

# An Investigation into the Teaching of International Public Relations to Undergraduates

Matthew Wisla  
*Marquette University*

---

## Recommended Citation

Wisla, Matthew, "An Investigation into the Teaching of International Public Relations to Undergraduates" (2017). *Master's Theses (2009 -)*. 417.  
[http://epublications.marquette.edu/theses\\_open/417](http://epublications.marquette.edu/theses_open/417)

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE TEACHING OF INTERNATIONAL  
PUBLIC RELATIONS TO UNDERGRADUATES

by

Matthew Wisla

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

August 2017

ABSTRACT  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE TEACHING OF INTERNATIONAL  
PUBLIC RELATIONS TO UNDERGRADUATES

Matthew Wisla

Marquette University, 2017

Currently, most U.S. multinational companies increasingly rely on international markets for revenue and growth. Public relations professionals, whether they are on assignment in a foreign land or based in the U.S. as part of an international team, must possess the skills to communicate effectively with target audiences from other cultures. The purpose of this study is to better understand the international qualifications and background of instructors teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates.

This study is based on data collected through telephone interviews with select academic thought leaders in the field of teaching international public relations, and a broad email survey sent to professors and instructors teaching undergraduate university courses in the U.S. A pilot study preceded the interviews and survey.

Research findings indicate that educators teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates generally have a solid background for the job, but teaching qualifications are unevenly dispersed throughout their ranks. Notable disparities exist in international professional experience, language skills, and time spent working or traveling in foreign countries. These metrics have been shown to be critical to the understanding and development cultural sensitivity, which is acknowledged as a key ingredient in the success of international public relations. The findings indicate that students are not being consistently taught by instructors with high qualifications.

Another key finding was that although academics and professionals recognize the importance of international public relations, no authoritative report has ever been completed on best practices for teaching the necessary skills to undergraduates. However, numerous commissions have reported on teaching basic public relations skills to U.S. undergraduates.

A primary conclusion of this study is that by establishing a new commission to focus on identifying instructor qualifications and best practices for teaching international public relations academia and the industry could craft guidelines and create a groundwork that would result in improved instruction and better prepared public relations professionals. If established, a new commission could focus on guidelines for making instructor qualifications more consistent, encouraging development of new textbooks, and developing recommendations or resources to help instructors stay up-to-date on developments in international public relations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I. OVERVIEW ..... 1
- II. INTRODUCTION..... 3
  - i. Agency Structure in an International World.....6
- III. LITERATURE REVIEW .....9
  - i. International Public Relations Education.....12
  - ii. Rising Importance of International Business.....17
  - iii. Exploring the Importance of International PR education.....29
- IV. RESERCH QUESTONS .....34
- V. METHOLOGY.....35
  - i. Pilot Study.....36
  - ii. Telephone Interviews .....38
  - iii. Email Survey.....39
- VI. FINDINGS.....41
  - i. Email Survey to Educators Academy.....41
  - ii. Survey Results .....46
  - iii. Telephone Interviews of Thought Leaders .....54
- VII. CONCLUSIONS.....60
  - i. Final Thoughts and Recommendations.....65
  - ii. Recommendations for Future Studies.....68
- VIII. REFERENCES.....70
- IX. APPENDIX A: COURSE SYLLABI.....74

X. APPENDIX B: PILOT SURVEY.....75

XI. APPENDIX C: TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS .....87

XII. APPENDIX D: EMAIL SURVEY.....101

XIII. APPENDIX E: EMAIL SURVEY: VERBATIM COMMENTS .....111

## Overview

Previous researchers have noted the important role cultural sensitivity plays when public relations professionals ply their trade in foreign countries. After all, how can a public relations practitioner be an effective strategist and communicator without understanding the target audience at the fundamental, cultural level? Building on that observation, researchers have emphasized the critical link between a teacher's international background and his or her ability to teach cross-cultural skills and perspectives to students. This thesis explores how international public relations is being taught to U.S. undergraduates by focusing on key aspects of the background and qualifications of their professors.

This thesis begins by discussing how vital international markets are to U.S. companies today and the importance of effectively engaging and communicating with foreign audiences. It traces the development of international public relations and key communication theories that define the practice. It then contrasts the role a series of industry commission reports have had in shaping how public relations is taught and makes the observation that there has been little emphasis on international public relations.

Research for this thesis draws upon input from both academics who are thought leaders in the field of teaching international public relations and members of the Educators Academy of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The value of the data from PRSA, along with the size of the survey samples, are discussed and conclusions are drawn about the overall background for instructors and their readiness to

teach international public relations. Finally, ideas are proposed for potential future academic research in this area.

## Introduction

Since at least the days when the John Company, or the British East India Company as it was formally known, drove global trade while powering England's economy, Western countries have understood the value foreign markets hold for businesses and governments. Success for today's international companies requires a far wider range of business skills than the East India Company needed to master as a globalization forbearer during the middle of the last century. Foreign direct investment, trade relations and pacts, social networking and data flows contribute to a complicated global business landscape that modern multinational companies navigate (Modella, 2009).

The United States is the world's leading, most innovative, and most stable large economy, and yet approximately 95% of the global population and 80 percent of the world's purchasing power exists outside of its borders. Therefore, reaching far-flung international markets through trade and foreign direct investment is critical to the success of many sectors of the U.S. economy, including manufacturing, agriculture, services, and information technology (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). In 2014, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that American exports totaled \$2.3 trillion in goods and services, maintaining the country's global leadership in both categories. Trade-related employment helps support about 38 million American jobs, a total that is growing at about three and a half times the rate of overall employment between 2004 – 2013 (The Business Roundtable, 2015). In addition, U.S. foreign direct investment abroad in 2014 was \$4.92 trillion, a significant increase from \$2.16 trillion just a decade earlier.

International business has grown to become an integral part of the U.S. economy. One indication of its significance can be seen by reviewing companies listed on the Standard & Poor's 500 Index, where increasingly companies are generating less of their annual income from within the United States and more from overseas trade and operations. In 2014, U.S.-derived income for companies on the S&P averaged 52%, a decrease from 53.7% in 2013 (Benjamin, 2015). The trend in foreign-derived income now helps drive broad sectors of the U.S. economy, with materials, information technology, healthcare, and energy generating more than half of their sales outside the United States in 2014. Iconic U.S. brands that generate 40% or more of their sales abroad in a typical year include Ford, McDonald's, Amazon, and Walmart. Companies on the S&P with more than half of their sales outside the United States in 2014 include Johnson & Johnson, Dow Chemical, Boeing, General Electric, Apple, Intel, and ExxonMobil (Krantz, 2015). The S&P 500 is a leading indicator of the U.S. economy and, since it is made up of companies selected by economists based on their size, earnings performance, and importance to the segment of the economy they represent, it is clear that success in international business endeavors is as crucial to American companies as it is to the health of the U.S. economy.

Foreign direct investment is a two-way street. Since 2006, the United States has been the world's largest recipient of foreign direct investment, which means that overnight a domestic U.S. company – along with all its employees – can become part of an international enterprise. In 2012, foreign companies invested \$166 billion in the United States largely through merger and acquisition deals, and net U.S. assets of foreign affiliates totaled \$3.9 trillion (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013). Employment at

these firms stood at about 5.6 million U.S. workers. China alone in 2015 completed a total of 103 merger and acquisition deals in the United States, representing a total investment of about \$14 billion, including consumer-facing purchases such as Haier's acquisition of GE's appliance group and Dalian Wanda's acquisition of Legendary Entertainment and the AMC movie theater chain (Rhodium Group, 2015).

Even at a time when "globalization" is under renewed scrutiny, in order to remain competitive and innovative American companies will need to continue to engage and succeed in international markets. While the politics of conducting business on a worldwide scale may currently be under review in popular media, shareholder expectations have not changed. That may explain why most of the public focus to date has been on where companies make their products, not where they sell them. This means that communication executives and managers in U.S. companies will continue working in a global context.

According to the Commission on Public Relations Education (2006), "Public relations is now arguably becoming a global profession in an increasingly-connected world where mutual understanding and harmony are more important than ever" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p. 6). International public relations has been described as "the planned and organized effort of a company, institution, or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations" (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 1989). A more explicitly multicultural perspective holds that international public relations is "the management of formal communication between organizations and their relevant publics to create and maintain communities of interest and action that favor the organization, taking full account of the normal human variation

of the systems of meaning by which groups understand and enact their everyday lives” (Banks, 1995, p. 21).

Practitioners of international public relations frequently work as part of global teams. This includes public relations professionals employed by U.S. companies stationed in overseas branches or offices, those based in America supervising or working as part of worldwide teams, and those who become part of an international enterprise through a merger or acquisition.

### **Agency Structure in an International World**

The global expansion of U.S.-based public relations agencies followed a trajectory similar to that of American business as agencies followed their clients into foreign markets. John Hill founded the agency that became Hill & Knowlton in 1927 following a career as a newspaper reporter and columnist. During the 1960s and 1970s it became the first major U.S. agency to establish a network overseas, followed in short order by agency competitors Edelman and Burson-Marsteller. Most global agencies first established a beachhead in London before expanding into Europe and beyond (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003).

Now, with their worldwide networks, the sun never sets on the modern public relations agency. For example, FleishmanHillard currently has more than 80 offices in 29 countries outside of the United States (FleishmanHillard, n.d.). Foreign markets, such as China, are often extremely competitive for U.S. agencies. They frequently must compete amongst themselves for clients as well as with local, in-country agencies and other global consultancies from Europe and elsewhere.

Today, beyond the work being done by global agencies and multinational corporations, there is also a thriving sector of American mid- and small-size agencies, networks of multidisciplinary communications entrepreneurs, and freelancers driving communication strategy and helping clients reach their objectives in countries around the world. Small agency entrepreneur Arianna O'Dell wrote in the July 2016 issue of *Fast Company*: "Right now, I'm sitting at a coffee shop in Bucharest, Romania, with my laptop and an Americano. For the past five months, I've been traveling through Europe and the Middle East while simultaneously building a marketing agency I can operate from anywhere in the world" (O'Dell, 2016, p. 1). O'Dell goes on to discuss seven international communication careers for U.S. freelancers and entrepreneurs, including those in public relations, content entrepreneurship, digital marketing, and e-commerce entrepreneurship. O'Dell is a 2012 graduate of the University of Washington.

As the scope of responsibilities and opportunities for entrepreneurs and freelancers as well as public relations professionals working for U.S.-based companies, agencies, and organizations expanded beyond American shores, there has been a flourishing in the number of industry associations and institutions supporting the global orientation and development of the profession (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). Examples include: The Commission on Global Public Relations Research of the Institute for Public Relations (founded in 2005), the Chartered Institute of Public Relations International Group (2004), and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2000). Pioneers that helped shape the profession's global facet from early on include: The International Professional Interest Section of the

Public Relations Society of America (1995), the International Association of Business Communicators (1970), and the International Public Relations Association (1949).

## Literature Review

As international success became increasingly important for U.S. companies, including being able to effectively communicate with foreign publics through the practice of public relations, university course offerings in public relations began incorporating global perspectives. However, to date, significantly more research and industry-wide formal recommendations have been directed toward teaching undergraduate students basic public relations practices rather than developing a consensus regarding how to best teach international public relations (Public Relations Society of America, 1999). As the importance of international public relations increased, the discipline failed to receive a corresponding uptick in emphasis from academia. As Robert Wakefield of the University of Maryland observed, “Only a few scholars have tried to define the international practice” (Culbertson & Chen, 1996, p. 4). If the development and teaching of public relations for U.S. audiences was the industry’s favorite child, then international public relations developed as the pleasantly regarded but less doted upon second fiddle.

Public relations in America began in earnest in the early 1900s. Henry Ford was among the first business leaders to leverage what modern public relations practitioners would recognize as basic practices for branding and messaging, namely positioning, and proactive media relations (Smith, 2011). During World War I, George Creel led the Committee on Public Information, which used public relations tactics to sell Liberty Bonds, promote food conservation, and increase support for the Red Cross. So effective were the tactics that soon organizations with less noble intents began to harness the power of public relations as well. Authors Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner explained in their book *Freakonomics* (Levitt & Dubner, 2009) that in the early days of

the Ku Klux Klan the organization skillfully exploited pre-existing racist attitudes in society to make money for itself, rather than to promote a racist agenda. “Rather than a terrorist organization, the 1920s Klan is best described as a social organization with a wildly successful multi-level marketing structure,” they wrote (Levitt & Dubner, 2009, p. 68). Edward Clarke and Bessie Tyler launched the Atlanta-based Southern Publicity Association and devised a campaign that increased membership in the KKK from approximately several thousand in 1920 to about three million in 1923.

It was also in 1923 that Edward L. Bernays – the man regarded by many as the father of public relations – published *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, where he explained strategies and tactics that helped define the fledgling vocation. He believed key audiences needed to be defined and understood before they could be swayed. A nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays served as a public relations consultant to Presidents Wilson and Coolidge, as well as to several companies and organizations that would go on to play significant roles in American history, including Alcoa, Dodge Motors, General Electric, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Many of Bernays’s clients would go on to leverage their success in business and communication in the United States to become international corporations (Cambridge Historical Society, 2012).

