview, 12/2012). Another respondent said that they try to teach their students to be good storytellers. Some were adamant, however, about being ethical in persuasion. "If you are doing it dirty, can you live with yourself" (telephone interview, 10/2012)?

Journalism Professors

From the interviews, H1b was not supported (*Journalism professors view interactions between the press and public relations practitioners as necessary, but not as a dialogic process*). All 10 of the journalism professors had some professional experience in journalism. Seven professors taught in a school of journalism, two taught in a communications division of arts and sciences schools, and two taught in schools of journalism and mass communication. Classes taught by the professors varied more than those taught by the public relations professors. All of the professors taught or had taught news writing and/or reporting. Six taught or had taught an introduction to journalism course. Two taught classes on journalism history.

Eight of the professors addressed public relations in either their introductory or newswriting classes, or both. Six of them devoted one class period to the subject of public relations, which included media relations, one devoted a week to public relations, one incorporated PR into their entire introduction to journalism course and one "touched on it" in their newswriting class (telephone interview, 11/2012). Two did not address the relationship at all in their classes. This leads to potentially supporting H3b: *Educators in journalism address public relations in the classroom minimally, if at all.*

As with the public relations professionals, there was a disconnect in what the journalism professors actually thought about the journalist/PR practitioner relationship and what they taught in their classes. There were inconsistencies in how the professors viewed the relationship and how they taught their students about it. Initial responses when asked about the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners were, for the most part, fairly neutral. Instead of animosity toward the profession, some professors expressed more of a problem with PR professionals who worked for certain organizations. One cited government agencies in particular, and another referred to practitioners at a few major corporations that stonewalled information exchange. For the most part, however, the professors had a realistic view of the need for public relations practitioners in journalism practice, and expressed the differences in the two professions in terms of different perspectives.

RQ4 (*Do professors of public relations and journalism agree that media relations is rooted in tension?*) was also supported for the journalism professors. Eight of the

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interviewees mentioned the tension or conflict between the professions at some point in the interview.

One professor said this:

We talk about how there are a lot of people trying to influence your information getting. You have got to deal with these people professionally, but you also have to deal with people who are more aggressively trying to monitor your story. I think that it can be a negotiated conflict (telephone interview, 9/2012).

Another said, "I think there has always been tension and there will always be tension" (telephone interview, 12/2012).

However, the professors thought that tension could be managed through good relationships with PR practitioners. All of the professors agreed that the relationship between the two professions was dialogic.

One professor said this:

I consider the loyalties of the two actors here, you think journalist and PR person; the loyalties are what really drive all of us in our professional practices and relationships. An ideal would be closing the gap on where those loyalties lie. To me, it's about angle of vision (telephone interview, 11/2012).

That same professor expressed the importance of rhetoric in both professions:

We spend way too much time talking about what someone's feelings are rather than about point of view. From the journalist's

standpoint, it is about trying to be an avid and engaged spectator whose feelings are engaged in the dialogue (telephone interview, 11/2012). Another said:

Journalists sometimes look upon themselves as too holy, and think that PR's perspective is an alliance and a loyalty to the company. You are out to help the company. Journalists look at themselves as portrayers of the truth and the American way, and in a lot of ways, yes, that is true, but there is a lot of common ground there. I think if you are a PR practitioner, you want to provide accurate information that will help your company. As a journalist, you are looking at it from the perspective of the people involved and from an audience standpoint. For someone in PR, you look at it from a company standpoint (telephone interview, 10/2012).

When asked how they describe the relationship between journalists and PR practitioners to students in the classroom, one professor said, "I don't think we really do. It is more 'this is what a PR person or a strategic relations person does'." Another said, "We touch on it. We do talk a good bit about journalist independence and the pursuit of the truth. We certainly talk about how there are a lot of people trying to influence your information-getting" (telephone interview, 11/2012). Another said, "The only thing I talk about in the [journalist/PR practitioner] relationship is that PR people tell stories and that news people pick apart that story. One person spins it, and another person picks apart that spin" (telephone interview, 12/2012). Yet another professor who

taught the introduction to journalism class said they spent "minutes" on the topic (telephone interview, 10/2012).

The professor who incorporated PR into their entire introduction to journalism class said this:

> We incorporate [PR] on a lot of different levels. On Friday, we did a mock press conference. Yesterday I started the class by showing clips from *Star Wars*. Talking about this nostalgia that journalists like to see themselves as defenders of justice on the light side, that they are fighting for truth and PR people are part of the dark side trying to spin the truth. I say, 'this is rubbish.' There are plenty of good PR people and I describe people I have worked with. You need them and they need you. It is a symbiotic relationship. We talk about how when you have a good relationship with the PR person, they are often the first person to want to expose a problem, move on and fix it. We also talk about how PR can be just as noble as journalism because you can fight for causes you believe in (telephone interview, 12/2012).

Another professor with public relations experience who taught a newswriting class focused on relationships:

> We talk a lot about personal relationships. I was always one of those people who relied on personal relationships coming up through the ranks. We talk about these personal relationships. We need to turn out students who understand the demarcations between roles, and the

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importance of dialogue between the two roles to come to an

understanding (telephone interview, 10/2012).

Eight of the professors believed that, if possible, the relationship between

journalists and PR practitioners should try to create win-win situations, which hearkens

back to what the professionals interviewed for this work said about trying to work

towards mutually beneficial outcomes. One professor said, "I think getting to an

acceptable point [for both parties] should be the goal" (telephone interview, 12/2012).

Another said, "I think you have to look at the history of PR and what has been done to

spin things, but most of the PR people I know today are good people who are trying to

do ethical work. They are putting forth their narrative, but everyone does" (telephone

interview, 11/2012).

The majority of professors also agreed that persuasion is key on both sides of the

reporter/PR practitioner relationship. "There are PR people who are remarkably

persuasive and there are journalists who are remarkably persuasive with PR people,"

said one professor (telephone interview, 11/2012).

Bringing the Two Together

While it seems that both PR professors and journalism professors have positive

views about the role of public relations and relationships with the media, those views

may not always be communicated to students. Some professors seem to do a good job

of integrating ideas about dialogue and media relations into their classes, and some do

not. Whether or not this is a time constraint issue, a curriculum issue, or is rooted in

something else is unclear.

Regardless, both groups recognize the importance of dialogue and ongoing relationships in the journalist/PR practitioner relationship.

The survey findings that follow shed more light on public relations professors' views of relationships and how they teach media relations to their students, particularly from the stance of a dialogue between the two parties. The survey of journalism professors also revealed interesting findings, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER VIII

RESULTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND JOURNALISM PROFESSOR SURVEY

Public Relations Professor Survey Participants' Demographics

The survey of public relations professors resulted in 93 useable responses out of 113 returned surveys. The response rate for the public relations professor survey was 14%. Fifteen professors provided incomplete surveys, which were not included in the results. Ninety-eight professors "completed" the survey, but five professors chose to click through the survey without providing responses. Eight email addresses failed to reach respondents due to technical problems, respondents' out of office reply, etc. Another two public relations professors responded that they did not have time to take the survey for various reasons.

Descriptive analyses of the demographic data was done to provide information about the respondents' age, the number of years of professional experience of the professor, the title of their current position, the number of years they had been teaching, and the number of years they had been at their current school (see Table 8.1). Seventeen professors were between the ages of 30 and 39, 21 professors were 40 - 49, 25 professors were 50 -59, and 25 professors were 60 or older. The average age of the respondents was M=51.62 (SD=11.24). Sixty-four professors held a Ph.D., 20 had completed a Master's degree, two were Bachelor's graduates, and five had other degrees, primarily Master's

of Education. Twenty-three had between one and five years of professional experience in public relations, 21 had between six and 10 years of experience, 10 had 11 - 15 years of experience, 15 had 16 - 20 years of experience, 10 had 21 - 25 years of experience, and 14 had between 26 - 35 years of professional experience.

Twenty-three respondents were full professors, 22 were associate professors, 27 were assistant professors, and 12 were lecturers. Seven held other titles, including professor emeritus, professor of practice, and instructor. Twelve had been teaching for five years or fewer, 26 had been teaching 6 - 10 years, 15 had been teaching for 11 - 15 years, 9 for 16 - 20 years, 11 for 21 - 25 years, six for 26 - 30 years, and 10 had been teaching for more than 30 years. Thirty-four professors had been at their current institution for fewer than five years, 19 for 6 - 10 years, 16 for 11 - 20 years, 11 for 21 - 25 years, and five had been at their current school for 26 - 34 years. Table 8.1 provides a breakdown of PR professor age, highest degree, years of experience and years teaching.

Table 8.1: Public Relations Professor Age, Degree, Years of Experience, and Years Teaching

Variable		Frequency (%)
Age	30-39	17 (19.3%)
	40-49	21 (22.8%)
	50-59	25 (26.9%)
	60 and over	25 (26.9%)
	no answer	5 (5.4%)
Highest Degree	Bachelor's	2 (2.2%)
	Master's	20 (21.5%)
	Ph.D.	64 (68.8%)
	other	7 (7.6%)
Years of Professional Experience in Public Relations	1-5	23 (24.8%)
	6-10	20 (22.6%)
	11-15	10 (13.1%)
	16-20	15 (16.2%)
	21-35	22 (23.9%)
	no answer	2 (2.2%)
Years Teaching	1-5	11 (14.9%)
	6-10	26 (28.1%)
	11-15	15 (16.1%)
	16-20	9 (9.7%)
	21-25	11 (11.9%)
	26-30	6 (6.5%)
	31-45	10 (11.0%)
Years at Current Institution	1 (or first year)	7 (7.5%)
	2-5	24 (29.2%)
	6-10	19 (20.4%)
	11-15	16 (17.4%
	16-20	3 (3.3%)
	21-25	11 (12.0%)

In response to what classes they taught most often (they could choose more than one), 64 professors indicated public relations writing or communication, 64 said introduction to public relations, 56 said public relations campaigns, 21 said public

relations administration or management, 13 said introduction to mass communication, and 35 said public relations cases.

When asked about the classes in which they address media relations, 57 said public relations writing or communication, 50 said introduction to public relations, 36 addressed the topic in campaigns, 12 covered media relations in PR administration/management, five said introduction to mass communication, 28 said PR cases, and 14 said they addressed media relations in other classes, including a class on media relations (n=3), crisis communication (n=2), PR strategies and tactics (n=1), and public relations and social media (n=1).

The "composite public relations professor" from the demographic data was a 52–year-old Ph.D. with six to eight years of professional experience and 12-13 years of teaching experience. They had been at their current institution for about 10 years, and taught primarily public relations writing or communication or introduction to public relations.

Journalism Professor Survey Participants' Demographics

Of the total 764 journalism professors contacted to take part in the survey, five invitations failed to reach respondents due to technical problems, permanent failure of email addresses, or respondents out of office reply. For the journalism survey, 113 respondents started the survey. Sixteen respondents not complete it. Another four "clicked through" the survey without providing any information. Those four were considered "incomplete," as there were significant blanks in those surveys. This left 94

useable completed surveys available for analysis, with a response rate of 15%,

providing both an N and RR nearly identical to that of the public relations professors.

