

HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS AND JOURNALISTS
IN PHILADELPHIA PERCEIVE EACH OTHER

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how public relations practitioners and journalists in Philadelphia perceive each other. Replicating by Kopenhaver et al. (1984) in Florida, this study discusses the perceptions of practitioners and journalists toward each other in three areas: (1) attitudes toward the motivation and news-gathering role of public relations people, (2) occupational status rankings, and (3) news value orientation. This thesis compares the results of the Philadelphia and Florida studies.

Generally, the journalists in both the Florida and Philadelphia studies are quite similar with respect to the three areas examined. Journalists have somewhat negative attitudes toward the perceived motivation and usefulness of public relations people, do not think practitioners have as high professional status as they do, and do not think practitioners and journalists share the same news values.

The major difference between the Philadelphia and Florida study is that public relations practitioners in Florida have more positive views toward journalists than those in Philadelphia.

Public relations people in Florida place journalists closer to them in status than the practitioners in Philadelphia do. In news value orientation, the Florida practitioners perceive journalists' values as quite similar to the way journalists perceive themselves. But the practitioners in Philadelphia perceive journalists as having totally different news values from their own.

Chapter 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The importance of credibility in communication has been articulated since the time of the early Greek rhetoricians. For the Greeks, ethos was one of the three means of persuasion. Ethos is now referred to as "ethical proof," but it is still advanced as a primary means of effecting changes in attitudes. In fact, in the broadest terms,

ethical proof may be defined to include all the ways in which the image of the source produces effects in the persuasion process, both directly and indirectly, positively and negatively. (Anderson, 1983, p. 252)

Source Credibility

The concept of credibility or "ethical proof" is widely accepted as a vital part of effective communication. Indeed, if a persuader lacks credibility with his or her audiences, it is almost impossible to create any effective communication. Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985) find this particularly true in public relations. They note that the credibility of the communicator is determined by a person's

intentions, trustworthiness, and expertise, as these qualities are perceived by the target audience. According to these researchers,

high credibility increases the probability of favorable attitude change, and low credibility lessens it. The more a communicator is known and liked by his or her audience, the more inclined the audience is to change its beliefs in the direction the communicator advocates. This is particularly true of lesser matters. The Yale experiments in communication and persuasion, conducted over two decades ago, found "that source credibility was an important factor in obtaining the immediate opinion change. Low-credibility sources were seen as more biased and unfair than were high-credibility sources." (Cutlip et al., 1985, p. 263)

The same researchers also indicate how important credibility is to the image of a company when they propose that

we buy new ideas only from those we trust; we are influenced by, or adopt, only those opinions or points of view put forward by individuals or corporations or institutions that we regard as credible. Unless the listener has confidence in the speaker, the listener is not likely to listen or to believe. (p. 179)

Similarly, Anderson (1983) indicates that a favorable prior image may increase persuasiveness in many instances. He points out that "innumerable studies show that the prior ethos of a communicator is linked to the success of communication effects when linked to sources with different prior reputations or prestige" (p. 253). He adds that the

image of a potential source is a factor that brings the receivers into the communication setting and that is why "we may buy a book by our favorite author, see a movie by our favorite director, make the effort to hear a speech by a famous radical. We expose ourselves selectively to communications, and the image of the source may be a powerful factor conditioning that decision" (p. 253). He also stresses that extrinsic ethos is related to impact on political, social, religious, and economic issues as well as to matters of aesthetic judgement and personal taste. Because prior image has such a broad impact, in recent years many companies have been trying to maintain or create good corporate images. Gray (1986), in his book Managing the Corporate Image, points out this new trend and stresses the importance of a good corporate image:

How people view a company is vital to that company's success. Corporations have long realized the marketplace value of polishing the image of their products. Now they have to package and sell themselves as well. How a company is perceived affects the bottom line, directly influencing the morale and attitude of investors, lenders of capital, and even the finance ministries of foreign countries where the company wants to do business. However, a favorable public image is central to the achievement of other corporate goals. Building and communicating the corporate image has become a major concern for business and business leaders. (p. 8)

What if the company loses its good image and people cease to trust it? Ross (1984) indicates that once a company loses its credibility, it is hard to regain. Thereafter, whatever the organization says, right or wrong, becomes suspect.

Building Corporate Credibility

How important a company's image is has been well documented. But how does a company transfer its message to the public, telling the public that it is reliable and trustworthy? In general, this responsibility is separated into four departments: marketing, advertising, finance and public relations. Gussow (1984) indicates this shared responsibility very clearly when he says: "Who is the corporate communicator? More often than not, he or she is not a single person but several: a marketing vice president, a financial executive, the advertising manager, and the public relations director" (p. 177).

Gussow points out further what kind of job a communicator usually has:

A corporate communicator's job has traditionally involved and will continue to involve at least three major functions: 1) regular communications with the corporation's stockholders, 2) communications with the general public through consumer media (both public relations and advertising), and

3) communications with the business community (again, through public relations and advertising) in both the general and specialized business press. (p. 177)

According to this definition, most of the responsibilities for corporate communication rest with the public relations practitioner.

In addition to transferring the company's message to the public, public relations practitioners must also play an important role in establishing a company's image. Lamb (1980) points out: "Much of the responsibility for the new role for conveying a favorable image of corporations to society has been placed in the hands of communications and public affairs departments" (p. 52). More directly, he indicates that, "whether the news be bad or good, public affairs departments have, more and more, been given the responsibility to make it available to the investing public" (p. 52). He also cites a similar observation by Mason (1978): "The bigger the decision, the larger the company, and the greater the number of people that are affected, the more significant the PR component becomes" (p. 52).

Thus, the public relations person is the one who has the major responsibility to communicate with the public, and his or her job is closely related to the corporation's image.

Public Relations and the Media

How do PR persons communicate with the public? Who are their real information receivers, and how do they get information to their target audiences?

Gussow (1984) answers these questions by saying:

Communications with the general public are usually directed through the public relations department or a professional public relations company employed by the corporation (and working in conjunction with its own public relations department). The major goal here is to shed favorable light on the work of the corporation. If the corporation's products are consumer-oriented, this function becomes particularly critical. The corporation also wants the public to buy its stock and/or bonds. The work of communicating with the general public is accomplished primarily through press releases, through the placement of feature stories and interviews in both the consumer and business press, and through a program of corporate advertising (distinct from product advertising). (p. 178)

As for communicating with the business community, Gussow indicates that the public relations person should develop a continuing series of public relations "tools" to tell the story of the corporation's programs, goals, and growth formula. These "tools" include press releases, feature articles, interviews, and corporate advertising in the business press, both specialized and general, with emphasis on the former.

According to Gussow, the information receiver for the public relations person is the general public and the press release is one of the most important methods of communicating with that audience. Ross (1984) also points out that one of the most generally used ways of reaching the public is through the news release.

Thus, public relations persons use press releases to the mass media to disseminate information to their audiences. Cutlip et al. (1985) declare: "The economical, effective channel of communication with the general public is through the mass media: newspapers, magazines, trade publications, AM and FM radio, television, cable, books, and so on" (p. 354).

It is obvious that understanding the role of information, the character of different media, and the priorities of those who control access to them becomes one of the important jobs of public relations practitioners. But in order for public relations practitioners to reach the media, they must first learn how to get along with those who represent the media--journalists--the gatekeepers of the media in our information society.

Cutlip et al. (1985) contend:

Media relations take up a good part of the practitioner's working day, are exacting in their

demands, and are often exasperating in their consequences. Practitioners' standing with media gatekeepers and reporters shapes and limits their accomplishments. (p. 425)

This summary not only explains the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media, but also gives us a hint as to the delicacy of the relationship between practitioners and journalists.

PR Practitioners vs. Journalists

A veteran publicist, Henry C. Rogers (1980), reports that "The relationship between the public relations man, the media, and the client is always a delicate one and requires walking the tightrope every moment of the working day" (p. 172). Because the interests of the organization and the journalist are quite different, conflicts between them seem unavoidable. Cutlip et al. (1985) recount a very interesting dialogue describing these clashes of opinion:

Organizations want news reported in a favorable manner that will promote their objectives and will not cause them trouble; the news media want news that will interest readers and viewers. Administrators complain, "Why does the press always sensationalize things?" "The papers never get things right." "They take things out of context." "You can't trust reporters." "I didn't say that at all." "Why do reporters enjoy stirring up trouble?" Journalists counter-complain, "That organizations will never come clean." "They won't give us the real news, only a lot of puffs."