Beyond his professional contributions, Bernays is credited with teaching the first college course in public relations at New York University, coincidentally also in 1923 (Smith, 2011). Bernays’s lectures at NYU, along with his 15 books and more than 300 articles, helped establish an early foundation for defining and teaching public relations to U.S. undergraduate students.

Since the days of Bernays, public relations course offerings at U.S. universities have grown quickly. In 1945, courses were available at about 20 colleges, by 1947 (when the Public Relations Society of America was founded) it was at least 30 colleges, and by 1977 approximately 160 offered at least one class in public relations while students could graduate with a major in the discipline from at least 130 institutions (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). Today, hundreds of colleges offer degrees and classes in public relations, and PRSA lists 325 registered student chapters at universities around the United States (Public Relations Society of America, 2016).

The evolution and development of public relations as it is domestically practiced in the United States has benefited from a series of high profile, comprehensive reports prepared by panels of leading educators and industry professionals who thoroughly review the requisite skills that lead to success on the job and compare them to what is taught in university classrooms around the United States. Each report tends to build upon the last by taking the previous findings and recommendations into consideration. These reports frequently review and generally catalog what is being taught at the time, look to the future to identify skills that will be needed, and make a series of recommendations of what ideally would be taught going forward so that students are well prepared for professional success. When guidelines from these reports are implemented in academia, the industry benefits from an ongoing supply of qualified interns and candidates for entry-level positions.

## **International Public Relations Education**

However, no industry or academic group has ever mounted a similar review and analysis focusing on international public relations. Even as the practice and importance of international public relations has grown over the years and as the teaching of public relations in universities has expanded, to date the discipline of international public relations has never had the benefit of comprehensive, systematic review conducted by a commission or panel of industry and academic leaders. When it comes to the teaching of international public relations today, academia and the industry have at no time come together to thoroughly review the state of current classroom outputs, compare them with industry needs, and chart a course with suggestions and recommendations for the development and preparation of future international public relations practitioners (Public Relations Society of America, 1999).

This means that during the current timeframe when the industry is experiencing a growing need for international public relations expertise and universities are expanding course offerings focused on global practices, there is no authoritative resource a university department chair or individual educator can reference when establishing and developing course contents and materials. As a result of this ad hoc course creation, the industry has little insight or input into how the next generation of public relations professionals are being prepared for international assignments and little assurance students are acquiring the necessary skillsets.

Results of a survey of public relations industry professionals in the year 2000 revealed that 35% felt teaching international public relations to U.S. university undergraduates majoring in public relations was “quite” or “very” important, and 45%

saw it as at least “somewhat” important (Hornaman, 2000). At the same time, however, 68% of those practicing professionals perceived international public relations was being taught “a little” or “none” to U.S. university undergraduates majoring in public relations. The results indicate that a gap exists between a qualification valued by the industry and the degree to which the industry believes that need is being fulfilled. It is possible industry professionals developed that perception because they have not been adequately updated on academia’s trend favoring the teaching of international public relations to U.S. university undergraduates. And industry recommendations for curricula and course contents have not been effectively solicited.

Beginning in 1975 with the first in-depth report authored by a broadly assembled commission focusing on the teaching of public relations to U.S. university undergraduates majoring in public relations, an international perspective has often, but not always, been incorporated into the reports. Through the years, these reports have typically been prepared by special working groups comprised of practitioners, industry association leaders, and educators. The 1975 report, “A Design for Public Relations Education,” published by the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, included suggested curricula for undergraduate studies, as well as graduate and Ph.D. programs in public relations. The report outlined specific courses that should be taken and stated that public relations students should receive a well-rounded education in the liberal arts and humanities. It also recommended studying at least one foreign language or the culture of some other part of the world especially for students who anticipate careers with global companies or government agencies with an international-facing sector (Institute for Public Relations, 1975). The report went on to generally recommend

studying public relations case histories but failed to make a connection to international, even though case histories would eventually become a mainstay in the teaching and study of international public relations.

The catalyst for the report was a paper presented two years earlier to the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism describing the unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education all across American campuses (Institute for Public Relations, 1975). Interestingly, the commission included several industry professionals and academics destined to earn reputations as visionaries in the practice or teaching of public relations. These luminaries – who were following in the footsteps of Bernays – included J. Carroll Bateman, Scott M. Cutlip, James E. Grunig, and Betsy Ann Plank.

Twelve years later in 1987, another report, “National Commission on Undergraduate Study in Public Relations,” focused on detailed elements of course content. That focus distinguished this report from the previous one, which emphasized overall curricula instead of specific topics for courses (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). The report was prepared by the Commission on Public Relations Education, an independent consortium of public relations educators and practitioners from a range of professional societies representing or relating to public relations. Although the commission included professionals with international backgrounds, the report lacked recommendations for teaching international public relations (Kruckeberg, 1995).

Also in 1987, with two significant reports on public relations education now under its belt, the industry began establishing criteria by which university programs could be defined and measured. That year the Public Relations Society of America determined

that any university wishing to register a chapter with their organization would be required to offer a minimum of five courses dedicated to some aspect of public relations (Grunig, 1989). This matched a recommendation made by the Commission on Public Relations Education in their report that year. At that time, 112 university programs met the threshold with 66 offering the five-course minimum and only 20 schools offering seven or more courses. No recommendation or specific requirement was made as to the content or focus of the courses.

The following year in 1988, a report by the National Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations returned to the question of how university students in the United States are being taught public relations, this time focusing on graduate studies. It built upon recommendations from the 1975 report and suggested that studies of mass media practices in the United States and other countries be included at the master's level (National Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations, 1988). While the recommendations may have been a step in the right direction toward equipping students with broader international perspectives, it is unclear how much impact this part of the report had since, according to a paper presented at the Eastern Michigan University Conference on Language and Communication for World Business and the Professions in 1994. At that time “only a handful” of universities in the United States had standalone classes dedicated to teaching international public relations (Pratt & Ogbondah, 1994).

The Commission's instinct to focus on international mass media seems to reflect a trend in communications thinking at the time. Though the media landscape and prevailing trends are always important considerations, in 1988 the focus on an international perspective appeared particularly acute. Assistant Professor of Journalism Bonnie

Brownlee at Indiana University described an approach whereby she began incorporating international news stories into her undergraduate journalism classes and asking students to relate them to personal interests or local news in their hometowns (Brownlee, 1988). The assignments required students to work, many for the first time, through a global perspective. Also that year, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication began a review of how international topics are handled in journalism textbooks (Pratt & Ogbondah, 1994).

Another 12-year interval passed between 1987 and 1999 when a new commission took up the matter of undergraduate public relations education in the United States. The need for a fresh look at the topic was outlined by Dean Kruckeberg, professor in the Public Relations Degree Program at the University of Northern Iowa at the time and co-chair of the Commission on Public Relations Education the previous year, when he described profound societal, technological, and professional changes impacting the profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the need to adequately prepare incoming practitioners (Kruckeberg, 1998). A rapidly globalizing world was among the evolving societal factors he identified when he argued “all practice will become international and multicultural because society will have become global” (Kruckeberg, 1998, p. 236). Because the public relations profession was changing fast, he also emphasized the need for a professional perspective in academia in order to maintain relevance in curricula and course content.

The years between commission reports, 1987 to 1999, included the changes noted by Kruckeberg and his colleagues as well as a growing understanding within the business community of the significant role international operations was playing for U.S. companies. For example, 1990 was the first year *Fortune* magazine began ranking U.S.

companies on its Fortune Global 500 List. Until then the annual listing of corporations worldwide as measured by revenue featured only non-U.S. companies. In 2015, the United States led all countries with 134 companies on the list, followed by China with 103 and Japan with 52 (*Fortune*, 2016).

### **Rising Importance of International Business**

Although the perceived importance of international business was on the rise, the 1999 report, “Public Relations Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Port of Call,” made only passing reference to its significance and included no specific recommendations for teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates (Public Relations Society of America, 1999). Even so, to the extent that an international perspective was incorporated into the report it represented the broadest inclusion of the topic in any industry report to date. For example, when the report recommended 12 skills and areas of knowledge undergraduates should possess upon graduation “multicultural and global issues” was included on the list and, similarly, the commission said it assumed that any student graduating at that time “must be prepared to operate in a multicultural environment” (Public Relations Society of America, 1999, p. 3). In addition, “fluency in a foreign language” was on the list of necessary skills.

In 2006, the same commission updated its 1999 findings and recommendations and put forth a new report, “The Professional Bond: Public Relations Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). While the report observes that “the rapid expansion and growing sophistication of public relations around the world, both in higher education and in the practice, since the Commission’s last report

in 1999 is truly remarkable” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p. 35) it makes no recommendations relating to curricula or approaches to teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates. The report dedicates a chapter to “Global Implications” but, similar to the 1999 report, it focuses on and makes general observations about the growth of the practice and teaching of public relations around the world and elects not to directly address the matter of preparing U.S. undergraduates for international projects and assignments. The report does encourage international cultural exchange programs for faculty and students, and notes the importance of the ethical character and international background or perspective of educators who teach international public relations (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006).

In 2014, the Commission began work on a new report and in May 2015 released a Summary Report, “Commission on Public Relations Education – Educator Summit on Public Relations Education” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015). While past reports often came out more than a decade apart and leaned substantially on the previous report to make recommendations that would result in mostly incremental adjustments, the Summary Report signaled a willingness to break new ground and the potential for significant changes. It includes the observations that: “The changes in the past few years [to how public relations is practiced] shake the foundations of skills taught for decades” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015, p. 5), and “Half of everything needed [to effectively practice public relations] now didn’t exist ten years ago” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015, p.5). The Commission’s willingness to take a whiteboard approach to a framework and ideas they have invested in

for years and years represents a progressive step, and potentially extends to making recommendations regarding the teaching of international public relations.

The Summary Report begins its exploration of the teaching of international public relations by acknowledging that business and organizations today “expect expertise and services from global-communications knowledgeable practitioners” and goes on to discuss the needed skills (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015, p. 17). The Summary Report raises important questions about the teaching of international public relations that the commission will address in the course of its ongoing work, such as whether a global knowledge/skills/abilities framework is workable considering the significant differences in the way public relations is practiced around the world. The Summary Report also asks what challenges exist in teaching global public relations. Here the report briefly discusses the universal need for greater writing proficiency, and the use of case histories from other countries.

As with past approaches to the practice of international public relations, the Summary Report frames its discussion around the needs of any practitioner working in any country and their ability to function internationally, rather than focusing on the needs of American companies and best practices for educating U.S. undergraduates. Since the Commission has given itself this global mandate, the discussion, at least in the Summary Report, around many of the questions raised is essentially it depends on in which country you’re practicing or teaching international public relations (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015). As the Commission continues its work it will be important to identify how recommendations for teaching international public relations evolve.

Commission members from 2006 and those onboard for the new report along with organizations participating in the preparation of the reports in other ways feature a broad representation of professional societies in public relations and related fields, many with international footprints and perspectives, including PRSA, Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, National Communication Association, International Communication Association, Black Public Relations Society, International Public Relations Association, Counsel of Public Relations Firms, Institute for Public Relations, and the International Association of Business Communicators (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). The Commission has not assigned itself, or at least has not made public, a firm deadline for releasing the new report (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015).

Since educators do not have the benefit of an authoritative set of recommendations for teaching international public relations to undergraduate students in the United States, the overall approach has been ad-hoc. A recent curriculum audit of institutions with Public Relations Student Society of America chapters, which included an analysis of 27 course syllabi, found that no two syllabi or course descriptions were alike for courses focusing on international public relations (Jain & Swiatek, 2015).

Instead, the education landscape is comprised of a collection of common elements that educators select from and emphasize to varying degrees, at their own discretion, when developing individual courses. This means the situation for teaching international public relations in the United States is not entirely unlike making or eating chili in the United States. Every chili cook in America has her or his personal prized recipe, and

most cities feature a popular chili joint (Huffington Post, 2013) boasting distinctive flavor characteristics even though chili recipes across the board generally share a common list of ingredients. Recipes vary greatly, but bowl to bowl, the ingredients are essentially the same.

“Ingredients” for teaching international public relations to undergraduate students in the United States are comprised of elements that reflect the culture of the society being studied and examples of real-world tactics and executions. Common elements for teaching international public relations include:

- **Culture:** The role the local culture of the target audience plays in successfully developing strategies and executing tactics presented through research articles, books, textbooks, and websites.
- **Case Studies:** Real-world examples of initiatives from a range of geographic locations, typically in the form of case studies written by the working professionals involved with the projects, and/or guest speakers invited into the classroom because of their experience working in public relations in one or more countries outside the United States.
- **Exercises and Best Practices:** Textbooks include in-depth discussions and best practices for developing strategies for international target audiences along with exercises that help students develop their skills. The most commonly used textbooks are at least seven years old (Jain & Swiatek, 2015). In addition to the textbooks, supplemental readings from recent industry publications or journals are often assigned.

Contents from the categories listed above frequently commingle. For example, textbooks may include various international case histories and brief summaries of projects that succeeded or failed, and up-to-date explanations about local culture may be relayed through guest speakers or supplemental articles.

