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ABILITY OR ABYSS: DOES AMERICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION PROGRAM ACCREDITATION ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE ABILITIES NECESSARY FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS?

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by

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Abstract

This paper researches the overall effectiveness of public relations (PR) accreditations in collegiate education programs, especially by standard of modern PR skills. Multiple sources recognize a wide variety in PR processes, education programs, and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) listed in the field. In essence, this paper clarifies the similarities and incongruences between PR educational programs and the KSAs of the professional field. The focus rests in understanding if accreditation processes are more successful in achieving professional status.

Keywords: public relations, college education, accreditation, public relations skills, modern communications

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Introduction

Professionalism is a highly desired attribute in any profession, and public relations (PR) is no different. Often overlooked but infiltrating every corporate system, PR represents a company or entity in a way that provides and promotes a favorable impression of the entity and builds on social skills and relationships to achieve that goal (Bernays, 2006). Permeating almost every sphere, including government, sports, celebrities, finances, businesses, etc., PR is a pervasive communication not limited to one medium.

In light of this information, possessing an understanding of PR is vital to successful business relations and reputation management. Recognizing the professional atmosphere of the occupation, and especially identifying the ways in which that professionalism is cultivated, prove difficult but necessary tasks. Protecting and building the professionalism of PR becomes more than routine; it becomes vital for execution in the ever-changing modern world.

The professional public relations field, while often underrated, is thriving. As public relations professionals continue to educate corporations and individuals about the necessities of their relations with others, PR becomes solidified as a necessary function. However, other aspects are not as abundant. The college PR education system has many benefits, but depending on the specifics, can lack quite a bit of information and experience that can only come from outside the classroom (Lee, 1974).

Because organizations have such a large need for the tasks of the PR field, there must be a proper and well-equipped population of individuals willing and able to perform those tasks. Having a gap of unengaged students and unfulfilled education requirements would lead to unsuccessful transitions into the workforce and ultimately result in a decrease in the professionalism of the PR field as a whole.

Purpose and Research Questions

  The purpose of this thesis is to adequately identify and address the proposed disconnect between the professional public relations employment field and the college education program, specifically analyzing if accreditation of PR programs provides the necessary bridge.

  PR seems to lack unity and conformity nationally in the United States, and can therefore confuse students about how prepared they are for seeking post-graduate employment in the PR field.

  The research questions that arise from these difficulties include:

  RQ1: What are the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) for PR professional success in 2017?

  RQ2: What is the current state of PR education programs today?

  RQ3: Are collegiate educational programs adequately preparing students for PR professionalism?

  RQ4: What is PR accreditation and what is its role in the educational sphere?

These clarifications lead to one overarching research question designed to understand the PR field and educational arena at its core, and provide a groundwork for understanding what exists in the PR realm in 2017.

  RQ5: In light of modern technological communications, does accreditation of public relations education programs prepare individuals to effectively develop and operate modern public relations skill sets?

  These provide a framework for finding and analyzing scholarly sources, as well as understanding the popular culture and the demands both academia and society place on PR education and practice.

Methodology

This thesis will answer the research questions by providing an extended literature review of the professional skills, current requirements and suggested growth, and analyze a similar path of development and improvement in academic PR programs and degrees.

The literature review will lead a study of professionalism in the PR occupation, its development over time, and areas for suggested improvement. In addition, the education for the PR occupation will be considered, its development and suggested improvements arranged in a manner similar to the study of professionalism.

The following chapter will build upon the research in the literature review and discover exactly what KSAs are being discussed by PR professionals in the last several years, from around 2000-2017. Sources will be analyzed for relevancy in relation to time period and peer consistency, and a clear description of current skills required for professional success in the PR field will be determined.

A further chapter will explain the accreditation processes available for the collegiate PR programs in the last ten or fifteen years, including non-accredited institutions. Analysis will take place on the efficiency for each accreditation, and an overall comparison between accreditation processes and non-accreditation options will clarify the benefits of accreditation.

Ultimately, the research analysis will conclude in a description of the usefulness of accreditation processes in achieving not only professionalism in PR, but college readiness for the occupational skills and demands.

Literature Review

Professional Analysis

   Current Standards of Professionalism in Public Relations. Public relations as a profession provides excellent opportunities for individuals, but without standards or structure the field would collapse. Research provides excellent sources regarding the formation of professionalism in PR throughout its career, including ethical codes, skill standardization, and other discussions.

   Ethical Codes. One way to measure professionalism is via ethical codes. In the *Journal of Business Ethics* in 2001, Yi-Hui Huang, a Taiwan professor, wrote about the construction of an international ethics code for PR that could be enforced and adopted by all PR practitioners. Huang seeks to understand this issue by questioning the need for a code of ethics, the plausibility of enforcement, and the recognition of the ethics code among the PR field.

   While the PRSA has a code of ethics, it is not enforceable because PRSA has voluntary membership, and is only for individuals, not organizations of PR. Because there is a gap in this area of PR, Huang (2001) sets forth an argument for this bridge. There are eight main concerns with a code of ethics, which Huang addresses individually and with logical responses, noting overall that PR as an occupation is not professionalized, and that an enforceable code of ethics would provide a stepping stone in the professionalization of public relations (2001, p. 260).

   Some say that a code of ethics is not absolutely required for a job to become 'professional' in nature. Huang (2001, p. 260) cites Bernays from 1980 to show that a code of ethics is the next step. While critics say that PR does not need a code of ethics, Huang asserts that is because the field is not yet professionally mature (2001, p. 260). The attributes of ethics codes demand a unified enforcement of the code, which would be necessary for a field to be

professional. As a huge consideration for PR, the negative public opinion of PR as lacking

professionalism could clearly and directly be confronted by an internationally enforceable code

of ethics that promotes professionalism and provides PR practitioners with support and a

framework for occupational success.

While many cited critics complain about the vagueness and problematic text of existing

ethical codes, Huang concisely points out that codes improve with discussion and open

evaluation, something that has already been done for the code of the PRSA, and would be

continually done for an international affair as well (2001, pp. 261-62).

Ethical codes have also lacked in strength due to professionals' disregard for them.

Huang notes that these codes need enforcement to ensure their stability and prominence in the

field, and that they are seen as mere presentation by critics because there is no follow through for

those who fail to follow the codes (2001, p. 262).

This leads critics to say that a code of ethics is unenforceable, especially in voluntary

organizations like the PRSA (Huang, 2001, p. 263). This Huang confronts with a three-fold

system for success. The mechanism of enforcement, while difficult, can be accomplished

through analysis and review, which the PRSA has in place, and could be enacted internationally

(Huang, 2001, p. 263). Formal licensing through the government or state has seen a multitude of

successful professions arise and become stable, as PR could easily follow as outlined and

discussed by Bernays in 1979 (Huang, 2001, p. 264). Huang (2001) also notes that including

more rewards or benefits for PR professionals who are members in voluntary organizations leads

to more commitment and involvement, also combating the instability of ethical enforcement.

Complaints about the limitations of freedom for practitioners is adequately refuted by

Bernays in 1979, who noted that the only freedoms being limited are the false practices and

incorrect opinions about PR (Bernays, 1979; Huang 2001). Anyone actually qualified or desiring

to pursue PR can do so honestly.

From the opposite side of the field, there are those who say PR practitioners are ethical in

and of themselves, making ethics a personal option rather than an international enforcement, and

ethical code enforcement is unnecessary (Huang, 2001, p. 264). If the previous note about those

who falsely practice PR is not convincing enough, Huang notes three aspects of ethical standard

necessity (2001, p. 265).

Firstly, most "ethics" followed by business organizations are situational and relative,

meaning the company decides when and where to follow ethics and when to choose their

personal benefit. Huang notes that the need for ethics arises secondly because people look only

for their self-interest, choosing 'morality' based on what will advance their personal success with

the least effort or maximum benefits (2001, p. 265).

The use of mutual coercion or social contract is a highly researched and mostly respected

means of controlling the self-serving mindset of individuals. Huang notes that an enforceable PR

code of ethics serves as a way to provide PR practitioners with accountability for themselves and

others and mutually overcome the relativism of ethics enforced individually (2001, p. 265).

Other theories believe that PR is sometimes twisted to value the public as a whole over

the individual client and their needs, making an ethical code for PR improper in the valuing of

the audience over the individual (Huang, 2001, p. 266). Huang (2001) seems confused and

almost sarcastic at the nature of the argument, noting that PR practitioners today adequately

seem to value the client as primarily important, and the ethical code for PR would reflect this

protection of the client and also for the public as a whole.

Lastly, the education of ethics serves for some as the solution for professional ethics, in their minds making a professional code unnecessary. Huang (2001, p. 268) uses a two-prong attack against this argument. She notes firstly that there is inadequate ethical education in PR programs, as resoundingly shown through empirical research. This is not the only reason for belief in professional ethics code, as Huang asserts that a professional, enforced code of ethics can be a catalyst for professionalism in the field and in the classroom.

Overall, Huang asserts that a code of ethics can be enforceable, and is extremely desirable in promoting and achieving the professionalism of PR (2001). Strengthening ethical education is also noteworthy, but the formal licensing of PR could provide the next the step toward PR legitimacy as a profession.

While Huang hails from Taiwan, her Ph.D. in Communications and extensive research in the field make her work applicable to the United States development of PR as a profession (2001). These arguments note not only ethical behavior as a desirable skill for PR, but also detail many other attributes that PR individuals can build upon or integrate into their career. On a global level, Huang provides vision for international PR development that can lead to further clarification of PR requirements and KSAs necessary for professionalism in the field. This work, done in 2001, sets the stage for the modern generation of PR to continue the developments.

The Public Relations Society in America (PRSA) stands as the organization leading the modern generation in PR nationwide, and sets the standard in professionalism and PR requirements. As such, the Code of Ethics (created or researched infrequently) serves as the foundation for PR ethics. Kathy Fitzpatrick worked on the 2000 Code of Ethics and details exactly what went into the process of structuring the ethical codes.

Fitzpatrick chronicles the problems with the old code, showing that the new code is now different. "The 2000 code assumes professional standing for PRSA members; it emphasizes public relations' advocacy role; and it contains no enforcement provisions" (2000, p. 111). The lack of enforcement clauses was due to the fact that enforcement of the old code had become practically impossible, and did more harm than good.

Focus group research showed that PR had three main areas of ethics or requirements to uphold. Lack of truthfulness in business activities, corruption of communication channels, and competitive practices all lend to destroy the ethics of PR practitioners and ruin the professionalism of PR as an occupation (Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 115-116).

Fitzpatrick (2002) details a list of issues that were recommended for inclusion in a code of ethics and reflect the content and skills needed in PR today:

> Commonly cited issues that should be addressed included the economics of ethics (i.e., the fact that taking an ethical stand might mean losing a job); licensing or certifying public relations professionals; effective enforcement mechanisms; "globalism" (p. 8); Internet activities; disclosure and confidentiality; front groups; and dealings with the media. (p. 116)

This proves quite a list of requirements that PR practitioners should analyze for their personal career as well. Other research into the code discovered a majority of PRSA members who agreed that ethics played a large role in occupation professionalism and in PRSA's ability to develop codes that could provide leadership in ethics (Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Ultimately, it was decided that a code of ethics should address PRSA members as individual professionals. This sets a high individual standard for excellence rather than an overarching and vague professionalism.

The six overarching values adopted by the 2000 code developers were advocacy, honesty, expertise, independence, loyalty, and fairness (Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 121). Fitzpatrick notes that these highlight the need for PR individuals to put the client and their needs first, to seek truth and morality, and to recognize professionalism in unbiased opinions and proficiency of the craft (2002, p. 121). These are skills and values that all PR professionals should strive toward.

The code body discussed six main concepts of PR, including information disclosure and free flow, competition and conflicts of interest, as well as keeping confidences and developing competency in the profession. As aspirational and positive principles, PR professionals are encouraged toward positive behavior, rather than shunned from negative behavior (Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 123).

Ultimately, the code did not set forth aspects of punishment or enforcement, because those elements are unfruitful without legal action to provide support. The code developers recognized that PRSA serves as a voluntary organization for the field, and that development of educational materials will better serve to enhance ethics rather than ineffectively promising punishment (Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 125).

Ethics education hopes to continue in structure development, providing a large aspect of the PRSA dedicated to helping PR professionals and chapters include ethics as a high value of their practice. The long-term implications of this code show that while there are not definitive, specific enforcements for misbehavior or clauses for PR individuals outside PRSA, the standard is set for PR ethical and professional behavior (Fitzpatrick, 2002, pp. 126-27). As future dilemmas face not only the PRSA but also American professionals in PR as a whole, this 2000 Code of Ethics acts as a foundation for aspirational conduct.

Fitzpatrick shows her knowledge and expertise in the area of development by detailing the third-party recommendations for code restructuring, and provides excellent material on the skills and requirements in PR that will continue to push the occupation toward a nationally licensed profession (2002). This code, adopted in 2000, and discussed by Fitzpatrick in 2002, is a stepping stone for future generations of identification processes of PR.

KSAs Discussion. Lynne Sallot, along with other authors, presented a survey to PR practitioners and educators throughout the United States to gauge their opinion about the professionalism and necessity of the PR occupation through different aspects of the profession. Conducted through the Yarbrough Public Relations Laboratory and published in the *Public Relations Review* in 1997, it serves as a follow-up to a previous article from 1996 regarding a similar topic from the viewpoint of practitioners.

In essence, the study analyzed educators' opinion on twenty-four different skills and elements of PR that were derived from scholarly literature and the PR field. These twenty-four elements were categorized into sections like: "activities-skills-managing through goals and objectives; salary; research; role in the organization; ethical guidelines; education-training; racial-gender equity; accreditation-licensing" (Sallot, 1997, p. 197+). The academic faculty were asked to rank the professionalism standards of each item in its establishment and acceptance across the field.

While the faculty who participated in the survey varied widely in personal characteristics, there were a few main areas they agreed upon (Sallot, 1997). Elements of the test such as writing skills, technical skills, ethics, and accreditation were considered highly established in standard performance structure. Sallot notes that the low end of the spectrum was "licensing, location of public relations on the organizational chart, inclusion of public relations in the dominant

coalition, how public relations should operate and continuing education/training" (Sallot, 1997, p. 197+). These areas seem controversial to many educators, and lacking in credibility or unified consent.

Influences on the responses came from experience, age, race, and gender, leading some responses to have varied and divergent results. The responses were also compared to the data from a previous study where the twenty-four elements were surveyed by a group of PR professionals. Educators rated writing, editing, graphics, and production technical skills higher than practitioners did (Sallot, 1997, p. 197+). However, PR professionals gave better standard ratings to continued education/training and how PR should operate. These seem reflective of the main focus of each respective group; i.e. the amount of interaction that the educators receive with writing versus the amount of interaction practitioners receive with how PR should operate.

In conclusion, Sallot (1997) recognized that educators had a slightly less clear focus of the professional standards in the field of PR, whereas practitioners understood the standards to a greater extent. She suggests that PR faculty continue to raise awareness and strengthen the focus of professional standards for the students, meaning they continue to impress students with the confidence in the professionalism of PR as an occupation (Sallot, 1997, p. 197+). Practitioners should prepare for individuals entering the work force, who are expectant of a new level of professionalism and carry a refined focus and energy for the excellence of the field.

While conducted in 1997, hardly relevant twenty years later, the survey is an excellent opportunity to understand what aspects of PR have continued through the years and what are elements continually being valued and practiced by both educators and practitioners. Sallot (1997) condenses the units of the study into six dimensions for faculty and eight for practitioners, as noted below.

From educators:

Research/Management Competency. Salary Levels. Skills/Training. Role/Status. Gender and Racial Equity. Ethical Performance. Accreditation.

From practitioners:

Technical Skills. Salary Levels. Research Competency. Organizational Status. Ethical Performance. Education. Gender and Racial Equity. (p. 197+)

PR consists of these basic principles at the core of the field. Therefore, in the search for professionalism of PR, these elements should be considered. When analyzing the success of collegiate PR programs, these elements should also be considered. For future comparison about the changes and growth of PR as an organization, these elements should be considered. Overall, this research and others like it are a benchmark, because they come directly from the educators and practitioners in the field who control the future of PR.

In 2010, Bey-Ling Sha conducted research for the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) in regards to the practices and categories of work actually performed in the public relations occupation. A follow-up to an original study performed in 2000 by UAB, the new survey sought to analyze and identify the areas of work that PR professionals actually completed in their profession.

The analysis was accomplished through two primary methods. The first was through analysis of the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that were incorporated in public relations practice of 2010, and the second was the analysis of the work categories identified and used by PR practitioners in 2010 compared to 2000.