"They won't let you in to see the person with the news." "What are they trying to hide?" (p. 426)

The public relations practitioner is the person who must deal with these complaints--the person who has the most direct and, at times, complicated relationship with the journalist:

Ever since public relations emerged early in this century, the practitioner and the journalist have functioned in a mutually dependent relationship, sometimes as adversaries, sometimes as colleagues cooperating in respective self-interest. (Cutlip et al., 1985, p. 428)

Frequently, however, the practitioner and the journalist are at odds. As noted by Cutlip et al., the complaints which are most often mentioned by the media are:

- 1) attempts by practitioners to color and check the free flow of legitimate news.
- 2) space-grabbing for "free advertising," with consequent loss of revenue to the media.
- 3) attempted use of "influence" and pressure to get into news columns; indirect and sometimes direct bribery of reporters.
- 4) gross ignorance of the media's editorial requirements; no conception of what news is or how it should be written.
- 5) raiding of news staffs for experienced journalists with the lure of higher salaries.
(p. 430)

Practitioner complaints cited by Cutlip et al. include:

- 1) failure of the press to do its whole job;
failure to increase its reportorial staff to keep

pace with the expanding list of socially significant activities demanding news coverage (industry, finance education, medicine, and so forth).

2) the slowness of change in the press's definition of news, which puts emphasis on conflict and minimizes the socially constructive events--the press's sensationalism.

3) failure to treat news as news regardless of the source; attacks on publicity only to rationalize a basic money motive.

4) failure to discriminate between the honest, helpful practitioner and the incompetent; increasing dependence of the media on the function journalists so frequently condemn. (pp. 430-431)

During the last ten years, several studies have verified these perceptions and sharpened our understanding of this conflict between journalists and public relations practitioners.

In 1975 Aronoff investigated the "credibility of public relations for journalists" by surveying journalists and practitioners in Texas. He found that journalists had highly negative attitudes toward public relations practitioners. When asked to rank 16 professions and occupations in terms of their respect for each, journalists ranked themselves first, and ranked public relations people last. In turn, public relations practitioners ranked journalists third and themselves fourth.

Ten years later, in 1984, Kopenhaver, Martinson, and Ryan replicated Aronoff's research but focused only on Florida to test how public relations practitioners and editors viewed each other. The results of this attitude testing for journalists are consistent with those of Aronoff. After almost ten years, journalists still have negative attitudes toward public relations persons. In the perceptions of occupational status, the journalists still ranked themselves first and ranked public relations persons next to the bottom (only politicians ranked lower). As in Aronoff's study, public relations practitioners ranked themselves fourth, but ranked journalists ninth (six steps below where public relations persons ranked journalists in Aronoff's research).

It is obvious that conflicts exist between public relations persons and journalists, and in our developing "information society," this problem seems more serious than ever. In order to understand the real problem and attempt to solve it, it is necessary to examine closely the opinions of both the public relations person and the journalist.

Research Question

The research question for this thesis will be: How do public relations practitioners and news reporters per-

ceive each other with respect to ethics, news values, and professional status?

Chapter Two will review those articles which have been written about the roles and perceptions of public relations persons and journalists. Based on this review, chapter Three will describe research instruments to study how public relations persons and news reporters perceive each other. The studies by Aronoff (1975) and Kopenhaver et al. (1984) will be core references. However, in contrast to Kopenhaver's focus on Florida, my own replication will focus on a Mid-Atlantic site, to see if there is a significant difference between results obtained in Florida and those obtained here.

Chapter Four will present the results of the study. In the final chapter (Chapter Five), discussion and summary of how public relations persons and news reporters view each other will be presented, relevant conclusions will be drawn and suggestions for further study will be proposed.

Chapter 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the perceptions of journalists and public relations practitioners toward each other, we must survey the research literature to see what conclusions have been drawn thus far. In general it has been found that the different motivations, training, and work standards of public relations persons and journalists are the major causes of the conflict between them. There have been numerous studies which discuss their perceptions toward each other from different perspectives. In general, these studies can be grouped into five categories: those that focus upon (1) communication skills, (2) ethical issues, (3) educational perspectives, (4) status expectations, and (5) source credibility.

Communication Skills

The most frequent complaint from journalists when they deal with public relations persons is that public relations persons lack knowledge of the media. Poorman (1974),

for example, conducted a mini-survey of eight large newspapers and found that newspapermen criticize public relations practitioners because they:

(1) do not know the working schedule of the media and don't know who to see and when.

(2) do not know the differences between print media and electronic media.

(3) do not understand simple matters of courtesy or professionalism, and often come by unannounced to say hello, send the same release to several people at the same newspaper, or set up conferences for routine news releases.

(4) have biased attitudes toward popular and unpopular media.

(5) prepare news releases which are poor in quality.

Shoquist (1975), in a speech before the Public Relations Society of America Counselors Section, also pointed out that public relations persons should understand the organization of the media. For example, he stated that "It is wise to bear in mind that what's good for television may not be appreciated by the printed press," and he encouraged public relations persons to "know how the newspaper is organized, which editors are responsible for what, and which reporters are specialists" (p. 19).

In a 1978 article summarizing research conducted by Hill and Knowlton, File also found evidence of a lack of understanding between journalists and public relations practitioners. He reported that two-thirds of the editors surveyed felt that the manner in which they received information could be improved, such as using fewer different terms and tersely technical jargon. One out of every three editors thought that business should trust the media more and be more open with editors in "bad times" as well as in "good times." Most of the editors surveyed did not like a public relations person "who calls repeatedly, questioning if and when the release will be used," and they wished that releases lacking a local angle could be eliminated. In addition, editors felt that the information supplied by public relations people was what the boss wanted rather than what the media needed. Hill and Knowlton's findings agreed with those of Poorman and Shoquist when they found that editors contend that "learning the news requirement, personalities, and deadlines of the specific newspaper would avoid this" (p. 9).

Research indicates, then, that journalists think that public relations persons should know the media better and improve their communication skills, such as the way they write releases and report information.

Ethical Issues

For their part, public relations persons think that the press lacks strict moral standards.

Wylie's 1974 summary of research conducted by PRSA pointed out that only 40% of public relations persons believe that newspaper reporting is more responsible than it was five years ago, and 41% of public relations persons have been offered combination deals on advertising and editorial space.

Forty percent of public relations persons had been asked for special favors by newspaper people. These kinds of requests varied from freebies to junkets, gifts, and discounts on products. Ninety percent of public relations persons noted that newspapers run stories about their company or client without calling to check the facts. Wylie argued that such ethical problems exist because of a "lack of policy of what is...and what is not...acceptable behavior" (p. 15). He appealed to the Associated Press Managing Editors to develop specific definitions for a journalistic code of ethics.

Another survey, also conducted by PRSA and reported by Luedtke in 1973, investigated how public relations prac-

titioners view freebies. Luedtke found that only 17% of the respondents regularly provided things of value to the press, and 22% gave gifts of value on Christmas or other holidays. The reasons the public relations persons provided things of value included: expected favorable coverage, a belief that the press expected it, or solicitations by the press. Similar reasons were revealed by those who regularly provided free transportation and accommodations to journalists so that they could cover events of importance to the public relations persons' employers. This was done to make the events seem newsworthy, to ensure that they were well covered, or because such favors were expected by the press. Only 48% of the public relations persons reported a clear understanding of the "freebies policies" of the newspapers, but 98% of the respondents said that if they knew the policy, they would abide by it. Although a significant number of media gift-givers believed that good coverage would result from those gratuities, the study did not identify a direct causal relationship.

According to Poorman's (1974) study, however, editors do not seem to appreciate such "gifts." He noted that outright gifts are banned by many papers, and as for the free lunches and cocktail parties, most newspapermen prefer to handle their work during working hours; they think cock-

tail parties are a waste of time and "you get neither a decent lunch nor a decent story."

Bos Johnson, president of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, was interviewed by Talburt (1974) and argued that the role of the public relations person should be that of simply "a neutral information specialist." Johnson stated that "the role of public relations persons, as it pertains to the news media, is to provide us with factual information, either self-generated or upon our request, dealing with the products or services of their employer. That has to be about it. You provide the information, you provide the facts" (p. 35).

Thus, it can be concluded that, in general, public relations persons think that the press lacks strict moral standards and that some public relations persons believe good news coverage can be achieved by sending "gifts," although editors indicate that they do not really appreciate this kind of gratuity. And at least one media figure (see Talburt, 1974) proposes that a public relations person should be only a reporter of neutral information.