Understanding foreign cultures is, appropriately, an area of particular emphasis in many courses (Jain & Swiatek, 2015). Although developing cultural sensitivity skills is new to most U.S. undergraduates, it is also crucial to success in international public relations. In “Teaching Culture: The Challenges and Opportunities of International Public Relations” Amiso M. George of the University of Nevada at Reno briefly discussed tactics such as media relations and audience research, and identified strategies to help international public relations students become more effective communicators including understanding their own cultural values and assumptions about foreign cultures and people (George, 2003).

Edward Twitchell Hall, cross-cultural researcher and contemporary of Ray Birdwhistell (pioneer in culturally patterned visual communication), Erving Goffman (considered the most influential sociologist of the twentieth century) and Clyde Kluckhohn (groundbreaking ethnographic researcher), developed the concept of “in-awareness” to identify elements within a culture that are observable and significant to understanding that particular culture. “In-awareness” contributes to effective international public relations as a means by which practitioners can understand the influence culture has on communication (Zaharna, 2001). Although public relations practitioners and educators rarely use the term “in-awareness” they frequently employ a three-tiered

framework derived from the concept to understand key audiences within foreign cultures: the country profile, the cultural profile, and the communication profile.

Popular textbooks for teaching international public relations often combine technical information about how to conduct research and strategic planning with real-world examples. In 2006 Michael G. Parkinson and Daradirek Ekachai published an undergraduate textbook, *International and Intercultural Public Relations*, which includes a wide range of international case study examples of successful executions along with guidelines for conducting and evaluating research and applying a strategic approach to public relations challenges in a cross-cultural context (Parkinson & Ekachai, 2006). In 2009, Alan R. Freitag and Ashli Quesinberry Stokes published a textbook titled *Global Public Relations: Spanning Borders, Spanning Cultures*. In addition to discussing the practice of public relations regions around the world from Africa, to Asia, to Latin America, to the Middle East, the book presents comparative cultural metrics as a framework for approaching international public relations initiatives (Freitag & Stokes, 2009).

The degree to which individual professors and instructors share common objectives but create their own distinct course experiences can be seen in both the choices educators make when combining the elements above and in the range of classroom activities, homework assignments, group projects, and assessment tools used throughout each semester. These ad-hoc choices drawn from a common but varied set of elements have resulted in a widely diverse spectrum of courses all categorized as international public relations (Jain & Swiatek, 2015).

Course titles typically include international public relations, but other terms are also frequently used or incorporated, including global public relations, intercultural communication, and international communication (Jain & Swiatek, 2015). Typical learning outcomes and course objectives found on syllabi for undergraduate and graduate level courses in international public relations include:

- **Examine public relations theory and practice** in an international context.
- **Recognize and understand significant differences** between people of different nationalities and cultures.
- **Demonstrate ability to research and analyze** an international public relations campaign using R.O.S.T.E. (Research, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics, Evaluation).
- **Explore political, socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and contextual variables** which determine specific public relations practices in different regions or nations.
- **Become aware of the different types of private and public organizations** (including national and transnational, for-profit, and non-profit) that use public relations strategies in a global marketplace and global public arena.
- **Analyze and discuss actual case studies** and/or campaigns.
- **Examine multiculturalism and diversity's** impact global on public relations and practice.
- **Introduce students to the global perspective** of public relations with an emphasis on corporate and agency public relations.
- **Research, track, and present** the efforts of a multicultural organization.

- **Become knowledgeable** about how public relations has developed and is practiced in other countries by reviewing pertinent literature.
- **Develop ways of communicating with global audiences** that are not only strategic and persuasive for that culture, but are also respectful of cultural and economic needs and sensitive to power imbalances between countries.
- **Evaluate characteristics of multicultural audiences** to determine effective ways to communicate with them via advertising and public relations. These characteristics may include language, media habits, geographical concentration, income, cultural values, education, level of prejudice directed toward the group, and degree of assimilation into mainstream society.
- **Identify and reflect upon one's own perspective** toward members of different groups to gain insight into attitudes that affect communication.
- **Learn to analyze international public relations practices** by applying environmental factors such as culture, law, media practices, and ethics.
- **Participate in a debate** on current issues in global public relations and critically analyze the case.

See Appendix A for syllabi acknowledgements.

In addition to not having a unified approach to teaching international public relations to undergraduates, academia also operates without a consensus on which theory (or theories) are more applicable to framing research efforts and classroom instruction (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). This mimics the situation concerning public relations itself where there has been little agreement among scholars regarding one unifying conceptual model for the profession. When it comes to international public relations, there is even

less unanimity. In fact, relatively few academics have attempted to describe international public relations from the theoretical perspective (Culbertson & Chen, 1996).

However, several of the prominent theories that describe public relations have been applied in research and in the classroom to international public relations. Since the practice of public relations influences a range of human behaviors, from persuasion in public affairs communications, to engagement on social media, to purchasing habits and many more, scholars rely on multiple theories when investigating and discussing public relations. Although fields of inquiry are expanding around the globe, most of the theories were developed in the west in order to understand western, usually American, audiences.

Theoretical discussions of public relations frequently incorporate one or more broad theories explaining certain human behaviors, some of which relate to public relations (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). These include communication theories such as the media dependency theory (Manheim & Albritton, 1984), or systems theories describing an individual's relationship to businesses and organizations. In collectivist cultures, a relational approach to engaging and communicating with audiences through public relations is frequently stressed in classrooms and in practice, instead of theories and models based on persuasion (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006).

Theoretical discussions that narrowly focus on international public relations frequently incorporate one or more broad theories explaining certain human behaviors and orientations toward culture, some of which relate to international public relations (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). These include theories describing cultures and providing common points of reference or cultural comparison and theories describing a global society and need for adaptive social and communication structures.

Perhaps the most widely used theory for understanding and exploring cultural diversity between countries around the globe is Geert Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (Vasquez & Taylor, 1999). Hofstede identified six basic dimensions common to every culture which form the basis for how societies organize and express themselves, including individualism, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede, 2015). For example, the United States and Russia are at different ends of Hofstede's scales for individualism (Americans are strongly individualistic) and power distance (Russians expect their leaders and government to have a strong role in shaping everyday choices and Russian life overall), and cultures in Asia are generally among the most collectivist. International public relations practitioners value Hofstede's dimensions because they identify and measure (on a scale from 0 to 100) characteristics of target audiences that influence how people interpret communication messages and how they relate to institutions, such as the media and governments. Understanding the target audience's perspective in each country helps public relations counselors fine tune their strategic approaches and messages so they can be optimized for that culture (Vasquez & Taylor, 1999).

When the academic discussion turns to public relations practices in a specific country outside the United States, especially in textbooks, broad theories like Hofstede's or those mentioned above focusing on public relations are frequently summarized and reviewed by way of introducing examples or case studies of public relations initiatives or trends in public relations practices (Parkinson & Ekachai, 2006; Culbertson & Chen, 1999; Freitag & Stokes, 2009). Mostly, these case studies focus on well-known American brands executing one or another public relations initiative in a foreign country in order to

advance a specific communications strategy, though some are more along the lines of anecdotal stories about how brands should avoid making embarrassing cultural blunders when they go abroad.

Theories that apply to the practice of public relations in the United States and which have been adapted by researchers studying international public relations include the excellence theories by James and Larissa Grunig and the critical theory put forth by Pam Creedon. The excellence theory of public relations posits that practitioners need to work with the C-suite or executive leadership of their company or organization to develop two-way communications with key audiences, and to align communication objectives with overall business goals. In its extension into international public relations, this theory incorporates cultural perspectives where practitioners research and build nuanced understandings of their audiences while focusing public relations planning on initiatives that drive business goals (Grunig, 1989). For example, brand building may be the global objective for a multinational company, but in a specific country business success may hinge on communicating product features and benefits to a key decision maker audience segment. In that instance, the in-market public relations team might set a strategy to execute locally needed product-oriented initiatives alongside the global corporate branding program.

The critical theory holds that the most effective approach for executing public relations plans is within a framework of network building and relationship building (Kent & Taylor, 2002). In its extension into international public relations, this theory can be applied to countries where the effectiveness of media relations is influenced by the rapport a multinational company or its agency has with local reporters. Likewise, because

it is rooted in relationships and networks, the theory can also be applied to countries where government relations are crucial to public relations success.

Having discussed international public relations and key academic theories supporting it, I now turn to an examination of the importance of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates, which leads to the Research Questions for this study.

### **Exploring the Importance of International PR Education**

This thesis, by a former practitioner with significant international experience, can explore the facts and in a small way lend a voice of support to the rationale for an authoritative report on teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates. However, it cannot do the work or deliver the impact of a broad-based commission. Studies from individual contributors like this one can explore relevant aspects of the topic and contribute data and tentative conclusions that are potentially worth considering when academics and industry thought leaders contemplate the merits and potential content of a commission report in the future. And, as with all research, studies like this one can raise questions worthy of further research and inquiry.

As mentioned earlier, The Commission on Public Relations Education is currently developing a new report that plans to address some aspects of teaching international public relations to undergraduates, potentially including ideal topics for courses and skills students should be taught (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015). In addition, Dr. Rajul Jain of DePaul University and Stephanie Swiatek from Allstate presented a preliminary report at the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America)

Educators Academy in 2015, “Preparing Students for the Global Workplace: Best Practices and Future Directions in International Public Relations Education”, that examined course and pedagogical approaches for teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates (Jain & Swiatek, 2015). In the future, they anticipate publishing their findings in greater detail in academic publications.

With those promising efforts already underway, the need exists for research that will help to better understand the qualifications and background of instructors teaching international public relations to undergraduates in the United States.

For practitioners working in the field of international public relations, professional success and job satisfaction can hinge on the ability to understand other cultures and strategically execute public relations tactics in a country that is foreign to the practitioner (Freitag, 2002; Jain & Swiatek, 2016). Developing the competence to interpret target audiences in foreign countries based upon an understanding of cultural values is critical.

Researchers have also pointed out the difficulty Americans can have in developing an effective ability to interpret foreign cultures. Blunders abound of high-profile American companies that created ads or key messages for a foreign audience that misfired (often with results that were hilarious to the foreign audience and embarrassing to the Americans) because the U.S. brand failed to understand the cultural context in which it was trying to communicate.

However, just as professional and academic observers and researchers agree on the importance of developing cross-cultural sensitivity, there is similar agreement that university curricula underinvest in teaching these skills to undergraduate public relations

students in the United States (Freitag, 2002). The 1999 Commission Report reiterated a concern from the 1987 report when it said, “Public relations courses should not be taught by people who have little or no experience and interest in the field and have no academic preparation in public relations” (Public Relations Society of America, 1999, p. 8). Freitag is among the researchers who have reported on the need and importance for international public relations teachers to have experience in multicultural environments (Freitag, 2002).

The Summary Report from the Commission in 2015 pointed out that “educators have difficulty inserting global content in courses. Mindset needs to change and room must be made. It becomes a competitive advantage to be global and think globally” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015, p. 17). Similarly, Sriramesh has discussed the significant role teachers play in international public relations education and how critical the cross-cultural perspective is to learning (Sriramesh, 2002). He believed that what was needed was a body of knowledge regarding multicultural public relations and a resource of qualified teachers able to communicate the knowledge of international public relations while also contributing to expanding it.

With the United States at the vanguard of the global public relations industry and American companies and brands integrated into the economic life of countries the world over, it is important for communication professionals and academics alike to consider how international public relations is being taught to undergraduates in the United States and what are the backgrounds and qualifications of the professors and instructors who stand at the head of the classroom doing the teaching (Freitag, 2002; George, 2003; Jain & Swiatek, 2016).

An important, and as yet relatively unstudied, aspect of that question is to consider the specific professional and academic training and background of university instructors who teach undergraduates international public relations and their experience with foreign cultures (Freitag, 2002). It makes sense to consider instructor background since developing cultural sensitivity can be a challenging journey for anyone and teachers who have already traveled the route themselves may have developed useful perspectives and a degree of credibility unavailable to teachers without international experience.

As the Commission Report “The Professional Bond” noted in 2006, “When [educators who have travelled to global conferences focusing on the practice of international public relations or who have participated in industry sponsored programs abroad] return home, these educators bring back new perspectives of public relations benefiting both their students and colleagues” (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006, p. 38).

One important caveat regarding this study: Researching the international background of instructors, of course, does not preclude the idea that there are excellent teachers without personal global experience. Certainly there are. While this study focuses on the international background and qualifications of educators, in the future, research could be done to specifically examine the connection between the background of teachers and student performance in international public relations courses and, perhaps, later in the workplace.

The purpose of this study is to gather and analyze relevant data that leads to a better understanding of the international qualifications and background of professors and

instructors teaching international public relations to undergraduates in American universities.