As with the public relations professors, descriptive analyses were conducted for

the survey data to explore demographic profiles of the sample: their age, the number of

years of professional experience the professor possessed, the title of their present

position, the number of years they had been teaching, and the number of years they had

been at their current school (see Table 8.2). The largest %age of respondents had more

than 20 years of teaching experience and more than 20 years of professional experience.

This may be due to the fact that some were still practicing journalism in some capacity

during part or all of their teaching careers.

Of the journalists who completed the survey, four had no professional

experience, 25 had between two and five years of professional experience, 15 had

between six -10 years of experience, 17 had between 11 -18 years of experience, and 33

respondents said that they had 20 or more years of practical experience. Respondents

had a mean of 15.99 (*SD*=9.30) years of teaching experience. Thirty-seven respondents

had more than 20 years of teaching experience.

The highest degree obtained by 61 of the participants was a Ph.D. Twenty-five

had obtained a Master's degree, and one had obtained a Bachelor's degree. Seven

respondents had other degrees, including an Ed.D., a J.D., an M. Phil, an MBA, and an

MFA in Creative Writing. Journalism professors completing the survey had a mean age

of 53 (*M*=52.76, *SD*=10.23). Table 8.2 gives a breakdown of age, degree and years of

practical experience, including %ages.

Table 8.2: Journalism Professor Age, Degree, Years of Experience and Years of Teaching

Variable		Frequency (%)
Age	25-29	1 (1.1%)
	30-39	12 (13.1%)
	40-49	18 (19.1%)
	50-59	34 (36.2%)
	60 and over	28 (29.9%
Highest Degree	Bachelor's	1 (1.1%)
	Master's	25 (26.6%)
	Ph.D.	61 (64.9%)
	Other	7 (7.4%)
Years of Professional Experience in Journalism	none	4 (4.3%)
	1-5	25 (26.6%)
	6-10	15 (16%)
	11-15	11 (11.7%)
	16-20	6 (6.4%)
	21 or more	33 (35.1%)
Years of Teaching	1-5	14 (14.9%)
	6-10	15 (16%)
	11-15	23 (24.5%)
	16-20	10 (10.7%)
	21-25	12 (12.8%)
	25-29	5 (6.4%)
	30 or more	17 (18.1%)
Years in Current Position	1 (or first year)	9 (9.6%)
	2-10	42 (44.7%)
	11-20	28 (29.8&)
	21-29	7 (7.5%)
	30 or more	8 (8.5%)

The "composite journalism professor" from the demographic information obtained was a 53 year-old Ph.D. with more than 20 years of professional experience and 11-15 years of teaching experience. They had been at their current institution for 2-10 years and taught a variety of journalism classes.

<u>Statistical Analysis for Research Questions and Hypotheses</u>

An exploratory factor analysis was done to separate concepts of "interaction" from concepts of "dialogue" in the questions on the public relations survey. The factor analysis did not reveal two distinct factors, possibly because the concepts are seen as intertwined. Indices were then developed based on conceptualizations and question wording. Chronbach's Alpha tests confirmed the reliability of the indices, at .73 (interaction) and .78 (dialogue). Through this process, valid measures for these concepts were developed.

It should be noted here that for this section of results, some of the research questions and hypotheses have been explored or addressed in earlier results sections of this dissertation, therefore all of them are not represented here. Statistical analysis was done on some of the hypotheses written for other portions of this work (H1a and H1b, for example) to provide statistical support for the results of previous sections. Additionally, for some tests, data sets for journalism and public relations survey responses were combined for analysis of some items, for example, RQ 3.

To answer RQ3, for public relations professors (*Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect professors' views about media relations?*), descriptive statistics revealed that most professors (*n* = 89) agree that public relations texts accurately reflect their views on media relations (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = .95). This also helps to support the idea that texts do reflect professors' views, which received mixed responses in the interviews with PR professors.

In addition, correlation coefficients were computed among the questions that asked about public relations professors' attitudes regarding the textbooks they used and their teaching practices. The results of the correlational analysis presented in Table 8.3 show that textbooks do, in fact, reflect professors' views of the *relationship* between a journalist and a PR practitioner. What the texts may not do is accurately reflect professors' attitudes about *dialogue* in the journalist/PR practitioner relationship.

There was a statistically significant correlation between public relations' professors beliefs about the textbooks they use reflecting their thoughts on media relations and their thoughts on the journalist/PR practitioner relationship $t(89)$, $r = .812$, $p < .001$). However, there was also significant correlation between those professors who used supplementary materials in their classes and those that thought the text did not place adequate importance on the journalist/PR practitioner relationship $t(87)$, $r = .469$, $p < .001$.

This suggests that professors who did not think textbooks placed enough emphasis on relationships were providing students with other materials to help them understand the importance of building and maintaining relationships with reporters.

Table 8.3 PR Professors' Attitudes about Texts and Relationship

	Texts reflect views	I use supplementary materials	Text explains PR/journalist relationship well	Text accurately reflects my views	Dialogue more important than text suggests
Texts reflect views		-.193	.804**	.812**	-.147
I use supplementary materials	-.189		-.120	-.161	.469**
Text explains PR/journalist relationship well	.886**	-.120		.886**	-.154
Text accurately reflects my views	.849**	-.161	.847**		-.107
Dialogue more important than text suggests	-.154	.469**	-.93	-.107	

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

In addition to the information gained from the interviews to support H1a (*public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process),* survey results showed 72 public relations professors either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners does consist of ongoing dialogue between the two parties (n = 92, M = 3.90, SD = .89).

For H1b (*Journalism professors view interactions between the press and public relations practitioners as necessary, but not as a dialogic process*), journalism professors either agreed or strongly agreed that interactions between the press and public relations practitioners

are necessary ($n = 94$, $M = 4.38$, $SD = .76$). They also agreed that the relationship is a dialogic process ($n = 93$, $M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.02$). This partially supports the second part of hypothesis 1b, as professors did not view dialogue as important as the interaction itself. While not in direct contradiction with the interview findings, which did not support H1b, the survey results do clarify that journalism professors view interaction as more necessary than the dialogic process.

Results of the survey supported H2a for public relations professors (*Professors' attitudes about relationships are reflected in what they teach in the classroom*). Correlation coefficients were computed based on questions in the PR professor survey regarding attitudes about relationships vs. what the professor taught their students about relationships. The results of the correlational analysis presented in Table 8.4 showed correlations between the professors' attitudes about the relationship being one of "give-and-take" and teaching that view of relationship to their students.

Professors who agreed that the reporter/PR practitioner relationship is one of give-and-take also communicated that concept in their classes ($r = .424$). Professors who taught the importance of relationships between journalists and PR practitioners also taught that the relationship was one of give-and-take ($r = .220$). Additionally, professors who believed relationships were as important as outcomes also believed that the relationship was one of a give-and-take nature ($r = .398$).

Table 8.4:   Correlations of Beliefs about Relationships and Teaching about Relationships for PR Professors

	Relationship exists	Teach importance of relationships	Relationships as important as outcomes	Relationship is give-and-take	Teach relationship is give-and-take
Relationship exists		.349	.184	.422**	.110
Teach importance of relationships	.099		.530**	.277**	.220**
Relationships as important as outcomes	.184	.392**		.362**	.191
Relationship is give-and-take	.422**	.308**	.398**		.424**
Teach relationship is give-and-take	.011	.220*	.191	.424**	

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
 * Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

The results suggest that public relations professors do, in fact, teach what they believe to their students in their public relations classes about relationships between journalists and PR practitioners.

Correlation coefficients were then computed to find support for H2b for public relations professors (*Professors' attitudes about dialogue are reflected in what they teach in the classroom*). The results of the analysis of the items that measured attitudes about dialogue and teaching about dialogue were significant at .53, $p < .01$.

For journalism professors, H2a and H2b were not supported. Because there were only two questions on the journalism survey that measured attitudes vs. teaching, a one-sample t-test was conducted to evaluate whether professors' attitudes were

reflected in what they taught students about relationships, news gathering, and dialogue. The mean of the attitude measure, (M = 4.06, SD = .801), $t(93) = 49.21$, $p < .01$ was significantly different from the teaching measure, M = 14.1, SD = 3.39, $t(93) = 40.1$, $p < .01$.

It seems that public relations professors' attitudes about a dialogic approach to teaching media relations may not be reflected in the texts they used in the classroom, which gives support to H3a (*Professors of public relations teach a more dialogic approach to media relations than PR textbooks reflect*). In addition to the correlation coefficient in Table 8.2, descriptive statistics showed that professors agreed or strongly agreed that, "the PR professional/journalist relationship may be more important than the textbook I use suggests" (*M*= 3.76, *SD* = .99). This data suggests that professors' emphasis on dialogue may be more important than the textbooks they used indicated.

H3b (*Professors of journalism address public relations in the classroom minimally, if at all*) was not supported (*n* = 94, *M* = 4.00, *SD* = 1.03). Regardless of how they address the subject of public relations, journalism professors agree that they do address public relations in their classrooms.

H3c (*Journalism professors and public relations professors will differ significantly in how they teach media relations*) was supported. An independent samples t-test indicated that PR professors (*n* = 91, *M* = 4.47, *SD* = .60) showed greater agreement with the concept of teaching media relations from a dialogic perspective than did journalism professors (*n* = 94, *M* = 3.36, *SD* = 1.19, $t(138.14) = -7.99$, $p < .01$).

Support for H4 (*A majority of public relations professors will agree with teaching media*

relations through a dialogic lens) was found in calculating the frequency of survey respondents who agreed with the statement "I believe in, and teach students, that media relations should involve dialogue between a journalist and a PR professional." Nintey-one professors (*M* = 4.47, *SD* = .60) either agreed or strongly agreed with the questionnaire item.

H5 (*There will be little to no consensus between public relations professors and journalism professors when presented with a dialogic view of the relationship between practitioners and journalists*) was not supported. There was no statistically significant difference between how journalism (*n* = 93, *M* = 3.74, *SD* = 1.02) and public relations professors (*n* = 92, *M* = 3.90, *SD* = .89) responded when presented with a dialogic view of the relationship between practitioners and journalists (*t*(180.18) = -1.13, p = .25).

To test the final hypothesis in the study, H6 (*Public relations professors and journalism professors will acknowledge that persuasion is part of the relationship between reporters and public relations professionals*), frequencies were calculated for the two groups of survey participants for the questions that addressed persuasion. Public relations professors (*n* = 90, *M* = 3.87, *SD* = .965) either agreed or strongly agreed that persuasion by the public relations professor is part of the journalist/practitioner relationship. Journalism professors (*n* = 93, *M* = 3.88, *SD* = .965) also either agreed or strongly agreed that persuasion by the public relations professor exists in the relationship between the two parties. This supports what was learned in the professional interview portion of this dissertation, which will be discussed in the section that follows this chapter.