Educational Perspectives

Research indicates that lack of understanding between journalists and public relations practitioners may be fostered by journalism education practices. In two surveys conducted in 1978 and 1981, Honaker (1981) finds that journalism students are being taught to "hate and reject" news releases. He designed these two surveys using the same topic and the same respondents to test newspaper editors' attitudes toward releases. He found that although three years' time passed between these two studies, the results did not really show any differences. The editors were still "repulsed" by the "fatuous" and poorly written releases they received, and believed that possibly only 1% of these releases deserved consideration and use. The editors declared that the situation is "as bad as ever, if not worse." But most editors recognized and appreciated the public relations practitioner "who knows news, who has a sense of the language, and who has sense enough to localize for each market" (p. 26).

Cline (1982) concluded that the negative attitudes about public relations practitioners and news releases were influenced by the way journalism students are educated. She analyzed 12 introductory mass communications texts and

discovered that they have strong biases against public relations persons: "They show the public relations practitioner as a posturing flack, deceiving, pushing, and employing techniques which 'run the gamut from handouts to junkets, from press conferences to bribes,' with one ultimate goal: 'to control the content of the media'" (p. 71).

On the other hand, the way journalists and public relations persons perceive each other was not so hostile in Brody's (1985) study. Brody conducted a survey to test how public relations persons and journalists in Tennessee viewed each other with regard to ethical considerations and quality of product. He found that they have very similar perceptions about each other's ethical standards and product quality. Though their perceptions concerning ethical factors seemed to differ more than those regarding product quality, Brody deduced that the discrepancy came from differences between their intradisciplinary standards more than from real ethical variation. He concluded that "the data collectively suggest that levels of interdisciplinary respect are greater than those which might be assumed on the basis of incidents reported in the media" and he suggested that the values which underline the various disciplines deserve further research (p. 15).

These studies suggest that one of the reasons for the different perceptions of public relations persons and journalists is their educational perspectives.

Status Expectations

Jeffers (1977) studied the relationship between journalists and public relations persons from the standpoint of professional status. The results of his research show that journalists did not accord public relations practitioners the same status as themselves. In contrast, practitioners assigned slightly higher status to the journalists in the study. But journalists evaluated those public relations practitioners with whom they worked as having higher ethics and skills than practitioners in general, while practitioners evaluated the journalists with whom they dealt as having lower ethics than journalists in general. Furthermore, "even newsmen who see the newsman/public relations practitioner relationship as being a cooperative one believe that newsmen as a whole are more skilled and ethical than practitioners" (p. 305).

Source Credibility

Aronoff (1975) studied the relationship between journalists and public relations people from the aspect of source credibility. Aronoff perceived journalists as the audience of public relations persons, and saw both personal and impersonal factors as contributors to the interaction between the two.

Choosing his sample from Texas, Aronoff studied how the attitudes and perceptions of journalists toward public relations practitioners influenced their decision-making process. In addition, he conducted a similar survey with public relations persons to compare their perceptions with those of journalists.

Aronoff collected data on four major aspects of the journalist/public relations relationship: (1) attitude testing, (2) status ranking, (3) news value orientation, and (4) news judgement. The study design and conclusions were as follows:

(1) Attitude testing: Twenty-five positive and negative statements toward public relations persons were designed to test the attitude of journalists and public relations persons. The results showed that in general,

journalists had negative attitudes toward public relations practitioners. Most of them suspected public relations persons of manipulating the press. Although some of the public relations persons admitted this manipulative practice, a majority of them felt they provided a beneficial service to the press in gathering, writing, and disseminating news.

(2) Status rankings: When asked to rank 16 professions and occupations in terms of their respect for them, the journalists ranked themselves first and public relations persons last. On the other hand, public relations practitioners ranked journalists third, behind physicians and architects, and ranked themselves fourth.

(3) News value orientation: Journalists perceived public relations practitioners' news values as nearly opposite from their own.

Journalists cited "accuracy" as the most important element and "interest to readers" second. They thought that "depicting the subject in a favorable light" was most important to practitioners; "prompt publication" was second. But for their part, practitioners ranked "accuracy" first and "interest" second, which was precisely how journalists ranked these elements. Practitioners rated "depicting the subject in a favorable light" last, and "prompt publication"

fourth (there were six values for this test). The perception of practitioners about journalists was just the reverse of the way journalists ranked themselves; they said journalists would rank "interest to readers" first and "accuracy" second.

(4) News judgement: Journalists were asked to read and evaluate four feature stories, two of which allegedly came from public relations writers and two allegedly from reporters. They were asked to evaluate each story immediately after reading it. In this experiment, journalists judged the stories which came from reporters more favorably than the same stories which allegedly came from public relations practitioners.

In 1984, part of Aronoff's research was replicated by Kopenhaver, Martinson, and Ryan with almost the same results. They replicated Aronoff's attitude testing, status ranking, and news value orientation, but conducted their study among 47 journalists and 57 practitioners in Florida.

The results of this study were consistent with those of Aronoff. The journalists held negative attitudes toward public relations persons. As for status ranking, the journalists ranked themselves first, and ranked public relations persons next to the bottom, higher only than politicians.

On the other hand, public relations persons ranked themselves fourth, but ranked journalists ninth (six status levels lower than in Aronoff's study).

For news value orientation, the results of the 1984 study were also very similar to Aronoff's. The perception of practitioners about journalists was just the reverse of the way journalists ranked themselves. Journalists ranked "accuracy" first and "interest to readers" second but thought "depicting subjects in a favorable light" and "prompt publication" were the two most important elements for public relations persons. On the contrary, practitioners ranked "accuracy" first and "interest" second. They rated "depicting the subject in a favorable light" last, and "prompt publication" next to last.

In addition to replicating three parts of Aronoff's study--attitude, status, and news values--Kopenhaver et al. added another part to the survey: the researchers elicited reasons from the editors for rejecting news releases and asked the numbers of news releases received and used each week. They also examined the demography of the editors and public relations persons to cross-tabulate the specific attitudinal questions.

Nearly half of the editors estimated that they received 51-100 news releases a week, and nearly a third received more than 150 a week. Approximately half of the editors used only 1-10% of those received. The most important reason they cited for rejecting a news release was "lack of news value"; "lack of local angle" was the second. "Lack of information" was ranked as the third reason, followed by "lack of timeliness," "poor writing," and "mechanical/grammatical errors."

The findings of Kopenhaver et al. reinforce the results of Aronoff's research that generally journalists and public relations people have negative attitudes toward each other, and that public relations people think they have the same news values as journalists, but journalists do not think so.

Conclusion

In sum, past research has identified five different areas in which public relations persons and journalists perceive each other. The first is communication skills. Journalists think that public relations persons should understand the media's values and needs better and should improve their communication skills, such as the way they

write releases and report information. The second area includes issues of ethics. Public relations persons think that the press lacks strict moral standards, and some public relations persons believe that good news coverage can be achieved by sending "gifts," although editors indicate that they often do not appreciate this kind of gratuity.

The third area of perception concerns the educational perspectives of public relations persons and journalists. Some studies suggest that the different perceptions held by public relations persons and journalists are due to their educational perspectives--journalists have been educated to held negative attitudes toward public relations practitioners and news releases.

The fourth area of perception concerns status expectations. Journalists don't rank the professional status of public relations practitioners as highly as their own, while public relations practitioners assigned slightly higher status to the journalists.

The final area of perception is the credibility of public relations persons as viewed by journalists. As investigated by Aronoff (1975), journalists, in general, have a negative attitude toward public relations persons and don't think public relations practitioners have the same

status as they do. In addition, journalists perceive public relations practitioners' news values as nearly opposite their own.

In 1984, Aronoff's research was replicated by Kopenhaver, Martinson, and Ryan in Florida, with almost the same results as those of Aronoff a decade previously. The consistency between the two studies findings led Kopenhaver et al. to conclude that journalists' negative perceptions of public relations persons could be attributed to the process of education and socialization, as well as the problems of public relations persons themselves. They declared that: "It may be that they [public relations practitioners] respond differently in the abstract than they do in actual practice; if that is the case, editors' perceptions may not be as inaccurate as indicated here" (p. 865).

In the present study the first three parts of the research by Kopenhaver et al.--concerning attitude, status, and news values--will be replicated in a Mid-Atlantic metropolis to determine whether the perceptions of public relations persons and journalists toward each other are the same as those that Kopenhaver et al. found in Florida.