The premise for this study is consistent with research and observations made by previous scholars, as well as public relations professionals, and follows this approach: Developing proficiency in cross-cultural understanding is critical to the success of international public relations practitioners, and it is a core learning objective in most university classes in international public relations. It is a skill that most people need time and practice to develop. Teachers who have cultivated and internalized this skill themselves, in contrast to those who may have a grasp of it intellectually but lack personal experience in having developed or used it, are likely to be adept in teaching and transferring the skill to students. Therefore, when considering how international public relations is taught to undergraduates in the United States, it would be useful to understand the international qualifications and background of professors and instructors teaching the courses.

### **Research Questions**

Considering the importance of developing a proficiency in cross-cultural understanding this study is focused on the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the international background of professors and instructors teaching undergraduate university courses in international public relations in the United States, have an impact on how they approach teaching?

RQ2 : And, if so how does their background impact their teaching and/or the curriculum?

## Methodology

This study is based on data collected through telephone interviews with targeted, select academic thought leaders in the field of teaching international public relations, and a broad email survey sent to professors and instructors teaching undergraduate university courses in the United States. Both the phone interviews and email survey share the same lines of inquiry, with the responses from the focused set of academic thought leaders in the telephone interviews serving to provide greater depth and context to data gathered via the email survey sent to a broader set of respondents.

The first step was to define and develop basic lines of inquiry that would be used in drafting specific questions and question types common to both the telephone interviews and email survey. The lines of inquiry or general topics for the research include:

- Home country of the respondent: Those hailing from outside the United States will have already needed to adapt to life in a new culture and would have lived experience in handling cross-cultural issues.
- Professional experience working in international public relations: Those who have held professional positions with international public relations responsibilities would have firsthand experience with the cross-cultural challenges students will face upon entering the field, in addition to understanding the expectations of clients and employers.
- Demographics about the respondent and background regarding the international public relations course(s) they teach or recently taught: This information is instrumental to meaningfully organizing and analyzing the data.

## **Pilot Study**

Prior to conducting the telephone interviews and launching the email survey, a pilot study was conducted. The instrument was an email survey and the purpose was to test the clarity of the questions (i.e., whether respondents had any issues or barriers to answering the questions based on wording, answer choices, etc.). It also sought to understand whether the online input and coding of the survey functioned as intended (i.e., whether respondents progressed through the survey as intended). Results of the pilot study yielded responses that were consistent with a survey that was technically sound and easy for respondents to interpret and understand as intended and complete. Appendix B includes further background on the pilot study.

Nonetheless, after the completion of the pilot study, changes were made to adjust the scope of the research and streamline the project. Those decisions were made not as a result of the pilot study but after discussions with academic thought leaders such as Alan Freitag and Rajul Jain who have been focusing on the question of how international public relations is being taught. Freitag suggested that there was a need for a study exploring the cross-cultural background of teachers, and Jain was completing new research on how international public relations is being taught but was not considering the background of instructors. Jain concurred with Freitag that a study exploring the cross-cultural background of teachers would be unique and useful.

Several measures were taken to ensure unique respondents for the pilot study that would be separate from the broad email survey. Comingling of respondents between the telephone interviews and either the pilot study or the email survey was not of concern

since participants in the telephone interviews would be relatively few in number and hand selected. The distribution list for the broad email survey would be members of PRSA (the Public Relations Society of America) who were also members of the Educators Academy group within PRSA. The distribution list for the pilot study would be hand selected educators from the 2015 edition of universities in the “Where Shall I Go To Study Advertising and Public Relations” publication compiled by the American Academy of Advertising based on the following criteria: 1) The university website lists an undergraduate course in international public relations, and 2) The university does not have a PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) chapter, thereby reducing the likelihood of an educator being a member of PRSA and making it even less likely they would be a PRSA member and belong to PRSA’s Educators Academy.

Invitations to participate in the pilot study were sent to 34 educators, and potential respondents were given three weeks to complete the pilot survey and two reminders were sent. Four participated in the study, for a disappointing response rate of 12%. The results may have been due to unforeseeable but unfortunately bad timing whereby it simply caught many recipients at a bad point in their schedules, or there could have been a shortcoming in the list from the American Academy of Advertising. However, the results were consistent with a survey that was technically sound and easy for respondents to interpret and understand as intended. Based on those results, the decision was made to move ahead with the broader research elements.

## Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with seven select academic thought leaders in the field of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates in order to gather data and information what would provide greater depth and context to data that would be gathered via the broad email survey. Whereas participants in the email survey would include teachers of courses in international public relations or of courses with a focus on international public relations, participants in the telephone interviews had to meet a more rigorous set of criteria. Potential interview subjects were required to meet at least two of the following criteria:

- Author or co-author of an undergraduate textbook on international public relations
- Author or co-author of at least one research article on the topic of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates
- Been selected to present at an academic conference on the topic of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates
- Be the Chair or Director or hold a similar position of responsibility (currently or formerly) within a U.S. university where international public relations is being taught to undergraduates
- Be the teacher of a course in international public relations or advertising that's regularly taught in to U.S. undergraduates

Email invitations were extended to 15 qualified thought leaders based on the above criteria and seven agreed to participate. Telephone interviews were conducted over a 12-day period. Of the seven participants, one met two of the above criteria, three met four criteria, one met four criteria and one participant met all five criteria.

Each telephone interviews consisted of the following six questions and lasted an average of 20 minutes. The questions provided respondents with time and opportunity to elaborate on topics and questions raised in the online survey.

1. Discuss the benefits/rationale for teaching international public relations. What's the value to students?
2. What are the most important skills undergraduates should be taught in international public relations courses? Why?
3. What skills/qualities of the instructor in international public relations courses are the most valuable? Briefly discuss up to three.
4. Discuss the most successful kinds of in-class exercises and assignments – and what makes them effective.
5. What in-class exercises and assignments have you tried that have not worked? Why?
6. How do you keep up with developments in international public relations?

Each call was recorded and respondents were assured that their responses would be anonymous and would not be attributed to their university. Appendix C includes further background on the telephone interviews.

### **Email Survey**

An email survey consisting of 37 questions was developed and members of the PRSA Educators Academy were invited to participate. PRSA approves and coordinates all research projects involving its members, including subgroups of the organization like the Educators Academy. PRSA sent the survey invitation three times to 734 members of

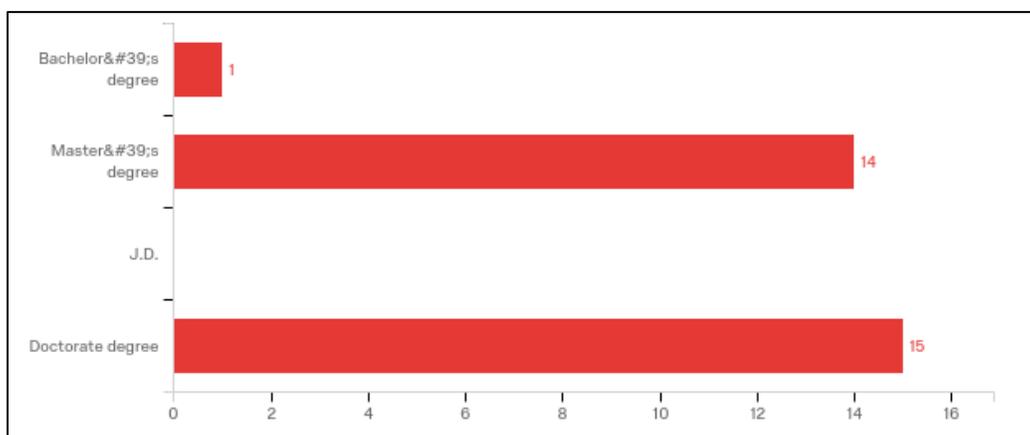
the Educators Academy. Members of the Educators Academy pay an extra fee to belong to the subgroup and it is presumed, but not required, that all are actively involved or have an interest in teaching public relations to university students. It is unknown how many of those members teach undergraduate courses on international public relations in the United States. At least some of the questions were answered by 49 respondents (a 7% response rate) and 30 completed the entire survey (a 4% response rate). The data is reviewed and analyzed in the following sections of this study, and further background on the email survey can be found in Appendix D.

## Findings

### Email Survey to Educators Academy

Respondents of the 30 completed surveys are about equally split between those holding Doctorate or Master's degrees with 14 Master's degree holders and 15 Doctorates (Fig. 1). A total of 16 respondents are tenured, and another five are tenure track.

Figure 1  
*Highest degree held by respondents*



About 75% of respondents hold the title of Professor or Associate Professor, and the remaining respondents are split equally between the titles Assistant Professor, Clinical Instructor (Instructor of Practice), and Other.

Survey respondents are experienced educators focused on teaching public relations (Fig. 2, 3). About 74% have been teaching at the university level for 11 years or more, and about 68% have been teaching public relations courses for more than a decade.

Figure 2

*Number of years that respondents have been teaching at the university level in the United States*

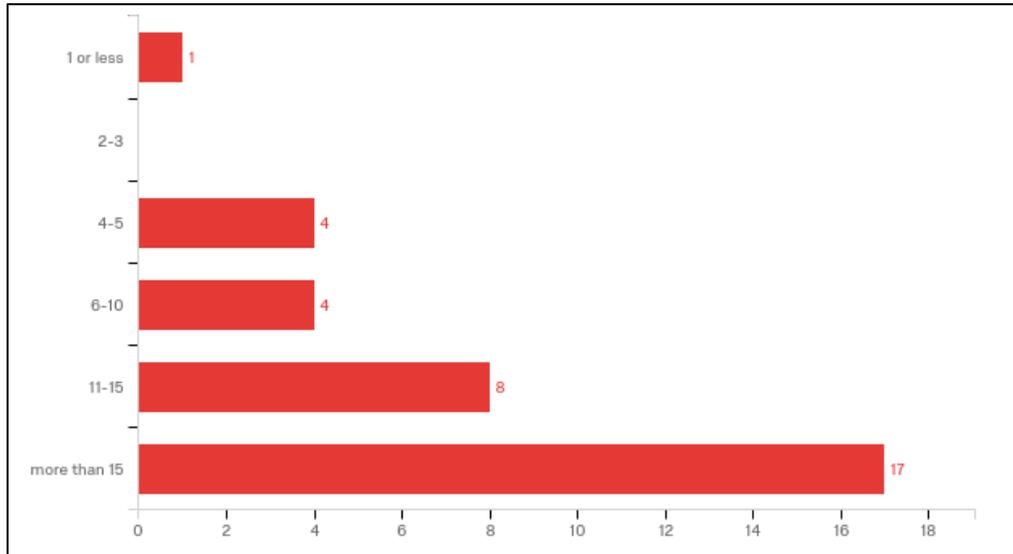
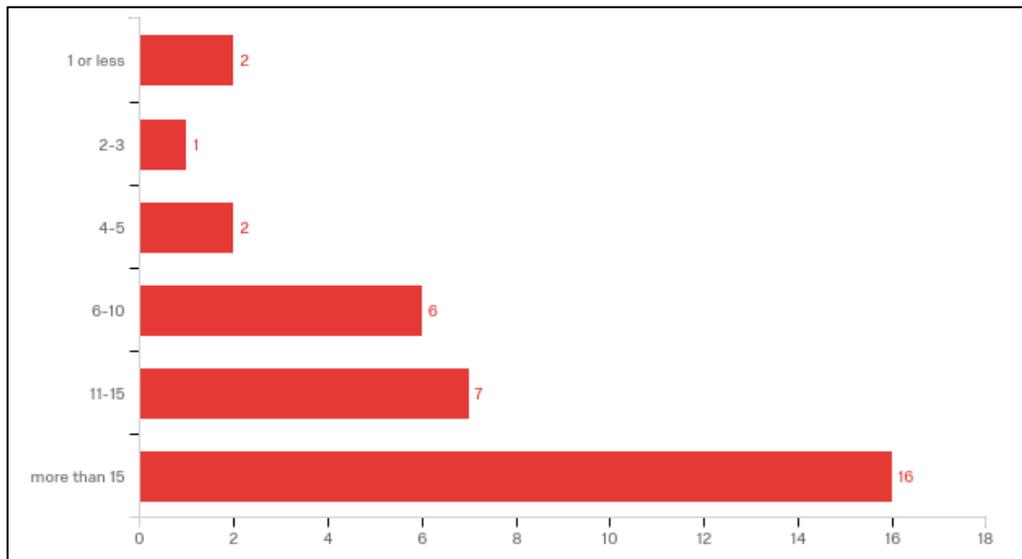


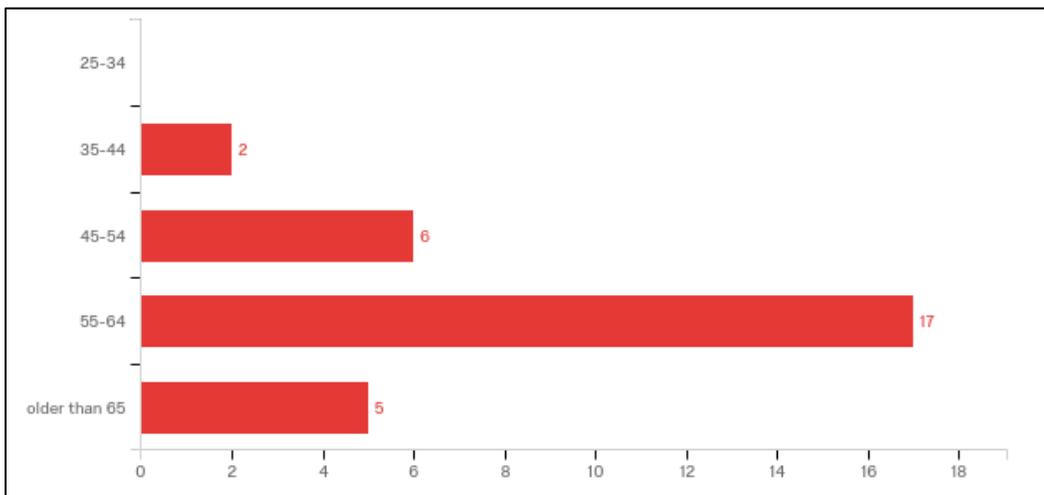
Figure 3

*Number of years that respondents have been teaching public relations courses at the university level in the United States*



Half of the respondents are age 55 to 64, and most of the rest are divided about equally between the age categories 45 to 54 and those older than 65. No respondent is less than 35 years old (Fig.4).