Overall, Sha and the UAB (2010) identified the top KSAs used by professionals:

In frequency order, the top KSAs were use of information technology and new media

channels (conducted by 91.4% of respondents either some or a great deal); management

skills and issues (88.9%); media relations (83.3%); research, planning, implementation

and evaluation of PR programs (81.9%); use of advanced communication skills (77.8%);

and incorporation of business literacy into PR duties (75.4%). (p. 193)

These are valuable in evaluating exactly what is needed for employment in PR. These skills

represent new media, business processes, and very old traditions of PR structure such as the four-

step planning process. The focus in general shown in 2010 identifies that PR is much more than

just writing or producing content, but instead includes business and management techniques as

well as adaptability to new skills and technologies not discussed in academia (Sha, 2010).

The work categories that the UAB identified appear in Appendix A as a whole, and are

generalized in this paper. Categories fall into four broad structures of PR: management,

development, planning, and communications (author's own categories). Management refers to

the oversight of specific projects, assistance in client decisions at an organizational level, and

identification and handling of issues and crises. Development includes general media research,

writing, and organizational interaction, helping stakeholders develop and implement a PR

strategy, as well as internal relations with employees and understanding their concerns (Sha,

2010, pp. 189-90).

Planning as an overview considers strategic thinking, conducting research, identifying

audiences, setting goals, implementing the four-step approach, and more (Sha, 2010, pp. 189-

90). Communications can relate to not only social media interactions online, but also outreach

into the community through sponsorships and partnerships. Other elements of communication

include hosting events such as conferences or celebrations dedicated to a central theme of the PR organization.

The top work categories that were identified by the UAB as most used by practitioners were as follows:

The top work categories were strategic planning (engaged in by 84.9% of respondents either some or great deal); media relations (84.2%); public relations program planning (83.9%); project management (84.0%); and social media relations (74.1%). (p. 194)

These categories are not only vital for success, but they reflect a large part of the educational process for PR as well. Sha (2010), on behalf of the UAB, discovered and summarized that these results may indicate a closer connection between the work force and the education program than previously intended.

Sha and the UAB conducted this research in 2010, so there is room for further research in 2017, but the foundation of work categories and KSAs appears the same and has set the structure for PR, though some implementation skills may differ.

While the primary focus of this thesis is PR in the United States, research collected by practitioners in Canada share many similar values and findings relevant to KSAs necessary in the United States. Terry Flynn writes for the *Canadian Journal of Communication* in 2014 and presents research to discuss the scholarly growth of skill development for PR professionals.

Most concerning, he notes, is that although education for PR is growing, the scholarly research is not (Flynn, 2014, p. 362). In fact, multiple studies in Canada show that the PR profession is receiving more leadership roles in the field, but cannot support this endeavor because there is no clear definition of the skill. The many confusions and misunderstandings regarding PR abilities can even lead to employment decrease. Though not as severe in America,

PR practitioners can resonate with the lack of clarity in the PR field. Therefore, Flynn provides a much-desired definition as he puts forth this article from which much can be gleaned.

Of first importance is term clarity. While there is much debate about the use of knowledge, skills and competencies interchangeably, multiple reliable communications sources agree on an almost hierarchical definition. Flynn (2014) notes,

> Gregory borrows working definitions from the public relations Society of America (PRSA) to define knowledge as "what practitioners need to know in order to undertake their role competently" and skills as "what practitioners need to be able to do to undertake their role competently." (p. 364)

Competency is using these skills and knowledge in a complex situation for the success of an organization. Discernment and cognitive abilities allow an individual to process and choose which skills and knowledge are essential for each situation in the workplace (Flynn, 2014).

These are constantly changing as technology and computer efforts continue to dominate the workplace, making human professionals desired for high cognitive thinking unable to be accomplished by a machine.

One of the biggest skills, therefore, is the ability to process high amounts of information. Flynn offers advice from other studies in the same vein who provide relevant suggestions. "Dede (2010) echoes the importance of information processing when he states that a crucial twenty-first-century skill is the ability to rapidly filter large amounts of incoming data and the ability to extract from this data valuable information for decision-making" (Flynn, 2014, p. 366).

Flynn (2014) tables other skills highly required or studied as necessary in the modern technological era, noting that a majority of studies find communication skills, teamwork, and information processing at the top of the list, along with other notable skills including information

and communication technology (ICT) competency, innovation, flexibility, and problem solving (p. 368). This list is crucial to understanding the current field of PR, whether in America or worldwide, as the field is proving more and more globally focused.

A list of skills and positions in the PR world has been compiled through a variety of historical research in PR. Two simple groupings have emerged over time, that of *manager* and *technician* (Flynn, 2014, p. 363). The study by Flynn seeks to analyze what skills or expectation the PR industry puts forth, how and why these expectations are reached, and what that looks like for modern society (2014).

The roles of PR in the field are varied in distinction, but have 12 aspects according to the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB). In general, entry-level positions tend to conduct technical tasks like research, data analysis, community and event planning, and content production. Senior-level PR managers are becoming more heavily involved with organizational decisions and include strategic and communication management, decision making, reputation management, and advocacy (Flynn, 2014, p. 371).

Comprehensively, studies declared that PR skills in the future will require a blend of old, traditional roles with new and improved traits (Flynn, 2014, 373-76). The industry expects new technological skills, more widely known as ICT, as the top of a fresh and improved PR professional. Cultural competency, or understanding how to interact with multiple cultures, was high, with writing and communication skills taking perhaps the highest place. Ethics, business management, and processing are other areas not necessarily inside the PR realm but deemed necessary for the success of PR professionals in the industry. However, Flynn astutely observes that these and others serve as an idealist view of the field, rather than a realistic approach of today's actual practitioners (2014, p. 376).

What can be drawn from Flynn's work is that the most desired skills are communication and new technology proficiency (2014). Unfortunately, these are not uniform across positions, often varying in importance and actual learning from position to position, so that a PR individual should familiarize themselves with communication skills as a whole and stay as up-to-date as possible in new communication technologies.

Flynn provides reliable and well-balanced research that is helpful and relevant for 2017 readers and professionals who wish to understand further the necessary skills required for PR success. The conclusion from Flynn in one sense is that it depends on the position; a general insight, however, shows the main skills listed above as necessary and universally foundational for success in PR as a profession and an education (2014).

Student Analysis. Ronald Taylor, in the 2016 *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* (a peer-reviewed, quarterly journal), conducted an analysis of almost 250 entry essays about public relations to understand why students want to major in PR and what they think the field contains. This work will help advance the literature for this paper by providing a student-perspective of PR KSAs and the structure of the field.

Taylor (2016) first notes that PR is projected to grow 24% from 2008 to 2018, an astonishing number. The rise of PR and its professionals is a noteworthy advance, especially in light of other professions that lack a similar growth trend. Therefore, it is important to understand why students wish to pursue this degree.

In discussion of previous literature, Taylor (2016) recognizes several studies that seek to measure the growth of opinion or mindset of students in the field. These analyses found that students within the PR major could articulate what skills professionals needed, but students

outside the PR major could not articulate such specific aspects. One study, conducted by Gower and Reber (2006), also found these skills and the student reactions to them:

> Within communication, students felt most prepared in computer and software skills and written communication; they felt least prepared in areas such as crisis planning, design and layout, electronic communication, and new technologies. Students also felt ill-prepared for basic business skills such as revenue and expense profiles and financial and budgeting skills. (p. 86)

Generally, Taylor's studies differ by analyzing the student's own words about the PR program, and using research from students before they enter the field to ascertain their understanding and opinions of the concepts and principles used in PR (2016, p. 86).

The essays that Taylor analyzed were written by students seeking to enter the school of PR at a large university, where the number of applicants doubled during the five years of essays analyzed. The detailed analysis process consisted of qualitative coder analysis, eventually categorizing all student writings by five main categories discovered within the essays (Taylor, 2016).

The first is expressive orientation, which about 71% of essays mentioned in some fashion. This refers to personality traits that would be successful in PR, like outgoing behavior, extraversion in the workplace, and passionate creativity (Taylor, 2016, pp. 89-90).

Management orientation refers to the task side of PR, and the essays included students' descriptions of their work ethic, organization skills, leadership abilities, and desire to perform tasks and fulfill research. Only about 12% of essays referenced this area in some form or fashion (Taylor, 2016, p. 90).

Students referenced experience as a particularly strong reason for the choice of PR; some 62% mentioned experience in some form or fashion. Many discussed classes they had taken, while others spoke about internships or work experience. They recognized the real-world aspects of PR and wished to pursue them (Taylor, 2016, p. 90).

The mention of the workplace served as a motivating factor for many students. Taylor notes, "Students saw that a career in public relations offered variety, diversity, and flexibility as well as a good long-term opportunity" (2016, p. 91). These students presented the case for continued perspective on the field even after graduation and years in the PR occupation.

Lastly, the students mentioned specific job tasks as the motivation to pursue PR. The coders recognized five main tasks described by students. Over the five-year study, event planning increased by 50% as a skill mentioned by students as desirable (Taylor, 2016, p. 91). Other skills, such as media relations and fundraising, experienced dramatic decrease of inclusion by students, while skills like building relationships and promoting awareness only slightly decreased. Overall, anywhere from 60%-90% of students mentioned these practitioner roles in some form or fashion (Taylor, 2016, p. 91).

Taylor notes that the student essays as a whole enjoyed and pursued PR for the creativity and challenge of learning new writing and managing skills (2016). While the students had not actually entered the PR major prior to writing their essay, they recognized the benefit of achieving a PR degree for success in the PR field.

Expressive and management orientations, as skills noted by students, could resonant with universities across the nation because of the similarities in program structure and students (Taylor, 2016). One thing to note is that because the PR program is housed in the communications department for this particular university, this could cause students to emphasize

the expressive orientation rather than the management orientation. Taylor (2016) notes that the expressive orientation is more required in entry-level positions while management orientation is required in higher level positions.

Taylor describes the implications of these findings in four main ways. Firstly, the core of PR is about building relationships. When describing and maintaining the skills necessary for the field, educators and practitioners should remember this foundational value.

Secondly, students did not mention new media technologies as much as anticipated, which could be due to its overall prevalence. Students either did not recognize the value of social media in the PR field, or they thought it was so obviously widespread that it did not require consideration (Taylor, 2016, p. 93). Either way, this factor must be considered in the skills that PR practitioners are continuing to develop.

Thirdly, the students believed that a PR degree was the key to a PR positon, which is not necessarily the case. The skills taught in PR education are excellent for use in the PR field, but many PR professionals learn these skills through other means, while PR skills can also be applied to other careers (Taylor, 2016, p. 93). The implication is that students should learn skills as personal development, not just for the PR career.

Taylor (2016) comments lastly on the process of writing an essay as perhaps being a deterrent to those who apply for the major. More research should be completed to ascertain the drive of students to complete the full degree program after they have enrolled in it. Questions could be raised about the students' perceptions of the skills and responsibilities necessary for the PR field before they enter the major and after they have obtained their first positon in the field (Taylor, 2016, p. 93).

Ultimately, Taylor provides a structure for PR skills and requirements to be analyzed from the perspective of the student, and show how the skills of PR are often centered around building relationships, which students agree with, and writing, which students seldom mentioned. However, the growth of students in the skills necessary needed further research across the board to provide additional knowledge about the effectiveness of skill development.

As a whole, the current standards of PR professionalism are characterized by insufficient ethical codes, and extensive lists of skills and abilities of the field. The core remains the same in communication, planning, and flexibility. A macro perspective requires PR professionals to be prepared for a wide variety of tasks or positions using a foundation of general knowledge and education.

Suggested Professional Development in Public Relations. The discussion on education in PR is not only researched in what currently exists in the program. Many professionals, both in education and in the workforce, have analyzed and researched future developments of PR and what should be included in the professionalization of PR as a field. Focused on themes such as professional accreditation or licensing, rhetoric, and emotional intelligence in the PR occupation.

Accreditation or Licensing. In 1979, Edward Bernays recognized a distinct gap in the professionalization of PR as an occupation. Therefore, in the *Public Relations Quarterly,* he detailed a means of licensing PR so that working individuals could actually achieve a professional status, with the proper skills and techniques involved.

Bernays (1979) laments that there is no state registration for PR individuals as there is with other professions, noting the misconceptions and distortion of the field by many individuals seeking money. On a side note he decries the English language as a whole because of its lack of nationally regulated definitions for words. Unfortunately, the negative connotation that has been

associated with PR, from all the false uses of the term, has led some real practitioners to avoid the term public relations and instead use words like Public Affairs, Communications, etc. (Bernays, 1979, p. 26).

The solution for this confusion, Bernays (1979) states, is a state and legal registration process similar in nature to that of a lawyer or doctor, who can be removed from practice when outside the rules of the profession (p. 27). The practice of licensing any occupation began in the United States in the late 1860s. Now, medicinal and law practices as well as many others are nationally registered and require licensing for practice.

To solidify the occupational development and stability of the field, Bernays (1979) demands that a similar system be put into place for PR. He addresses several questions that may arise. While the PR definition may seem vague to some, Bernays (1979) cites his definition from 1923 as sound, noting that attributes such as human relations, social sciences, how to persuade and influence, and advising administration are part of a PR practice and can be measured by a national board (p. 27).

The registration of PR professionals, asserts Bernays (1979), will not provide government encroachment on the public or on the practice of any qualified, creative individual who fears his practice or imagination would be stifled by the licensing process. Bernays (1979) shows that registration simply provides the field with distinct boundaries and consequences for those who divert from the original definition; weeding out false PR professionals while ensuring the success of valuable individuals.

Bernays speaks with authority in the field because of his definition created for the field. His work and experience is internationally recognized as foundational to the field of PR, and his assertion here holds sound weight for the PR field.

While written in 1979, there are modern applications of Bernays discussion. Since national standardization or licensing has not yet been implemented, the accreditation through national organizations serve as a temporary assessment that can be used to analyze PR skills and success, which shall be done in the continuation of this essay.

In 1984, E. W. Brody discussed the need for licensing and accreditation in PR as a means to determine exactly what skills are necessary for PR proficiency. His work in the *Public Relations Quarterly* sought to expand the discussion on how to achieve PR standard requirements and provide not only the public with professionals, but provide workers with a standard of excellence to achieve (Brody, 1984).

He details current discussion of PR KSAs in two main areas: the academic realm and the professional realm. While some seek to discuss the two separately and determine what skills are needed for each, Brody believes that the skills and abilities should be analyzed as a whole, and then placed in the professional and academic realm as appropriate (1984, p. 6).

The education discussion is concerned about the content of curriculum in reference to professional skills. The amount of information required for entry-level PR practitioners demands a structure in education, but no consensus regarding this education has been reached. Ultimately, Brody (1984) shows a lack of support for one clear approach to providing an adequate education, either in moving PR courses into a master's degree, having specific classes in a master's program, or requiring PR curriculum apart from journalism courses.

The credential acquisition process has long been debated because there is no clear path to professionalism (Brody, 1984, p. 8). There is much debate about recurring or one-time certification, the process being too similar to accreditation, and skill levels that claim to be measured are actually undefined.

Licensing for PR has benefits. At a legal and governmental level, anyone who is not licensed cannot be considered in that field, a helpful aspect for PR professionals wishing to distance themselves from falsifications or bad reputations (Brody, 1984, p. 7). The certification process can be nationally consistent but stems from an academic standpoint rather than the legal aspect of licensing. Brody notes that there are a variety of ways in which professionalization is accomplished in other careers, making the task of clarification even more difficult.

Brody (1984) concludes that there are more questions regarding a variety of skills and proficiencies needed to be considered professional, the method or process of gaining professional stature, and the role of education and degrees in achieving PR certification.

Overall, Brody provides an analysis of the field that cites little academic or empirical research, stemming rather from personal experience and logic. Set in 1984, Brody fails to bring clarity to the field. However, there is still much progression from this point into modern PR education, certification, and standardization, and the points brought forth are excellent for consideration in research.

In this discussion, Brody (1984) lends focus and direction to where the PR individual should explore for necessary skill development. At the end of the day, further research must be done to ascertain a clear picture of KSAs and the process to obtain them that will effectively launch the PR practitioner into professional.

Brody's article signalizes an introduction to a further discussion with nineteen practitioners from the PR field, also in the *Public Relations Quarterly* in 1984, curated by John Bailey. The resulting opinions of practitioners are summarized in a table in Appendix B for easier clarification.

The discussions begin with Bailey (1984) outlining the options available. Licensing by the government is considered the harshest. Certification programs provide a similar solution; accreditation of schooling institutions is the most logical next step. Bailey ultimately laments the lack of progress in PR professionalism, and notes that a school or program dedicated to PR skills and knowledge is most desirable for continuing the profession (1984).

Bernays (1984) argues hard and strong for governmental licensing. Licensing provides a hard and clear line that separates those who pretend to practice and PR a bad name from those who are upright and experienced in the field (1984, p. 10). Bernays quickly outlines a Board of Examiners who will approve practitioners and have the power to decide a practitioner's ability to operate in PR.

The continued collection of individuals who speak about the profession of PR speak back and forth across the continuum of licensing, certification, accreditation, and education. Each aspect on the spectrum has different benefits and pitfalls in society.