The following chapter will explain the specific design of this research project.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Research clearly shows that misperceptions between public relations persons and journalists have not decreased as time goes by. In order to understand the nature of the problem and attempt to solve it, it is necessary to examine more closely the opinions of both the public relations persons and the journalists.

Whereas the study of Kopenhaver et al. (1984) was limited to Florida, the present study will replicate their research in Philadelphia to see if there is a significant difference between results obtained in Florida and those obtained here.

The Research Topic

The survey utilized by Kopenhaver et al. tested how public relations persons and journalists perceived each other in three major topic areas: (1) attitude, (2) status, and (3) news value orientation. These constructs also form the core of the present survey.

Population and Sampling

Two populations were represented in Kopenhaver's survey: one was Florida newspaper editors, and the other was Florida public relations practitioners. The study used a stratified random sample of 101 Florida newspaper editors drawn from the 1983 directory of the Florida Press Association and 100 Florida public relations practitioners from the Florida section of the 1983 Public Relations Society of America directory.

The populations represented in the present survey were the journalists and public relations persons of Philadelphia. A stratified random sample was used in this survey also. One hundred Philadelphia journalists were drawn from the 1987 directory of Sigma Delta Chi, the Society of Professional Journalists; and 100 public relations persons were drawn from the Philadelphia section of the 1987 Public Relations Society of America directory.

Philadelphia is a metropolis which has approximately 1.6 million people and is ranked by the U. S. Bureau of the Census as the fifth largest city in the United States. It is a substantial media market, which makes it appropriate for conducting this survey. In Philadelphia there are two major daily newspapers, 39 weekly newspapers, eight TV sta-

tions, and 23 radio stations. In choosing Philadelphia as the site for the survey, the study investigates whether or not those journalists and public relations people who work in the concentrated setting and high-pressure job environment of a major Northeast metropolis have perceptions toward each other comparable to those in the geographically diffuse and demographically varied Florida study.

Operationalization

As was done by Kopenhaver et al., the present study operationalizes its constructs by having subjects respond to a number of statements about public relations people and journalists on a seven degree Likert-type scale. This study will use the same scale in an effort to replicate the Kopenhaver research (see appendixes A and B).

The Definitions

(1) Attitude: This concept was operationalized by having subjects respond to 25 questions (see appendixes A and B).

(2) Status: The concept of occupational status was operationalized by having subjects rank/order the following 16 types of jobs: architect, artist, banker, carpenter, clergyman, corporate executive, engineer, farmer, high school

teacher, journalist, lawyer, physician, police officer, politician, public relations practitioner and university professor.

(3) News value: This concept was operationalized by having the respondents rank/order the following values: accuracy, interest to reader, usefulness to reader, completeness, prompt publication, depicts subject in favorable light, mechanical/grammatical, news story style.

The Procedures

The following activities were completed in order to gather data for the study (*: period of time for each procedure).

1. Mailed a letter to and called Dr. Kopenhaver to request that she send her questionnaire as a core reference (5/18-5/30).*
2. Followed the questionnaire format of Kopenhaver et al. to design the questionnaire and write a cover letter (6/12-6/30).*
3. Collected the 1987 directory of Sigma Delta Chi in Philadelphia and the 1987 directory of PRSA in Philadelphia

(6/8-6/30).*

4. Printed 300 questionnaires (7/30-8/15).*

5. Deleted the unqualified members of the directories (7/1-7/15).*

6. Put those members included in the directories into the computer separately, and randomly choose 100 persons from each group (8/15-8/31).*

7. Typed envelopes for each questionnaire (8/15-8/31).*

8. Assigned numbers to each questionnaire (9/1-9/2).*

9. Mailed the questionnaires (9/3-9/7).*

10. Three weeks later, conducted follow-up mailings to those nonresponders (9/18-9/20).*

11. Assembled four return-rate graphs, two for public relations persons and two for journalists. (Two graphs were used for each group: one counted the number of questionnaires returned each day, and the other reported the cumulative number of those questionnaires to date.) (9/5-9/7).*

12. When completed questionnaires were returned, assigned an identification number serially to each of them (9/8-10/17).*

13. Entered data into computer (9/20-10/30).*

14. Analyzed data in SPSSX computer program (11/1-11/20).*

15. Interpreted computer results and began to write the thesis
(11/20-11/30).*

Chapter 4

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Three aspects of the survey were examined for both journalists and public relations practitioners: (1) attitudes toward public relations, (2) perceived status ranking, and (3) news value orientations. However, before the results of this survey are discussed, the demography of the sample will be explained.

Slightly more than 200 surveys were sent out. One hundred and one surveys went to members of the Society of Professional Journalists in Philadelphia, and 101 surveys went to members of the Philadelphia chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. The responses and backgrounds of the respondents are as follows:

(1) Journalists. There were 50 responses from the Society of Professional Journalists; 67.3% represented daily newspapers; 20.4% represented weekly newspapers; and 12.2% were from the broadcast media.

(2) Public relations practitioners. Fifty-eight responses were received from PRSA members; 34.5% represented non-profit organizations, and 65.5% represented for-profit organizations.

Attitudes toward Public Relations

Results from this study are broadly consistent with those of Kopenhaver et al. in that journalists and public relations practitioners did not agree about the value of public relations activities.

For example, journalists expressed negative opinions about nine statements which reflected positively on public relations practitioners. On the other hand, journalists seemed to agree with negative descriptions of public relations. The public relations practitioners, when compared to journalists, tended to agree more with positive descriptions of public relations and disagree with negative interpretations. The differences among the means for 23 of the 25 statements in Table 1 were statistically significant (journalists versus practitioners). Item 17 and Item 22 were the items for which the differences were not significant.

Table 1: Mean Responses of Philadelphia Journalists and Public Relations People to 25 Statements about Public Relations

	Journal- lists	PR people	T value
1. Public relations and the press are partners in the dissemination of information.	4.04	2.66	3.66
2. Public relations practitioners are basically competitors with the advertising departments of newspapers rather than collaborators with the news staff.	4.65	5.83	-3.95
3. Public relations practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services and other activities which do not legitimately deserve promotion.	3.12	4.51	-4.29
4. Public relations is a profession equal in status to journalism.	5.34	2.15	10.07
5. Public relations practitioners often act as obstructionists, keeping reporters from the people they really should be seeing.	2.82	5.03	-7.05
6. Public relations practitioners have cluttered our channels of communication with pseudo-events and phony phrases that confuse public issues.	3.36	4.83	-4.71
7. The abundance of free and easily obtainable information provided by public relations practitioners has caused an increase in the quality of reporting.	3.96	3.08	*2.71
8. Public relations material is usually publicity disguised as news.	2.96	4.76	-5.98

9. The public relations practitioner does work for the newspaper that would otherwise go undone.	4.12	3.16	*2.68
10. Public relations practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to a trivial, uneventful happening.	3.14	5.19	-7.85
11. The public relations practitioner serves as an extension of the newspaper staff, covering the organization for which he is responsible.	5.30	3.58	4.87
12. Public relations practitioners are really just errand boys for whomever hires them.	3.98	6.23	-7.53
13. Public relations practitioners are people of good sense, good will and good moral character.	3.66	2.67	4.07
14. It is a shame that because of inadequate staff, the press must depend on information provided by public relations practitioners.	3.78	5.61	-5.62
15. Public relations practitioners understand such journalistic problems as meeting deadlines, attracting reader interest and making the best use of space.	3.42	1.82	5.23
16. You can't trust public relations practitioners.	4.26	6.21	-6.99
17. Journalists and public relations practitioners carry on a running battle.	4.14	4.89	** -2.33
18. Public relations practitioners are typically frank and honest.	4.54	3.10	5.18
19. The massiveness of the impact of public relations makes it harder and harder for the average citizen to know when he is being sold a bill of goods.	3.24	5.05	-5.84

20. Public relations practitioners help reporters obtain accurate, complete and timely news.	3.76	2.00	6.01
21. Public relations practitioners frequently use a shield of words for practices which are not in the public interest.	3.46	5.33	-6.85
22. Public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of the daily newspaper as we know it.	3.92	3.05	** 2.41
23. Public relations is a parasite to the press.	5.18	6.29	-4.36
24. Public relations practitioners typically issue news releases or statements on matters of genuine news value and public interest.	4.04	2.61	5.0
25. The prime function of public relations practitioners is to get free advertising space for the companies and institutions they represent.	3.38	5.87	-8.43

**p<.05 *p<.01; p<.001 for the other items

Note: A "1" on the original scale represented "strongly agree" while a "7" represented "strongly disagree." Therefore, the smaller means in this table represent greater agreement with the items than the larger means. A "4" indicated a neutral response.