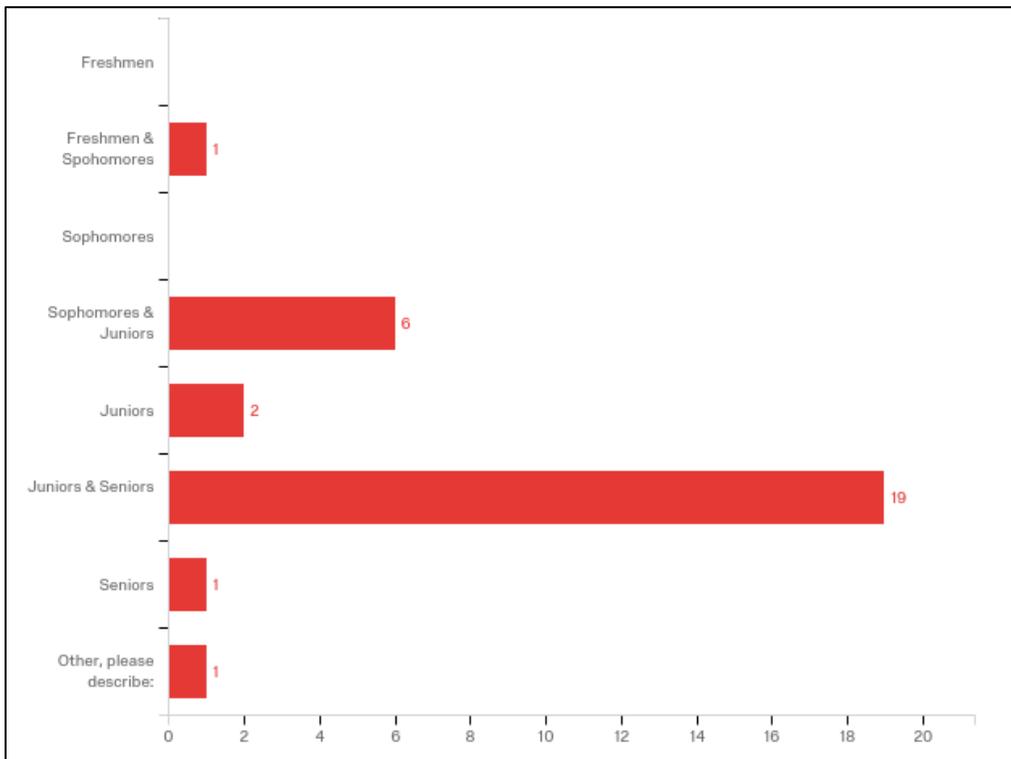
Figure 4  
*Age ranges of respondents*



The vast majority of respondents (85%) teach international public relations as a module or focused section within a broader class, instead of as a course that concentrates exclusively on the topic. In most instances (70%) the course is aimed at students who have achieved the class rank of junior or senior, and in 20% of the instances the class is comprised of sophomores and juniors (Fig. 5).

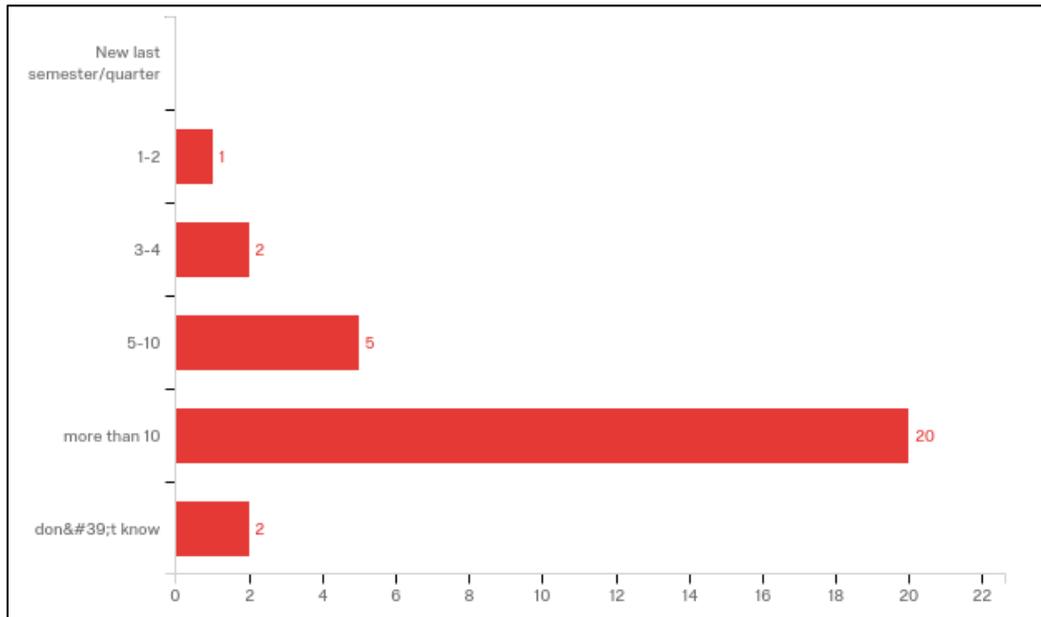
Figure 5

*Student composition of the class that focuses on or includes a dedicated module on international public relations*



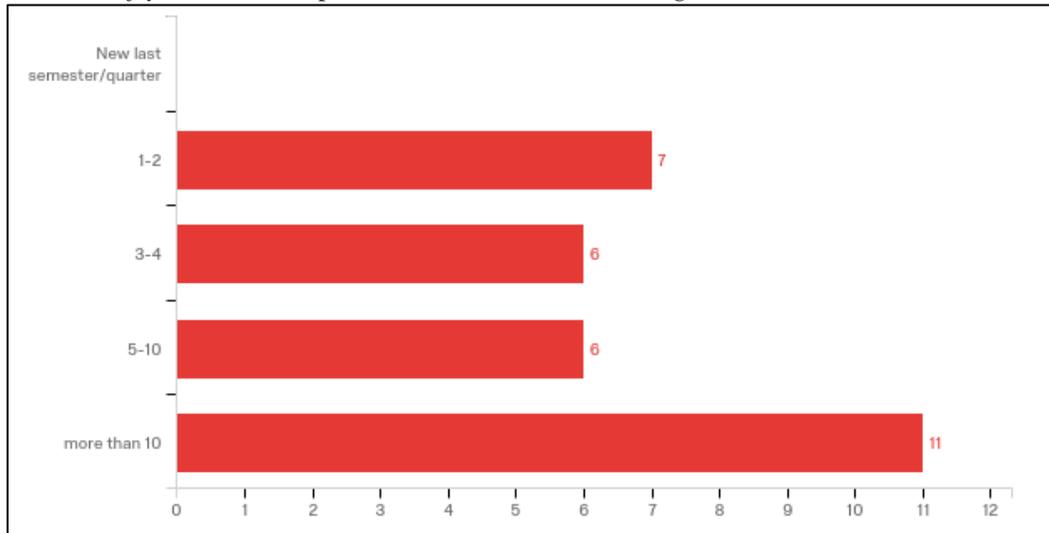
In the vast majority of instances, the course is an established part of the curriculum. In 20 of 30 cases (67%) respondents report that the course has been taught at their university for more than 10 years with another 17% reporting that it has been taught for between five and 10 years (Fig. 6).

Figure 6  
*Number of years the course has been taught at the respondent's university*



About one-third of respondents have been teaching the course for more than 10 years, and in total 57% have been teaching it for more than five years. About 23% have been teaching the course for one or two years (Fig. 7).

Figure 7  
*Number of years that respondents have been teaching the course*



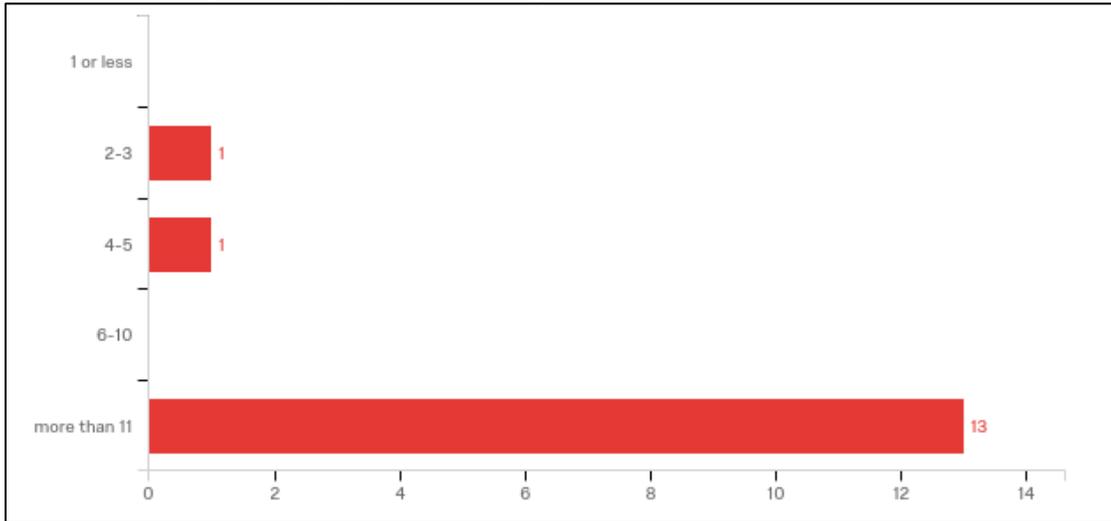
## Survey Results

With U.S. communications professionals providing public relations support to companies and brands worldwide, it is important to consider how international public relations is being taught to undergraduates in the US, and what are the backgrounds and qualifications of the professors and instructors who stand at the head of the classroom doing the teaching (Freitag, 2002; Sriramesh, 2002; George, 2003; Jain & Swiatek, 2016). One research component for this study explored the professional public relations experience of the survey respondents.

Prior to becoming an educator in undergraduate public relations, 30 of 34 respondents worked full-time as a public relations practitioner in the United States. Most respondents with international work experience had substantial careers in private practice of 11 years or more (Fig. 8).

Figure 8

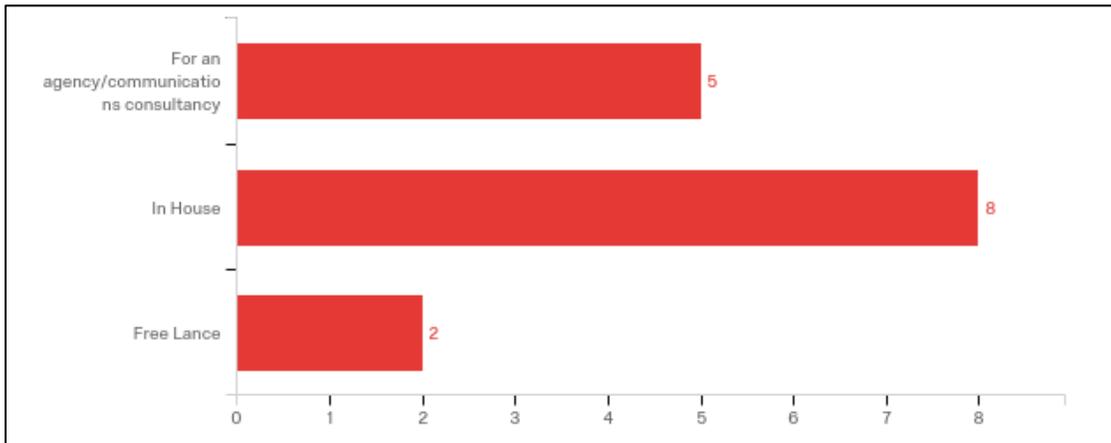
*Number of years that respondents with international work experience held full-time public relations positions prior to entering academia*



In their professional careers, the academics worked as public relations practitioners across the range of capacities including in-house, agency, and freelance. A slight majority of respondents (eight of 15) worked in-house (Fig. 9). Since professionals often change organizations over the course of their careers, respondents selected as many positions as appropriate for this question.