<u>Additional Analysis</u>

While beyond the scope of the hypotheses and research questions posed by this work, additional statistical analysis was conducted to see if there were differences in opinions based on age and years of teaching experience about dialogue and teaching students about dialogue. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to compare professors' age and their attitudes about dialogue. The test was not significant ($F(36,21)$ = .308, p = 1.0). There was also no significance in the number of years the professor had been teaching and their attitudes about dialogue ($F(34,53)$ = .889, p = .64).

One-way analyses of variance were also conducted to see whether the class that the professor taught most often had an impact on how they viewed dialogue. Those tests did not reveal significant results, as attitudes about dialogue were similar regardless of what class the professor taught most often.

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

Since the research questions and hypotheses are spread across four studies and some are addressed by multiple studies, this summary of findings is provided.

RQ1a: How, if at all, has the relationship changed between public relations practitioners and journalists, following advances in technology and changes in the journalism industry? **(Professional interviews revealed that while attitudes about relationships have remained relatively unchanged, technology has provided more ways for PR practitioners to form relationships with reporters,**

and changes in the journalism industry have affected the nature

of those relationships).

RQ1b: How do current public relations practitioners view the

journalist/PR practitioner exchange? **(Exchanges are affected by**

more demands on journalists' time, and necessitated more

creative ways to reach out to journalists).

RQ2a: How do public relations texts address media relations and the

journalist/PR practitioner interaction? **(Texts vary widely in how**

they address media relations and the interaction between

journalists and PR practitioners. For the most part, however, texts

do devote space to a discussion of media relations).

RQ2b: How do journalism texts address media relations, if they do so at

all? **(Most journalism texts address media relations as part of a**

discussion of public relations as a career choice, if they address it

at all. A few do address the relationship between reporters and

PR practitioners, but only minimally).

RQ3:   Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect

professors' attitudes about media relations? **(Results for this**

question from the interviews were mixed, but the survey

indicated that texts accurately reflect professors' attitudes about

media relations).

H1a: Public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process. **(Supported).**

H b: Journalism professors view interactions between the press and public relations practitioners as necessary**,** but not as a dialogic process. **(Partially supported).**

RQ4:   Do professors of public relations and journalism agree that media relations is rooted in tension? **(In interviews, the results were mixed).**

H2a: Professors' attitudes about relationships are reflected in what they teach in the classroom **(Public relations professors: supported. Journalism professors: not supported).**

H2b: Professors' attitudes about dialogue are reflected in what they teach in the classroom. **(Public relations professors: supported. Journalism professors: not supported).**

H3a: Professors of public relations teach a more 'dialogic' approach to media relations than PR textbooks reflect. **(Partially supported).**

H3b: Professors of journalism address public relations in the classroom minimally, if at all. **(Not supported).**

H3c: Journalism professors and public relations professors will differ significantly in how they teach media relations. **(Supported).**

H4:   A majority of public relations professors will agree with teaching media relations through a dialogic lens. **(Supported).**

H5:   There will be little to no consensus between public relations professors and journalism professors when presented with a dialogic view of the relationship between practitioners and journalists. **(Not supported).**

H6:   Public relations professors and journalism professors will acknowledge that persuasion is a part of the relationship between reporters and public relations practitioners. **(Supported).**

CHAPTER IX

DISCUSSION

To provide continuity and a more thorough examination of the results of this

work, this discussion section begins with a discussion of the professional interviews

and continues through each subsequent phase of research, culminating in an overview

of what assumptions and ideas all of the research sections may point to. This provides

for more detailed discussion and helps to build a solid argument as to the findings of

this body of work.

<u>Professional Interviews</u>

The enlightening perspective of the professional interviews provided solid

grounding to begin a discussion of the hypotheses and research questions posed in this

dissertation. As stated earlier, the purpose of the professional interviews was to provide

a "state of practice today" snapshot in order to explore current teaching methods and

views of professors as they relate to what is being done in the field.

What emerged from the professional interviews in response to RQs 1a and 1b

contained several different themes relating to current practice and instruction.

Supporting the work of Sallot and Johnson (2006), the foundation of the journalist/PR

practitioner exchange is indeed the *relationship* between these two groups. While

professionals agreed that relationships and dialogue are still the central currency of

their profession, technology has required them to become more "careful" in how and where they share and post information. This is not because of a lack of transparency, it is simply because lines are becoming blurred between professional and personal relationships. It makes a difference in how reporters can access information that may lead to some kind of story idea. On a personal note, I have always been careful to tell my students to beware what they post on Facebook or other social media sites. It seems that the same holds true for today's practicing professionals.

A Less Adversarial Relationship

As the media landscape is changing with fewer reporters covering more beats, it may be that the "adversarial" nature of the relationship between reporters and public relations professionals as discussed by Fedler & DeLorme (2002), may be giving way to a more dialogic approach to newsgathering. Reporters truly need to rely on public relations practitioners more as increased demands are placed on reporters' time. Instead of adversarial, the relationship today may better be described as two groups of people doing different jobs with different agendas, but working together through dialogue to get those jobs done.

As news outlets change, public relations professionals are required to be even more aware of trend stories that may include an opportunity for their business or client. This places even more emphasis on relationships and dialogue between the reporter and the public relations practitioner, as regular communication between the two parties is key to keeping each party informed about the other. As the opportunity for long-

form stories diminishes, dialogue becomes the tool by which to stay up-to-date on pertinent information beyond the "big story."

Changes in technology, particularly social media, have provided valuable contact points for PR professionals, particularly those newer to the industry or for professionals reaching out to a journalist they've never dealt with before. Still, direct contact via email and telephone is preferred, giving even more support to the importance of dialogue in the relationship between practitioners and journalists.

Revisiting the definition of public relations that was adopted by PRSA in 2012, the interviews with professionals support the notion that "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (Corbett, 2012). The main difference here is the focus on mutually beneficial relationships and not mutually beneficial outcomes, as was once suggested by the Grunig & Grunig hegemony of the early 1990s. The interviews with professionals also lend support to the idea of *interpersonal* relationship management rather than relationship management as defined by Ledingham (2006). This is not to suggest that PR should not be a management function – it should certainly occupy a seat at the top levels of management in organizations. However, with regards to relationships with various publics, and in this case the media, meaningful, thoughtful and "smart" dialogue with the press might better serve to meet the needs of both parties in the relationship.

<u>Interdependence</u>

Interdependence was certainly an apparent theme in the interviews with PR professionals. As discussed in the literature review, from an interpersonal communications perspective, relationship means the interdependence between two or more people (Coombs, 2001; O'Hare, Fredrich, Weimann & Weiman, 1995), professionals are building from interaction to relationships, regardless of the tools they are using to do so. Central to those relationships is dialogue, as proposed by Taylor et al. (2001), given dialogue's central position in a more relational approach to practice.

The interviews with professionals also revealed that they are using concepts from relational dialectics. While practitioners and journalists are certainly not giving up the "self" of their professions, during the interaction with each other they are certainly occupying the same time and space (Baxter, 2004). This goes hand in hand with the lessening of the adversarial nature of the relationship that has occupied both practice and folklore since PR's inception as a profession. Each party has a job to do, but as technology and lack of time and resources are becoming increasingly important issues, perhaps both parties are learning that they need each other more than they once thought.

Interviews with professionals also may suggest that concepts from Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic theory may fit well within the notion of the idea of interpersonal relationship management. The orientation of public relations professionals and journalists show indications of mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment in their interactions with journalists. Additionally, the conversations

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revealed that Tomlinson's (2000) proposal of comfort with relational dialectics in the reporter/PR practitioner exchange may be becoming reality. There are boundaries to be maintained, particularly with so many channels of message distribution and consumption, but the "delicate balance" (2000, p. 89) that Tomlinson proposed may play a part in maintaining the equilibrium between self and other in the practice of media relations.

Key Assumptions of Relational Dialectics and Media Relations

The literature review of this work linked concepts of dialogic theory to concepts of relational dialectics. This section expands on the four key assumptions of relational dialects as it relates to current practice. Concepts of relational dialectics will be revisited later in this chapter as they relate to media relations instruction.

1. *Contradiction*. According to the interviews with PR professionals, it is still true that journalists and PR practitioners view things from different perspectives. This is reflected in Baxter and Montgomery's (1998) proposition that dialogic relationships are grounded in contradiction. What the interviews also reflected was the ongoing flow of meaning that occurs between journalists and practitioners. From the practitioner's view, each party is working within the tension of the relationship to create shared meaning from different situations. Relational dialectics works for media relations and media relationships in that both parties in the journalist/PR relationship are constantly "shifting" their views on particular issues over time as dialogue occurs. The end state is certainly not a completely changed viewpoint by either party. Rather, the statement-counterstatement process of media relations results in benefits to both parties *over time*.

While "mutually beneficial outcomes" may be the case in certain situations, "mutually beneficial relationships" are certainly front-and-center in the minds of many practitioners.

It also must be stated here, that, as relational dialectics suggests, media relations is often a "messy, less logical, and more inconsistent practice of the moment" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 46) than an ideal view of the process would suggest. Concessions are made, compromises are reached, and there is no elegant end-state of balance. In the literature review of this work, it was stated that we are all human beings, each with our own needs, desires and goals. Each party has a job to do, and each party brings a voice to the interaction.

2. *Change.* Media relations is an ongoing process, as the interviews with professionals revealed. While dialogic exchanges may begin and end, the ongoing dialogue of a relationship is never really finished. As one interviewee said, an exchange about a completely random event resulted in a solid relationship between herself and a prominent reporter. This provides an excellent example of taking an isolated instance and using it to build a relationship through dialogue. Change also involves Kent and Taylor's (2002) tenets of empathy and risk. What will be discussed later in this chapter is how this may relate to a more "interpersonal relationship management" view of media relations, and how professors might convey that concept to their students.

3. *Praxis and Dialectical Flux.* As the media environment changes and practitioner and journalists are learning new and better ways to function in relation to each other, each party must "fuse their perspectives to some extent while sustaining the uniqueness

of their individual perspectives" (Baxter, 2004, p. 7). While both parties may know that they have a job to do, the dialogue between them fluctuates based on particular situations. This is helpful in understanding how discursive opposites such as separation and integration can complete, enhance, and enable journalists and public relations professionals while at the same time they may constrain each party (Baxter, 2004). While this may be a difficult concept to relate to students, in practice it seems to be second nature to many practitioners, most likely a product of experience.