Most of the responses were similar to those obtained by Kopenhaver in Florida. For instance, the journalists agreed with the statements: "Public relations practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services and other activities which do not legitimately deserve promotion" (Item 3), and "public relations material is usually publicity disguised as news" (Item 8). They were not completely negative, however, as they did not agree with the strongly worded statement, "Public relations is a parasite to the press" (Item 23).

On the other hand, public relations practitioners disagreed with Items 3 and 8, and strongly disagreed with Item 23. They did not believe that public relations practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services and other activities which do not legitimately deserve promotion, and they did not think that public relations material is publicity disguised as news. They strongly disagreed with the statement: "Public relations is a parasite to the press."

As Kopenhaver et al. found, journalists expressed negative feelings about public relations practitioners when responding to a number of other statements. They agreed that "practitioners often act as obstructionists, keeping

reporters from the people they really should be seeing" (Item 5) and that "Public relations practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to a trivial, uneventful happening" (Item 10). They disagreed with statements that said, "Public relations is a profession equal in status to journalism" (Item 4) and "The public relations practitioner serves as an extension of the newspaper staff, covering the organization for which he is responsible" (Item 11).

In contrast, public relations practitioners disagreed with Items 5 and 10, and they agreed with Items 4 and 11.

Items 17 and 22 were the two items for which the differences were not so obvious, because the means between public relations people and journalists in these two items were very close. On Item 17, both journalists ($\bar{M} = 4.14$) and public relations ($\bar{M} = 4.89$) practitioners somewhat disagreed with the statement that "Journalists and public relations practitioners carry on a running battle," though the public relations practitioners showed a slightly higher mean score--less agreement--than the journalists.

Interestingly, on Item 22 there was again a very close mean score. Both journalists ($\bar{M} = 3.92$) and public

relations people (\bar{M} = 3.05) "slightly agree" that "Public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of the daily newspaper as we know it," though the journalists seem more neutral about this statement.

Still, we can see there is often a conflict between the perceptions of journalists and public relations people. Though the journalists agreed that public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of news (Item 22), they did not think that public relations people serve as an extension of the newspaper staff (Item 11). In addition, journalists tended to disapprove of the way that public relations people do their job, disguising publicity material as news, too frequently insisting on promoting products, services, activities, and so on.

Perceived Status Ranking

The results of perceived status ranking in this study for practitioners are quite different from those in Florida. In the study of Kopenhaver et al., journalists ranked themselves first and ranked public relations practitioners next to the bottom; only politicians ranked lower. In this study, journalists ranked themselves second, lower than policemen, and ranked public relations practitioners at

the bottom of the list. In the Florida study, public relations practitioners ranked themselves fourth and ranked journalists ninth, five steps below themselves; they ranked physicians first and politicians last. In the Philadelphia study, public relations practitioners ranked themselves first and ranked journalists next to the bottom; only policemen were ranked lower than journalists (see Table 2).

The status perceptions of journalists and public relations practitioners appear to reflect a general attitude toward each other as measured more specifically by the responses to the 25 attitude statements. Interestingly, in Philadelphia the priority of status as ranked by journalists was almost an exact contradiction of the rankings assigned by practitioners. In addition, policemen seem to be a key in the status ranking profile, because journalists ranked them as first, but public relations people ranked them as last. This discrepancy would appear to deserve further research.

Table 2: Job Status Rankings by Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners in Philadelphia

	Journalists' Views	Practitioners' views
Policeman	1	16
Journalist	2	15
Farmer	3	14
Carpenter	4	13
Politician	5	11
High school teacher	6	12
Clergyman	7	10
Artist	8	9
Engineer	9	6
Physician	10	8
University professor	11	7
Lawyer	12	5
Banker	13	4
Architect	14	3
Corporate executive	15	2
Public relations practitioner	16	1

News Value Orientations

The Philadelphia results relating to news value orientations were different from those of the Florida study. Public relations people and journalists in Philadelphia actually ranked news values in a similar way--but they thought that the other group would rank the values very differently. In the Florida study, although journalists thought their news values were totally different from those of public relations people, public relations practitioners perceived journalists' news values as quite similar to their own. In reality, the values held by each group were almost the same (see Table 3).

Journalists in both studies cited "accuracy" as the most important value in the news story, but the journalists in Philadelphia cited "completeness" as the second, "interest to reader" as the third, and "usefulness to reader" as the fourth. Journalists in Florida cited "interest to reader" as the second, "completeness" as the third, and "usefulness to reader" as the fourth. Thus, the most highly regarded news values were quite consistent among Philadelphia and Florida journalists. However, both sets of journalists judged practitioners' news values as quite different from their own. Journalists in the two studies said

Table 3: Ranking of Eight News Values by Journalists and Practitioners, and Their Perceptions of the "Other Group's" Rankings

	Journalists' Views		Perceptions of PR Views		PR Views		Perceptions of Journalists' Views	
	FS	PS	FS	PS	FS	PS	FS	PS
Accuracy	1	1	4	8	1	2	2	8
Completeness	3	2	7	6	3	3	4	7
Interest to reader	2	3	3	5	2	4	1	3
Usefulness to reader	4	4	5	7	4	1	7	6
Mechanical/Grammatical	5	5	8	4	5	5	6	5
Depicts subject in favorable light	8	6	1	1	8	8	8	4
Prompt publication	6	7	2	2	7	7	5	2
News story style	7	8	6	3	6	6	3	1

Note: "FS" refers to the Florida study; "PS" refers to the Philadelphia study.

"depicting the subject in a favorable light" was most important to practitioners; "prompt publication" was second. Philadelphia journalists ranked "accuracy" the least important element to practitioners and "completeness" as the sixth, while "interest to reader" was the fifth. Style and grammatical considerations were viewed as third and fourth in practitioners' minds, according to Philadelphia journalists.

Similarly, Florida news editors thought public relations practitioners would assign quite a different value to the three news elements most important to journalists. Hence they rated "accuracy" as the fourth most important element to practitioners, "completeness" as the seventh, and "interest to reader" as the third most important value for practitioners, although they ranked first, second, and third in the journalists' own news values.

A similar situation emerged with the practitioners of Philadelphia, who perceived journalists as having totally different values from their own. Regarding their own values, the practitioners ranked "usefulness to reader" as the most important element, "accuracy" as the second, "completeness" as the third, and "interest to reader" as the fourth. They picked "depicts subject in favorable light" as the

least important and ranked "prompt publication" next to last. These results are quite similiar to those obtained in Florida, although the practitioners in Florida ranked "accuracy" as the first, "interest to reader" as the second, "completeness" as the third, and "usefulness to reader" as the fourth.

The way Philadelphia public relations practitioners perceived journalists is also quite different from the way they perceived themselves. They rated "accuracy" as the least important value to journalists and "completeness" as next to the last, but thought "news story style" was first in journalists' minds and "prompt publication" was second. This is different from the results of the Florida study, where practitioners perceived journalists' values as quite similar to the way journalists perceived themselves.

Thus, with regard to news value orientations, the misunderstanding between journalists and practitioners in Philadelphia seems more serious than those in Florida. In Philadelphia, neither journalists nor practitioners thought the members of the other group would hold values similar to their own.

To further analyze the relationship between journalists and public relations people in terms of news value ori-

entation, Kopenhaver et al. adopted a coorientation model which used three variables--accuracy, congruency, and agreement. A Spearman rho test, which was also used in the Philadelphia research, was used to apply the coorientation model.

With regard to accuracy, Kopenhaver et al. found that the way journalists perceived public relations people was quite inaccurate, because the correlation between journalists' perceptions and practitioners' stated attitude was quite low ($\rho = -.31$; n.s.). On the other hand, the way public relations people perceived journalists was more accurate, as the correlation between practitioners' perceptions and the journalists' stated ranking was fairly high ($\rho = .64$; n.s.).