Figure 9

*The capacities in which respondents worked as public relations professionals*



Of the educators who had worked professionally, slightly more than half had international public relations responsibilities (16 of 30 respondents) (Fig. 10). Of that group, about half focused on international public relations 10% or less of the time and about a quarter of those respondents worked in international between 26% and 50% of the time. Only one respondent focused on international initiatives between 51% and 75% of the time (Fig. 11).

Figure 10

*The number of respondents who had international public relations responsibilities during their professional career*

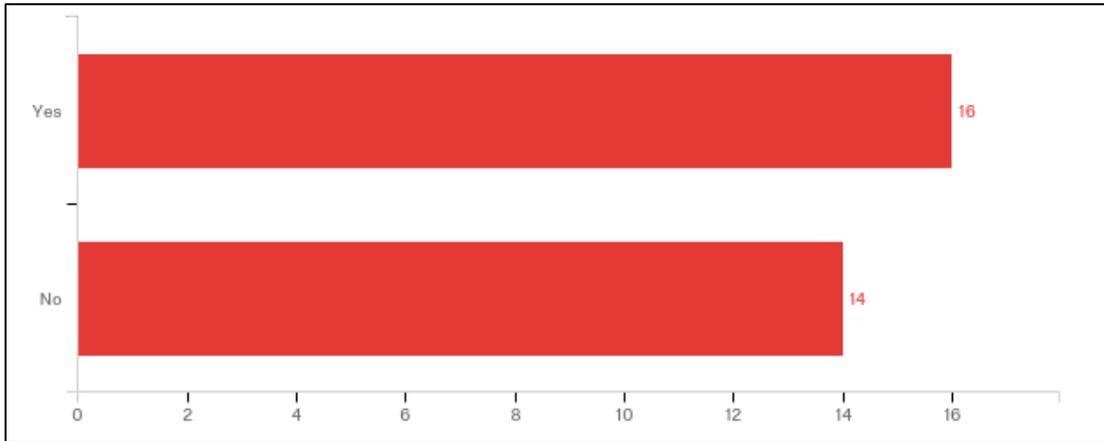
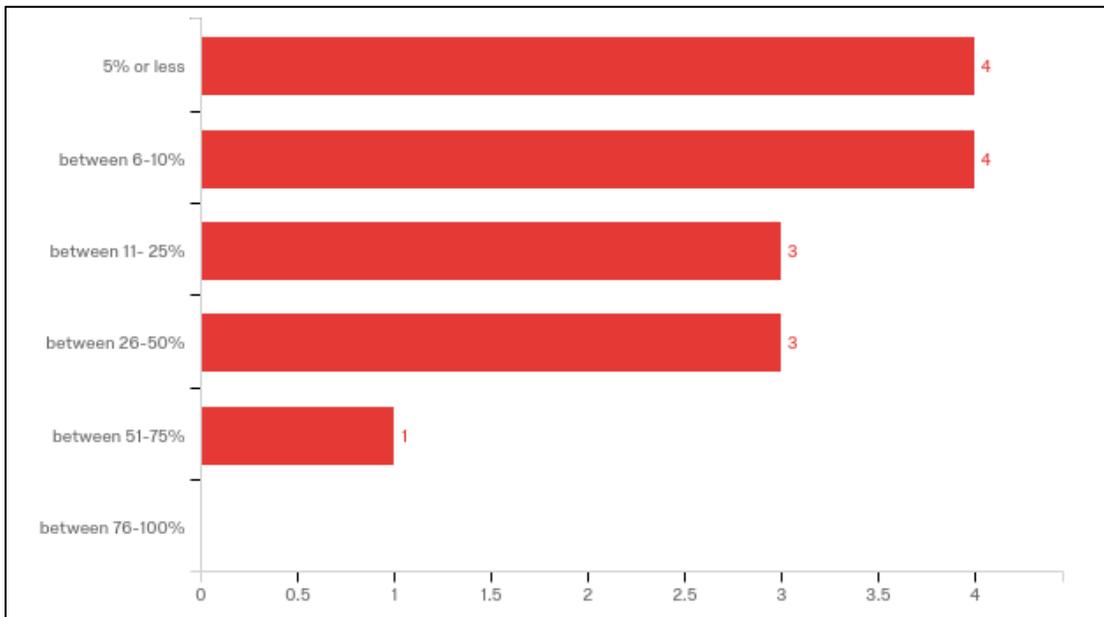


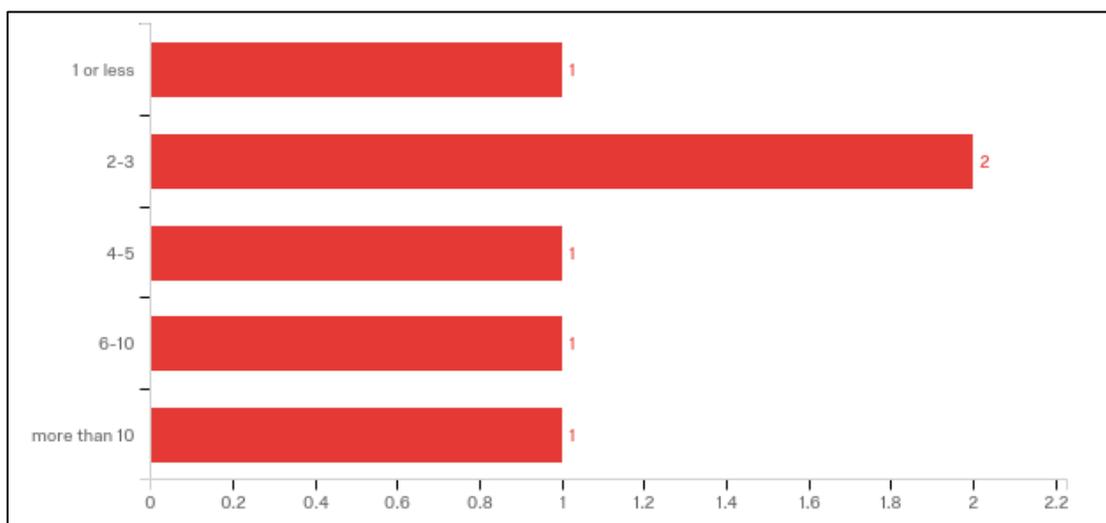
Figure 11

*The percentage of time respondents who worked professionally focused on international public relations initiatives*



Although the majority of those who held professional public relations positions worked within the United States, six of the 15 lived and worked internationally. Of the six, three worked outside of the United States for at least four years (Fig. 12).

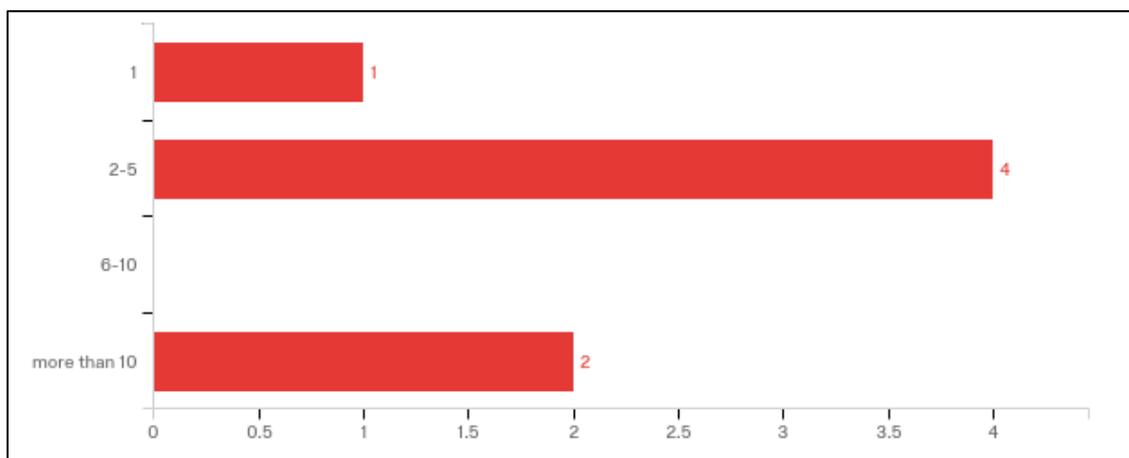
Figure 12  
*Length of time lived outside of the United States while working as public relations professionals*



Among the educators with professional public relations experience working within the United States, the majority (seven of nine) were required to participate in international business trips as part of their responsibilities. Most of those (four respondents) took between two and five international business trips, and two travelled outside of the United States 10 or more times for work (Fig. 13).

Figure 13

*The number of international business trips taken by respondents who worked as public relations professionals in the United States*

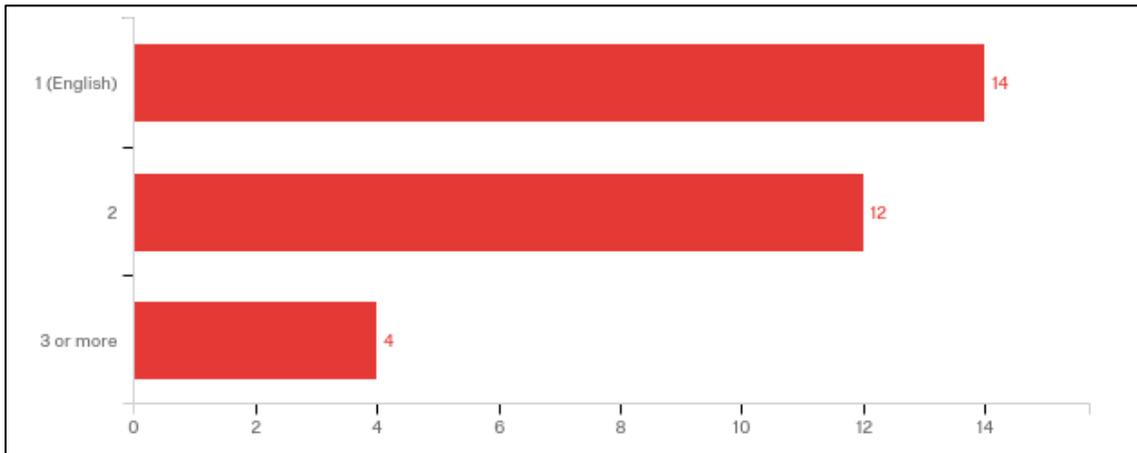


Of the 15 respondents who worked professionally as public relations practitioners in the United States prior to turning to academia, a majority (nine respondents) continue to work professionally while they teach. One-third of the teachers who also work professionally have international public relations responsibilities (three respondents).

In addition to their professional international public relations experience, teachers can bring a global perspective to the classroom based on their personal experience. The Summary Report from the Commission in 2015 pointed out the important role a teacher's background can play in developing cross-cultural mindset among students (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2015). One research component for this study explored the personal international and cross-cultural experiences of the survey respondents.

Only two of 33 respondents were born outside of the United States. One is from China and another hails from India. Nonetheless, 12 respondents are bilingual and four speak three or more languages (Fig. 14).

Figure 14  
*The number of languages spoken by respondents*

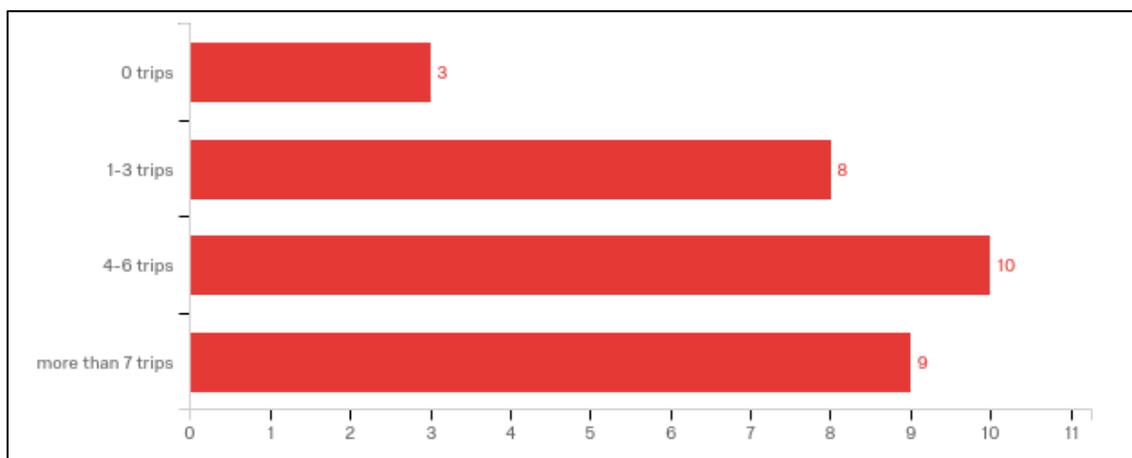


During their time studying as undergraduate and as graduate students, about one-third of respondents (nine of 30) took a course on international public relations or cross-cultural communication. Only three participated in a study abroad program as a university student.

However, the respondents are well-travelled internationally. About one-third have taken more than seven personal trips outside the United States in the last ten years, about another third travelled internationally between four and six times, and about another third took between one and three personal trips abroad. Only three respondents have never ventured outside the United States on a personal trip (Fig. 15).