After analyzing the data, the support for the four categories was evident. The majority of contributors advocated for licensing as the means of achieving PR professionalism. A large minority desired education, and an equal number suggested performance to be the catalyst for professionalism. Less people argued for accreditation, recognizing its limitations (Bailey, 1984).

The arguments for each side showed that the PR field has a long way to go in determining what will be the most effective and realistic method for achieving professionalism. There were a few sources who questioned even the necessity of PR to become professionalized, spinning PR as a more varied, personal, and private skill than something that can be set at a national or state level (Bailey, 1984, pp. 19-20).

Cutlip (1984, p. 15) appeared to be the most balanced of sources, advocating for all four aspects in differing levels and stages. Presenting the case for education, he notes that education must remain in communications and advance in diverse curriculum to receive a broad overview of skills that will work together to provide students with processing skills necessary.

For professionalism, he notes that licensing is good in an idealist sense, but likely unpractical because the process would not be beneficial for PR professionals (Cutlip, 1984, p. 15). He instead argues that continuing with a combination of educational development, accreditation where applicable, and a continuous pursuit of professional performance hold the most promise for PR professionalism in the future.

In this, Cutlip (1984) appears to be the most accurate in his prediction of modern society. While this source comes from 1984, the discussion is still relevant today because licensing has not happened. PR today involves accreditation and education much developed from the 1980s, but still lacks in overall professionalism of the trade.

Therefore, PR still requires an individual to acquire a broad range of skills that are not directly definable but vary based on job, skill level, and position. The professional should seek further education and accreditation as a means of continuing the development of the career.

PR Professional Rhetoric Development. Public relations entail a wide variety of skills, and deserves taking a closer look at exactly how different areas play a role in advancing the abilities and performance of PR. Dr. Andrej Skerlep, from Slovenia, writes in the *Journal of Communication Management* in 2001 to address the connection between rhetoric, writing as a whole, and the public relations profession. His conclusion is that "rhetorical discourse" requires further examination and integration into PR knowledge and implementation.

Skerlep (2001) first defines PR as a field that is based on social sciences and human behavior to analyze and explain how corporations should interact with the public. This, he asserts, is based on the work of Grunig (1984), who is analyzed in this paper. Skerlep argues that this definition of PR fails to adequately address the foundation of language and words that are required for successful public communication (2001, p. 177). Although the social sciences began to focus on communication tactics such as writing, expression, and context, Skerlep notes that PR has not reviewed this area of the profession.

He analyzes textbooks currently cited for PR education, and notes the lack of theory and discussion for communication tactics. This, he differentiates, is not simply the practical application of writing, which is often well-covered. He refers instead to the study and theoretical knowledge of language in the PR education and presentation (Skerlep, 2001, pp. 178-9).

Rhetoric is the basis of PR, and can be analyzed in several dimensions. In defining rhetoric, Skerlep promotes "the art or skill of being able to articulate oneself well" (2001, p. 180). In narrow, persuasive terms, Aristotle's model of ethos, pathos, and logos are well-documented forms of rhetoric. Skerlep delves into the multi-faceted character of rhetoric on a broad scale, noting that PR must incorporate these elements to a greater degree because the elements of rhetoric are often confused in trying to communicate with publics (2001, p. 180).

Practically, rhetoric should be implemented to form persuasive dialogue that justifies decisions. PR authors such as Grunig (1984) originally classified rhetoric with manipulative tactics that were one-sided and ill-becoming to the profession of PR. However, further research has shown that rhetoric is fully able to assist PR in the exploration of topics and to provide a channel for successful persuasive and reciprocated communication (Skerlep, 2001, p. 183).

Skerlep (2001) notes that argumentative discourse includes structure and dialogue for the ultimate goal of discovering true knowledge, which he claims cannot be discovered without some form of discussion to clarify and bring forth a more complete understanding of the issue.

Because of this, he examines Toulmin's model of argumentation. Toulmin provides a flexible structure for information to be analyzed and presented with confidence in a formal debate setting, or more informally in communication with publics (Skerlep, 2001, p. 184). The details start with a claim that must consequently provide context, authority, further research, and possible detractions. This model allows for growth and change of an idea or message.

Ultimately, Skerlep (2001) shows that the theoretical aspects of writing and language are not adequately included in PR education or practice today. In order for effective growth of the PR professional, there must be further implementation of rhetorical analysis in the communication discussion of PR.

Written in 2001, this advancement of the PR field provides a foundation for practitioners to gain a greater grasp on what areas of the profession need further development personally and academically.

Emotional Intelligence. One area of PR skills and occupation is the concept of gender. While there is not much room for gender discussion in a thesis dedicated to skill development, some discussion of the subject is deserved as a part of the interpersonal skills in PR. Liz Yeomans writes for the *Journal of Communication Management* in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2007. Her article details the effect of perceived gender roles in the PR position, and that impact on the requirements for skills in PR, ultimately arguing for a further discussion and inclusion of emotion in the skills addressed and achieved by PR professionals.

Noting that a majority of the PR field is comprised of women, Yeomans (2007) seeks to understand where that trend arises. She first analyzes emotion in organizations. A more recent phenomenon, emotion is slowly gaining recognition for the role emotions play in decision-making, though many try to discredit emotions and rationalize logical thinking.

In terms of occupations, emotion is something that is becoming commercialized, meaning that more professions are requiring some form of emotional presence not always genuine, making emotions something that can be paid for in the profession. Yeomans (2007, p. 214) cites this as worth discussing in terms of women who are seen as more emotionally attuned, and their presence in the PR profession. She questions if PR is seen as more emotional of a profession and leads women to pursue the career, or if women pursuing the career make it appear more emotional (Yeomans, 2007, p. 217). The chicken or the egg, essentially.

Yeomans (2007) asserts the necessity of multiple layers, prompting her further study. Different theories assert that emotions involve differing levels of "emotional labor," or the forced use of emotions that transform a person's natural behavior.

In PR, there is almost no research about the emotional demands of the job. While most research focuses on the rational thinking elements of PR, some practitioners note the intuitive, instinctive elements that are involved in PR. Minimal emotionally-related studies discuss connections that PR professionals must make with a client that cannot be measured in any other capacity than emotional labor.

For further discussion, Yeomans (2007, p. 217) showed through interviews of 20 students who returned to the educational atmosphere after 12 months in the field what the emotional labor looked like in the field. Overall, the students recognized the need for emotional rules and acting

to help advance the goals of themselves, the clients, and the corporation. While they had to learn how to please others and change themselves for customers, they did see positive results.

Ultimately, Yeomans (2007) shows that emotions do play a large role in the PR development and advancement of the profession. Skills often required in the PR field but almost never discussed include a professional's demeanor that is distinctly part of their emotional make-up. Professionals or educators looking to advance the PR occupation as a whole or individually must consider the implications of this study.

While there are flaws, such as Yeomans' lack of male inclusion, small database, or slightly inapplicable constituents, further research and discussion would benefit the scope of the skills and abilities required by PR professionals today.

Overall, the research on suggested growth for the professionalization of PR highlights the continuing issue of evaluation through accreditation. Skills involved are highly debated, with writing as a traditional skill recognized in high demand, and new technologies are emerging as equally important. Professionalism on an absolute level has yet to be realized, but there remains strength in the unified recognition of necessary skills.

Educational Analysis

Current Standards of Education in Public Relations. The professionalism of PR is dependent upon the reliability and excellence of education. The correlation has been distinctly noted by many professionals and studies. In this discussion, education is the most important aspect of PR, especially in preparing students for success in the workplace. As such, a review of the current literature regarding education practices in America today will provide clarity through history, programs, international and extracurricular analysis.

Education History. One of the most important discussions is the education process of PR throughout American collegiate programs. For the purpose of this work it is deemed necessary that an understanding of the educational history of PR be given, with descriptions in regards to structures of PR programs and accreditation processes.

Two brief snippets from opposite chronological ends actually have several similarities that prove fruitful for discussion in PR education analysis.

In 1967, the PRSA offered new course materials for professionals and educators regarding case studies (Simon, 1967, p. 48). The subject matter was designed as a brief workshop or conference to help any individual in the PR field become more familiar with real cases and scenarios, and how to implement theory, ethics, and leadership into situations requiring PR experience (Simon, 1967, p. 48).

The goal of this output was development of the PR profession as a whole by individually advancing the PR professional, educator, or student.

In 2013, Courtney Dreyer, APR, gave a brief interview regarding her involvement in the PRSA and the value that continuing her education had provided for her professional career (Dreyer, 2013, p. 16). She highlights PRSA as continuing her growth in education even outside the college classrooms. Dreyer (2013) asserts,

> It's important to be involved in organizations like PRSA and professional development groups. While you may not be pursuing a degree, you're continuing that learning process—either informally through the relationships that you build or people that you're networking with and learning from, or formally, like coming to a conference like the PRSA International Conference. (p. 16)

This brief interview shows the value that academic and professional organizations like PRSA can add to the education experience.

Both pieces provide evidence for the education system of PR, in that the education flows not only from the classroom, but the environment and experiences around it that help shape individuals into professionals.

An update in the *Public Relations Quarterly* in 1968 shows similar progress and development of education in public relations at this time. Raymond Simon details two main propositions that the PRSA board discussed and clarified.

The first was the development of a Director of Research positon, which would oversee nine main operations. These operations were mainly concerned with the gathering and disseminating of research in the available field. The Director would consolidate research in many different fields that could pertain to PR occupations in such a way that would be accessible for PR professionals nationally (Simon, 1968, 29).

This Director would put into place the processes for future research and national professionalization of the PR field, such as awards in the organization, a database of PR facts, studies about the practice of PR in the field, and a place for academic research to be published (Simon, 1968, 29). Most importantly, the Director would encourage and support future research by ascertaining areas of weakness in the PR field of exploration, look forward to future developments in the field, and encourage research for the overall benefit and professionalization of PR as a whole (Simon, 1968, 30).

The implications for education hold that the education process of PR will not only conduct more research as part of the degree to gain a better understanding of what PR consists of, but will also allow the education process to reflect PR as a whole.

In light of this discussion and benefits, the PRSA Board also approved nine student chapters throughout the United States to form part of the first Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) (Simon, 1968, 30). The student chapters emerge from a desire to build the educational process outside of the classroom, and give outlet for the furtherance of modern communication techniques that students must obtain. This marks the first instance of student PR organizations sponsored or accredited by a national PR organization in 1968 (Simon, 1968, 30).

While these instances overall present only minor information, they speak a great deal as to the development of PR educational and research procedures. The PRSA put forth a great deal of effort, thought, and research into developing the next generation of PR communicators and how to prepare them adequately as students for the real world, and as professionals for excellence in the field.

Past presidents of the PRSA, as a reflection of the organization as a whole, have given thought into the most impact development of PR throughout its life as a career. Bill Baxter, from the University of Oklahoma, compiled responses from 24 previous presidents of the PR about the effect of education in PR. Written in 1981 for the *Journalism Educator* (a quarterly academic journal)*,* this collection sought to identify the catalysts for PR advancement since its genesis, and these 24 presidents discussed the incredible role of education as a catalyst in PR professionalization.

As Baxter (1981) assesses, most presidents noted that the classes and structure provided by PR education programs were essential in carrying the PR career through difficult times such as World Wars (p. 23).

Baxter interviewed Carroll Bateman, president of PRSA in 1967, and noted her response about PR development.

Biggest change has been the gradual but steady moves toward professionalism,

particularly through the accreditation and continuing education programs of PRSA and

the improvement of public relations teaching in colleges and universities as evidenced by

the increasing number of PR programs accredited by ACEJ. (Baxter, 1981, p. 23)

This demonstrates the importance of education as a pillar in the PR occupation. In considering

this thesis, then, education must be excellent and standardized to achieve the full function of PR

professionalism.

Presidents also showed that progression has been significant in the context PR is used. In

earlier years, PR has been used primarily as a writing and speaking function for the organization,

but presidents were proud to note that PR is becoming more related to policies and human

behavior (Baxter, 1981, p. 24), assuming a managerial function in the organization to provide

advice into the behaviors of the publics.

As gathered in the *Journalism Educator* in 1981, these sentiments set the precedent for

furthering PR education into the future and the role that PR plays in the occupational world.

Education should therefore strive to adequately prepare the student so that the education is

sufficient for student entry into the workforce.

Academic Analysis. The Association for Communication Administration (ACA) also

values the development of the next generation of PR communicators through education, so they

commissioned a survey in 1989 to analyze the extent of PR programs in universities across

America. In response to the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education (the

Commission) put forth by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

(AEJMC) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the ACA sought to analyze the

accuracy and relevancy of this commission (Fitch-Hauser, Barker, Barker, 1989). While the

Commission discussed what ideal PR programs should look like, the ACA sought to identify current PR standings. This serves as an excellent foundation to gain a broad understanding of where education in PR stood in that time, providing the first step to discovering today's modern education status.

In this survey, several questions were asked of around 2000 students, of which 210 actually returned applicable answers. The questions and responses were broken down into four categories: structure of existing PR programs, faculty attributes, curriculum issues, and advanced PR education (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, p. 81).

The first is existing structure. Survey found that the majority of PR programs were housed in combined or speech communication departments, rather than mass communication or journalism. While the majority were experiencing program growth, those in mass communication programs were showing signs of decline. Margaret Fitch-Hauser, Deborah Roach Barker, and Larry Barker write on behalf of the ACA and outline the research findings. They note that a very small percentage of programs practice self-study, or the self-analysis of the program success and effectiveness, except those programs in the journalism department (1989, p. 82). This could in part be due to the lack of accreditation by the AEJMC from most departments. Fitch-Hauser and Barker (1989) admit this is due to the bias in accreditation against departments that are not journalism. Overall, the structure of the PR programs is growing and developing, but lacks standard content and accreditation across the nation.

Faculty experience and size as a category was used by Fitch-Hauser et al. (1989) to analyze number of faculty with practical experience, highest educational degree, and number of these individuals in different programs. Overall, the data reported that most programs house faculty that have doctorates as their highest degrees, and the majority of faculty have 1-6 years of

practical experience in the field. Students noted that out of the time spent working with faculty, the majority hold doctorate degrees, while many hold master's degrees (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, p. 84). These aspects are in conjunction with the recommendations made by the Council regarding what future PR programs should entail, and are along the guidelines of the AEJMC accreditation process requirements.

Curriculum was also addressed by ACA, and courses labeled PR and the requirements of such courses in the program were a focus. PR programs in journalism departments reported the highest number of classes offered with PR in the title (the majority more than 5 classes), and had requirements to take 1-4 classes of that nature. Other departments offered slightly less in number and requirements (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, pp. 85-86). However, in relation to communication classes in general, the vast majority noted requirements in five or more classes, and around 30% required ten or more classes in the communication field.

The Commission also recommended business writing as a focus for PR majors, so the ACA surveyed the availability and requirement of business writing classes in the PR programs. A large majority of respondents did not have any requirements in business writing or business classes, but a sizeable minority had that requirement (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, p. 86). The vast majority had the option to choose business-related studies as a minor, which somewhat balances out reality with the recommendations.

Fitch-Hauser et al. (1989) explore the requirements of internships as another aspect of curriculum issues in PR programs. Consistent across all departments housing PR was the majority verdict that internships of some kind were required by the institution (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, p. 86).

Lastly, the topic of advanced PR education focused on degrees past bachelor's degrees. While the majority of surveys noted no degrees past undergraduate, a small minority (17.1%) had master's degrees, and only 1.9% had doctorates (Fitch-Hauser et al., 1989, p. 87).

ACA concluded by noting that most programs are adequately meeting the needs of accreditation except for curriculum requirements, which could be due to other communication related requirements. The most troubling aspect was the lack of self-study, but Fitch-Hauser et al. hoped to see improvements in this area as the PR programs continued to grow (1989, p. 88).

In the year 2017, a comparative study would be quite interesting to see the growth in today's PR programs. These survey results give a clear picture of what early PR programs entailed, showing that the education of PR was something taken seriously by national organizations such PRSA and ACA, but lacked standardization across the nation. Overall, PR programs and their educational effectiveness appeared to be substantial in content.

International Analysis. Only looking at the United States in measurement could lead to bias or an inaccurate view of the program. Wonjun Chung and Jinbong Choi offer a comparison of PR programs in the United States, the United Kingdom, and South Korea in 2012 for the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. They seek to understand the characterization of professional occupations in the curricula of each country and provide a suggestion about those implications.

In PR education programs, they recognize first and foremost a desire for ten main elements to be required in curricula, based on the Commission on Public Relations Education (Chung & Choi, 2012, p. 377). The ten categories of PR education are PR theory, law and ethics, research, planning and management, writing and production, action and implementation, globalization, new media technology, internships, and specialized electives. Chung and Choi

(2012) use these criteria as a measurement to identify what quality of education curricula in each country offer.