4. *Totality*. By now, it is clear that public relations practitioners and journalists rely on one another. Study upon study has made that abundantly clear. While other forces act on each party's time and resources, there is a "coming together" that is necessary for PR practitioners to get their stories out and for journalists to cover what they need to cover. As a chosen profession, both journalists and public relations practitioners agree to work with the other, even though there may be little commonality between the participating individuals. The concept of totality as it relates to the journalist/PR practitioner relationship may be controversial, but it is difficult to see how one can function without the other in today's environment. Each forms one part of a whole. Doubtless, there are those who will find holes and flaws with this view, but from the standpoint of dialogue, it is difficult to see how those arguments can be defended absolutely.

Persuasion

All of the interviewees agreed that persuasion by the PR practitioner, and by the journalist, are part of the relationship between the two parties. What needs to be made

clear here is that persuasion is not completely changing one person's view to that of the other. The interviews support the concept by Altman (1993) that interpersonal dialectical processes involve the overt display of oppositional dynamics between people in a relationship.

With a view of the current state of practice and how theory applies to current practice, this discussion now moves to the next phase of this research, which was an examination of texts to see what they express in terms of relationships and dialogue.

Discussion of Textbook Content Analysis

Through an examination of public relations and journalism texts, a better understanding was provided for the basis of media relations instruction in the classroom. While the results of the textbook analysis yielded few surprises, it was enlightening to see the major differences between texts and their contents when discussing media relations and dealing with members of the media.

Public Relations Texts

To be sure, each author or group of authors had their own approach to a discussion of media relations, as the results section of this work indicates. In a discussion of RQ 2a (*How do public relations texts address media relations and the journalist/PR practitioner interaction?*), texts varied greatly in their discussion of media relations and ways to form relationships with members of the media. To aid in a discussion of texts and their contents, it is important to note here that 77 public relations professors indicated that they chose the textbook(s) they used in their classes. Many of those texts were among those coded for this work.

For the purposes of this work, textbooks may be viewed as the "institutionalized" education" element, given that some of these texts are used by thousands of students each year. The "individualized" element of education comes with how the professors use and supplement these texts in their classrooms.

Many of the public relations texts that were analyzed do, in fact, reflect practices expressed by the professionals in the initial interview portion of this work. The majority of writing texts and the majority of introductory texts addressed the importance of relationships in the PR practitioner/journalist exchange. Wilcox and Reber (2013) refer to the relationship as "symbiotic" (p. 92), Treadwell and Treadwell (2005) called it "mutually respectful" (p. 227) and most other PR introductory or writing texts gave some credence to the idea that both parties need each other to do their jobs. As an overall sample, the texts that were examined explained the importance of media relations and media relationships as thoroughly as they could given the constraints of space and other subjects that have to be addressed in the scope of an introduction to PR or a PR writing class.

However, few went further to talk about the human aspect of the reporter/practitioner interaction. Additionally, several texts spoke of the importance of relationships, but few texts provided suggestions for forming and maintaining those relationships. It is unrealistic to think that texts can provide intricate instruction on relationship formation and enhancement. What some of the texts examined for this work seemed to lack was anything beyond basic fundamental instruction on "getting the word out" to journalists, with no reference to the nuances of relationship building

like offering exclusives, complimenting reporters on well-written stories regardless of their subject, providing news tips not related to a practitioner's client or company, or recognizing the value of an occasional email just to "check in" with a reporter.

To be sure, it is difficult for an introductory PR text or a PR writing text to devote significant attention to media relations. However, as will be revisited later in this chapter, professionals reported that they spend anywhere from 30 to 90 % of their workweek devoted to media relations, so perhaps texts might highlight the importance of media relations in public relations work.

A few texts seemed to give scant attention to the subject of working with the press. Granted, this was more than compensated for by professors' responses to the interview questions and survey items that supplement what the texts said, which will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Still, it may be that textbooks should focus more attention on media relations based on reports from the field.

This analysis did, however, update the work of Cline (1982), in that today's editions of texts do address the functions and duties of public relations practitioners, at least in regards to media relations. And, while this study did not examine ethical matters as addressed in public relations texts, Pratt and Renter's 1989 study may require updating, as there was certainly a tone of practicing media relations in an ethical manner in most of the texts, regardless of the theoretical framework they used for its study.

It is also difficult for a text to go beyond tactical information to provide information that may result in more significant learning experiences for students. Those

come from classroom exercises, healthy discussion, and a grounded approach by the professor teaching the class, regardless of what class that may be. It is up to the professor to carefully examine the texts they choose to use in their classes to not only reflect their views on media relations, but also the current state of media relations in the field.

Students' Use of Textbooks

Another issue is students' use of textbooks. What a student reads in a book may have little or no bearing on his or her life until it is placed in context of a classroom simulation or a real-world experience. It is difficult to comprehend the complexities of the journalist/PR practitioner relationship just by reading about it. What textbooks can do, however, is plant the seed to be nurtured through other forms of instruction. In my own experience, students did not fully comprehend the material in the texts they were assigned to read until a thorough discussion of the subject matter took place in class.

The textbooks that were examined were coded for practical information in how they covered media relations, but some theoretical information was gained through the coding process. While it was difficult to parse out specific tenets of relationship management, relational dialectics, and dialogic theory that appeared sporadically through the PR textbooks, many of them did acknowledge concepts that relate to those theories. A further discussion of theory development based on all of the phases of this research will conclude this discussion chapter.

Journalism Texts

Granted, this work pays particular attention to public relations texts, because this is a public relations dissertation, but journalism texts provided valuable insight as well. Most notable was the fact that journalism texts dealt with public relations primarily as a career choice rather than addressing the reporter's relationship with public relations professionals. Granted, these are journalism texts, with the goal of teaching students the values and techniques of journalistic writing and newsgathering. However, some of the texts did place emphasis on the reporter/PR practitioner relationship, a refreshing finding for RQ 2b (*How do journalism texts address media relations, if they do so at all?*).

While three of the journalism texts did not mention public relations at all, the others that did presented the profession in a favorable light, with a few exceptions. "Hired prize fighters" (Harcup, 2009, p.21) is hardly flattering. However, when public relations was addressed by most of the coded journalism texts, it was not based in a negative frame of reference. It is also important to reinforce the information from the survey of journalism professors that while texts may reflect professors' views of the *relationship* between a journalist and a PR practitioner, they may not accurately reflect professors' attitudes about *dialogue* in the journalist/PR practitioner relationship.

Why Journalism Texts?

The question may arise here of, "Why examine journalism texts at all for this work?" The answer is twofold. First, as the subject of this work is media relations instruction, it was important to have a comprehensive view of how students are seeing the topic mentioned in journalism classes, as most, if not all, students are taking those

classes in preparation for their public relations writing classes. Second, seeing how these journalism texts address media relations builds a foundation for examining how professors of journalism talk about public relations in their classes.

Results from the professor interviews and from the professor survey support RQ3: *Do public relations and journalism texts accurately reflect professors' attitudes about media relations*? While some disagreement between professors about material in texts was expected, for the most part, professors had no major issues with what the texts they were using said about media relations.

One final point of discussion should be reinforced before leaving the subject of texts. Textbooks are the basis of classroom instruction. How the professor decides to address what is in those texts creates the environment for a student's learning experience.

Public Relations and Journalism Professor Interviews and Surveys

From a discussion standpoint, the professional interviews and textbook analysis have been addressed separately. For the remainder of this discussion section, the last two phases of analysis, the professor interviews and surveys, will be combined to make more logical sense in support of theory development and looking at the information gained from the two phases logically.

From the interviews, the support for H1a (*Public relations professors view the reporter/PR practitioner interaction as a dialogic process*) provide refreshing underpinning for the arguments made in this work.

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As all 10 of the public relations professors interviewed stressed the importance of a relationship between journalists and public relations professionals, and as all but one of them described the relationship as "dialogic" without prompting from the interviewer, it does indeed seem that professors' views support a dialogic view of media relations.

Surprisingly, the interviews with and the survey of journalism professors indicated that they, too, saw the reporter/PR professional relationship as important, if not as an ongoing dialogue. While results from the interviews showed that professors do indeed agree that media relations is rooted in tension (RQ4), all of the professors interviewed talked about ways that they teach students to manage that tension. As relational dialectics suggests, tension is a part of any relationship.

Professors' Proclivities: Dialogue

Professors have a lot to communicate over the course of a semester in any class. In public relations classes, particularly public relations writing, it is quite the task to get students to write a coherent press release, much less all of the other materials they need to learn to write. Adding a good grounding of media relations on top of that is quite the task. However, professors are doing it. Professionals indicated that they spent 30% to 90% of their time on media relations. Appropriately, at least in writing classes, the interviews with professors showed that more of them than not are incorporating media relations into every exercise. The correlations from the survey also supported that professors are teaching the concept of dialogue in their classes. This contradicts the

arguments made by Kalupa (2007) who suggested that public relations education is still focused on one-way communication.

The points made by Wright (2011) may also need to be called into question with regards to his suggestions that curriculula focus more on outputs than on outcomes. This work clearly indicates that professors are teaching relationships and dialogue as central to the reporter/PR practitioner relationship. Wright's arguments also seem to be flawed in his assertion that public relations professors may not be fully qualified to teach (2011). As this study shows, professors possess a wealth of professional experience that they bring to the classroom, and the degrees the professors have are certainly reflective of a high level of scholarship.

Journalism professors, too, are spending time discussing the relationship between journalists and public relations professionals, even if the topic is given scant attention in many texts. And, while the survey results showed that journalism professors agree that interactions between the press and public relations practitioners are necessary and, potentially, a dialogic process, the interview process revealed that professors of journalism are recognizing, and teaching, the value of dialogue between the two parties.

The results of H2a (*Professors' attitudes about relationships are reflected in what they teach in the classroom*) and H2b (*Professors' attitudes about dialogue are reflected in what they teach in the classroom*) also provided refreshing topics for discussion. Regardless of how texts treat media relations, many professors are supplementing classroom discussion with their own views about dialogue and relationships. It should be noted here that the

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interviews responses and the survey results about professor views vs. teaching provided some contradictory results. While it is easy to indicate on a survey that, "I teach what I believe about media relations," more probing questions in the interview process revealed some inconsistencies. An explanation for this may lie simply in the complexity of the media relations relationship. "Real world" work does not always lend itself easily to a classroom setting.

<u>Relational Dialectics and Dialogic Theory</u>

Support for H3a (*Professors of public relations teach a more 'dialogic' approach to media relations than PR textbooks reflect*) and H4 (*A majority of public relations professors will agree with teaching media relations through a dialogic lens*) opens the way for a theoretical discussion of dialogue in the literature. As stated in the literature review of this dissertation, "dialogue," "dialectic," and a "dialogic relationship" have been described in the public relations literature with little consistency in their usage (Grunig & White, 1992). Perhaps using concepts from relational dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998) can help to provide a more grounded use of those terms in public relations. As relational dialectics suggests, dialogue is a flow of meaning between people (Baxter & Montgomery, 1998). If dialogue involves "shifting their views on particular issues or problems as dialogue occurs" (Baxter, p. 12), then the idea fits nicely with the "mutually beneficial relationships" part of the new definition of public relations as proposed by PRSA (Corbett, 2012), as both parties have to engage in give-and-take in order to have mutually beneficial relationships.