In the Philadelphia study, neither of these two correlations was high; that is to say, neither practitioners nor journalists perceived the other group accurately. The correlation between journalists' perceptions and practitioners' stated attitude was similar to the result of Kopenhaver et al. ($\rho = -.30$; n.s.). There was also a strong negative correlation between practitioners' perceptions and journalists' stated ranking, which is different from that of Kopenhaver et al. ($\rho = -1.00$; $p < .001$)

As defined by Kopenhaver et al., "'Congruency' in the coorientation model is the extent to which one group's attitudes are similar to their perceptions of a second group's attitudes" (p. 865). In the Florida research, there was low congruency on the part of journalists ($\rho = -.21$; n.s.) and high congruency on the part of public relations people ($\rho = .69$; n.s.). In Philadelphia the congruency of journalists ($\rho = -.28$; n.s.) was very low. But public relations people showed a strong negative correlation with journalists ($\rho = -.69$; $p < .05$). These results indicated that in Philadelphia both journalists and practitioners perceived a wide gap between themselves and the other group, especially for the public relations people, in terms of the importance of various news elements.

Kopenhaver et al. also studied "'agreement' in the coorientation model," which refers to "the extent to which persons in two groups agree about an object or set of objects" (p. 865). They found that the stated views of journalists and those of practitioners were similar ($\rho = .98$; $p < .02$). In this respect the Philadelphia results ($\rho = .69$; $p < .05$) were close to those of Kopenhaver, indicating that the views of Philadelphia journalists and practitioners in terms of their own news values were actually not much different.

Although Kopenhaver's coorientation model provides an overview of the relationship between the journalists and practitioners, the Spearman rho test used in the Florida study considers the data only in mass and cannot look at the individual items in the rank order. Thus, a Mann-Whitney U test was adopted in this research to analyze in detail the rank-difference correlation between each item in the journalists' perceptions of practitioners' ranking and the practitioners' actual ranking. It was also used to test the rank difference correlation between what the practitioners thought the journalists' ranking would be and the journalists' actual ranking.

Table 4 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U tests of the rank-difference correlation between journalists' perceptions of practitioners' ranking and the practitioners' actual ranking.

From the analysis, it is apparent that seven of the eight news values were ranked significantly differently by Philadelphia practitioners and journalists. There was agreement only on "news story style." This further confirms the results of Kopenhaver et al.: in Philadelphia as well as Florida, journalists' perceptions of practitioners' values were quite inaccurate.

Table 4: The Rank-Difference Correlation between Philadelphia Journalists' Perceptions of Practitioners' Ranking and the Practitioners' Actual Ranking.

News Value	Mean Rank of JRs' Perception of PR N=50	Mean Rank of PRs' actual Ranking N=58	P Value
Completeness	65.65	43.78	.0002
Depicts subject in favorable light	27.56	77.19	.0000
Accuracy	74.34	36.16	.0000
Interest to reader	62.42	46.61	.0074
Mechanical/ Grammatical	61.37	47.54	.0198
News story style	59.00	49.61	.1126
Prompt publication	38.08	67.27	.0000
Usefulness to reader	70.98	39.11	.0000

Note: "JR" means journalist; "PR" means public relations practitioner.

Similar inaccuracy of perception is shown by the Mann-Whitney U tests on the differences between Philadelphia practitioners' perceptions of journalists' values and the journalists' own rankings (Table 5).

Here, six of the eight news values were ranked significantly differently. This result suggests again that in Philadelphia practitioners perceive journalists as quite different from themselves in terms of news values.

It is clear that the major difference between the Florida and Philadelphia studies is that the attitudes of public relations practitioners towards journalists are quite different in the two locations.

Table 5: The Rank-Difference Correlation between Philadelphia Practitioners' Perceptions of Journalists' Ranking and the Journalists' Own Rankings.

News Value	Mean Rank of PRs' Perception of JR N=58	Mean Rank of JRs' Actual Ranking N=50	P Value
Completeness	62.89	42.12	.0004
Depicts subject in favorable light	53.78	51.06	.4389
Accuracy	64.39	40.47	.0000
Interest to reader	42.55	64.49	.0002
Mechanical/Grammatical	56.18	49.50	.2502
News story style	37.24	70.34	.0000
Prompt publication	46.25	58.59	.0336
Usefulness to reader	61.53	43.62	.0022

Note: "JR" means journalist; "PR" means public relations practitioner.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

As pointed out in the first chapter of this thesis, the public relations person has the major responsibility for establishing a company's image and for communication with the public--both the general public and the business community. Most public relations practitioners view the media as the most efficient channel to transfer their ideas or messages to these publics. Thus, unavoidably, public relations people have to get along with and work well with media gatekeepers: journalists. Both of these professional groups, public relations people and journalists, have a similar objective: to disseminate information to the public. However, their different motivations, training, and work standards often lead to conflicts in their relationship.

Chapter Two of this thesis discusses these two groups' perceptions of each other. In general, these perceptions can be divided into five categories: (1) communication skills, (2) ethical issues, (3) educational perspectives, (4) status expectations, and (5) source credibility.

(1) Communication skills: Journalists think that public relations people fail to understand the media's news values; they believe public relations people should improve their communications skills in writing releases and reporting information.

(2) Ethical issues: For their part, public relations people think that the press lacks strict moral standards; indeed, some public relations persons believe good news coverage can be achieved by sending "gifts" to representatives of the media.

(3) Educational perspectives: Research indicates that journalists have been educated to "hate and reject" news releases, and have learned biases against public relations persons which cause misunderstanding between these two kinds of professionals.

(4) Status expectations: Journalists do not accord public relations practitioners the same high status as themselves, and practitioners assign slightly higher status to journalists than to themselves.

(5) Source credibility: According to Aronoff (1975) and Kopenhaver (1985), who replicated Aronoff's research in Florida, journalists generally have a negative attitude

toward the motivation and usefulness of public relations persons. In addition, journalists perceive public relations practitioners' news values as nearly opposite to their own.

Chapter Three proposed the research topic and instrument. Replicating the research of Kopenhaver et al., this study was conducted in Philadelphia to determine how public relations practitioners and journalists perceived each other and, further, to find out if there is a significant difference between results obtained in Florida and those obtained in Philadelphia. The survey tested perceptions in three major areas: (1) attitude toward public relations persons' motivations, priorities, and usefulness in news gathering, (2) professional status, and (3) news value orientation. The results are presented in Chapter Four.

Summary of the Results

Generally, the journalists in both Florida and Philadelphia studies are quite similar with respect to their (1) attitude toward the motivations and news gathering role of public relations people, (2) occupational status rankings, and (3) news value orientations.

The journalists in both Florida and Philadelphia have negative attitudes toward public relations people. Though the journalists in Philadelphia agreed that public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of news, they still did not think that public relations people serve as an extension of the newspaper staff, and they tended to disapprove of the way that public relations people do their job, disguising publicity material as news, too frequently insisting on promoting products, services, activities, and so on. The results of the job status ranking which was conducted among journalists in these two studies were also quite similar. Journalists in Florida ranked themselves first and public relations people next to the bottom. Journalists in Philadelphia ranked themselves second and public relations people at the bottom of the list.

As for news value orientation, journalists in both Florida and Philadelphia picked "accuracy," "completeness," and "interest to reader" as their first three priorities, and both of them chose "accuracy" as the most important value. In addition, journalists in both places thought "depicts subject in favorable light" and "prompt publication" were the most important priorities for the public relations people.

A comparison of the public relations practitioners' attitudes toward journalists in these two areas indicates that public relations people in Florida have milder views than those in Philadelphia. This difference was not obvious in the attitude testing until the results of the status ranking and news value orientation were analyzed.

In the status ranking section of the survey, the public relations people of Florida ranked themselves fourth and journalists ninth. But in Philadelphia, they ranked themselves first and journalists next to the bottom. It seems that public relations people in Florida place journalists closer to them in status than the practitioners in Philadelphia.

In news value orientation, the practitioners in Florida perceived journalists' values as quite similar to the way journalists perceived themselves. But the practitioners in Philadelphia perceived journalists as having totally different values from their own.

Basically, practitioners from both areas have very similar news value orientations. They all picked "accuracy," "completeness," "interest to reader," and "usefulness to reader" as the first four priorities. But practitioners in Philadelphia ranked "usefulness to reader" as the most

important value, while practitioners in Florida ranked "accuracy" as the most important. "Accuracy" was ranked second by practitioners in Philadelphia, but in Florida "interest to reader" was ranked second. Both of the groups agreed that "completeness" was third. The fourth value ranked by Florida's practitioners was "usefulness to reader," but "interest to reader" was ranked fourth by Philadelphia's practitioners. The other four items of news value were ranked by the two areas' practitioners in exactly the same order.