Top PR classes required in United States curriculum included PR principles, writing, campaigns, internship, and production (Chung & Choi, 2012, p. 381). The United Kingdom's classes were more focused on management, research, marketing, new media technologies, with similar qualifications in internships and production. South Korea agreed with most required classes in writing, production, internship, research and campaign (Chung & Choi, 2012, p. 382). The implications mean that the United States in collegiate programs nationally focus on practical courses, while the UK has more theoretical approaches, and Korea values practical and skill-based classes (Chung & Choi, 2012, p. 385).

Chung and Choi find that the United States offers "the most balanced PR education" (2012, p. 386) and the classes are centered primarily in US theory and practice. International PR is trending toward the PR standards and education provided by the United States, so these programs provide excellence in many areas.

There are weaknesses in each program; for example, fewer US college programs offer courses in new media or PR ethics, and have very little international PR focus (Chung & Choi, 2012, p. 386). Chung and Choi (2012) conclude that each country's culture affects the PR of that country (p. 387).

In the future, since this only included online curriculum assessment, research should include more real-life curriculum analysis which could involve interviews with faculty and staff. Overall, Chung and Choi (2012) recognize that this study will have to be continually updated as PR shifts to adapt to an ever-changing society.

For the purposes of this paper, Chung and Choi provide a healthy and observant exploration of the overall collegiate PR programs in America and offer helpful areas for professionalism standards and future educational growth.

Extracurricular Analysis. In 2013, research was completed by Sarah Maben and Kathleen Whitson to decipher the benefit of "Experiential Learning Labs in Public Relations Programs." The advance of PR education was such that in 2013, there were almost 120 PR programs in the United States that provide student-run public relations firm running out of the academic sphere for educational experience. In an article for the doctoral dissertation, Maben and Whitson assess the many aspects of these organizations. The research completed in this article showed that the labs provided incredible experience for students, but Maben and Whitson (2013) sought to determine what characteristics made an impact on the success of these student-run public relations firms.

The literature review initially noted internships as the most influential method for learning KSAs not found in the classroom. Therefore, these student-run PR firms filled a much-needed gap in the PR educational system (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 5). The evaluation of the firms determines how effective they are in providing necessary experience for students.

The PRSSA shows that 124 chapters make use of such student firms (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 6). Maben and Whitson detail the characteristics of several such firms, noting attributes like full PR consultancy, the ability to research, present and implement such PR knowledge that can only be presented in the classroom without full effect.

Colleges without fully fledged student-run firms often have similar campaign course requirements or internship opportunities. Internships are very similar in nature to the academically based student groups, but the collegiately-housed program replaces the internship

experience with even more opportunities for students to take full responsibility of the position and run PR through a full completed sequence (Maben & Whitson, 2013, pp. 7-8).

The method of the study explored student firm's characteristics through a rigorous and detailed survey to the advisors of such student firms. Roughly 55 institutions were actually represented with the received data (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 10).

The results show a majority of institutions that supported firms are not accredited by ACEJMC (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 14). The programs varied greatly by length of operation, acceptance rate of students, compensation levels of students, professional space dedicated, and types of clients. The majority of student-run PR firms, while having a dedicated work space, had no competitive application process or any type of compensation, leading to a majority of clients identified as community non-profits (Maben & Whitson, 2013, pp. 15, 19).

The efficiency of experience analysis showed that the majority of programs allowed students to often or always interact with the client, make decisions, handle complaints, and persuade new clients (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 16). The longevity of the program contributed most dramatically to the presence of a handbook or employee manual within the firm; the oldest and newest firms had manuals while the majority of middle-aged firms had no written policies (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 17-18).

The biggest factor in creating a lasting student program seemed to be a majority of local businesses as clients instead of community non-profits (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 20). The questions that require further study from this research involve the accreditation of the program as a factor in firm success. Maben and Whitson (2013) believe that the accreditation could play a role, but the connection is undocumented.

Overall, this research provides insight into extracurricular internship experience as a catalyst for student success in the field. The study does have limitations, as Maben and Whitson admit. Because only half of the firms responded, generalizations cannot be extended across the board, and some elements of the study could be further clarified through in-person or over-the-phone surveys rather than online. However, the studies lend implementation advice for the structure of academic programs in PR (Maben & Whitson, 2013, p. 21-22). The overall effectiveness of education can be significantly increased and developed by the inclusion of a student-run PR firm.

In modern PR programs, this aspect of collegiate education proves a major achievement for growth and keeping up with the demands and skills required for professionalism in the workplace. While further research could be done regarding student opinions and individual success in the field, these statistics and facts help paint a picture of the ideal educational realm in modern America.

In consideration of the education program for public relations in the United States, research shows that the development of academics to maturity has not always been standardized, nor yet fully professional. Even international PR has weaknesses. However, the education of PR is continuing to develop through extracurricular options while remaining true to the fundamentals of PR training.

Suggested Educational Development in Public Relations. As society changes over time, so must PR as an occupation and an education. These adaptations must be intentional and evaluated so that the education proves effective in the field of modern PR to communicate in a relevant manner to current audiences. The literature reviewed shows the development for PR

education discussed among the professionals and educators, specifically through education origin changes, internet development, and skills commissions, surveys, and reports regarding the field.

   Shift in Origins. A very brief but highly notable source in regards to public relations comes from Edward Bernays (1978), whom many consider to be the father of PR. Bernays writes in the *Public Relations Quarterly* to address one of his most passionate arguments for the PR field. This opinion piece is well-worth considering, especially in light of the many accomplishments that Bernays achieved for the PR field as a whole.

   Bernays' (1978) work declared first of all that PR education must be sustained in order for the field to continue (p. 18). Without raising up more professionals through higher education, there would be no practitioners to carry on the occupation. Bernays then analyzes the state of public relations education in his time, noting that what was being taught was not in line with what the field required.

   The most revolutionary line is that PR is not some communications or writing based field, but rather an applied social science. Bernays (1978) insists that PR must stem from the foundations of psychology and understanding history, human behavior, and economics to create relationships for a business. He notes that almost all education programs during his writing focus exclusively on writing and journalism techniques because these are the primary PR tools (p. 18).

   Bernays (1978) called this poppycock (p. 18). Instead, he compares writing to a scalpel in the hands of a surgeon. Medical students, he states, do not learn about the knives and tools of the profession before they learn about the intricate workings of the human body, nervous system etc. Therefore, PR students must learn about the psychology of human behavior and the internal workings of audiences as a whole before learning how to write (Bernays, 1978).

Bernays (1978) condemns the Association for Education in Journalism, known today as the AEJMC, stating that this accreditation program has no right to control education when they are merely a product of the field. Instead, he believes that if any source of input outside of direct PR like the PRSA should be considered, the voice of advice should come from the psychology department and field (p. 18).

He concludes very adamantly, "Public relations, in its own interest and the public interests, needs a new deal in higher education" (Bernays, 1978, p. 18).

As PR continues to develop and strengthen beyond the original parameters witnessed in 1978, there are several areas where Bernays will remain applicable, but other areas where his words fall short.

Modern education seems very similar to the situation that Bernays addresses. The curriculum and focus are primarily addressing the communications elements of the field. Further study and research would be beneficial to understand if Bernays' theories are worth pursuing and re-develop the PR field to more adequately address the concerns put forth by Bernays.

Internet Development. In 2001, the topic of Internet use in the PR field was the beginning of a highly useful discussion. Karla Gower and Jung-Yul Cho (2001) recognized the need for research in this area, and conducted a survey to understand the use of internet in current PR practitioners, and how educators could or should incorporate this knowledge and skills into the curriculum.

In the literature review, they recognize the inherent connection between PR and the Internet, because both seek to provide connections for and between the publics. However, the ability of PR practitioners to use the internet was in premature stages in 2001. While not asking for complete coding abilities or transformation of PR professionals into technological "nerds,"

PR individuals should become familiar with the terms used on the internet and the abilities and structure of online content (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 82).

Normal skills of PR like the press release, media communications, media kits, etc. are not fit for simply digitalization, but must be entirely restructured to adapt to a new form of communication. While the internet was demonstrated as being used by corporations to give material to the public, there was almost no documentation of using the internet as a two-way communication tool to gain feedback from the public (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 83). In this sense, the internet provided a large area of growth for corporations and PR professionals to develop skills and content for a new communication field.

In PR curriculum in 2001, there was almost no mention of online development, with scant recommendations for learning how to use basic technological structures of the time. However, further research showed that technologies were being incorporated into the PR education programs (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 84). This education consisted of technical and practical discussion of the tools available for use, without any principles or theory of online PR success.

Therefore, Gower and Cho (2001) explored research questions about how PR could successfully integrate new internet tools into not only the professional practice, but the daily discussion of PR so that the internet's capabilities could be used to the fullest extent (p. 85).

The results discovered found that most PR practitioners believed in media relations as the number one use for the internet. Other uses included direct public communication, competition monitoring, and brand awareness. The most frequently used tools of the internet were websites, email, online clipping services, and a few others (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 87). Some PR evaluation online is conducted through emails, site data analysis, and online clipping services.

Online KSAs desired for PR positions included writing, reliability, honesty, quick-thinking, and creativity (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 89). Most PR employers desire technological savvy and internet experience; in fact, Gower and Cho noted that some only hire online.

In education, practitioners were mixed about including internet PR tactics as a separate course or with other material (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 89). As a whole, however, Gower and Cho decided that online skills should be taught in the classroom.

A second aspect of education that should be included in future PR programs was not only the technical skills of internet use, but the theories and principles for how to succeed online in the future, beyond one time period. Because the internet offers so many new opportunities for connection with publics, for communication of important corporation messages, and for analyzing success of PR strategies, students should become familiar with the many principles of the internet (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 90).

Ultimately, the skills needed for PR success on the internet are similar to the ones required in print, but practiced in totally new contexts. Writing, reliability, and critical thinking must be put to work in the online community instead of just traditional media. This creates a vision to look ahead to the future of the internet as a whole not just in one element of internet technology (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 91).

Gower and Cho (2001) provide an excellent analysis of the internet's involvement in PR for 2001. Their recommendations and realizations about the future of PR on the internet have only been proven with time, and the current technologies available in 2017 for internet discussion and communication are vastly more broad than the time of the article.

Because of this, current practitioners and educators should use this article as a foundation for inclusion of internet discussion in the classroom and workplace. The internet serves a vital and irreplaceable role in the PR field of 2017.

Commissions, Reports, and Surveys. The Commission on Public Relations (CPR) issues periodic research findings and suggestions for further development of PR. Dean Kruckeberg was the co-chair on the 1998 Commission on Public Relations Education. He voices the need for the new commission in his article to the *Public Relations Review*, a publication of PRSA.

The needs for new research are detailed because three main changes in the 21st century force PR to adapt. Societally, the world is becoming more and more globally focused as technology brings everyone closer together (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 236). The global perspectives that arise from technological advancements show a unity in communication, not necessarily a unity in thought processes. Rather, PR must not only continue to strengthen the complex relationships in the United States, but also learn new strategies for cultures.

Technologically and professionally, PR will have to expand to include new and growing media outlets used as communication tools. The field of PR also lacks the depth of professional knowledge and standardized research of other occupations; more advancement in education is necessary (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 237).

Kruckeberg (1998) argues that because of these changes, PR must develop its own professionalization department separate from any other communication fields; PR is a field of its own. The new Commission would provide fresh professional perspective in education. PR previously has been intertwined with journalism and mass communication departments. While still useful and connected in nature, these departments are no longer satisfactory for public relations development (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 238).

PR spans more than communication to include business, behavioral and social sciences, and liberal arts education. The recognition of PR as its own field will dramatically improve the influence and stability of PR as a career and as an education program (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 239). This is not enough weight to give PR its own college or school, but it is enough for educators to remain actively in pursuit of PR as a whole and not just a part of other subdivisions.

Kruckeberg (1998) analyzes the treatment of PR in other educational branches. In Journalism/Mass Communication, PR is often discriminated as lesser in importance or illegitimate in resource acquisition, rumors which PR faculty and advocates should dispel with careful definitions and professional support (pp. 240-41).

The department of speech or communication often provides PR with adequate room to develop, and serves students well in academic progress (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 241). The only warning is for PR to remain recognized enough to include its own theories and disciplines rather than serve as a simple dialect of speech communication.

While PR is rarely housed in social or behavioral sciences, it does contain elements of human behavior theory. PR is more connected with the business and management departments; European education systems often include PR in the management or administration concentrations, or even include PR in marketing programs (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 242).

As an education system, the liberal arts education system is generally agreed upon as primary for the PR education. Liberal arts provide the necessary development of global and individual perspective required for an individual to become a professional, but often fail to meet the specific, focused, and professional training desired by parents, students, and PR practitioners (Kruckeberg, 1998, pp. 242-43). Therefore, PR should include, but not be limited to, a liberal arts foundation.

However, Kruckeberg (1998) posits, the general and core requirements often found in education are hindering the PR major from achieving their professional education (pp. 243-44). The collegiate system in America cites core and standardized courses as necessary academically, but this serves little professional or administrative purpose. Kruckeberg (1998) suggests that professional education be geared toward the development of students for specific careers, rather than an academic consideration.

In light of this difference, educators often distance themselves from "academic" ideological debates, drawing accusations about lack of theory and depth in a field. In the case of PR, Kruckeberg (1998) asserts that PR is inherently ideological; the theories simply pertain only to the field of PR and should be considered within the field, not within the education sphere.

This logically follows that the professional PR education should provide adequate experience and training for the business. Kruckeberg (1998) notes that while some scholars believe the industry should control the professional education, he responds,

> Seldom do organizations or individuals who employ or retain professionals primarily
> define or dictate professional education; rather, overall societal and professional needs
> are addressed by such education. (p. 245)

The professional education of PR, then, presents one of the most necessary and important functions within the PR field, and should be carefully cultivated and strengthened.

Kruckeberg (1998) concludes that PR should be redefined without the constraints of other departments, industries, or ideas. The Commission he co-chaired in 1998 sought to provide suggestions for PR education based solely on the excellent execution of PR as a whole and the unique ideology and theories in the field.

As a source, Kruckeberg (1998) provides incredible insight into a field that he not only has extensive experience in, but is also deeply invested. The Commission on Public Relations Education is not biased toward a specific institution or program, so the results and the research are trustworthy as objective across educational programs in the United States.

In the context of this work, Kruckeberg serves as an exploration of PR education and what areas should be covered. These considerations define and narrow the field of PR, and provide criteria for further research and education requirements.

An extensive study into the excellence of PR was completed by the University of Maryland over the course of 15 years throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom regarding what provides most effective PR work for an organization. Not only is this study an incredible resource for PR professionals seeking a greater purpose in their work, it also opens opportunities for the education system of PR to radically grow to match the skills needed.

James Grunig & Larissa Grunig (2002) are PR professors at the University of Maryland who recognize the benefits of the research completed and outline the good for the education system in their thorough article in the *Journal of Communication Management*.

The introductory stages of the article outline the background of the excellence study and detail why PR education is essential. In the mid-1990s PRSA noted that PR as a field needed some clarity and standardization that could be brought about by an extensive study to find common themes, make suggestions about the standard of PR, and bring public attention to PR (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 36). The University of Maryland sought to fulfill that demand through their 15-year excellence study (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 36-37).

The authors ascertain the necessities of the research and the results thereof. The study must be based on empirical research, pertain to professionals' actual problems, and improve

students' hands-on experiences. In their theories, the body of knowledge is the most fulfilling method of achieving professional status, making PR education of utmost importance to students and those seeking the continuation of public relations as a field (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 37).

Eight conclusions from the excellence study are examined in relation to education. At the core, PR is not just an addition to other communications, but a management function of its own (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 37). This means that PR seeks to cultivate the relationships that benefit an organization. PR develops goals in conjunction with constituents that can be measured by analyzing business relationships. Education should therefore provide students with the KSAs to develop and analyze relationships with specific publics for the success of the organization.

This relationship-building aspect means that PR is not just a support role, one that simply completes tasks and it told what to do. Instead, the company and the PR professional should recognize the strategic managerial role that PR plays in giving advice regarding decisions, sectors of the company's audience, and other communication decisions (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 38). In this sense, education must include not only the basic tools for PR, but also include leadership and management courses.

A PR professional uses not only technical research skills to discover what the public wants, but also managerial and strategy skills to postulate exactly what the public might need at a specific time, and provide relevance to the decisions in light of the greater community outside the organization (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 38). In education, therefore, excellence means having a strong emphasis on managing skills without neglecting any of the foundation of technical abilities.

The organization for which a PR professional works for defines quite a bit of the work structure that will be introduced. A PR professional should expertly assess the organizational

configuration and determine areas where communication is lacking. This leads to the PR involvement in the shaping and developing of an organization's excellence (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 39). In education, PR students should be required to take courses in organizational structures, psychology, and economics. Organizational understanding gives PR its strength.

Not only should PR be educated in organizational leadership, but management and business professionals should have an understanding of PR. The multi-faceted connection between business and PR provide effective communication for both consumers and the company (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 39-40).