Figure 15

*Number of personal trips outside the United States taken by respondents in the last ten years*



Public relations professionals who work internationally must bring to their strategic planning efforts an understanding of how to interpret and comprehend key aspects of foreign cultures if they are to effectively communicate with, persuade, and engage target audiences in countries other than their own (Freitag, 2002; Sriramesh, 2002; Jain & Swiatek, 2016). One research component for this study explored the use of cross-cultural theory in international public relations classes taught by survey respondents, as well as the use of textbooks that emphasize cross-cultural communication.

About two-thirds (19 of 29 respondents) dedicate classroom time to teaching cultural values, such as Geert Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions, as part of the learning approach for understanding foreign markets and target audiences. Respondents reported using eight different textbooks. Ten respondents use textbooks that cover a range of public relations topics including international, and seven assign textbooks that focus exclusively on international public relations (Table 1). Respondents who did not

list a textbook reported using case studies they independently sought, student-driven research or readings, or an assemblage of articles.

Table 1

*Textbooks assigned for use in class*

<u>Textbook</u> <u>Title; Author(s)</u>	<u>Year of</u> <u>1<sup>st</sup> Edition</u>	<u># of Respondents</u> <u>Using the Textbook</u>
<i>THINK Public Relations</i> ; Wilcox, Cameron, Reber, Shin	2010	5
<i>The Practice of Public Relations</i> ; Seitel	2007	3
<i>Global Public Relations: Spanning Borders, Spanning Cultures</i> ; Freitag & Stokes	2009	2
<i>International Public Relations</i> ; Curtin & Gaither	2007	2
<i>Public Relations: A Value Driven Approach</i> ; Guth, Marsh	2002	2
<i>The Global Public Relations Handbook</i> ; Sriramesh & Vercic	2009	1
<i>Bridging the Gaps in Global Communication</i> ; Newsom	2006	1
<i>International and Intercultural Public Relations: A Campaign Case Approach</i> ; Parkinson & Ekachai	2005	1

### **Telephone Interviews with Thought Leaders**

Insights provided by academic thought leaders during the telephone interviews yielded greater context and added examples and specificity to data gathered through the email survey and other research done for this project.

Respondents to the online survey mentioned the importance of understanding cultural sensitivity, and noted how it contributes to effective strategic communication regardless of whether a practitioner works in the United States or abroad. Comments made during the telephone interviews include:

- “It [learning international public relations] helps them in the workplace. Even if they don’t go on international assignments or work with international clients, the workplace itself has become a global milieu with people from all over the world working in PR.”
- “Social media and everything else you do in the United States travels fast. You need to be sensitive about the impact of what you say.”
- “Understanding the profession from a varied, broad perspective can help students avoid fundamental mistakes in the workplace, even if they never leave the United States.”

When discussing the benefits of teaching international public relations telephone interview respondents underscored the importance it has for companies, and expanded on the point to include the value that having an international mindset brings to a public relations professional career. For example, not all public relations counselors will work overseas; however, many will have international assignments. Another point was that news now travels internationally in an instant, especially via social media, which means that public relations counselors must be aware of the global impact of their messages. A final point mentioned on this topic was that the workplace for all communications professionals is becoming increasingly diverse and public relations practitioners are working in a “global milieu” comprised of international colleagues and diverse target

audiences in the United States. Another survey respondent observed that some international public relations firms have international ownership, meaning that some students will be working for bosses overseas and will need to function effectively within a foreign corporate culture in order to achieve career success.

Other telephone respondents focused on specific skills that should be taught, and emphasized the importance for undergraduate students to learn how to transfer skills learned in other public relations courses, such as effective writing, to an international context:

- “An important skill is learning to write for an audience that is not from your culture.”
- “The ability to recognize different constructs of message delivery in intercultural settings.”
- “There should be an understanding of the range of variables that impact our practice, like media systems and government regulations.”
- “Knowing how to imbed strategic thinking into your PR communications and being aware of cultural nuances are critical. So the communication has impact.”

Like several of the industry commissions that commented on the international public relations skills undergraduates need, two telephone interview respondents mentioned language skills. One of those respondents, as well as an additional respondent, expanded on that thought to say that the skills needed go beyond language to include how to use a foreign language effectively to deliver public relations messages to target audiences. One mentioned the use of social media in particular. In discussing the most important skills undergraduates should be taught in international public relations,

respondents mentioned knowing how to think strategically in culturally relevant ways, and understanding the importance of foreign government structures and media systems. Another respondent brought up Hofstede specifically is discussing the importance for students to understand how cultural values impacts the perception of public relations messages. It is worth mentioning here that several of the respondent's comments have implications in international public relations theory and will be revisited in the Conclusions section of this paper.

Most relevant to the focus of this study were the comments telephone interview respondents made when discussing the most valuable skills and qualities of instructors of international public relations. The respondents believe that instructors should have as extensive an international background as possible, both through work-related and personal experience. Several respondents mentioned that an instructor with a well-rounded international background and perspective is usually adept in teaching students how to adapt public relations skills to various cultures. And they expanded on that observation by discussing how instructors should put their internationalism to work for students. One mentioned that instructors working from their own solid international foundation should be able to push students out of their comfort zone to embrace global perspectives while still supporting students as they expand their boundaries. One made the analogy of instructors "pulling back the onion" of another culture layer by layer until students understand it. Another pointed out the importance of instructors being tireless in creating, and continually adding value to, international opportunities for students, such as study abroad experiences.

On the topic of effective classroom practices for teaching international public relations, respondents focused on best practices for using case studies. Two mentioned taking an existing case study and altering one facet (e.g., changing the country from France to Japan) and asking students to explain how the executions would need to be changed for the new circumstance. One of those respondents along with two others brought up the limitations of case studies. According to those respondents, instructors need to guide students beyond the case study basic facts to the cultural significance that underpins them. To provide deeper cultural meaning and perspective, respondents require students to interview students or others from countries where a case study takes place, or they pose reflective questions to get students thinking about the foreign audience. One respondent discussed the challenge of connecting public relations theory to case studies and observed that it is insufficient to simply present the theory and the real world example without providing accompanying discussions and exercises to help students fully understand how theory and execution relate to each other.

The ever-changing international business and political landscape presents an ongoing challenge for teachers who need to stay abreast of trends and developments. Respondents to the telephone interview try to keep up through a variety of means. Some say they rely on their students for up-to-date information: “A lot of my students have international backgrounds and I keep in touch with them. I use that to my advantage to find out what’s going on in their country.” Another said, “It helps to have students generate questions and comments about what they’re studying in class that week because it introduces news and new sources of information into the classroom. The assignment is

useful because students as a group will be following more and different news sources than a teacher will.”

Others attend international public relations conferences that are held around the world, as well as seeking opportunities to travel and teach outside of the United States. One shared, “One thing about me: I’m a news junkie” while another acknowledged the challenge as overwhelming by commenting “How do you keep up? You don’t. You can only keep up with one little piece of it at a time.”

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to better understand the international qualifications and background of professors and instructors teaching international public relations to undergraduates in American universities. As a public relations professional with more than 25 years of experience, including nine years working in China and throughout Asia, my observation is that respondents in this research have every reason to approach the topic of public relations with confidence. In this study, about 74% have been teaching at the university level for 11 years or more, and about 68% have been teaching public relations courses for more than a decade. This means that, as a group, the respondents are experienced educators both in the classroom and specifically in teaching public relations.

In addition, members participating in this survey bring international experience into the classroom. The majority of respondents, 30 of 34, worked at some point in their career as full-time public relations practitioners, and most of those who had international responsibilities in the private sector (15) had lengthy careers of 11 years or more. And although the majority of those who held professional public relations positions worked within the United States, six of 15 with global experience did live and work outside the United States. Also, about one-third have been teaching the international public relations course for more than ten years, and in total 57% have been teaching it for more than five years. This means that, for this study, a majority of students are being taught international public relations by instructors who have worked globally and who have significant classroom experience. The findings suggest that these instructors combine first-hand international expertise with effective classroom skills.

Beyond professional international public relations qualifications, respondents in this study also bring an overall global perspective to the classroom based on their personal experience. Their personal experience, based primarily on travel and language skills, is relatively narrow but nonetheless relevant. About one-third have taken more than seven personal trips outside the United States in the last ten years, and about another third travelled internationally between four and six times. Also, about 40% of respondents are bilingual and an additional 13% speak three or more languages. In total, 53% of respondents speak at least one language in addition to English. Respondents to the telephone interview reinforced the importance of language skills. Whenever someone learns a language they also absorb knowledge about culture and history, which are important perspectives to pass along when teaching international public relations.

Although educators teaching international public relations to undergraduates in the United States generally have a solid background for the job at hand, teaching qualifications are by no means uniform throughout their ranks. For example, in this study less than 60% of the instructors were bilingual or spoke three or more languages, and similarly, less than 60% percent have professional international public relations experience. In fact, in most of the metrics for aspects of cultural competence in this study, instructors were under 60%, such as the percentage who have taken international business trips and the percentage who lived and worked internationally. This demonstrates that most instructors in this study possess personal qualifications and expertise to teach international public relations but credentials are unevenly dispersed. This means that

students are not being consistently taught by instructors with high qualifications, based on the measures in this study.

My observation from a professional's perspective is that this lack of uniformity in instructor experience challenges academia's ability to consistently graduate international public relations students with consistent backgrounds into the workforce. I have witnessed many young professionals with the desire to work internationally passed over for assignments because they lack international training and experience, and I have seen underqualified young professionals struggle with global assignments for the same reason. For example, lacking the understanding that media structures differ by country, some young professionals recommend inappropriate, U.S.-centric media strategies for foreign markets.

Another observation based on this study that suggests a possible remedy is that no industry commission has ever been formed to address creating recommendations or identifying best practices for the teaching of international public relations. Such a commission would have the work of previous commissions, a small but relevant body of academic research, and the expertise of a select group of qualified educators and industry professionals to leverage as a starting point. If a new commission were launched, the result could be recommendations for instructor qualifications, such as language aptitude and demonstrated cross-cultural sensitivity. And recommendations for teaching international public relations, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions and suggested approaches for teaching case studies that guide students toward connecting theory with real world executions (as discussed earlier in this paper).

A new commission on teaching international public relations to undergraduates in the United States could also focus on establishing a clear definition of international public relations. The need for a definition that demarcates and explains the practice, and which all relevant parties would implement when framing their approaches to the practice, was mentioned earlier in this study and previously by other researchers including Jain and Swiatek (Jain & Swiatek, 2015).

Turning to teaching practices and their connection to theories regarding international public relations, this study concludes that critical theory, excellence theory, and Hofstede's cultural dimensions are all emphasized by instructors in this research. In addition, respondents in both the telephone interviews and the online survey expressed consistency with the three elements common to international public relations courses discussed earlier in this study as well as many of the learning outcomes mentioned on syllabi, also discussed earlier here.

In the international context, critical theory emphasizes building relationships and rapport between a company or organization and its key audiences, including media and government (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Participants in this study demonstrated use of the critical theory for international public relations when, for example, telephone interview respondents discussed case studies and the importance of connecting them to theories. These exercises include developing relationships with institutions, like government, within foreign societies. As one respondent said, "There should be an understanding of the range of variables that impact our practice, like media systems and government regulations." This shows how students in this study are being taught how businesses and

organizations engage and build relationships with key audiences. The approach is consistent with critical theory.

A second theory that, according to this study, instructors emphasize in their classrooms is excellence theory. It states that public relations practitioners must work with the C-suite or executive leadership to develop two-way communications with key audiences, and to align communication objectives with overall business goals. In the context of international public relations, this theory incorporates cultural perspectives where practitioners research and build nuanced understandings of their audiences while focusing public relations planning on initiatives that drive business goals (Grunig, 1989). Respondents to the online survey mentioned the importance of understanding cultural issues and cultivating a strong sense of cultural sensitivity. They noted how it contributes to effective strategic communication regardless of whether a practitioner works in the United States or abroad. In the verbatim online survey section one respondent said, “Understanding of cultural, historical, and ideological dimensions are critical to international practice.” And one telephone interview respondent said that students must “know how to understand and communicate with publics. That requires knowing their culture and understanding where they are coming from.” This shows how students in this study are being taught the importance of cultural sensitivity and how communication initiatives must align with businesses goals in order to be successful. The approach is consistent with excellence theory.

A third example from this study shows how theory is being taught to international public relations students concerns Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions. Hofstede was mentioned specifically by respondents as was the importance of cross-cultural skills

to the successful practice of international public relations. As one online survey respondent said in verbatim comments, “A familiarity with intercultural communication, and possibly more than familiarity, is helpful.” And as a participant in the telephone interview said, “To have an understanding of culture and how it impacts public relations – even if it’s just a basic understanding of the indicators of culture, like high-context/low-context, or Hofstede’s cultural dimensions – will help them understand how you address PR situations in another different cultural context.” This shows how students in this study are being extensively exposed to theories and tactics that teach cultural values and compare multiple cultures, such as Hofstede. The approach is consistent with the contents in the syllabi sample discussed earlier in this paper and how public relations professionals approach global markets.