Thus, a comparison of the results of the status ranking and news value orientation sections reveals that the perception of practitioners toward journalists is the difference that distinguishes the Philadelphia and the Florida studies. It can be further concluded that the misunderstanding between journalists and practitioners in Philadelphia is more serious than that in Florida. Although the journalists in Florida think practitioners are different from them, at least the practitioners perceive themselves as holding almost the same values as journalists. But in Philadelphia, neither journalists nor practitioners think the members of the other group hold values similar to their own.

In order to examine closely the relationship between public relations people and journalists, this research explores these two professional groups' opinions toward each other and the values held by each group. It is hoped that the results of this research might help them understand more about each other and thus alleviate conflict. An analysis of those variables that might account for the two groups' different attitudes is beyond the scope of the present study, although some previous relevant research will be described later in this chapter.

Also in this chapter, the broader implications of the conflict between public relations practitioners and journalists will be discussed. In fact, to a large extent the relationship between the media and business in general may help to explain the conflict between public relations people and journalists.

Limitations

Before discussing the implications of this study, it will be beneficial to discuss several limitations. The first is the limitation of a mail survey. With a mail survey, it is difficult to control the number and representativeness of the responses. Ideally, a researcher should

define the parameters of a sample, stratify the sample, and conduct face-to-face or telephone interviews to assure that the actual responses conform with statistical requirement. The responses of a mail survey may suffer from self-selection. In contrast, if stratification could be rigorously control through personal interviews, different classes of opinion could have been compared.

The second limitation of this study is the fact that the individual selected may not have been fully representative of their professions. The public relations practitioners were chosen from a national institution--the Philadelphia chapter of the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America). Similarly, the journalists were selected from the Philadelphia directory of the National Society of Journalists. Thus, both samples were drawn from the population of widely accepted professional organizations. Still, the researcher does not have concrete information to indicate how many of the total journalists or practitioners in Philadelphia are members of these associations. Thus, it is possible that the individual included may not be completely representative, if significant numbers of professionals are not listed in the directories.

The third limitation of this study is the unknown backgrounds of the public relations practitioners and journalists. Some of the public relations people who responded to this study indicated that they used to be journalists before they transferred to the field of public relations. Although there were no journalists who said that they used to be public relations practitioners, it is possible that the results of this study may have been influenced by the shift in careers reported by public relations practitioners.

Why Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners
Misperceive Each Other

Kopenhaver et al. suggest one reason for journalists' perception that practitioners do not have the same news values that they do. They think the problem might stem from the practitioners themselves: that public relations people may not actually practice the high values they report. They state:

It may be that they [practitioners] respond differently in the abstract than they do in actual practice; if that is the case, editors' perceptions may not be as inaccurate as indicated here. (p. 865)

On the other hand, the problem might also come from the journalists themselves. That is, journalists may

respond in the abstract to public relations practitioners in the way their training has conditioned them to respond. As mentioned in Chapter Two, some research does show that journalists have been educated to "hate and reject" news releases, and some mass communications texts have strong biases against public relations persons. Given this training, it would be difficult for a journalist to rate the public relations profession in general as highly as he/she might rate an individual practitioner.

Whatever the original causes, Kopenhaver et al. warn journalists that if they do not understand the practitioners' role in the communications process, a huge disadvantage to the whole society can result. They elaborate:

If journalists do misperceive the news orientations of public relations practitioners, the implications for information dissemination may be great. A journalist who will not use information from a public relations person because he or she does not trust any practitioner may miss out on some good stories or include incomplete, unclear or inaccurate information in articles. A practitioner who finds he or she is not trusted simply because of the position he or she holds will find it harder to do a job and may feel forced to use unethical means to get a message to the public. Neither situation benefits the news media, public relations or society. (p. 884)

From this standpoint, the dangers of journalistic dislike for public relations are significant. Indeed, further research in this area may prove very useful in clarifying

whether the perceptions held by each group are due to abstract conceptions or to practical experience, so that groundless prejudice can be rectified.

Further Research

In addition to the causes of the perceptions which are held by each group, the results of this study indicate that there are other areas that deserve further research. The first is how the educational and professional backgrounds of the public relations practitioners and the journalists may have influenced their perceptions toward each other. As previously mentioned, some public relations responders declared that they used to be journalists before they became public relations practitioners. Thus, this shift in field experience might influence their perceptions toward journalists or public relations practitioners. More detail information concerning professional background could shed more light on the reasons for individual responses. If a significant portion of of public relations people have a journalism background, why do these two groups of people feel prejudice and dislike toward each other? How does this shift in profession influence their perceptions toward the other group?

As far as education is concerned, there is research that suggests that some communication texts read by young journalist have biases against public relations persons. It would be interesting to investigate how public relations people have been educated to view journalists and to examine more in detail how these two professional groups' educational backgrounds influence their perspectives and perceptions.

Other useful research would be a longitudinal study that resurveys the same groups. As pointed out in Chapter Two, the study by Kopenhaver et al. (1984) duplicated Aroff's study of 1975 and showed very similar results. Three years later, Kopenhaver's study has been duplicated in Philadelphia. However, the effect of time on each group has not been considered in any case. A longitudinal study might explore how these two groups' perceptions toward each other have changed over time. If they have changed, what were the causes? Were they influenced by further education, increase interaction, or other social factors? If there were no changes, why not?

Media and Business

As a matter of fact, the conflict between practitioners and journalists cannot be viewed purely as an inter-

est conflict between two groups of professionals. If we review their relations and conflicts within a larger context, we find an overriding conflict between two big organizations--business and the media. From this standpoint, public relations practitioners and journalists are mere representatives of these two organizations, and the tension between public relations people and journalists is symptomatic of the tension between business and the media as a whole.

Because of the different functions of the media and business in a pluralistic society, disharmony and conflict are inherent in their relationship. In order to perform their functions, these two organizations have to develop their own goals. For example, if the function of a business is to produce goods, the goal behind this is probably to create as large profit as possible. On the other hand, in many scholars' view (see MacDougall, 1980), the function of the media might be to make sure business acts responsibly, and thus the goal might be to serve the public interest. In the process of achieving their goals--maximizing profit and serving the public interest--there will naturally be conflict when the media and business interact.

But can this tension be lessened? Some studies (Griffith [1974], Rubin [1977], and Finn [1981]) suggest that the two groups should start by trying to understand each other.

Finn (1981) suggests that executives learn the details of media practice, keep in touch with journalists on a continuing basis, and allow for the possibility that reporters may not be well acquainted with business. As for reporters, he suggests that they prepare for interviews by studying pertinent company statements, become familiar with the fundamentals of finance, accounting, economics, and management practice.

Rubin (1977) concludes his research by saying that "big business has a lot to learn from the press; and the press has a lot to learn from big business" (p. 62). Griffith (1974) also suggests that businessmen should become more media-wise. He maintains that businessmen should learn to understand television: "They should know what direction press questions might take, how vigorously they will be pursued, and how widely answers will be publicized" (p. 212).

However, is it necessary to erase all the tension and expect totally harmonious relations between business and the media? According to MacDougall (1980), this is undesirable and unrealistic. He points out:

Business and the media must also recognize that some tension, even conflict, is inherent in business-media relations. Expecting total harmony between the two is as undesirable as it is unrealistic. In a pluralistic society, business and the media serve different functions. Business produces goods and services and provides jobs. The media have a public responsibility to make sure business acts responsibly. (part VI, p. 3)

Thus, to expect total harmony between public relations people and journalists seems to be impractical. However, it is still important to transfer the conflict between practitioners and journalists into a kind of cooperative competition that could act to the advantage of the whole society. Public relations practitioners and journalists should understand the essential characteristics of their relationship, then try to understand each others' situation and needs. Moreover, when they compete to serve their respective organizations' interests, they should always keep in mind that they have the same real goal--the public's and the whole society's benefit. In the long run, business can make the biggest profit only when it can provide the greatest benefit for the public and the whole society. The same is true for the media. Even though the media themselves constitute a type of large-scale business they still conceive of themselves as a watch dog for other businesses. Only when the media can satisfy the interests of the public and the whole society can they realize the full extent of

their social responsibility. Thus both of these organizations have a common goal in the end--to serve and to benefit the public and society.

From this standpoint, the relations between practitioners and journalists, while antagonistic in individual instances, can be viewed as a cooperatively competitive relationship that creates the greatest benefit for us all.

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APPENDIX A: PUBLIC RELATIONS
PRACTITIONER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Mr. ,

Source credibility has been assumed to be an important factor in successful communication. I am attempting to replicate an earlier study on this subject done in Florida. Specifically, I am concerned with how Philadelphia area Journalists and Public relations practitioners view public relations persons as credible sources of information. This is where I need your help.