These functions raise questions of whether or not PR should be integrated with other marketing or management functions. The excellence study found that although PR often does overlap with other similar departments, an excellent PR function in an organization retains its independence (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 39). While it greatly benefits PR to learn about advertising and vice versa, the two should be taught separately rather than combined.

PR is a two-way communication path that seeks to present materials to the publics and listen intently to their voice and opinions. In order to fulfill that expectation, PR education should provide research and qualitative tools for students to become familiar with engaging publics and collecting data from them (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 40).

The ongoing structure of PR shows that there is constant change and development, meaning that new knowledge increasingly lends itself to professionalization (Grunig & Grunig, 2002, p. 41). PR education should be continually updated to match modern technologies, and should also mold students to become life-long learners that allows them to stretch and develop even in their career.

Ultimately, Grunig and Grunig recognized the need for a more globalized standard of PR, meaning that education should present a progressive global mindset (Grunig & Grunig, 2002).

As a discussion of education, Grunig and Grunig provide excellent feedback regarding ideal PR education programs that adequately reflect the skills and abilities necessary for success in PR careers. This article is rigorous in logic, and offers the work of three books of PR studies to provide further background evidence. Both authors are well-published and accredited, solidifying the advice given.

The PRSA serves as one of the best indicators for the success of PR education in America. The organization is dedicated to making sure that students are prepared for the real world. As such, there are PR assessments to determine proper methods for continual professionalism in the education field and the upkeep of the craft. In 2009, Vicki Todd produced such an assessment in response to the 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE or the Commission), which listed out several areas needed for PR improvement in education.

The first area was new media and the integration into education. The CPRE found that media continuously evolved and PR professionals were being forced to adapt to the new media. However, curriculum had not changed as quickly, causing education to fall behind. Because there are many difficulties in remaining up-to-date with curriculum, the Commission suggested that PR educators remain as current as possible and inform students of new media technologies (Todd, 2009, p. 72).

The other areas for improvement included assessments, internships, and portfolios. Assessment of education programs is essential for accurate growth of a program. The Commission urged PRSSA chapters to conduct annual appraisals to measure accuracy and

efficiency of a program, and to involve not only faculty or educational staff, but PR professionals connected to PRSSA, perhaps even through financial support (Todd, 2009, p. 73).

Internships and portfolios are two other methods of enhancing education outside the classroom to bring students full experience for the career. Internships are deemed necessary, but requiring significant improvement in the experience provided. For the Commission in 2006, portfolios were in discussion as a means of achieving "direct measurement of student learning outcomes" (Todd, 2009, p. 73). The portfolios require detailed explanation, time-consuming analysis and evaluation, and standardization of content, all of which can be difficult to execute. However, they would provide a platform for student success, experience, and assessment.

The literature review analyzes these sections and the PR education system as a whole in order to properly gain understanding of the scope of the field. Todd (2009) discusses the history of critical thinking and writing skills as fundamental. While educators and professionals agree that these skills are necessary in high quality, students fail to achieve the skill levels needed, offering minimal fulfillment of critical thinking and writing.

Internships and campaign capstone courses were considered important functions of students' experiences to prepare them for full-time jobs. Internships are more effective in that preparation, Todd (2009) finds, and should utilize the student's full capabilities as autonomously as possible.

New skills are one the biggest concerns for educators to master, but also important as a proficiency for professionals. Professionals should apply more of the theory and structure from PR education into practice, but PR programs should include more practical examples (Todd, 2009, pp. 74-75). A developing relationship between a professional and the students in an

institution can be a learning experience on both ends. Allowing the two groups to work together provides each with experience, and gives students overall better success in the field.

Todd's research conclusions led her to propose her own questions, which were then measured through survey. Todd's (2009) survey measures the values that professionals and educators had about a variety of education curriculum aspects. Ultimate, the two agreed on many aspects as to their importance, the highest difference in professionals valuing internships highest effective education experience, whereas education faculty noted ethics as most important aspect.

In parallel to the original 2006 Commission findings, Todd notes that four main differences arise, having great effect on the PR education goals that should shape a PR program (Todd, 2009, p. 80).

First, professionals believe that students are not getting enough hands-on, new media training to keep up with the field, while educators focus more on theoretical and analytical skills. This is an important aspect. This difference in focus happens because there are many obstacles in the education system to prevent adequate preparation of students in new media (Todd, 2009, pp. 81-82). Funds to install new software, lack of faculty experience in the area, and lack of new media criteria in educational achievement are some of the flaws that hold education back from reaching the new media skills that should be taught.

The second difference was in internship priority. The commission stated that professionals and educators viewed them equally, where Todd's work showed professionals require them more than educators. There are difficulties for educators to implement and monitor these internships. Internships must be held to a high standard of excellence, but faculty oversight is often unavailable because there is no time or money to properly implement internship engagement (Todd, 2009, p. 82).

Collaboration between educators and professionals was the third aspect. While the CPRE encouraged and believed in educator to approach professionals regarding advice or involvement in the education process, Todd (2009) believed that professionals already had this desire but lacked the educational invitation.

Lastly, the divide is large between professionals who wish students had better writing skills, and educators who wish to impart more cognitive, analytical mindsets. Todd (2009) suggests that new curricula should be created that integrates both synthesis of thinking and concise, strong writing that fits into new media technologies; a single class or series of classes that replaces separately taught material (p. 83).

Ultimately, Todd (2009) provides four suggestions for future PR educational success. A one-credit workshop for both faculty and students would be facilitated by professionals who could educate the academic world in new media technologies and how to use them. Secondly, third-party organizations like PRSA and AEJMC should house conferences or workshops for professionals and educators to intermingle and exchange information from both sides of PR (Todd, 2009, p. 84). Third, educators should approach professionals consistently to gain feedback about what skills and writing abilities are desired from students so those principles could be implemented into education. Lastly, internships should have greater, more consistent analysis to ensure effective procedures are taught to students, and the professional should play a larger role in mentoring students through the internship process (Todd, 2009, pp. 84-85).

These incredible insights from Todd show that PR education in 2009 had many areas for further growth, especially to bridge the gap between the professional and the academic realm.

Future Growth Summary. The development of PR academia has many facets and suggestions for the future. An overview of suggested improvements includes increased new

media technology training, nationally standardized measurement of education, a broadening of requirements to include more elements from other relevant fields, and an increase in extracurricular experiences such as internships to provide real-world experience while maintaining a high emphasis on the theory and principles of the field.

These improvements represent an ideal PR educational program, not an excellent one already in existence. Some elements of these suggestions cannot adequately be implemented. Further research can help clarify what aspects are most important and what change can actually be accomplished by modern PR programs.

What are Modern Public Relations Skill Sets?

Public Relations as an occupation has many facets. It is difficult to know exactly how to prepare anyone for a field without an understanding of the requirements. For PR, this could mean looking at job descriptions, but these are so diverse that categorizing them is impractical for the educator or the researcher.

Instead, this study analyzes the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of Public Relations to provide a picture of the workforce for which the student must be prepared. While skills are diverse in nature, if there is not accountability for them, there will be no improvement in those areas or any means of preparation for the profession. Therefore, the following research in academic or scholarly works as well as online and digital sources of PR skill descriptions lists seven specific skills with overall skills noted first. Appendix C offers further online resources.

Overall Skills

The Chartered Institute for Public Relations (CIPR) is a leading PR professional organization in Europe. The highly experienced and accredited members work tirelessly to help promote the field, the produce professional literature, and to develop business individuals further through ethics and standards ("Our organisation," n.d.).

CIPR analyzes many different kinds of PR. Framework is important for understanding exactly what PR looks like in the occupational realm, and there are two main ways PR is practiced. One is in a firm, which is a separate entity but provides promotional and relational content for the organization. The other is called in-house PR, which means working directly for a company and focusing PR efforts solely to promote the company and their relationships ("Working in PR," n.d.). These two aspects could be found in a variety of fields, including medicine, fashion, politics, charities, financial markets, business, and many more.

CIPR provides analysis on the day-to-day function of a PR position, keeping information broad to apply to a variety of PR fields. Some essentials include research, writing, and events ("Day-to-day," n.d.).

PR serves as a check for the company to assess their relevancy to the public and gain feedback on what the consumer wants more of in a specific area from the company ("Working in PR," n.d.). Therefore, much of the work involves interacting with not only audiences, but also the media to assist in distributing communication messages on a wide scale. At the core of the company, PR helps define exactly who or what the organization is in the mind of the public ("Day-to-day," n.d.). This involves shaping the corporate identity and producing various materials such as brochures, websites, social media accounts, videos, events, and more. These functions often vary in regularity, intensity, and from position to position.

CIPR concludes with a list of skills and abilities that ranges from situational analysis and event planning to strategic goal-setting. Working with the media, the public, and the organization to understand the desires of all parties is what creates successful PR ("Is PR for you?" n.d.).

In one comprehensive work entitled *Develop Your PR Skills,* authors Neil Richardson and Lucy Laville (2010) detail to a primarily British audience what are common and necessary skills for the public relations realm. The text states,

> PR is not marketing, advertising, sponsorship, sales, or any of the more obvious expensive tools that send a message directly to 'customers', often saying, 'we are great, buy our products.' PR is more subtle: 'You may have heard about us; get to know us and we may have a long and happy relationship.'" (Richardson & Laville, 2010, p. 6)

These authors show how to fulfill and address these elements of public relations through several skills. These include online communications, cost effectiveness, internal communication, crisis management, research, and audience interaction (Richardson & Laville, 2010).

KSAs in PR are enhanced by theories and principles. Vineet Kaul, Ph.D. in Communication, details the strengths and weaknesses of public relations. His study in the *SCMS Journal of Indian Management* brings to light a variety of cases where public relations has failed to adequately address the modern world. Writing in 2013, he puts forward new perspective about the future of integrating PR into real time.

Kaul's research is published in an Indian communication journal, which could cast doubt on the relevancy of his work in America. However, his conclusions speak to a global audience. He most notably explains, "Symmetrical two-way communications is considered to be an important element in excellent corporate communication" (Kaul, 2013, p. 37). Kaul (2013) logically concludes that the wide variety of public relations communications could provide further development in the future.

If anyone is qualified to address public relations skills and professionalism, it is Bonnie Riechert, who not only is a member of the PRSA, but is a Fellow PRSA (similar in nature winning a prestigious award) and an active member of numerous other national communication associations. She is APR as well, the intense certification process or public relations professionals, and she has a Ph. D. in Communications. Interviewed in the June 2014 issue of *Public Relations Tactics,* published by the PRSA, Riechert discusses the skills necessary for success in the field.

> Writing is the most important skill to learn and develop, with skills related to business,
> management and leadership also becoming important as people advance in their careers.

Employers today look for new hires with skills in listening, writing, researching, planning, communicating through many channels, serving, leading, engaging and relationship building. (Riechert, 2014, p. 10)

This is quite a formidable list. The magnitude of these skills is all-encompassing for PR professionals. Writing and researching must be carefully adapted for each organization's unique style or voice, and PR specialists should be familiar with multiple styles and platforms for writing. Communicating through many channels is an extremely broad discussion.

Reichert later offers powerful advice for new public relations graduates seeking to enter the field. She advises having constant up-to-date knowledge of news and information related to the field, getting actively involved professional organizations, and creating personal content that can build credibility, recognition, and experience (Riechert, 2014, p. 10).

While perhaps it is difficult to know exactly what skills Riechert was referring to, one can assume these channels include social media, the internet, websites, online press releases, videos, as well as the physical hard copies such as newspaper articles, journals, press releases, media kits, and more.

Ultimately, Riechert has learned quite a lot in the 36 years of public relations employment. "Focus on the intersection of what's important to your organization, its publics and the news media. And intentionally practice research, planning, implementation and evaluation" (Riechert, 2014, p. 10). The last sentence quotes the four pillars of PR, showing that even as the field progresses and develops and shoots ahead to new heights of communication, the very foundation of PR remains consistent and relevant.

In a discussion related to PR careers on *The Guardian,* Lottie O'Conor discusses broadly the skills required for PR success, but more specifically analyzes the tools and methods for

obtaining a position in the PR field. As someone who has already climbed the occupational

leader and achieved the status so desperately sought by college students and graduates, O'Conor

provides insight from personal experience to benefit the future generations.

O'Conor (2015) emphasizes the benefits of character and experience; perhaps even more

than education. O'Conor notes that employers want to know that an individual has spent time

dedicated to their passions that PR is right for not only the individual but also the company.

Overall, O'Conor (2015) demonstrates that PR is a field highly dedicated to the progress

and development of communication platforms within an organization, and that the proper

method to obtain these jobs is development of skills in high demand.

The University of South Carolina (USC), in the School for Communication and

Journalism, offers resources and information such as blogs, videos, and infographics. One brief

article (2017) has specific and intentional relevancy to this paper because the source originates

from an academic institution, which is a large aspect of this research.

This article shares the simple and broad skills USC believes are necessary for a career in

PR. Communication, writing, social media, multimedia, and creativity are the five core skills

(USC, 2017). USC firmly asserts that all PR professionals, no matter what area of the workforce,

need to have a grasp of these areas. Ultimately, the PR field benefits from students and

professionals working together to develop their skills so that all can raise the standard and

excellence of public relations.

Research Skills

Research is a skill highly stressed by Richardson and Laville as necessary for continuing

the standard of PR excellence. There are all types of research. Market research involves

analyzation of new markets a business may enter (Richardson & Laville, 2010, p. 112). Product

research gathers information about the product, whether opinions from the public or facts from the supplier themselves (Richardson & Laville, 2010, pp. 112-13).

Following a simple, six-step researching process can focus the research to the specific area desired and give public relations professional a key to understanding what needs to be communicated to any and all stakeholders. The summary of research is to understand what is the truth about either a new field, the public's opinion, or a product characteristics (Richardson & Laville, 2010). Engaging in different areas of research is something that public relations professionals should be familiar with.

Alastair Turner (2013) writes for *The Guardian Professional* about the skills needed to be successful in PR, listing research as one of the top five categories for PR professionalism. As a professional online source, *The Guardian Professional* provides many businessmen and women with resources for professional success. Though online sources are not considered specifically academic, Turner's work is worth considering due to the clarity of information provided in the field desired. PR professionals need to know what skills are required of them.

Researching is a huge element of any PR strategy and action plan, according to Turner. In order to have effective communication, information and knowledge are required (Turner, 2013). This includes staying up-to-date on the multitude of societal issues that are constantly changing, as well as technology and personal opinions. Knowing exactly where the client stands on different issues is crucial to proper public relations tactics.

Writing/ Communication Skills

These tactics include writing, another skill discussed by Turner (2013). Writing takes a wide variety of forms, so anything from a photo's caption to social media posts to a professional news releases are part of PR repertoire. Not only understanding how to write well, but being able

to go back and edit a piece PR is all about correcting mistakes, not creating new ones. Writing also demands high attention to detail; knowing what diction and syntax is appropriate in what context takes careful concentration (Turner, 2013).

Turner's primary skill, however, is communication. This is a foundation; not necessarily a degree in communications, but simply the ability to make a point and to explain complex issues to a simpler audience (Turner, 2013). Communication includes all forms, so written, spoken, reading, and even listening to others counts as communication. Understanding exactly what kind of audience responds to a specific attitude or inflection is a requirement of public relations communication.

The CIPR also mandates that good communication skills are foundational ("Is PR for you?" n.d.). Communication skills are universally agreed upon as the basis of PR, which is not surprising. At the elementary level these skills can and are successfully taught in collegiate programs.

O'Conor, who wrote for *The Guardian* similarly to Turner, advises primary improvements in writing skills (O'Conor, 2015). PR is a highly communicative skill, mostly involving writing in a variety of forms. No audience can obtain a message without content, and the text provides at the very least the skeleton for the body of the communication.

Digital Media Skills

The text may provide the skeleton, but new digital media is putting muscles and sinews onto the bones of writing. Richardson and Laville (2010) suggest several methods for success in digital media skills, and note that blogging arises as a primary digital skill. Blogging requires quick and interactive responses to any complaints or even positive reviews. Because blogs are

run most often by individuals, they can easily pop up in Google® searches related to a company, making responses to other bloggers who interact with a specific company crucial.

Other online communication tools recommended are RSS feeds, (Really Simple Syndication) which are simple links to give audience direct updates of new content (Richardson & Laville, 2010, p. 65). Search engine optimization (SEO) uses good writing and tech-savvy skills to make sure content is highly ranked and discovered in search engines (Richardson & Laville, 2010, p. 66). This is a highly developed skill and take careful energy and knowledge to cultivate.

Amy Reitz (2012) understood the need for growth in PR communication, and detailed the function of digital and social media in an article for the University of North Colorado. In a functional sense, there is the individual benefit of social media that continually draws the everyday person to the internet. Much research in the area of uses and gratifications for online content shows that people use and enjoy social media to find information, find community through social interaction and development, and find entertainment (Reitz, 2012, pp. 45-46). Studies show that a company can meet these needs through fostering an online community of mutual support and communication (Reitz, 2012, p. 46).