Relational dialectics also nicely incorporates the tenets of dialogic theory (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The concepts of contradiction, change, praxis and totality encompass the dialogic theory tenets of mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. Relational dialectics also lends itself well to explain the "coming together and drawing apart" nature of media relations today. If, as the survey here suggests, relationships are as important as outcomes, the outcome, instead of being the primary focus, now truly does become grounded in the exchange. Here again, we see contradictions with previous research by Kalupa (2007) and Wright (2011).

The lack of support for H3b (*Professors of journalism address public relations in the classroom minimally, if at all*) and the lack of support for H5 (*There will be little to no consensus between public relations professors and journalism professors when presented with a dialogic view of the relationship between practitioners and journalists*) hopefully point to less adversarial relationships in future practitioners of both journalism and public relations. As has been discussed already, the nature of the relationship between the two parties is changing. Certainly, this information supports the work of Shaw and White (2004), who found that journalism and public relations educators acknowledged that journalists depend on public relations-oriented material. In an off-the-cuff remark that underscores the discussion of PR in journalism classes, one journalism professor remarked, "we talk about it all the time." While not a scientific indication that PR is being talked about, the remark was, nonetheless, heartening.

Support for H6 (*Public relations professors and journalism professors will acknowledge that persuasion is a part of the relationship between reporters and public relations practitioners*)

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reflects again the social nature of interaction. As the interviews with professionals and

professors conducted for this work revealed, contradictions form the basis for

persuasion. These contradictions lie in different roles, different perspectives, and

different objectives. In discussing dialogue as "the utterance," Leslie Baxter (2004)

provides a new way to consider persuasion and contradictions that places them in the

context of dialogue, rather than as an individual thought process carried out to gain the

upper hand in persuading another party to that individual's point of view. Here, the

process is continually dynamic.

> Contradictions are not internal cognitive dilemmas located in the
>
> individual mind, which in turn serve as the basis of the individual's goal-
>
> directed communication. Instead, contradictions are located in the
>
> relationship between parties, produced and reproduced through the
>
> parties' joint communicative activity. The activity is synchronic,
>
> characterized by the simultaneous equality of opposing voices (Baxter,
>
> 2004, pp. 14-15).

Clearly, this way of thinking is somewhat radical for PR practitioners and

students of PR. It supports the overall theme of this work that "winning" doesn't

necessarily mean getting one's way. Rather, it places the process of dialogue in a new

paradigm, in which the dialogue itself is front and center.

<u>Linking Relationship Management, Relational Dialectics and Dialogic Theory</u>

This work has attempted to advance public relations theory development by

introducing relational dialectics as a way to advance thinking about dialogic theory. To
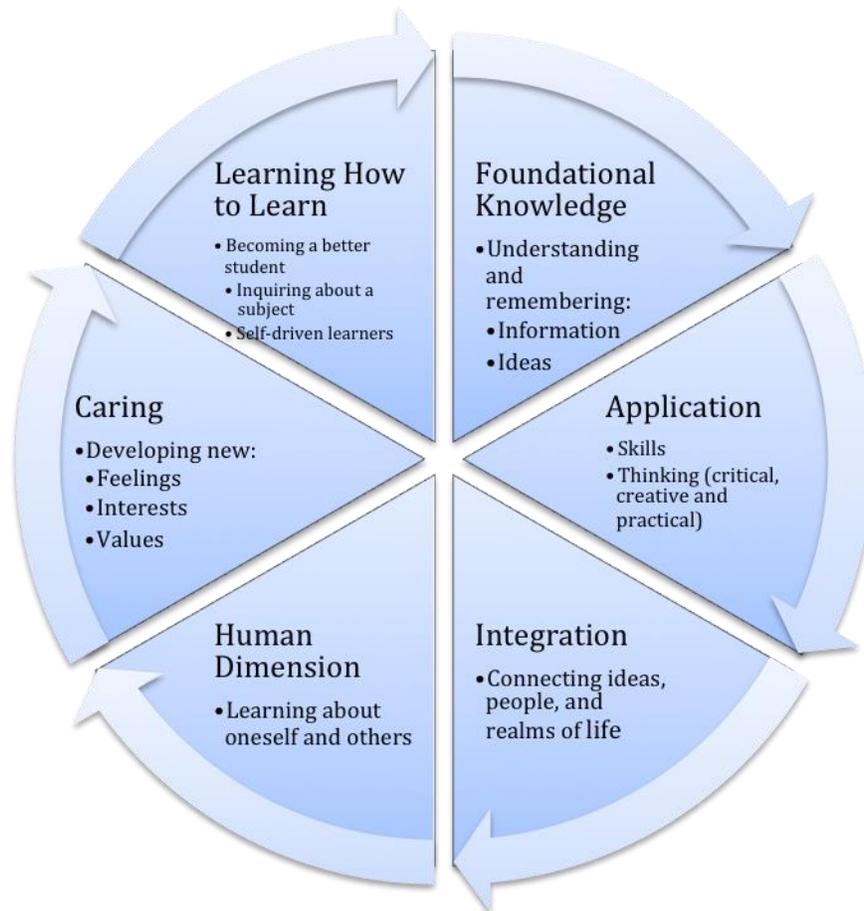
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further the theoretical arguments made here, there is also support to suggest a new way

of theorizing about relationship management as it relates to media relations. Cutlip,

Center and Broom (1992) and Ledingham and Bruning (1998) focused on the

management function of relationships in relationship management theory. Perhaps

interpersonal relationship management, focusing not so much on the management

function of PR but on the importance of carefully thinking through each dialogic

exchange so that the relationship is enhanced, might be a better way to theorize about

media relations. Relationships are interpersonal, especially now with technologies that

allow practitioners to address members of groups rather than the entire group itself.

And while "management" is perhaps not the most appropriate term here, it serves the

purpose of conveying that there is some level of management in the give-and-take of

information.

Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning

It was mentioned in the introduction of this work that a new taxonomy

would be introduced that may suggest changes in how educators are addressing media

relations with their students. L. D. Fink (2003) developed a taxonomy that can easily be

adapted for media relations instruction. This model is provided as a succinct way for

public relations educators to view how they teach media relations, which may be

helpful in organizing thoughts for future classes.

The taxonomy is shown in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1: Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning

Learning How to Learn
• Becoming a better student
• Inquiring about a subject
• Self-driven learners

Foundational Knowledge
•Understanding and remembering:
•Information
•Ideas

Caring
•Developing new:
•Feelings
•Interests
•Values

Application
• Skills
• Thinking (critical, creative and practical)

Human Dimension
•Learning about oneself and others

Integration
•Connecting ideas, people, and realms of life

Each category of significant learning contains concepts that are related in some way and have a distinct value for the learner. Beyond foundational knowledge, which provides the basic understanding that is necessary for other kinds of learning, there is application, which allows other kinds of learning to become useful. Integration of these concepts provides connections to give learners a new kind of intellectual power, and provides the reason that the concepts behind a relational-dialectical approach to media relations are useful. Based on the information from this study, professors seem to be doing a good job in those three areas, represented on the right half of the figure.

Beyond knowledge, application and integration, a dialogic approach to media relations incorporates a human dimension to the experience, moving to the "left side" of the learning experience. When students learn something important about themselves or others it "enables them to function and interact more effectively" (Fink, 2003, p. 31). They discover the "personal and social implications of what they have learned" (Fink, 2003, p. 31). Understanding that Facebook, Twitter and other social media applications are monitored by potential employers is an important lesson to learn. Also, adding the human dimension to teaching media relations involves an element of caring. Sometimes a learning experience changes the degree to which students care about something. As students learn to care about the pressures and limits of journalists, perhaps they can learn to care more about them as people. Some of this researcher's best friends are journalists from the days of professional practice. It was through dialogue that those relationships were nurtured and fostered. Students will quickly have to learn in the workplace that caring about journalists as people will get them more answered phone calls, more answered emails, and more attention on social media outlets. Professors may be teaching dialogue, but are they teaching the human element of the relationship between a reporter and a public relations practitioner?

Caring may be reflected in the form of new feelings, interests, or values (Fink, 2003). Any of these changes means students now care about something to a greater degree than they did before, or in a different way. Can professors help students care more about media relations, given that it is such an important part of the jobs they will soon be applying for? Perhaps more stories from the field, which professors indicated

they shared in the interviews conducted for this work and in the survey responses they gave, might help here.

When there is time, it may be that educators could incorporate practice "pitch calls" into their classes, or, as some professors are doing, taking students into environments where they interact with working journalists. While this study did not inquire about what kinds of speakers professors were bringing into the classroom, having a journalist visit a PR writing class certainly gets to the human dimension of Fink's taxonomy.

Probably the most difficult element of this model is helping students learn how to learn. Especially when the most frequently asked question in a class is, "Is this going to be on the test?" Overcoming the test-only mentality requires extra effort on the part of the professor. Perhaps grading can become secondary on some projects in the interest of students actually getting the experience of doing something over and over again until they master the task. Making sure students are interested in media relations as a key to their future success may be the best way to encourage students to continue the learning process on their own. Also, providing students with activities that go beyond the classroom, such as interviewing reporters or seasoned public relations practitioners, may help reinforce the importance of relationship-building in the media relations process. Previous research supports this idea. Sallot and Johnson (2006) found that while journalists believed relationships with public relations practitioners are important, they placed the responsibility for the maintenance of those relationships squarely on the shoulders of practitioners.

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As mentioned earlier, this model is provided as a succinct way for public relations educators to view how they teach media relations, which may be helpful in organizing thoughts for future classes.

In the following two chapters, limitation of this research are acknowledged, future research is suggested, and the contributions of this work to theory and practice are explored.

CHAPTER X

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations

As with all scholarly works, this dissertation was limited by time and scope. The

interviews with professionals were purposive in nature, and are therefore not

generalizable, as interviews themselves cannot be generalized to a larger sample. While

a good cross sample of corporate and agency professionals were interviewed,

representing major corporations and smaller shops with few employees, there is still the

issue of generalizing the conclusions reached here. A random sample survey of

professionals would be the next step to generalize the findings of this study.

Limitations of Textbook Coding

There were also limitations in the textbooks that were coded for this work. It

became evident through the course of this research that media relations is taught in a

wide range of classes, not just introductory courses or writing courses. Future studies

might consider a broader range of texts for examination. From that, comparisons can be

drawn and further assumptions made. The texts here were also coded for very specific

information as it related to media relations. A more in-depth examination of texts might

uncover more nuanced information that could have been missed in this study in the

pursuit of answers to particular research questions and testing for particular

hypotheses. Additionally, combining future research based on what was done here with the work of Cline (1982), Pratt and Renter (1989) and Byerly (1993) might result in a more thorough view from which to evaluate PR textbooks for their practicality and theoretical grounding.