As research for my master thesis, I hope the results will assist college and university educators in both the journalists and public relations areas in the development of future communications professional.

Your name was drawn at random from a list of members in the Philadelphia PRSA's 1987 Directory. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The questionnaires are numbered simply to help me keep track of who responds and who does not--just in case I must send out follow-up mailings. A self-addressed and stamped cover was printed on the back of the last page of the questionnaire. When you finish the questionnaire, just refold, staple, and mail. Please dispose of this letter.

I will greatly appreciate your response, as a good response will help me hold down the costs of the study and will increase the value and accuracy of the survey. Thank you for giving your valuable time to the project. Please be assured it is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ching-Hwa Meng, Graduate Student,
University of Delaware.

I. Attitude Profile

Statement 1-25 contain items related to the general attitude one has toward public relations. For each statement indicate with a check in the appropriate blank the extent to which you agree/disagree with the item. Seven blanks follow each statement; please be sure you check one blank (but not more than one) for each statement. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

1. Public relations and the press are partners in the dissemination of information.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

2. Public relations practitioners are basically competitors with the advertising departments of newspapers rather than collaborators with the news staff.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

3. Public relations practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services and other activities which do not legitimately deserve promotion.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

4. Public relations is a profession equal in status to journalism.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

5. Public relations practitioners often act as obstructionists, keeping reporters from the people they really should be seeing.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

6. Public relations practitioners have cluttered our channels of communication with pseudo-events and phony phrases that confuse public issues.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

7. The abundance of free and easily obtainable information provided by public relations practitioners has caused an increase in the quality of reporting.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

8. Public relations material is usually publicity disguised as news.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

9. The public relations practitioner does work for the newspaper that would otherwise go undone.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

10. Public relations practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to a trivial, uneventful happening.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

11. The public relations practitioner serves as an extension of the newspaper staff, covering the organization for which he is responsible.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

12. Public relations practitioners are really just errand boys for whomever hires them.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

13. Public relations practitioners are people of good sense, good will and good moral character.

Strongly Agree ____:____:____:____:____:____:____:____:Disagree
Strongly

14. It is a shame that because of inadequate staff, the press must depend on information provided by public relations practitioners.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

15. Public relations practitioners understand such journalistic problems as meeting deadlines, attracting reader interest and making the best use of space.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

16. You can't trust public relations practitioners.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

17. Journalists and public relations practitioners carry on a running battle.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

18. Public relations practitioners are typically frank and honest.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

19. The massiveness of the impact of public relations makes it harder and harder for the average citizen to know when he is being sold a bill of goods.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

20. Public relations practitioners help reporters obtain accurate, complete and timely news.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

21. Public relations practitioners frequently use a shield of words for practices which are not in the public interest.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

22. Public relations practitioners are necessary to the production of the daily newspaper as we know it.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

23. Public relations is a parasite to the press.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

24. Public relations practitioners typically issue news releases or statements on matters of genuine news value and public interest.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

25. The prime function of public relations practitioners is to get free advertising space for the companies and institutions they represent.

Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree

II. Status Profile

Rank the following professions/occupations in the order of your respect for each of them, with 1 being the highest in order of respect, 2 next, etc. Please rank order all 16.

_____ Architect	_____ High school teacher
_____ Artist	_____ Journalist
_____ Banker	_____ Lawyer
_____ Carpenter	_____ Physician
_____ Clergyman	_____ Policeman
_____ Corporate executive	_____ Politician
_____ Engineer	_____ Public relations Practitioner
_____ Farmer	_____ University professor

III. News Value Profile

Rank order the following news values as you perceive their important in a news story, with 1 being the most important, 2 next, etc. Please rank order all 8.

<input type="checkbox"/> Completeness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical/grammatical accuracy
<input type="checkbox"/> Depicts subject in favorable light	<input type="checkbox"/> News story style
<input type="checkbox"/> Factual accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Prompt publication
<input type="checkbox"/> Interest to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness to reader

Rank order the following news values as you feel journalists perceive their importance in a news story, with 1 being the most important, 2 next, etc. Please rank order all 8.

<input type="checkbox"/> Completeness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical/grammatical accuracy
<input type="checkbox"/> Depicts subject in favorable light	<input type="checkbox"/> News story style
<input type="checkbox"/> Factual accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Prompt publication
<input type="checkbox"/> Interest to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> Usefulness to reader

IV. Please answer the following questions about your personal background.

1) Type of organization for which you work:

Profit
 Non-profit

2) Educational background:

<input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Some graduate work
<input type="checkbox"/> Some college work	<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree
<input type="checkbox"/> College graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Other. Please specify:

3) Number of years worked in public relations: _____

APPENDIX B: JOURNALIST'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Mr. ,

Source credibility has been assumed to be an important factor in successful communication. I am attempting to replicate an earlier study on this subject done in Florida. Specifically, I am concerned with how Philadelphia area Journalists and Public relations practitioners view public relations persons as credible sources of information. This is where I need your help.

As research for my master thesis, I hope the results will assist college and university educators in both the journalists and public relations areas in the development of future communications professional.

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Sincerely,

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1. Public relations and the press are partners in the dissemination of information.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

2. Public relations practitioners are basically competitors with the advertising departments of newspapers rather than collaborators with the news staff.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

3. Public relations practitioners too frequently insist on promoting products, services and other activities which do not legitimately deserve promotion.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

4. Public relations is a profession equal in status to journalism.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

5. Public relations practitioners often act as obstructionists, keeping reporters from the people they really should be seeing.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

6. Public relations practitioners have cluttered our channels of communication with pseudo-events and phony phrases that confuse public issues.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

7. The abundance of free and easily obtainable information provided by public relations practitioners has caused an increase in the quality of reporting.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

8. Public relations material is usually publicity disguised as news.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

9. The public relations practitioner does work for the newspaper that would otherwise go undone.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

10. Public relations practitioners too often try to deceive the press by attaching too much importance to a trivial, uneventful happening.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

11. The public relations practitioner serves as an extension of the newspaper staff, covering the organization for which he is responsible.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

12. Public relations practitioners are really just errand boys for whomever hires them.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

13. Public relations practitioners are people of good sense, good will and good moral character.

Strongly Agree ___:___:___:___:___:___:___:Disagree
Strongly

14. It is a shame that because of inadequate staff, the press must depend on information provided by public relations practitioners.

- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
15. Public relations practitioners understand such journalistic problems as meeting deadlines, attracting reader interest and making the best use of space.
- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
16. You can't trust public relations practitioners.
- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
17. Journalists and public relations practitioners carry on a running battle.
- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
18. Public relations practitioners are typically frank and honest.
- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
19. The massiveness of the impact of public relations makes it harder and harder for the average citizen to know when he is being sold a bill of goods.
- Strongly Agree _____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:Strongly Disagree
20. Public relations practitioners help reporters obtain accurate, complete and timely news.
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_____ Artist	_____ Journalist
_____ Banker	_____ Lawyer
_____ Carpenter	_____ Physician
_____ Clergyman	_____ Policeman
_____ Corporate executive	_____ Politician
_____ Engineer	_____ Public relations Practitioner
_____ Farmer	_____ University professor

III. News Value Profile

Rank order the following news values as you perceive their important in a news story, with 1 being the most important, 2 next, etc. Please rank order all 8.

_____ Completeness	_____ Mechanical/grammatical accuracy
_____ Depicts subject in favorable light	_____ News story style
_____ Factual accuracy	_____ Prompt publication
_____ Interest to reader	_____ Usefulness to reader

Rank order the following news values as you feel public relations practitioners perceive their importance in a news story, with 1 being the most important, 2 next, etc. Please rank order all 8.

_____ Completeness	_____ Mechanical/grammatical accuracy
_____ Depicts subject in favorable light	_____ News story style
_____ Factual accuracy	_____ Prompt publication
_____ Interest to reader	_____ Usefulness to reader

IV. Information Profile

1. Frequency of publication

_____ Daily _____ Weekly _____ Other

2. Circulation

_____ under 10,000 _____ 25,001-50,000 _____ over 100,000
 _____ 10,001-25,000 _____ 50,000-100,000

3. Number of news releases (estimate) received each week.

_____ 1-25 _____ 51-100 _____ over 150
 _____ 26-50 _____ 101-150

4. Percentage (estimate) of news releases used per week.