Issues and crisis management is a key function of organizational-public relationship systems, which is something that digital media can fulfill at the system level (Reitz, 2012, pp. 49-50). Providing an avenue for organizational leaders to gain insight about consumer issues or struggles in the early stages of conflict can prevent further discontent or disaster for the company, and social media also serves as the fastest way for a business to put forth PR content reassuring consumers from a potential breach in organizational growth or reputation. Reitz

(2012) notes that digital media can even serve as emotional support for the public as a unified whole, not just as separate entities.

Kaul (2013) lists several digital media tips, and the definition of PR gives him room to develop digital facets. He distinguishes between media relations and public relations, denoting media as a sub-category of public relations (Kaul, 2013, p. 34). Digital perspectives offer a variety of benefits to the public relations field, mainly more effective communication with publics. Digital media allows communication to go back and forth and provides space for quick and easy feedback.

As Kaul seeks to explore the field, he notes characteristics of PR in this modern era. "All PR is ePR and this remains a vital component when utilized effectively and Internet is allowed to go hand-in-hand with PR" (2013, p. 38). He highly recommends that professionals in the field learn to cope with new platforms, either by forming greater relationships with information technology departments, or developing their own proficiency in skills such as web site development and protection. There are so many aspects of internet PR protocol that can't all be discussed (Kaul, 2013), but are all helpful in understanding the new corporate and public field that professionals must now tackle.

Some of these tools include video news releases, video conferences, blogs, social media, emails, and more. Using all kinds of areas like YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and more involves careful discussion and analyzation on the part of public relations professionals to determine what content will spark a two-way communication street, and how to deal with the feedback and publics (Kaul, 2013).

Specifically, PR and the internet can connect and transform traditional public relations tools. Press releases, media kits, and other documentation normally done in physical hard copy

can now be completed online, but some question this authenticity (Kaul, 2013, pp. 43-44). Kaul

agrees with Richardson and Laville about the prominence of blogging, noting its international

influence and effective communication properties (Kaul, 2013, p. 47).

Kaul (2013) also details videoconferencing and video news releases (p. 47), two more

forms of online resources that can be quickly and effectively utilized by public relations

professionals to reach new audiences and co-workers.

In an article on the professional community of LinkedIn.com, one author details the skills

necessary for success in current public relations communications. Leonita Julian (2015) is a

public relations & marketing consultant in Indonesia, and presents work based on her personal

experience in the field. She lists ten skills deemed essential, and provides the audience with

suggestions for improvements in their own careers. Six out of ten skills involve current

technological advancements (Julian, 2015).

The list includes knowing how to get information, using social media, experience in

design, video production, search engine optimization, mobile sourcing, and programming.

Writing and storytelling are highlighted, especially as inclusion and incorporation into the web

(Julian, 2015). There are a multitude of aspects included within this list.

Like many others, Julian highlights blogging. Current business professionals and publics

are using blogs as a form of not only communication and relationship building, but information

gathering and resource sharing. Julian (2015) asserts this information directly from the years of

experience in the field. This means effective public relations professionals must begin to

cultivate these skills in their own careers.

Several other skills Julian details are not required, such as video editing or programing, but these areas are something that public relations professionals must be aware of and familiar with in the current societal environment that is techno-centric (Julian, 2015).

USC concurs on these accounts. The university is well aware of the new technologies available in today's society, and believes that PR professionals must keep up with the advances in communication today. Elements such as Adobe Suite, to edit photos or create graphics and websites, are useful and often required in PR positions. Other aspects, like search engine optimization (SEO) and website design, may at the moment seem a little less crucial or slightly more advanced, yet they are fast becoming the norm of modern communication (USC, 2017). USC seeks to provide this perspective of the future, but they do not invalidate the methods and processes that are time-tested, such as news releases and speaking at events.

USC is not the only university speaking out on digital media issues. Harvard University, one of the highest and most prestigious learning institutions in the nation, produces a blog within their Division of Continuing Education to help leaders and professionals grow, in the website section called Professional Development. One article outlines the skills necessary for proper growth and functionality in the field.

Harvard blog notes that the top skills that PR professionals should concern themselves with in their field are digitally related. The first discussed is coding. Coding is creating computer programming to produce content, such as websites, games, or more. In this instance, communications and PR should learn to code as a resource to produce consumer content that can effectively communicate their message (Harvard, 2016). Coding will become essential as consumers demand more online digital content and the producers of the content, i.e., PR professionals, must learn to keep up with the demand.

Data analysis is proving key in communication professions as well (Harvard, 2016). Most careers have measurable statistics for the productivity and success rate of the organization or position. Communications, and specifically PR often have trouble ascertaining this figure due to the relational nature of the job, and the sometimes-subtle results that can't always be tracked (Harvard, 2016). However, in today's social and digital age, more analysis tools are emerging, such as Google or Hootsuite Analytics, that PR professionals must be familiar with to achieve occupational success.

These are a few of the digital media skills that PR is beginning to tackle in the professional field. The wide variety reflects the leaps in technological growth over the past decade, not the least being digital media.

Social Media Skills

Social media is such a large part of digital media it deserves its own category. In online communications, Richardson and Laville (2010) note that the rise of social media is creating a faster, more efficient, and more publicly viewable communication field (pp. 67-68). Public relations professionals wishing to adequately interact with their publics must utilize these online sources to the maximum benefit of the company.

In such a capacity, Amy Reitz (2012) analyzes the value and function of social media in organizations and public relations. Her article provides a functional analysis of social media integration into PR skills, and allows practitioners and educators to understand the scope of PR.

Her overview analysis describes PR as open for communication and designed for dialogue between the public and the organization. This means social media and internet opportunities perfect for inclusion in PR initiatives (Reitz, 2012, pp. 42-43). The lens Reitz

employs is to assess the values and benefits social media gives in the social function for organizational public relations systems.

Social media characteristics include technological and communicative aspects. The accessibility makes it possible for anyone, anywhere to have a voice and make their opinion known (Reitz, 2012, p. 44). In this way, dialogue is opened up not only between individuals but also between corporations and their constituents. Organizations who utilize social media through their PR processes, postulates Reitz (2012), can take advantage of the internet to gain feedback about the reputation of the company among public groups and the wants individuals have for the company.

On a larger scale in the systems level, social media used by PR practitioners for a corporation has almost no research to show the benefits or functionality for the organization. Reitz (2012) proposes that the functional analysis theory of uses and gratifications be applied to the organization-public relationship system, and provides her own analysis on the subject.

She begins with "four functions in which social media may serve the organization-public relationship system based on current research in the public relations literature: maintenance of organizational identity, opportunity to build relationships, ability to control issues management, and the chance to promote social corporate responsibility" (Reitz, 2012, p. 48). These four functions are discussed for their applicability to the system as a whole and to their role within the core of PR.

For the function of organizational identity, Reitz (2012) believes that social media may serve the role of providing feedback regarding the perceived identity by public consumers of an organization. The identity is formed from interaction between the organization and the public, as

well as public interaction with each other regarding the corporation (Reitz, 2012, p. 48).

Therefore, social media can be beneficial in promoting that perception in both senses.

Social media builds relationships as well. This function is modified from traditional roles to the digital age, and applies not only to internet websites, but also to social media. Reitz shows that social media can fulfill multiple roles and positions required for PR success and growth among a corporation (2012, p. 49).

As organizations and constituent bases continue to grow, complex structures and public issues arise, creating a need for corporate social responsibility, a crucial function of an organizational-public relationship system. Social media fulfills this area as an avenue for communication of events related to the goodwill of the company (Reitz, 2012, p. 50). Perhaps even stronger and more important is social media's ability to provide the public with a means to communicate their desires and social issue needs to the business so that a business's social choices may remain relevant and beneficial.

Ultimately, Reitz (2012) presents an overall structure showing the functions of social media at an organizational usage standpoint, not just individually or for growth, but as a means of communication and development of an open system for PR in a corporation.

Kaul asserts that social media plays a huge role in public relations as a catalyst in the communication process (Kaul, 2013, p. 49). Providing direct dialogue between corporation and constituent, social media can and should be carefully cultivated by the public relations team to keep up to date with audience preferences in an effort to remain current in an ever-changing social stream. Kaul (2013) stresses the importance of gaining a full grasp of new media to advance public relations in this digital age (p. 51).

Julian (2015) notes that social media activation includes such a breadth of knowledge as to be overwhelming. This would include a consistent monitoring of social media sites, understanding what sites are currently being used by what percentage of the public and by which demographic. Separate content is appropriate for differing sources in terms of effective communication, and cultivating a following of publics is quite an intricate art, varying from social media site to site (Julian, 2015). In order for public relations to have a balanced set of skills, this element must be incorporated to everyday practice.

Other top actions to get ahead are watching social media presence and being active in the media, asserts O'Conor (2015). There is so much information online in forms of news tweets, Facebook posts, and traditional news sources such as *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* that provide online information regarding current social issues and allow an opportunity for the individual to express themselves and their strengths (O'Conor, 2015). Therefore, an individual should watch their social media presence to protect professional integrity, and keep up with other social struggles so the relevancy to audiences and professionals is in most effective form.

Harvard (2016) agrees. Social media is considered foundation and shouldn't be new or in the early stages. Sites like Facebook and Twitter have been around since the early 2000s, so Harvard (2016) argues that social media strategy and proficiency should already by well-embedded into the portfolio of PR professionals.

Change: Flexibility, Boldness, Creativity, And Learning

PR is not a typical office job, CIPR emphasizes. Coping under hard and unseen deadlines is a key trait because there are so many varied tasks and projects ("Is PR for you?" n.d.). Being aware of the cultural climate and conflict that confronts audiences on a daily basis is the number one most effective way to connect with stakeholders and successfully integrate PR.

In the *Guardian Professional*, Turner (2013) lists flexibility as one of his five core PR characteristics. Change is constant, and PR requires creativity. Since the goal is ultimately to develop relationships with consumers and stakeholders, new and innovative techniques are often the only way to captivate attention when it is most needed (Turner, 2013). PR professionals must be willing to look at an issue or communication technique outside the box.

The PRSA strives to reach outside the box. Their scholarly website has many helpful resources for professionals and students regarding public relations. One is the *Public Relations Strategist,* a modern digital publication. In a 2014 article, Kenneth Jacobs lists keys that public relations professionals will need in the future age. Jacobs is certified in many areas of communications and coaching (Jacobs, 2017), and is able to pull together the wisdom of CEOs from around the country to share what the most influential leaders are developing. Not all of these CEOs are directly public relations or even communications related, adding to the point of change, and also providing further evidence for skills discussed later in this thesis.

The majority of Jacobs' skills relate to the ability to learn. As technology becomes even faster and more instantaneous for larger audiences, it becomes necessary for the public relations field to also adapt with matching speed (Jacobs, 2014). Other skills that follow this are flexibility and learning new communication platforms. One leader Jacobs interviewed said,

> As so many things come in and become part of the real world, such as Google Glass, you have to think about how they have an impact on how your message gets out there. We, as communicators, must think about the format of different stories, new ways of communicating and the growing importance of visuals. (Jacobs, 2014)

These new technologies implicitly point to a higher calling for personal learning and growth as a public relations specialist and leader.

Jacobs also notes a willingness to be bold. The CEOs who contributed to this article declare that boldness is what will be the key factor for communication. Jacobs talks with one such CEO who declares,

> Clients care less and less … if you're an advertising or a PR firm. The leaders who are going to thrive are the ones who create and evangelize bold, market-changing ideas. Who cares what you call your agency? If you have bold ideas and can execute, you'll reap the benefits. (Jacobs, 2014)

A surprising but solemn note to public relations professionals: cultivate relationships and build publics with new and innovative techniques.

O'Conor (2015) also tells students to put themselves into the market. This requires confidence and charisma to essentially use public relations for personal gain. She quotes multiple communication directors who have gone through the same struggles that PR professionals face, and they recommend attending to personal image and reputation online and in person to improve chances of occupational success (O'Conor, 2015).

USC strives for occupational success by finding the next step for PR professionals. Creativity is a foundation USC strongly urges; perhaps because PR is the most unique and varied form of communication. The drive for new and intriguing content is constantly pressuring public relations specialists, and creativity is what sparks the human mind into the next level of excellence and competency (USC, 2017). Change is what fuels the growth of PR.

Collaborative Skills

At a macro level, PR experiences so much change because the field is also in relation to business, advertising, strategy, and media. Richardson and Laville (2010) point out that these elements see PR defined in multiple fields. The tasks included in PR are often seen and used in

other fields, such as marketing, or even governmental sources. Therefore, PR is relatively new in its own discipline. In relation to other professions and fields, public relations practitioners should work hand in hand with aspects such as advertising and marketing. PR exists to serve the business and manage the strategic relationships with stakeholders and consumers for the entire audience of the business.

These are just a few of the skills detailed in Richardson and Laville's (2010) book *Develop Your PR Skills.* These key points show that ultimately, public relations cover a wide range of skills. Not everything must be done by the one department of public relations; in fact, collaboration of fields is what PR has always been about; working with multiple individuals and categories of a business to succeed (Richardson & Laville, 2010). This is why PR is so crucial for business growth, and why PR professionals should understand and grow in their skills.

Reichert (2014), as an APR heavily connected in the PR community, even includes skills that are not specifically public relations oriented, such as service and leadership. She notes that PR is more than simply writing or communicating. It is an entire persona of confidence, benevolence, and relationships (Reichert, 2014, p. 10). The PR professional must learn how to navigate any communication field in a way that continues to satisfy the consumer and uphold the values of the business, especially when through other areas of the workforce.

International Mindset

The skills necessary for PR don't just apply to one country or culture. Turner (2013) articulates that PR extends globally, so a skill necessary in PR is international mindset. The more PR professionals can learn or experience about foreign relations, the more effective the organization is in dealing with international customers, client, or corporations (Turner, 2013).

Kenneth Jacobs (2014) and the CEOs he interviews strongly highlight skills relating to the mindset of an individual, how someone in the profession views themselves and the world around them. Leaders in the field must recognize the global perspective, Jacobs (2014) notes. Jacobs interviewed multiple CEOs, one of whom said, "Those that have the global mindset will be rewarded. Multinational companies looking for growth aren't looking to the United States, but many PR companies are still focusing on the United States" (Jacobs, 2014). This is crucial. PR must jump to the next level and step outside the box of one nation or one aspect of public relations.

This vision should include the world both present and future. The next technology and communication platforms are right around the corner, and the field that is entirely devoted to providing consumers with the next level should be leaping into the future well aware of what is to come and what will become effective communication tools. Therefore, when all PR KSAs are considered, the international and futuristic mindset proves to be the defining factor of modern PR skill sets.

Summary and Comparison in PR Skills

An overall tabulation of the skills and procedures address by scholarly research provides several large categories of abilities and knowledge that PR practitioners should heed. These include communication in any and every form, flexibility and learning, the four-step process of PR, research, and ultimately relationship-building on all levels.

Public relations and the skill sets required within have been rapidly changing throughout the past century, much more the past decade. The most up-to-date and relevant information today seems to stem from the source that now reaches the largest audience of humankind. The internet provides incredible research in real time about the status of any subject, including PR.

The ultimate conclusion of the skills described from online, non-scholarly sources provides a broad picture and description of the PR field, with specific and detailed descriptions of much newer skills than previously analyzed. A cumulative list includes writing, social media, technology (like SEO, videos, web coding, etc.), research, creativity, and personality skills. These have much detail and information that provides a clear picture for the PR professional of what the internet believes the PR field should accomplish.

In regards to the differences between the academic and the online skill compilations, there are more similarities than expected. Both place a clear emphasis on writing and research, the very foundational aspects of PR. However, there are significant differences. Academic descriptions focus more on elements of PR that relate to theory or principles of PR, such as the four-step process. Online sources value skills not necessarily found in textbooks, such as personality and creativity.

The skills required for professionalism in PR in 2017 are quite varied, as seen from a multitude of sources and ranging a wide list of topics. The overall KSAs feature personal strategy and charisma, while the seven skills that emerge from modern research show that traditional skills such as research, writing, and communication are just as important as newer skills like digital and social media. Perhaps most definitive for the modern PR skill set, however, is the flexibility and futuristic mindset that sets PR apart from occupations that remain irrelevant or behind the times. The question remains as to how these skills can be realistically achieved not only in today's PR field, but more importantly through the PR educational programs.

What is the state of Modern PR Accreditation Processes?

Accreditation Options

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) noted that accreditation is "a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement" (CHEA, 2002). This refers to a detailed and carefully examined process that takes all elements of an institution's PR program into consideration. An accreditation review of an institution must be from a nationally-recognized organization that can foster the necessary assessment tools. There are a few accreditation options, and a large number of non-accredited programs discussed.

UAB Accreditation. In analyzing the accreditation options available for collegiate PR programs, information was discovered about the Certificate in Principles of Public Relations (CPPR) offered by the Universal Accreditation Board (UAB) (LaBorde, 2014, p. 15). This is a noteworthy accreditation and valuable in discussion; however, it relates to individual PR students in their last collegiate years to advance in professional skill. In terms of this thesis, it is not analyzed at length because it is not applicable to an institution as a whole, but only an individual student.