Limitations in Participants

The professor interviews were also purposive, as this study was seeking to find professors who taught particular classes in which media relations was addressed. A broader sample of professors might provide more insight into more general attitudes about media relations and media relations instruction.

As with any survey, there was the issue of self-reporting bias and self-selection in survey participation. The issue of sampling bias is a limitation, as other, younger journalism professors might think differently than those interviewed here. The population for the survey was small, and the chosen N was smaller still. What was desired for this work was a "snapshot" of how professors view and teach media relations in their classes to advance theory and suggest potential ways to improve media relations instruction. This researcher is not suggesting that the results of this survey can be used to draw more general assumptions about the state of media relations education in the U.S. today.

Future Research

The subject of public relations education is rich with un-mined areas for research. And, it may be that the closer we examine how we teach students how to practice, the more we may learn about practice itself.

The data gathered for this project still contains information that can be re-examined and more thoroughly dissected to uncover different facets for additional research directions in the area of media relations and media relations education.

There is also much to be done in theory development in public relations. Kent and Taylor (1998) argued that dialogue should be an end goal, rather than a particular outcome. This dissertation supports this idea, with the caveat that most journalist/PR practitioner exchange is in the pursuit of some sort of story. There is benefit in a more thorough examination of the commonalities and differences between dialogic theory and relational dialectics, resulting in an extension of dialogic theory as it currently exists or, as is suggested in the conclusion of this work, revising some of the principles of dialogic theory to encompass the notions of tension, conflict, and a focus on the process rather than the outcome.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION (AND OTHER THOUGHTS)

There is no easy way to "wrap up" a work like this. I can say, however, that as a former practitioner, the fact is that nothing takes the place of actual experience. Even if former students are reporting, as one did in this work, that they felt unprepared for dealing with the press when they took their first job, there is only so much that educators can do in the bubble of a classroom. This is especially true when students are encountering something like media relations for the first time. However, there are some things that professors can do to make sure students better understand the importance of media relations to public relations practice.

Reviewing notes and information gathered for this dissertation, I came across some "Laws of Public Relations" for PR that I suddenly realized aren't funny, and don't even make sense, without some experience in the field. Here are a few of them.

- The media never calls on a quiet day unless you've left the office and forgotten your cell phone.
- The less important the topic, the more media coverage your executive will demand.
- The only error in a thrice-proofed press release will be discovered only by the CEO.

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- An up-to-date media list will include at least three people who died more than 10 years ago.

- Not responding to a reporter usually results in at least two pages of negative copy on page one above the fold.

Granted, these are all tongue-in-cheek, but they do speak to the difficulty of instruction in a field like public relations, where there are plenty of shades of grey. Through approaches like interpersonal relationship management and relational dialectics, there may be a way to help students find these "laws" funny before they experience them in the working world. Public relations and journalism professors are certainly bringing practical experience into the classroom, but there may be room for improvement in how that practical experience is communicated, especially from a relational dialectical perspective.

Perhaps, as this study suggests, incorporating a more interpersonal approach to working with journalists into classroom projects and discussions may pave the way for students to feel more prepared as they leave academia in pursuit of a career. For this researcher, life is all about relationships. It is very difficult for me to learn anything without consulting others. This dissertation is based on information gathered from other people, and, at some level, dialogue with other people.

<u>Implications for Teaching</u>

Certainly, there is room for improvement in how textbooks address media relations. Some texts incorporate media relations into other areas of practice, like planning and execution of a campaign. Others do not. If practitioners are spending as

much time as they say they are on this area of the profession, then does it not make

sense for media relations to occupy more than just a chapter or a section of a chapter in

public relations communication texts? This may be an unrealistic stance, since there is

so much to cover in the course of the semester, but in preparing students for what they

will actually be doing, it seems a reasonable suggestion. While many professors are

weaving media relations throughout the semester's work in a PR writing course, many

are not.

Fink's taxonomy suggests incorporating ways to help students understand the

human dimension of media relations, which is key to meaningful dialogue between

journalists and public relations practitioners. Relational dialectics also provides a

foundation for an examination of interpersonal relationships grounded in the tension

between two parties. Granted, all exchanges with journalists are not dialogic. A press

release (or more likely, a tweet) may be sent and used without any contact between the

public relations professional and the journalist. In many cases, however, young

journalists and young public relations professionals "grow up together" in their

respective professions. They have a lot to learn from each other. This encompasses the

concept of *self-becoming* through relationships advocated by Baxter and Montgomery

(1996). Both professions can benefit from learning to work *within* the tensions that exist

rather than trying to overcome those tensions.

The Classroom "Bubble"

It is beyond unreasonable to suggest that there is some way to "burst the

classroom bubble" in pursuit of better media relations instruction. However, perhaps

we can enlarge the bubble through some of the information learned from this work. As some professors reported, they attempt to incorporate media relations throughout the course of a semester's work, creating a thread of learning that may help students "learn how to learn" more of how media relations is practiced. Getting students out of the classroom whenever possible to visit news stations or newspapers may also have value. If time does not permit outside activities, then perhaps Skyping in bloggers or journalists is a good alternative. The point here is to increase students' exposure to the people with whom they need to build dialogic relationships.

<u>Implications for Theory</u>

This work suggests that Kent and Taylor's (2002) concepts of dialogic theory may well be enhanced by relational dialects. It certainly seems from this work that the two mesh well, and often overlap. Relational dialectics can help to address some of the flaws in dialogic theory. For example, dialogic theory "presupposes a communal orientation between interactants" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 27). One of the key publics in public relations is being shortchanged by dialogic theory as it currently exists, as there may not be a "communal orientation" between a journalist and a PR practitioner, particularly in times of crisis. It is a much messier enterprise, in which there is little communality and no end state of balance.

Relational dialectics recognizes the tension inherent in the practitioner/journalist relationship. Relational dialectics also redefines the concept of conflict as negative to conflict as constructive. Dialogic theory states that "dialogue occurs when individuals (and sometimes groups) agree to set aside their differences long enough to come to an

understanding of the other's positions" (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 29). With relational

dialects, similarities *and* differences form the basis of the interplay between two parties,

constituted as a "complex dialogic enterprise" (Baxter, 2004, p. 6). More simply, conflict

results in change through dialogic exchanges. Certainly, placing dialogue and tension

in the "center" of an exchange rather than with either party provides a new way to look

at the practitioner-journalist relationship. Dialogic theory claims that public relations

should be "public centered" (Kent & Taylor, 2002). In media relations, it is more of a

balancing act.

Additionally, this work suggests an additional way to look at relationship

management. Scholars have focused mainly on the management aspect of relationship

management. Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined public relations as "the management of

communication between an organization and its publics" (p.6). Cutlip, Center and

Broom (1994) also focused on the management function of public relations, as did

Harlowe (1976). While Botan (1992) argued for a focus on the communication exchange

itself, what constitutes a communication exchange? Is it symbolic process as suggested

by Roloff (1981)? Does it create structures that affect what gets done and by whom

(Weick, 1987)? What seems to be missing in relationship management is the actual

human-to-human relationship. In relational dialectics, relationships are constituted in

communication practices (Baxter, 2004). This allows scholars to transcend the notions of

"symmetrical" or "personal influence" models advocated in 1995 by J. E. Grunig,

Grunig, Sriramesh, Lyra and Huang (which still seem to permeate the relationship

management literature) to focus on the dialogic exchange itself.

A Few More Thoughts

Teaching is not for the fainthearted. Neither is research. The information gained and the suggestions made through the research done for this dissertation can only go so far. What this work does indicate, however, is that media relations is an extremely important aspect of public relations practice, and therefore should be extremely important aspect in public relations education. PR students, if they're serious about education, want to be prepared to stand out from the crowd as they apply for jobs and internships. Educators should be doing everything they can to prepare them, including proper grounding in, understanding of, and learning how to conduct media relations.

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APPENDICES

<u>APPENDIX A: Public Relations Professional Interview Protocol</u>

EMAIL OR PHONE CALL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

Good morning/afternoon.

This is Justin Pettigrew from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia.

I am in the process of conducting research for my Ph.D. dissertation under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber, an associate professor here at Grady. My dissertation will examine how we teach media relations in public relations and journalism classes. Before I talk to professors, I would appreciate your insight. Your feedback will provide the foundation for the rest of the research.

You were purposefully chosen for this research FROM A LIST OF AEJMC PUBLIC RELATIONS/JOURNALISM PROFESSORS OBTAINED FROM THE 2011 MEMBER DIRECTORY. If you would agree to a 20-30 minute interview arranged at your convenience which will be audio recorded, I'd like to ask you a few questions about how you interact with members of the press, and how social media has affected those relationships.

Would you be interested in participating in this research? Please understand that you have the right to refuse to participate without penalty.

(IF EMAIL): Thank you for your time.

IF ANSWER IS YES – schedule a convenient time for interview

IF ANSWER IS NO – read or email the following:
"Thank you for your time. If you change your mind and would like to participate in this study, I can be reached at jeppr@uga.edu, or at 678-488-9668. If you have questions for Dr. Reber, he can be reached at reber@uga, or at 706-542-3178. Have a pleasant afternoon/evening."
 END CALL

Informed Consent Letter

Date

Dear   :

This is Justin Pettigrew, a Ph.D. student under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study as part of my dissertation research.   My dissertation will examine how we teach media relations in public relations and journalism classes. Before I talk to professors, I would appreciate your insight. Your feedback will provide the foundation for the rest of the research.

Your participation will involve an interview and should only take about 20-30 minutes. The interview will be recorded. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The interview recording with your identifiable information will be saved until the completion of the dissertation, hopefully in May of 2013. This is so that I can refer back to individual interviews and look for common themes based on position level and/or industry. The interview recordings will then be destroyed. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form, although quotes that will not be identified by individual may be used. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this project may provide information on how teaching media relations differently can result in better-prepared students entering the workforce. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-488-9668 or Dr. Reber at 706-542-3178, or send an email to jeppr@uga.edu or to Dr. Reber at reber@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you. If you would send me a return statement confirming your agreement to participate, I would appreciate it. Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Justin Pettigrew, under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber
Department of Advertising and Public Relations
Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communications
The University of Georgia

PR Practitioner Questionnaire

Hello and thank you for agreeing to this interview. Let's begin.

Questions:

1.   Do you conduct media relations for your clients/company?
            If not, who in your company does (get contact info, end call and contact
            that person)
            If yes, how long have you been doing media relations?

2.   What types of journalists do you deal with? What kinds of beats do they write
for?

3.   About what % of your workweek do you spend on media relations?
        3b.   Does it vary much regarding type of journalists' beats and type of media
                 you're contacting? If yes, how?

4.   In the time that you've been working with journalists, have media relations
        changed? If yes, how? [Don't ask about relationships yet]

5.   Have changes in media – such as staff reductions – changed how you conduct
        media relations? If yes, how? (Wait for responses, if following doesn't come up,
        then probe—)
        5b.   Are you finding more frequent changes in beat staffing?
        5c.   Are you finding greater prevalence of younger, less experienced
        journalists?