ACEJMC Accreditation. As one of the major communications and public relations related accreditation program for colleges, ACEJMC provides an ethical and academic standard for journalism or communication departments seeking a higher level of academic professionalism (ACEJMC, 2013).

Within this approach are nine standards for the ACEJMC that apply to college programs (ACEJMC, 2017c). As listed by the Commission of Public Relations Education, they are:

- Mission, Governance and Administration

- Curriculum and Instruction

- Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Full-time and Part-time Faculty

- Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity

- Student Services

- Resources, Facilities and Equipment

- Professional and Public Service

- Assessment of Learning Outcomes (CPRE, 2006)

The Curriculum and Instruction, Diversity and Inclusiveness, Scholarship: Research etc., refer specifically to the content of educational classes within the PR or communication program. There are specific guidelines and many, many standards of measurement for each section.

Some examples of the three curriculum-oriented standards include assessing the programs ability to provide concept courses alongside professional content and integrate both theory and skills into curriculum successfully. (ACEJMC, 2017c). Diversity is standard with detailed guidelines:

The unit has a written diversity plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan…The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. (ACEJMC, 2017c)

The accreditation also analyzes faculty members' experiences and offers support for faculty to explore research and engage in professional activities. ACEJMC (2017c) also monitors the positions and advancement of faculty as being in accordance with experience and academic

development. Overall, the requirements are thorough, detailed, minutely recorded academically, and diverse in nature.

For the other aspects, most relate to the environment of the program, whether through faculty development, resources, facilities and equipment, student services, or professional and public service (ACEJMC, 2017c). Other career-advancing opportunities are also discussed: professional opportunities through alumni, greater knowledge and experience of faculty available to students, more modern technology available in computer labs, or research databases for student access. They are worded similarly to the other nine in relations to demands for accuracy, honesty, precision, and documentation of the breadth of the standards (ACEJMC, 2017c).

The first and the last standards are reflective and vision-casting elements. An example includes,

> The accredited unit must gather, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success. The unit annually publishes retention and graduation information on its website. (ACEJMC, 2017c)

Forcing the institution to identify where the objectives should lead the program and how those learning outcomes are actually achieved is the most important element for the ACEJMC accreditation (ACEJMC, 2017c).

The university submits a request for an ACEJMC visit for review around three years in advance, and conducts a self-study while waiting for the schedule. The self-study report consists of two main parts. The first is a series of identifying questions that give general and foundational information regarding the program (ACEJMC, 2017d). The second is unique to each university, based specifically on their program and their fulfillment of the nine accreditation standards

(ACEJMC, 2017d). There is a section about the university's mission and the remaining section is the nine-standard analysis. If the university completes the proper self-study, they submit it to the executive director who ultimately decides regarding a visit (ACEJMC, 2017d).

The two sides of ACEJMC accreditation process are the self-study and the analysis of the team who visits the university. This way there is data and experience to provide accurate consensus on the readiness of the institution to become accredited. The requirements for a visit are detailed, extensive, and exhaustive to ensure accurate and objective measurement of a university's program (ACEJMC, 2017d).

At the conclusion of a visit, the team presents a summary report regarding the readiness of the university for accreditation (ACEJMC, 2017d). There is a period for clarification, and then the team presents the findings at the annual Accrediting Committee meeting. An institution can be accredited, denied, or receive a probationary period with specific weaknesses pointed out for immediate correction (ACEJMC, 2017d).

The ACEJMC accreditation process is designed to provide education communication programs with professional measurement of educational success in student achievement. Continually updated and nationally recognized, there is much benefit achieved from the ACEJMC. However, what is called into question is the overall efficiency for a public relations program, and the preparation of the students for the real-world positions.

The ACEJMC website lists the programs that are accredited in this process, to show the widespread reach of the ACEJMC accreditation. There are currently 113 programs with accreditation, ten of which are international. The ACEJMC requires reaccreditation every six years, and can choose to rescind or extend reaccreditation (ACEJMC, 2017a). Because accreditation is something that encompasses not only curriculum content, but also faculty

development and facility improvements, the accreditation process can be quite lengthy. Through the strengths and weaknesses of accreditation, ACEJMC has a wide and respectable accreditation span throughout the United States.

A liberal arts institution accredited by the ACEJMC with a public relations program provides an excellent example for the practical application of the principles just discussed. In the case below, Abilene Christian University (ACU) does not have an explicit PR program, but there is an Advertising/Public Relations (A/PR) major for evaluation.

This university offers a major in A/PR under the College of Arts and Sciences within the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (ACU, 2017b). In the department courses, the subjects relate to media issues, with more technological courses like Web Publishing, Communications Design, and Visual Media Introductions. A sample course description runs, "Survey of the history, principles and tactics of public relations and corporate communications, with an emphasis on how organizations use public relations to maintain goodwill among their various publics and meet strategic objectives" (ACU, 2017c, "JMC 347-Principles of Public Relations"). Also required is a race and media class, as well as an internship credit. These total 16 credit hours for a semester (ACU, 2017c).

Principles of PR and of Advertising, a writing class, a campaign class, and lab are part of the 18, required credit-hours in the PR major. Optional courses include Social Media and Strategic Planning, described as "A study of social media and the place of those tools in professional communication" (ACU, 2017c, "JMC 367-Social Media"), giving 6 more credit hours for 40 total hours of major-related courses (ACU, 2017c).

Marketing, Business, and Social Research classes can be considered supplemental for this major. A minor or support field in almost any area supplies 15 more credit hours, and

supplemental course hours needed are 12. Five elective hours add up to a total of 32 in work related to the major, tallying a grand total of 72 hours for the major (ACU, 2017c).

The university requires core classes of 56 hours (ACU, 2017d), so the Advertising/PR degree is 128 credit hours, providing a little less than half of the courses in general studies adding to the liberal arts education of the student.

As a whole, the institution and the program provided for Advertising/PR as a ACEJMC-accredited organization seems to provide a more theoretical and academic approach to the profession of PR rather than skills-oriented (ACU, 2017a). This has benefits of producing better educated students, but perhaps a further emphasis on the internship process and senior-readiness aspects could improve the curriculum of the ACEJMC school.

PRSA CEPR Accreditation. College accreditation serves as the primary vessel for standardized PR programs in the United States. A school can be accredited through a few different programs.

For the PRSA, accreditation is available to institutions through the Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR). It was established in 1989 and is based on the recommendations of the Commission on Public Relations Education (PRSA, 2016, p. 1). While this is voluntary in nature, the programs that choose to participate receive valuable standardization tools that further develop the professionalism of PR education. The PRSA CEPR is reviewed by the PRSA Educational Affairs, part of the PRSA Board (PRSA, 2016).

The process for PRSA CEPR accreditation is clearly defined through their Guidelines established in 2016, sponsored by the Global Standard in Public Relations Education. There are eight main aspects of the accreditation process that provide a solid procedure for establishing educational credibility.

Step One is the curriculum, which is mandated to include "principles, writing, research, campaigns/case studies, and experiential learning" (PRSA, 2016, p. 2) PR classes are specifically laid out for undergraduate degree, and institutions seeking accreditation must provide proof of their current and continued fulfillment of the requirements (PRSA, 2016, p. 2).

The second and third aspects relate to the environment. Faculty is second; facilities and resources are third. While not mentioning specific measurements in this section, it is clear that faculty and facilities are expected to remain current and up-to-date in experience, knowledge, and technology in the field (PRSA, 2016, p. 3).

Students comprise the fourth requirement as the certification measures the number and quality of students admitted into the PR program (PRSA, 2016, p. 4). An institution must provide detailed record of the individuals who have applied and received entrance into the PR program.

The Global Standard in PR Education (2016) notes that the fifth standard is assessment. An institution cannot simply let the aspects of their program continue without measured improvement. A regular evaluation must be proven by the education program to ensure achievement of curriculum objectives and successful field preparation (p. 4).

The last three elements of CEPR involve relationships with outside organizations. Sixth is professional affiliations, seventh is department and university interdependence, and eighth is global perspective. The professional affiliations should adequately provide the next steps for students to find employment following graduation, with involvement in the PRSA and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management strongly encouraged (GAPRCM). PR programs should also include other departments in the university as a part of the general liberal arts education, and build the variety of skills necessary for PR success (PRSA,

2016, pp. 4-5). Global mindset inclusion into curriculum focus should adequately develop students to reach a global audience.

After an initial request for certification, the institution submits these elements. Two reviewers sent by the PRSA Education Affairs follow with their appraisal. One reviewer is an educator; one is an APR professional (PRSA, 2016, p. 6). This gives a balance of education and professional experience to the evaluation.

As an accreditation process, PRSA and the CEPR work to analyze the attributes of an institution's PR program so that the full range of education can be provided to students, and that the skills necessary for success in a PR occupation are taught and understood (PRSA, 2016, p. 1).

In comparison to the skills necessary for PR as discussed previously, the CEPR appears from this complex process to ensure the meeting of these skills. Further research can offer a full analysis of the two, but it is clear from the requirements stated by the PRSA that professionalism and skill preparation are some of the top priorities for accreditation achievement. The other goals of accreditation are providing a sound base in the literature and theory of PR.

The Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) offers chapter membership to qualifying institutions, and is closely associated with the PRSA CEPR. They identify the range of the PRSA CEPR, providing information for the 35 schools offering certified Bachelor's degrees in the United States, along with the four international Bachelor's programs and the six institutions with certifications in Master's degrees. Overall, the scope of the PRSA CEPR is very small so far, but growing in scope and professionalism (PRSSA, 2017).

As far as the PRSA CEPR accreditation is concerned, school curriculum provides an excellent analysis of the practicality of the program. Lee University, a Christian, liberal-arts

university that is accredited by the PRSA, can be used to gain a better understanding of the CEPR in real-world application.

This university separates majors into the College of Arts and Sciences, then by the Department of Communications, and then the degree of Public Relations with an option for either a Bachelor's of Arts or a Bachelor's of Science (University, 2017a). The Bachelor of Science is used for this study to ensure consistency across programs.

In the four-year plan provided and the curriculum program accessible online, the requirements for PR include basic classes of speaking, researching, writing, and communications (University, 2017c). Each student chooses a writing specialty class of their choice, a digital media class of their choice, and a business or marketing class of their choice. Also required are three credits of internship experience, credit hours in law, planning/management, and a discussion of "Traditional and New Media."

The wording of these course descriptions indicates a high focus on the principles and theories behind the major, overarching elements of communication and public relations, while balanced with a practical, applicable understanding of the skills necessary for employment in the PR field after graduation (University, 2017c). A sample course description runs,

> This course emphasizes the development of messages to achieve specific objectives with key audiences. Students will develop and edit strategic messages and determine where and when these messages should be distributed. Particular attention will be placed on the development of news releases, fact sheets, pitch letters and news advisories for print, broadcast and internet communication. (University, 2017c, "PUBR 316 – Public Relations Writing")

The levels of emphasis on either academic discussion or practical application varied from course to course, as the classes offered differences of focus for different materials covered.

These classes are coupled with a choice of 15 other credit hours in topics like communication through a variety of specialty areas, more internship credits, event management, or PRSSA case studies. This particular PR major requires 55 credit hours conclusively (University, 2017c). General education classes totaling from 35-41 credit hours gives students around 6-15 credit hours of general electives for a 120-credit hour minimum requirement in the program (University, 2017b).

The courses intended for student absorption provide a well-rounded education in academic content. The major courses that students are required to complete before graduation strive for balance in knowledge and skills bestowed on students (University, 2017c). This proves promising for the PR field as practitioners and educators alike seek to adequately prepare students with knowledge and experience. This university's inclusion of multiple internship credits, case study credits, and practical application are strong pillars to uphold the academic knowledge imparted. While it might not be the perfect solution, it appears well-balanced.

Non-Accredited Programs. In terms of collegiate PR programs that do not receive accreditation from either the PRSA CEPR or the ACEJMC accreditation, there is a surprising lack of quantifiable information available. As noted in each of the other accreditation systems, the ACEJMC has 113 fully accredited schools in the program (ACEJMC, 2017a), and PRSA CEPR certifies 35 schools in America for Bachelor's degrees (PRSSA, 2017). This is not the extent of American collegiate PR programs by any means; further research requires analysis of institutions offering PR degrees without accreditation. This is difficult to identify because there is not specific grouping of non-accredited organizations.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there are just over 3,000 institutions offering four-year degrees in the United States in 2016 (NCES, 2016a, column 2 bottom row). Other online sources cite as many as 5,000 (Selingo, 2015), but these numbers are not researched. While quite overwhelming in sheer number, simply identifying education programs holds no guarantee of quality.

When PR is searched in online college search tools, the majority cite around 100-400 schools in the United States offering a four-year degree in some form of public relations. Ten different college search tools were analyzed to determine what PR majors were offered in any school in the USA. PR as an individual major was not even an option on several sites, so the closest option was chosen. The most reliable website is the "College Navigator" feature sponsored by the NCES, which cited 313 schools with a PR degree (NCES, 2017) and 329 four-year institutions with enrollment in a communication and journalism field of study (NCES, 2016b). These results are not conclusive, but simply show that there are likely to be several hundred schools in America in 2017 that offer a degree in Public Relations. The citations for those college search websites can be found in Appendix D.

The Commission of Public Relations Education (CPRE) issued a report in 2006 about the status of accredited schools, and noted that about one-quarter of institutions with registered communication programs are accredited by the ACEJMC, and that out of 109 accredited units, there are 88 with PRSSA chapters (CPRE, 2006).

Overall, there is not much available research regarding the statistics of PR programs or majors not accredited by any source. It can reasonably be assumed that at least 100 schools exist without accreditation that still offer PR degrees. In order to better understand how these schools

operate and what curriculum is offered, a non-accredited university with a public relation major in a communications department will be individually analyzed.

Southeastern University is not accredited by ACEJMC or PRSA CEPR, and retains a PR degree in both Bachelor's of Arts and Bachelor's of Science. The Bachelor's of Science degree shall be analyzed as it follows suit with the other university degrees.

While not accredited, Southeastern University (SEU) has a College of Arts & Media, which houses the Department of Communication. Within this department are degrees in Digital Journalism, Film, Communication, English, Graphic Design, and more (SEU, 2017b). The Public Relations major includes a four-year plan for academic completion.

Core requirements of the university total 55 credit hours, including humanities, communications, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences credits (SEU, 2017b). As a Christian university, there is also a religion core required of all students.

For the department classes required in communications, there are theory, law, intro, and ethics classes with job preparatory requirements in seminar class and internship credit hours. A sample course description is worded, "This course is an examination of moral and social conduct and decision-making in the world of media. Contemporary ethical issues in commercialism, journalism, and media expression will be examined in light of biblical principles" (SEU, 2017b, "COMM 2122 – Media Ethics"). There are 15 credit hours required in general communications.

Public Relations require an introductory class, two different writing focuses, social media and digital design classes, as well as case studies, corporate PR, and campaigns (SEU, 2017b). The social media course description runs, "This course covers the strategies that guide social media planning and integration in public relations. The various tools that public relations practitioners use to identify and engage publics through social media are included" (SEU, 2017b,

"COMM 3323 – Social Media in Public Relations"). Students can also choose six credits of their own, options ranging from Photography and Magazine Design & Publication to Business Communications and Marketing. The PR major credit requirements are 34 hours, totaling 49 for the major specific credits (SEU, 2017b, "Major Core").

General electives of 15 credit hours fill the quota of 120 hours for the PR major as a whole. This puts a little less than half (41%) of the classes in the major specific areas.

Overall, the PR major at this non-accredited liberal arts university provides an overview of the field, and course descriptions seem balanced toward an equal amount of technological and practical development combined with theoretical and principled aspects. While there is not proof of continuity across all non-accredited schools, this example seems to provide a solid foundation for real-world experience.

Accreditation Analysis

In examining the research and discussion of this paper, the final question remains: is accreditation beneficial for collegiate education programs in preparation for the skills needed in the occupation? Research is not empty regarding this discussion.

Scholarly Source Analysis. Mark Massé and Mark Popovich conducted a survey in 2002 of faculty at both ACEJMC accredited and non-accredited universities across America who were members of the AEJMC. They published their findings in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator,* quarterly journal, in 2007. The results showed that the differences between the two areas were not significant on a large scale (Massé & Popovich, 2007, p. 143).

Many areas were tested, including faculty experience and diversity, faculty classroom experiences, and writing class materials. The differences between accredited and non-accredited

programs were slight, with most weight in faculty writing experience, which was higher in accredited programs by an average of about 4 years. (Massé & Popovich, 2007, pp. 144-45).

The other issue addressed was professors' ability and technique for handling problems in writing. While most professors between accredited and non-accredited agreed on using detailed, individual critiques and offering more opportunities for re-writing or additional writing assignments (Massé & Popovich, 2007, pp. 148-152), the only real difference was that non-accredited faculty slightly preferred acting as a coach rather than an editor when assisting students (Massé & Popovich, 2007, p. 152).