6.   Have new technologies impacted how you conduct media relations? If yes, how?

7.   When you initiate a contact with journalists currently, how are you doing so?
        [Wait for responses, then probe…]

8.   How often are you using the following when you initiate a fresh conversation
        with journalists (how many times per day, how many times per week)?
            Email?
            One-on-one telephone conversation?
            Texting?
            Facebook?
            Twitter?
            Any other form of social media? (note type of social media)
            HARO or other online networking platform? (if so, which platform?)

9.   Do you do any contacting of journalists by express mail? Surface mail? Fax?

Are there any other ways you contact journalists?

10.   Do you attempt to place stories with bloggers pertinent to your clients/company? If yes, how do you typically interact with them? What means do you use?

11.   How often do journalists or bloggers contact you for information? [Try to get a % of interactions]
11b.   How are journalists finding you? (Website content? Response to Facebook? Twitter? Blogs? Anything else?)

12.   Have your professional and/or personal relationships with journalists shifted because of changes in media and/or changing technologies? How? (Wait for responses, then probe – do you find journalists have less time to interact with you because of staff cuts, deadline pressures, more streamlined communication?)
12a.   If yes, has this impacted your ability to form professional and/or personal relationships with journalists? If yes, how?

13.   In general, would you say it is easier or harder to motivate journalists to cover your stories now than, say, a few years ago? If it has changed, how and why do you think it has changed?

[If social media is being used… then ask….]

14.   Is there any way I could see a social media exchange between you and a member of the press that resulted in a story? Can you provide me with an example or transcript of an instance in which you used social media exclusively to generate or develop a story?

(Follow up) Is there anything else you can tell me about your recent experiences building relationships with journalists?

If you think of anything else, would you please call/email me? (Just to remind you, my phone number is 678-488-9668, email jeppr@uga.edu).

Thank you for your time and the information you've provided. I will be happy to provide you with the results of this survey once it has been consolidated and reviewed.

END CALL

APPENDIX B: List of Textbooks for Coding
(*note: proper APA citation style has been modified for this list)

Introductory PR Textbooks

1.   Seitel, F. P. (2011). *The Practice of Public Relations* (11th Edition). New Jersey:
      Prentice-Hall.

2.   Broom, G. M. (2009). *Cutlip & Center's Effective Public Relations* (10th Edition)
      New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

3.   Wilcox, D. L & Cameron, G.T. (2011). *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (10th
      Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

4.   Lattimore, D., Baskin, O., Heiman, S., Toth, E. & Van Leuven, J. (2004). *Public
      Relations: The Profession and the Practice* (4th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

5.   Guth, D. W. & Marsh, C. (2011). *Public Relations: A Values Driven Approach* (5th
      Edition). New Jersey: Pearson.

Public Relations Writing Textbooks

1.   Wilcox, D. L. & Reber, B. H. (2012). *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques*
      (7th Edition). New Jersey: Pearson.

2.   Foster, J. (2008). Effective Writing Skills for Public Relations (4th Edition).
      Philadelphia: Kogan Page.

3.   Treadwell, D. & Treadwell, J. B. (2005). *Public Relations Writing: Principles in
      Practice* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

4.   Newsome, D. & Haynes, J. *Public Relations Writing: Form and Style* (9th Edition).
      Boston Wadsworth

5.   Bivins, T. H. (2010). Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format
      (7th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Journalism Writing/Reporting Textbooks

1.   The Missouri Group (2010). *News Reporting and Writing* (10th Edition). New York: Macmillan.

2.   Bender, J. R., Davenport, L. D., Drager, M. W. & Fedler, F. (2012). *Reporting for the Media (*10th Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

3.   Stovall, J. G. (2007). *Writing for the Mass Media* (6th Edition). New Jersey: Pearson.

4.   Rich, C. (2007). *Writing and News Reporting: A Coaching Method* (6th Edition). Boston: Wadsworth.

5.   Scanlan, C. (2000). *Reporting and Writing: Basics for the 21st Century.* New York: Oxford University Press.

6.   Mencher, M. (2010). *Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing* (12th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

7.   Lanson, J. & Stephens, M. (2008). *Writing and Reporting the News* (3rd Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

8.   Kerschner, J. W. (2011). *Elements of News Writing* (3rd Edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

9.   Harcup, T. (2009). *Journalism: Principles and Practice* (2nd Edition).Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

10.   Harrower, T. (2007). *Inside Reporting* (2nd Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill

APPENDIX C: Professor Interview Protocol

PHONE CALL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW

"Good morning/afternoon.

This is Justin Pettigrew calling from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia.

I am in the process of conducting research for my Ph.D. dissertation under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber, an associate professor here at Grady. My dissertation will examine how we teach media relations in public relations and journalism classes. As a professor of public relations (journalism), your participation as a potential interviewee for my research will help to structure the remainder of my dissertation, and provide me with invaluable insight into how you approach teaching media relations to your students.

You were purposively chosen from among professors at ACEJMC-accredited schools, which I have access to through the Grady College. If you would agree to a 30-45 minute interview that would be audio recorded, I'd like to ask you a few questions about if and how you currently teach media relations to your students.

Would you be wiling to in participate in this research? Please understand that you have the right to refuse to participate without penalty.

YES – schedule a convenient time for interview

NO – read the following:
"Thank you for your time. If you change your mind and would like to participate in this study, I can be reached at jeppr@uga.edu, or at 678-488-9668. Have a pleasant afternoon/evening."

[END CALL]

<u>Informed Consent Letter</u>

Hello, this is Justin Pettigrew from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia.   I am a graduate student working under the advisement of Dr. Bryan Reber, an associate professor in Grady to complete my dissertation research. Thank you on advance for agreeing to this interview. As a part of the informed consent process I need to read you a prepared statement. If you agree to the interview I will need to tape record your response. I am turning on the tape now. Please respond on tape.

For the purposes of this research, this interview will be audio recorded. May I tape this conversation? (WAIT FOR ANSWER.) Please state your name.

This interview will take 30-45 minutes to complete. My research will examine how public relations and journalism professors teach media relations in the classroom, and explore ways for improving instruction to better prepare students for practice.

Consent:
I hereby give my consent to participate in your research. I am at least 18 years old. I understand that:
A: My participation is entirely voluntary, and I may refuse to participate or end my participation at any time prior to the completion of the study without penalty. If I find a question offensive or inappropriate, I understand that I may cease my participation without consequence.

B. Any information that I may give will be reported in such a way as to not obviously identify specific participants.   However, I understand that the researchers cannot foresee how others will interpret the anonymous conversations. Data will be stored securely and will be made available to those involved with the research. This interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and the transcripts will be destroyed at the completion of my dissertation in May 2013.

C. The researcher is available to answer any questions I may have regarding the study or my participation later on. If I have questions in the future. I may reach Justin E. Pettigrew at 678-488-9668. Additional questions regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (716) 542-3199, email address IRB@uga.edu

If you agree, please say, "I agree".

Thank you. We'll begin the interview now.

Public Relations/Journalism Professor Interview Questionnaire

1. What is your position?

2. Where do you teach?

3. Do you have any professional experience in public relations (journalism)? If so where did you work and for how long?

   a. Do you teach in a journalism school, a communications school, or in another school or department?

4. What undergraduate classes do you typically teach?

   a. (Probe: writing, introduction, management, campaigns)

5. In which classes, if any, do you teach media relations (or how to work with public relations professionals) – that is, the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners?

To answer H 3 and to support H 1a & b: items 6, 6a & 6b
6. In an "ideal" situation, how do you view the PR practitioner/journalist relationship?

   a. Do you view the relationship as more monologic or dialogic (that is, an ongoing relationship give-and-take between parties; monologic is more that the information is pushed out from the practitioner to the journalist?)

   b. Can you give an example of this ideal relationship. Maybe an illustration you use in your classroom.

To answer RQ 3 b: item 7
7.
   (If the professor is journalism) Do you address public relations or working with public relations practitioners in your classes? If so, how much time do you devote to the topic?

To answer RQ 3 a, b: items 8, 9 and 9a
8.   How do you explain or describe the relationship between PR practitioners/journalists to your students?

9.   Do you share personal or practical examples of how media relations (or journalism) is practiced?

        a.   How do you draw from your experience? Give me an example if you can.

To answer RQ 3 a, b: items 10, 11 and 12
10.   If you have practical experience in media relations (or journalism), do you use that as your foundation for teaching? If so, how?

        a.   When you think of the journalists/public relations professionals with which you interacted during your career, what relationship comes to mind first and why?

11.   Do you teach your students that the relationship between journalists and public relations professionals is rooted, or based in, conflict? How so?

        a.   Do you provide examples of ways to manage conflict in the relationship?

12.   In teaching media relations, what would you say to the concept of teaching students that working with the press (or practitioners) is a series of negotiations between the two parties? That is, a series of back-and-forth exchanges to develop a story?

To answer RQ 2: items 13, 13a, 13b, 13c and 13d
13.   Do you use textbooks in your class(es)? If not, what do you use (reading packet, course reserves etc.) If you use a text, which one or ones do you use? (If they use texts, ask a., b., and c. if not, skip to d.)

        a. Why did you choose that/those texts?

        b. How, if at all, does that text cover media relations?

        c. About how much space – a chapter, a section of a chapter, a few paragraphs, a sentence or two – is devoted to media relations in the text?

        d. (If they do not use a standard text) Why don't you use a standard text?

To support H 4: item 14
14.   (If the professor is in public relations); if not skip to 15). Is there a theory of public relations that you see as most reflective of "best practices" in the field? What is it?

15.   Much has been written about public relations as "relationship management," which centers the exchange between an organization and its publics on relationships rather than outcomes. Do you subscribe to the relationship management view? Why or why not?

    a. Do you see media relations as a function to create win-win solutions for reporters and for organizations? Why or why not?

    b. Do you see media relations as creating ongoing dialogues with reporters/public relations practitioners?

    c. Do you think personal relationships with reporters/PR practitioners are an important part of the news-making process? Why or why not?

To answer H 2 and to support H 4 and H 5: items 16, 16 a, 16 b

16.   What would you say to the concept that PR (journalism) should focus on long-lasting relationships first, outcomes second? (If the interviewee is a journalism professor, ask a. If they are a PR professor, ask b.)

    a. How would you address the following scenario with your students: Let's say a public relations person doesn't fully cooperate on a story, even though they've been reliable in the past. How would that affect your relationship and future interaction? (Probe: Could you trust them in the future? Would this one instance color your future interactions? How?

    b. How would you address the following scenario with your students: Let's say a journalist writes a negative piece about your client or company, even though you have a good working relationship with him or her. How would this affect your relationship and future interaction? (Probe: would you trust them in the future?)