Overall, Massé and Popovich (2007) noted that non-accredited programs were more innovative in teaching and offering help. The accredited programs actually had less faculty with doctorate degrees and a lighter workload in terms of research and other activities (p. 154-55). Massé and Popovich (2007) concluded that the differences between accreditation and non-accredited college communication programs were inconsequential. The real concern was found that communication programs in general were not adapting quickly to current standards of communication processes or development. The consensus was that the faculty and programs in communication departments needed to improve their flexibility.

This survey provides an excellent overview of the programs in America and compares accreditation in ACEJMC with non-accreditation. However, this is only one broad scope; it has little direct effect on public relations programs or the accreditation of PRSA CEPR. It was also conducted in 2002, though significant advances have been made since this time. Despite these shortcomings, there is substantial research showing minimal differences between course curriculum and faculty experience in communication programs around the country.

Taking a more current look at this issue, Marc Seamon conducted an overview study of literature in this area in 2010, that was also published in the *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*. He noted that the ACEJMC has met with member division regarding the implementation of different policies due to the wide range of practices that universities can accomplish during a specific time frame (Seamon, 2010, pp. 10-11). Seamon is particularly interested in the University of Wisconsin's decision to not renew their accreditation. He declares that such a rift in the education system is symbolic of ACEJMC's inadequacies with their program requirements (2010, p. 11). His study is therefore an analysis of twenty-one scholarly articles regarding the discussion (Seamon, 2010, p. 12).

Through broad groupings of articles, Seamon (2010) seeks to show the similarities between accredited institutions and non-accredited universities to ultimately point out the weaknesses of the ACEJMC accreditation process.

In areas like curriculum control, many findings showed that the strict limitations on classes in journalism and mass communication prevented a university from presenting the most up-to-date education for the students (Seamon, 2010, p. 13). Some areas included math skills, international public relations, and convergence (collection of skills from variety of fields). Other studies highlighted the ACEJMC's emphasis on faculty development, which was deemed unnecessary to the required extent, and argued that the extreme diversity requirements detracted from the education as a whole.

So, in this consideration, the ACEJMC accreditation is not just equal to non-accredited schools, but some aspects are unhelpful and inferior to non-accredited collegiate programs (Seamon, 2010, pp. 17-18). When analyzing if accreditation is right for a particular university, more care should be taken for the specific circumstances faced by that institution.

As a national organization with over 100 accredited schools, the ACEJMC is still a well-respected source for accreditation of collegiate mass communication programs. Seamon (2010) even acknowledges the benefits and strengths of accreditation, showing that the evaluation process and standardization across the nation are helpful for building professionalism (p. 17).

Seamon (2010) notes that evaluation of graduate students and the positions they hold will increase the success measurement of accreditation in ACEJMC. In this area, more research must be done.

The Commission on Public Relations Education (CPRE) is a global organization dedicated to upholding the value of PR education. They provide a more thorough approach to the accreditation process. With members from more than 15 PR organizations and similar groups, the CPRE has a specific educational vision:

The Commission seeks to establish benchmarks for teaching public relations that are current, research-based, sensitive to culture and language and applicable to preparing public relations students for a career in practice, research or teaching. (CPRE, 2013)

As such, their evaluation of college accreditation programs is valid for understanding the effectiveness of college PR accreditation. In their 2006 report entitled *The Professional Bond: Program Certification & Accreditation*, they provide an analysis of the available college accreditation practices.

Firstly, both PRSA and ACEJMC offer third-party, optional accreditation programs that can provide professionalism from an outside perspective. The Commission notices the history of ACEJMC first, recognizing its early beginning in 1945 exclusively for journalism programs, and progression through the 1980s to include other communication elements. Now sponsored by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) instead of the US Department of Education,

ACEJMC is designed and focused on professionalism exhibited in collegiate units of journalism or mass communication (CPRE, 2006).

The CPRE noted 11 elements measured in student educational growth. Something "often-overlooked" is the ACEJMC's emphasis on a liberal-arts, balanced curriculum, meaning that there are many classes required outside of the communications college (CPRE, 2006). This broadens and develops the overall education of the accredited student program.

CPRE (2006) reported that while this accreditation is not directly related to public relations, it provides skills and professional credibility useful for PR majors. PR is becoming better represented on the ACEJMC, with three members currently representing PR in some fashion. However, the CPRE (2006) proposes further growth in representation, as the field of journalism in newspapers has double the number of PR representatives.

CPRE analyzed not only the ACEJMC, but also the PRSA Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR). The PRSA CEPR was developed in 1989, and is similar in design to the ACEJMC process. However, it deals solely with PR programs, and is dedicated to the advancement of PR (CPRE, 2006).

The CPRE (2006) notices that "only 94 out of more than 3,000 U.S. colleges and universities have public relations programs certified or accredited by either PRSA or ACEJMC." In 2006, there were 88 programs accredited by the ACEJMC with public relations programs in them; 14 US universities with PRSA CEPR accreditation; 8 of which also contained ACEJMC accreditation (CPRE, 2006).

CPRE (2006) concludes with discussion and recommendations for the future. PR programs in colleges should work toward more effective self-evaluation that will increase the growth and development of PR professionalism in education. They also recommend a greater

involvement of PR practitioners in the field, and PR organizations should seek larger voice in communication organizations as a whole (CPRE, 2006).

These conclusions show the long-reaching vision of CPRE. PR programs across America have a responsibility to provide education that develops the student for professional occupation. As a means of achieving that goal, CPRE notes that any type of accreditation may not be the solution or the cure-all, but can provide a big step in the right direction. The principles of accreditation, namely, assessment, can be applied to any PR program regardless of accreditation.

In summary, there are two accreditation options and one general non-accredited option. A side-by-side comparison of three example institutions will provide a clear picture of the accreditation processes differences.

Collegiate Side-by-Side Analysis. All three options for collegiate PR degree programs offer a wide range of classes and cover broad areas of PR education. Table 1 provides information about the content of the degree programs. Remarkable similarities can be observed specifically in the major-specific requirements, where all three require Writing for PR, Principles or Introduction of PR, and a media course. The ACEJMC degree is in Advertising/PR, not explicitly PR, which is why there is an emphasis on the advertising aspects of the degree as seen in Principles of Advertising, etc.

Table 1: College PR Degree Course Contents

	PRSA CEPR	ACEJMC	Non-Accredited
Communication (Comm) core	Media Law Understanding Human Communication Public Speaking Internship Comm Practicum	Media issues Intro to Visual Media Intro to Race and Media Colloquium in Race and Media Web Publishing Comm Design	Media Ethics Intro to Mass Comm Mass Comm Theory Mass Comm Law Comm Seminar Comm Internship

		Comm Law JMC Internship	
PR specific core	Principles of PR PR Writing PR/Ad Research Traditional and New Media Digital Media Skills Option PR Planning & Management Christianity & PR Writing Option Business/Marketing Option	Principles of PR PR Writing Creating Media Messages OR Convergence Reporting Principles of Advertising Ad/PR Campaigns JMC elective	Intro to PR Writing for PR Mass media writing Social Media in PR Digital Layout and Design PR Case Studies Corporate PR PR Campaigns Practicum

PR elective
options
	Interpersonal
	Communication
	Principles of Advertising
	Persuasion
	Communication,
	   Organizational OR
	   Sport OR
	   Intercultural OR
	   Crisis OR
	   Leadership
	Internship
	Event Management
	PR in the Music Industry
	Case Study Competition I
	OR II
	Contemporary Topics in PR
		Social Media
		Advertising
		Creativity and Copy
		Writing
		Ad/PR Media
		Planning
		Principles of
		Marketing
		International
		Business
		Management and
		Org Behavior
		Intro to Psychology
		OR Sociology
		Social Research OR
		Social Statistics
			Photography
			Business
			Communications I
			Business
			Communications II
			Writing for Digital
			Media
			Magazine Design
			and Production
			Marketing
			PR Practicum

For general communication requirements, Media Ethics/Law is common to all three programs, as well as internship credits. The PRSA CEPR seems to focus on speaking and communication principles, while the ACEJMC has a higher emphasis on race and modern digital technologies such as Introduction to Visual Media, Web Publishing, and Communication Design. The non-accredited program has basic theory and practice instruction.

The biggest difference seems to be in elective options, where even the amount of options or the set-up of the elective process is different per institution. Five different types of

communication classes offered in the PRSA CEPR show high value placed in communication. Non-accredited electives are fewer in number and follow business communications or further design areas. The ACEJMC program offers mainly advertising, marketing, and business electives, with further requirements in social science and social analysis.

Ultimately, the PR degree programs of these institutions with differing accreditation statuses provide striking similarity with distinctive concentrations. The accredited schools clearly reflect some of the requirements of the respective accreditation process, while the non-accredited school provides a broader and simplistic degree program.

Table 2: College PR Degree Requirement Hours

	PRSA CEPR	ACEJMC	Non-Accredited
Communication core	N/A (13 by discretion)	16	15
PR specific core	18 (9 additional)	18	28
PR elective options	15	18	6
Other electives	6-15 (10 avg)	15 minor (5)	16
General credits	53-59 (55 avg)	56	55
Total credits	120	128	120
Comm/PR Specific Percentage	46%	41%	41%
PR specific percentage	35%	28%	28%

In reference to the number of classes required in the major specifically, there seems to be a difference in structure among the schools. As seen in Table 2, the ACEJMC has less specifically-required PR courses and more PR elective options, whereas the non-accredited has few elective options. An aspect worth noting is that the percentages of major specific courses with general requirements is almost identical between the ACEJMC program and the non-accredited institution (taking into account rounding to the nearest whole number). Further

research could determine the causes for these similarities; perhaps the non-accredited is in the process of working toward an ACEJMC accreditation.

For the comparison of the programs as a whole, the content provided in the tables appears not to differ significantly in terms of effectiveness of the PR programs or preparation of individuals for the real world; all have internship requirements and practicum offerings. Further research into actual course content could provide analysis regarding the effectiveness or relevancy of the individual course work, which could vary between universities even though the class bears the same name.

Accreditation Summary. Comprehensively, the accreditation processes have assessments designed to assist the universities in self-evaluation and to promote growth throughout every area possible. However, the accreditation processes appear to currently perform with only slight differences from non-accredited programs, meaning that non-accredited collegiate PR programs are similar to accredited schools in effectiveness.

Conclusions

Limitations

While this study provides great depth of analysis, there is lacking a clarity in focus. More research specifically into PR skill development would provide a more structured picture of the PR field at large. Comparison of KSAs and accreditation processes would be more effective if more detailed and precise practices were used to analyze the discrepancies between the two.

Lack of analysis in accreditation processes leaves much to be desired in terms of accurate portrayal of the accreditation development and standards; comparison of only one institution for each accreditation option is not sufficient for adequate observation to be made.

Firsthand research by contacting faculty for details regarding exactly what is being taught in collegiate PR programs could improve the results of this thesis. Research about the workforce outcomes of students from the differently-accredited programs would provide further insight into the success rate of each accreditation, rather than simply curriculum analysis.

Value Analysis

Both skills and education programs have been analyzed in their own right; the modern elements of the PR professional field show that PR as an occupation is continually changing, and requires careful assessment on a continual basis to maintain relevancy.

In the study of PR KSAs, it appears that the modern skills required for competency in PR are elusive to understand as a whole, meaning that skills are a difficult way to measure exactly what is needed in the PR occupation. Modern PR research shows that traditional core values and skills are required in the workforce, but they can often be applied in new ways to fit technological advancements.

Based on the skill characteristics, the education program appears to be achieving professionalism for students at a much more reliable rate than originally anticipated. The curriculum reflects the high priority on the theory and historical principles of PR, but also is beginning to provide the more current technological skills needed, especially at an overarching level, which is all that is plausible given the sporadic nature of PR skills in the occupation.

There is a large difference between the professionalism of the field as a whole, and of achieving success from education to occupation. The extreme lack of conformity in the PR field nationally and raging conflict regarding professionalism in PR give an illusion that the career of PR is not performing well or that education is not preparing students for real world employment.

When analyzing the skills generally used in PR positions, however, the PR field appears to be growing and adapting in a positive way to achieve greater societal and professional success. Education, while slower because of the process required for development, is still making strides to continually update and advance all areas of PR academia to modern PR occupational skill standards in 2017.

As far as accreditation goes, the side-by-side analysis provides a picture that the accreditations in the United States for public relations degree programs are not significantly superior to a typical institution. Accreditation does help achieve a cohesive profession and national unity. Therefore, it could be advised for non-accredited institutions, such as Southeastern University, to pursue accreditation of the PR program, not for better preparation in the PR occupation necessarily, but for developing the integration of PR education into the professionalism of the field as a whole.

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Appendix A

12 Work Categories Identified by the UAB in 2010

ACCOUNT/CLIENT MANAGEMENT - This category focuses on client and customer

relationships. Work activities under this category include: establishing client

relationships, coaching and counseling clients, managing expectations, etc.

STRATEGIC PLANNING - This category focuses on the overall approach to public relations

and reputation management. Work activities under this category include: conducting

research, setting goals, engaging customers and key stakeholders, developing messages

for specific audiences, branding, etc.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM PLANNING - This category focuses on the implementation

of the strategic plan. Work activities under this category include: conducting research,

identifying key audiences, producing a detailed PR plan, managing marketing

communications, creating measurements of effectiveness, leveraging interactive elements

of the campaign, etc.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT - This category focuses on project implementation & logistics.

Work activities under this category include: creating and managing the budget, assessing

resource allocation needs, planning logistics, managing the team, working with vendors,

etc.

MEDIA RELATIONS - Work activities under this category include: identifying audiences,

training organizational spokespersons to work with media, pitching stories, writing and

distributing press releases in traditional and online ways, monitoring media coverage,

coordinating publicity, measuring media engagement efforts, etc.

SOCIAL MEDIA RELATIONS - Work activities under this category include: utilizing Web based social networks, developing social media strategies for communications efforts, producing in-house or client blogs, apprising clients on how to use social media strategies as delivery channels for communications efforts, SEO, blogger relations, etc.

STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS - Work activities under this category, for each set of stakeholders, include: developing strategies and key messages, arranging tours and conferences, forging strategic partnerships, etc.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT - Long-range efforts to anticipate potential problems and plan for crises. Work activities under this category include: assessing and developing strategies around long-term and business-impacting issues, writing crisis management plans, providing strategic counsel to clients or stakeholders, resolving conflicts, etc.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT - This category focuses on reacting to immediate problems such as workplace violence, poor earnings reports, industrial accidents, etc. Work activities under this category include: executing crisis management plans, coordinating release of information via traditional and social media, understanding the varied and different crisis situations that may erupt, training spokespersons, monitoring and analyzing media coverage of company crises, etc.

INTERNAL RELATIONS & EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS - This category focuses on communication with employees, management, members, and other internal audiences. Work activities under this category include: developing action plans, assessing in-house communication needs, developing and producing in-house publications in print and online, developing Web content, managing organizational change, etc.

SPECIAL EVENTS, CONFERENCES & MEETINGS - Work activities under this category

  include: developing themes, promoting products and planning roll-outs, coordinating

  logistics and external promotions, etc.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Work activities under this category include: sponsoring

  community events, developing corporate giving plans, communicating with different

  audiences, building alliances, community outreach using social media, etc.

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Appendix B

Grid Analysis of "The Credentials of Public Relations: Licensing? Certification? Accreditation?

An Overview"

Author	*Licensing*	*Accreditation*	*Education*	*Performance*	*other*
Bailey	Licensing is best			Presented the options	
Bernays	Licensing				
Bitter	Licensing				
Bogart		PRSA standards			
Budd			Focus on education	Functionality of PR defines it; not licensing	
Campanale			Education is better		Accreditation doesn't work; try something else
Center	Licensing is good				
Cutlip	Licensing is ideal;	current accreditation is practical	Education: liberal arts necessary,	then experience	
Griswold	Licensing can overcome negatives				
King		Accreditation continually			
Lesly		Licensing is impractical; accreditation is sound	Education for the public is necessary for good reputation		
Newsome			Education is necessary because of confusion about definitions		PR is private skill; is profession actually real?
Pedersen					Licensing is terrible

Schecter			Start with education		APR is meaningless
Stephens		Start with education and accreditation			Not ready for licensing or credentials
Stephenson				Work on technical skills and experience before contemplating licensing	
Strenski				Performance is most important in defining expertise	Accreditation is lacking; licensing is unnecessary
Truitt				Certification is not applicable; experience, performance, and skills are	Professionalism is not relevant
Wylie	Licensing is necessary for professionalism			Work together for better education, for licensing, and for life-long education to keep up with the field.	
Totals:	7	5	6	6	It doesn't work; not ready

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Appendix C

Online Articles Skill Descriptions

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Appendix D

Citations for College Searches with Public Relations Degrees

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