To support H 7: item 17

17.   Do you think persuasion has a place or plays a role in the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists? There has been much debate about this in the PR literature. What do you think? And why?

Thank you. This concludes the bulk of our interview. I just need to finish with a few demographic questions.

How long have you held your current position?

What is you highest degree and where did you get it?

May I ask your age?   25-35
                        36-50
                        50-65
                        66+

Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. I hope some good information comes out of this dissertation that may be of interest to you. Would you like an executive summary once I've completed my dissertation?
(If so, how would they like it sent to them)
(If not, read the following and end call)

If you have any questions or think of anything else that might benefit my research, please let me know at jeppr@uga.edu or by phone at 678-488-9668. Again, thank you for your time and input.
[END CALL]

DATE

Dear Professor:

This is Justin Pettigrew, a Ph.D. student under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Georgia. I hope you'll take the time participate in a survey, which is part of my dissertation research. My dissertation will examine how we teach media relations in public relations and journalism classes. I would appreciate your insight in this final phase of data gathering.

The findings from this project may provide information on how teaching media relations differently can result in better-prepared students entering the workforce. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Your participation will involve answering the questions in a survey from the link below. It should take only about 15-20 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All information you provide is anonymous, and you cannot be identified by your participation in this survey. However, because of the nature of the Internet, there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. The researcher will do everything possible to limit risks by not recording IP addresses or other information.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-488-9668 or Dr. Reber at 706-542-3178, or send an email to jeppr@uga.edu or to Dr. Reber at reber@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Your completion of the survey will serve as your confirmation that you agree to participate in my dissertation research. Here is the link: https://ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_77A0SckvhoczUAl. Again, I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Justin Pettigrew, under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber
Department of Advertising and Public Relations
Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communications
The University of Georgia

APPENDIX E: Invitation to Journalism Professors to Participate in Survey

DATE

Dear Professor:

This is Justin Pettigrew, a Ph.D. student under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at The University of Georgia. I hope you'll take 10 minutes or so to complete a survey as part of my dissertation research. My dissertation, in part, will examine how public relations practitioners are addressed in journalism classes. I would appreciate your insight in this final phase of data gathering.

Your participation will involve answering the questions in a survey from the link below. It should take only about 10 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All information you provide is anonymous, and you cannot be identified by your participation in this survey. However, because of the nature of the Internet, there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. The researcher will do everything possible to limit risks by not recording IP addresses or other information. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 678-488-9668 or Dr. Reber at 706-542-3178, or send an email to jeppr@uga.edu or to Dr. Reber at reber@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Your completion of the survey will serve as your confirmation that you agree to participate in my dissertation research. Here is the link: https://ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_54ENBqvuls8f9hb. Again, I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Justin Pettigrew, under the direction of Dr. Bryan Reber
Department of Advertising and Public Relations
Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communications
The University of Georgia

Follow up email 1:
Hello:

About a week ago, you received an invitation to participate in my dissertation research on media relations and media relationships. If you haven't done so already, I'd truly appreciate your participation. You can reach the survey by clicking here.

Again, thank you for your time and participation.

All the best,

Justin Pettigrew
Ph.D. Candidate
Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of Georgia

Follow up email 2:
Hello:

I know the beginning of the semester is a busy time, but your participation in the survey you were asked to participate in a few weeks ago for my dissertation research would really help me to finish the project. This dissertation will also hopefully provide valuable information for educators in public relations and journalism. I truly appreciate your time. To go to the survey, please click **here**.

Again, thank you in advance.

All the best,

Justin Pettigrew
Ph.D. Candidate
Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of Georgia

Appendix G: Public Relations Professor Survey Instrument (Qualtrix)

Q1: What undergraduate classes do you typically teach? Even if class titles don't exactly match, please choose based on class concepts.
❑ Public Relations Writing/Communication
❑ Introduction to Public Relations
❑ Public Relations Campaigns
❑ Public Relations Administration/Management
❑ Introduction to Mass Communications
❑ Public Relations Cases
❑ Other (please identify all) _____

Q2: Which class do you teach most often? Even if class titles don't exactly match, please choose based on class concepts.
○ Public Relations Writing/Communication
○ Introduction to Public Relations
○ Public Relations Campaigns
○ Public Relations Administration/Management
○ Introduction to Mass Communication
○ Public Relations Cases
○ Other (please identify all) _____

Q3: In which classes, if any, do you teach media relations?
❑ Public relations Writing/Communication
❑ Introduction to Public Relations
❑ Public Relations Campaigns
❑ Public Relations Administration/Management
❑ Introduction to Mass Communication
❑ Public Relations Cases
❑ Other (please identify all)_____

Q4: How many hours would you say you spend on media relations in your classes?
○ 1-3
○ 4-6
○ 7-10
○ 10 or more

Q5: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is, in fact, a relationship.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is primarily one-way (PR pros pushing information out to reporters).	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is primarily a two-way street, with each party needing the other to do their jobs.	○	○	○	○	○
An existing relationship enhances the interaction between public relations and journalists.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between a journalist and a PR practitioner usually consists of ongoing dialogue between the two parties.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is a give-and-take relationship.	○	○	○	○	○
The goal of the reporter/public relations practitioner relationship is to work towards outcomes	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
that are satisfactory to both parties.					
Sometimes, a solution cannot be reached that is satisfactory to both parties.	O	O	O	O	O
A possibility in the reporter/public relations relationship is the potential for outcomes neither party anticipated before the exchange.	O	O	O	O	O
Through exchange with a reporter, the relationship can be enhanced for better outcomes in the future.	O	O	O	O	O

Q6: Do you address working with journalists, e.g. pitching stories, developing relationships, etc. in your classes?
O Yes
O No

Q7: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The textbook(s) I use in my classes accurately reflect what I think about media relations.	O	O	O	O	O
I use supplementary materials to convey information about media relations in my classes.	O	O	O	O	O
The book(s) I use are of my own choosing.	O	O	O	O	O

Q8: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I teach my students that it is important to form relationships with journalists with whom they deal with regularly.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I teach my students it is important to form relationships with journalists regardless of whether or not they may work with them again.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I teach my students that relationships are equally as important as outcomes.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I teach my students that relationships with journalists don't really matter in the bigger scheme of keeping the client/their employer happy.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q9: Do you share personal or practical examples of how media relations is practiced?
- ❍ Often
- ❍ Occasionally
- ❍ Rarely
- ❍ Never

Q10: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe in, and teach students, that media relations should involve dialogue between a journalist and a PR professional.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The textbook I use does a good job of explaining the relationship between a journalist and a public relations professional.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The textbook I use reflects my views on how media relations is practiced.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The textbook I use accurately reflects my views on the relationship between the PR professional and the journalist.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I teach that dialogue in a PR professional/journalist relationship may be more important than the textbook I use suggests.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q11: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The relationship between journalists and public relations professionals is rooted in conflict.	○	○	○	○	○
Conflict can be overcome by forming good relationships with journalists.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between journalists and public relations professionals is rooted in each party understanding the job and needs of the other party.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between journalists is rooted in creating a common understanding of situations.	○	○	○	○	○
I teach students that the relationship with journalists is a back-and-forth exchange in creating a story.	○	○	○	○	○
Personal relationships with journalists can be an important part of the news making process.	○	○	○	○	○
Personal relationships usually enhance the quality of the working relationship with journalists.	○	○	○	○	○

Q12: Do you teach...
- ❍ In a School of Journalism and Mass Communication
- ❍ In a Journalism/Public Relations Department housed in a College of Arts and Sciences
- ❍ In a Business School
- ❍ In a Communications Department housed in a College of Arts and Sciences
- ❍ In a School of Journalism
- ❍ Other (please identify) _____

Thank you. Now a few demographic questions...
Q13: What is your position?
- ❍ Lecturer
- ❍ Assistant Professor
- ❍ Associate Professor
- ❍ Professor
- ❍ Other (please identify)_____

Q14: How long have you been at your current institution?
_____ Number of years
Q15: How long have you been teaching?
_____ Number of years
Q16: Do you have any professional experience in PR?
_____ How many years did you practice?
Q17: Do you have any professional experience in journalism?
_____ How many years did you practice?
Q18: My highest degree is:
- ❍ Bachelor's
- ❍ Master's
- ❍ Ph.D.
- ❍ Other (please specify) _____

Q19: My age is...
_____ Current age

Appendix H: Journalism Professor Survey Instrument (Qualtrix)

Q1: What undergraduate classes do you typically teach? Check as many as apply.
- ❑ Introduction to Mass Communication
- ❑ Introduction to Journalism
- ❑ A news writing class
- ❑ Investigative Reporting
- ❑ Advanced reporting
- ❑ Other (please specify as many as you wish) _____

Q2: In which classes (if any) do you address working with public relations professionals (not just the profession of public relations)? Check as many as apply.
- ❑ Introduction to Mass Communication
- ❑ Introduction to Journalism
- ❑ A news writing class
- ❑ Investigative Reporting
- ❑ Advanced Reporting
- ❑ I don't address interaction with PR professionals in any of my classes
- ❑ Other (please specify as many as you wish, or provide other information on how you address PR in your classes) _____

Q3: Do you have any practical experience in journalism or reporting? If so, how many years did you practice?
_____ Years

Q4: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is necessary for journalists to interact with public relations practitioners.	○	○	○	○	○
Journalists should form good relationships with the public relations practitioners they work with.	○	○	○	○	○
It is necessary for journalists to form good relationships with the public relations practitioners they work with.	○	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○	○

The interaction between journalists and public relations practitioners is enhanced when there is an established relationship between the two parties.					
I address the subject of public relations practitioners in my journalism classes.	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship between a reporter and a public relations practitioner consists of ongoing dialogue between the two parties.	○	○	○	○	○
I teach that the relationship between a reporter and a public relations practitioner consists of ongoing dialogue between the two parties.	○	○	○	○	○
A news story can be better if there is a good relationship between the reporter and the PR practitioner with whom they are working.	○	○	○	○	○
I teach that a news story can be better if there is a good relationship between the reporter and the PR practitioner they are working with.	○	○	○	○	○
Getting a good story sometimes involves ongoing give-and-take with a public relations practitioner.	○	○	○	○	○
Persuasion by the reporter is part of the reporter/PR practitioner relationship.	○	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○	○

Persuasion by the PR practitioner is part of the reporter/PR practitioner relationship.					
I teach that persuasion is part of the reporter/PR practitioner relationship.	○	○	○	○	○

Q5: Thank you. This concludes the bulk of this survey. I just need to finish with a few demographic questions.What is your position?
○ Lecturer
○ Assistant Professor
○ Associate Professor
○ Professor
○ Other (please identify) _____

Q6: How long have you held your current position?
_____ Number of years
Q7: How long have you been teaching?
_____ Number of years
Q8: My highest degree is:
○ Bachelor's Degree
○ Master's Degree
○ Ph.D.
○ Other (please specify) _____

Q9: My age is:
_____ Age