### **Final Thoughts and Recommendations**

This study outlines the many positive attributes of instructors teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates and their relevance to the material, such as the fact that about half have worked internationally and about one-third have taken more than seven personal trips outside the United States in the past decade. It also demonstrates instructors’ adherence to accepted communication theories that apply to international public relations. However, results from this study also indicate that instructor backgrounds are inconsistent, and more than 40% of respondents often lack a key attribute for teaching international public relations, such as working outside of the United States or foreign language skills.

Experienced professionals like myself value process orientation and systems that help ensure results. By committing to a new commission that would focus on identifying instructor qualifications and best practices for teaching international public relations, academia and the industry could create guidelines and establish a groundwork that would result in improved instruction in the following ways:

- **Make Instructor Backgrounds More Consistent:** The commission could define general guidelines universities should consider when selecting instructors for international public relations courses. The guidelines would be consistent with the qualities and qualifications outlined in the work and observations of earlier researchers that were mentioned earlier in this paper, including experience working in foreign cultures.
- **Encourage Development of New Textbooks and Other Materials:** International public relations is a dynamic topic, fast-changing topic; however, most of the textbooks about it are older. Value could likely be added to classroom experiences if new textbooks were available and the new commission could help drive that initiative. Survey respondents use eight different textbooks, five of which are dedicated to the topic of international public relations while three are general titles that include an international component. This survey confirmed what was first reported by Rajul Jain of DePaul University and Stephanie Swiatek from Allstate to the PRSA Educators Academy in 2015: most textbooks commonly used to teach international public relations in the United States are old (Jain & Swiatek, 2015). The most recently published textbooks on international public relations used by survey respondents are from 2009, and the oldest was

first published in 2006. While some of the textbooks have been updated more recently, the dramatic changes in international business and communication suggest that an entirely fresh approach to the topic might be of value. It is worth noting that in 2017, a new textbook, *Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street: How to Practice Global Public Relations and Strategic Communication*, was published (Alaimo, 2017). Educators are currently considering it, so it is too soon to know what contribution it may make to the teaching of international public relations.

- **Develop Recommendations or Resources Supporting Instructor Desires to Stay Current:** Study results from the telephone interviews suggest a weakness in how teachers of international public relations stay abreast of ongoing changes and developments affecting business and communication. None of the respondents described an intentional process they use, and overall responses suggest that knowledge fluctuates inconsistently over time. For example, some seemed to say they are only, or feel they are only, up-to-date after attending an international conference or after class sessions in which their students have raised new topics. A new commission report could survey instructors and thought leaders to identify the best and most relied upon media outlets and other sources such as the most useful blogs or podcasts. Or the commission could develop a resource, such as an online portal, and support it perhaps with funding from publishers and the industry.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

A major weakness of this study is the limited number of respondents represented in the online survey. According to PRSA, surveys to their Educators Academy generally enjoy at least a 15% response rate as opposed to the 4% who participated in this study. It is possible that responses were limited by this survey's requirement that only those who teach international public relations respond. It is not known how many instructors in the United States teach international public relations or what percentage in any population of instructors they comprise, so the 4% garnered by this survey may be representative. However, the low response rate represents a weakness in this study. It also raises the question of whether the results are skewed. Perhaps the respondents are overly representative of adjuncts or a select group of full-time academics who are also working professionals. Another, albeit anecdotal, observation that could indicate skewing would be that only two survey participants were born outside of the United States. That seems low based on casual observations of public relations faculty around the country and instructors teaching international public relations to undergraduates.

A new study could again potentially work with PRSA in its prescribed manner (see Appendix D) but also reach out directly to educators who teach international public relations and invite them to participate in the study. This approach would require extensive research to identify specific teachers and involve dedicated outreach and follow-up, but it would help to increase the total number of respondents, better identify the professional and academic background of each respondent, and expand the study beyond PRSA's Educators Academy.

An additional potential study could explore which aspects of a teacher's background may be most relevant for preparing students for success in international public relations. The study could identify variables in teacher backgrounds (such as having worked professionally in international public relations, foreign language skills, having been born outside the United States) and measure the career success of students taught by each teacher. Career success could be measured by professional achievements in international public relations and input could come from the students and their supervisors.

Another potential study could seek to understand any connection between a teacher's cross-cultural background and the degree to which cross-cultural skills are emphasized in the classroom. Since it is known that there is measurable variability in teachers' cross-cultural backgrounds and it is also known that cross-cultural skills are critical to success in international public relations, results from a study like this could suggest whether it would be valuable to preferentially assign teachers with the most, or with certain, cross-cultural backgrounds to teach international public relations courses. Or, in cases where teachers' cross-cultural backgrounds are weak, whether it would be valuable to attempt to increase their appreciation of and comfort level with cross-cultural skills so that the teacher could be more willing and adept at teaching those skills which best prepare students for professional success.

## REFERENCES

- Alaimo, K. (2017). *Pitch, tweet, or engage on the street*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Banks, S. (1995). *Multicultural public relations: A social-interpretive approach*. Washington, DC: Sage.
- Benjamin, J. (2015, August). *How the S&P 500 Index is giving investors plenty of international exposure*. Retrieved from <http://www.investmentnews.com/article/20150820/BLOG12/150819890/the-sp-500-index-is-giving-investors-plenty-of-international-exposure>.
- Brownlee, B. (1988). Main street America asks students to give international perspective. *Journalism Educator*, 43(3), 17-20.
- The Business Roundtable. (2015). How the U.S. economy benefits from international trade & investment. Retrieved from [http://tradepartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/US\\_State\\_Study.pdf](http://tradepartnership.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/US_State_Study.pdf)
- Cambridge Historical Society. (2012). *Public Relations 7 Lowell Street*. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridgehistory.org/discover/innovation/Edward%20Bernays.html>
- Public Relations Society of America. (1999). *Public relations education for the 21st century: A port of entry*. Retrieved from <http://work.colum.edu/~amiller/pr-education.htm>
- Commission on Public Relations Education. (2006). *The professional bond*. Retrieved from <http://www.commpred.org/theprofessionalbond/>
- Commission on Public Relations Education. (2015, May). *Industry-educator summit on public relations education*. Retrieved from <http://www.commpred.org/uploads/indUSty-educator-summit-summary-report.pdf>
- Culbertson, H., & Chen, N. (1996). *International public relations: A comparative analysis*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- 2015 500. (2016). *Fortune Magazine*. Retrieved from 2015 500. Fortune Magazine.
- FleishmanHillard. (n.d.). *Offices*. Retrieved from <http://fleishmanhillard.com/offices/st-louis/>
- Freitag, A. (2002). Ascending cultural competence potential: An assessment and profile of U.S. public relations practitioners' preparation for international assignments. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(3), 207-227.

- Freitag, A., & Stokes, A. (2009). *Global public relations: Spanning borders, spanning cultures*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- George, A. (2003). Teaching culture: The challenges and opportunities of international public relations. *Business Communications Quarterly*, 66(2), 97-113.
- Grunig, J. (1989). Teaching public relations in the future. *Public Relations Review*, 15(1), 12-24.
- Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (2006). The excellence theory. In C. H. Botan & V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 21-55). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hofstede, G. (2015). *Cultural dimensions*. Retrieved from <https://geert-hofstede.com/cultural-dimensions.html>
- Hornaman, L. (2000). *Public relations education and the public relations profession* (master's thesis). Retrieved from <http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/UF/00/10/07/68/00001/thesis.pdf>
- Huffington Post. (2013, November). The 6 best places to get chili in the U.S. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/food-wine/best-chili-in-the-US\\_b\\_4303708.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/food-wine/best-chili-in-the-US_b_4303708.html)
- The Institute for Public Relations. (1975). *A design for public relations education*. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/about/history/>.
- Jain, R., & Swiatek, S. (2015, November). *Preparing students for the global workplace: Best practices and future directions in international public relations education*. Retrieved from <https://www.prsa.org/Network/Communities/EducatorsAcademy/Documents/2015%20EA%20Proceedings.pdf>
- Kent, M., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28(1), 21-37.
- Krantz, M. (2015, July 15). 10 US companies take the most foreign money. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://americasmarkets.usatoday.com/2015/07/15/10-u-s-companies-take-the-most-foreign-money/>
- Kruckeberg, D. (1995, May). *1987 revisited: Is it time for a new look?* Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Communication Association, Albuquerque, NM.
- Kruckeberg, D. (1998). The future of PR education: Some recommendations. *Public Relations Review*, 24 (2), 235-248.

- Levitt, S., & Dubner, S. (2009). *Freakonomics: A rogue economist explores the hidden side of everything*. New York, NY: William Morrow.
- Manheim, J., & Albritton, R. (1984). Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting. *The American Political Science Review*, 78(3), 641-657.
- Modella, J. (2009, March 19). Global public relations. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/global-public-relations/>.
- National Commission on Graduate on Graduate Study in Public Relations. (1988). *Advancing public relations education: Recommended curriculum for graduate public relations education*. New York: Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, Inc.
- O'Dell, A. (2016, July). Seven jobs that let you live and work abroad (as your own boss). *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3062111/seven-jobs-that-let-you-live-and-work-abroad-as-your-own-boss>.
- Parkinson, M., & Ekachai, D. (2006). *International and intercultural public relations: A campaign case approach*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.
- Pratt, C., & Ogbondah, C. (1994, April). *US public relations from an international Perspective: Curricular issues and objectives*. Paper presented at the 13th Annual Conference on Language and Communication for World Business and the Professionals, Ypsilanti, MI.
- Rhodium Group. (2015). *China Investment Monitor*. Retrieved from <http://rhg.com/interactive/china-investment-monitor>.
- Smith, R. (2011, June). *Pioneers in public relations*. Retrieved from <http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/smithrd/PR/pioneers.htm>.
- Sriramesh, K. (2002). The dire need for multiculturalism in public relations education. *Journal of Communication Management*, 71(1), 54-77.
- Sriramesh, K., & Vercic, D. (2003). *The global public relations handbook: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (n.d.). *The benefits of international trade*. Retrieved from <https://www.uschamber.com/international/international-policy/benefits-international-trade-0>

- U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Public Affairs. (2013). *U.S. Commerce Department and the President's Council of Economic Advisors release report on economic benefits of foreign direct investment at SELECTUSA investment summit*. Retrieved from <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2013/10/US-commerce-department-and-presidents-council-economic-advisors-release>.
- Vasquez, G., & Taylor, M. (1999). What cultural values influence American public relations practitioners? *Public Relations Review*, 25(4), 433-449.
- Wilcox, D., Ault, P., & Agee, W. (1989). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics*. Philadelphia, PA: Harper & Row.
- Zaharna, R. (2001). "In-awareness" approach to international public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 135-148.

## APPENDIX A COURSE SYLLABI

Representative syllabi for courses in international public relations were reviewed from the following universities. They were gathered online and from the instructors of record who were promised anonymity.

- Marquette University (two syllabi, one graduate level and another undergraduate class)
- Texas A&M, Texarkana
- Texas Tech University
- University of Florida
- University of Oklahoma

APPENDIX B  
PILOT SURVEY

**Distribution List**

<b>Professor</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Comment/ Source</b>
Keith J. Zukas, Assistant Professor Department of Communication & Sociology	Carroll College	kzukas@carrollu.edu	The researcher guest lectured in his class
Frauke Hackmann	University of Nebraska- Lincoln	fhachtmann@unl.edu	Thesis committee recommendation
Judy VanSlyke Turk	Virginia Commonwealth University	jvturk@vcu.edu	Several in telephone survey recommended;  Emeritus statUS; Recently retired
Carolyn T. Mitchell	University of Texas El Paso	cmitchel@utep.edu	Where Shall I Go
Eli Garcia	University of Texas El Paso	Egarcia11@utep.edu	Where Shall I Go
Trent Seltzer	Texas Tech University	Trent.seltzer@ttu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Paul Bolls	Texas Tech University	Paul.bolls@ttu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Chris Cook	Texas Tech University	Chris.cook@ttu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Kristi Gilmore	Texas Tech University	Kristi.gilmore@ttu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Sun Yong Lee	Texas Tech University	Sun.lee@ttu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Bonnye Stuart	Winthrop University	stuartb@winthrop.edu	Where Shall I Go
Padmini	Winthrop	patwardhanp@winthrop.edu	Where Shall I Go

Patwardhan	University		
Lisa Weidman	Linfield University	lweidma@linfield.edu	Where Shall I Go
Dane S. ClaUSsen	Thiel College	dclaUSsen@thiel.edu	Where Shall I Go
Kurt Wise	University of West Florida	kwise@uwf.edu	Where Shall I Go
Chris Fenner	University of West Florida	cfenner@uwf.edu	Where Shall I Go
Sabrina McLaughlin	University of West Florida	smclaughlin1@uwf.edu	Where Shall I Go
Melinda Cheval	University of Colorado Boulder	Melinda.cheval@colorado.edu	Where Shall I Go
Kathy Menzie	Washburn University	Kathy.menzie@washburn.edu	Where Shall I Go
Hsin-Yen Yang	Fort Hayes State University	hsin-yan-yang@fhsu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Kenna Griffin	Oklahoma City University	kgriffin@okcu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Lisa Ball Moskal	Arkansas State University	lmoskal@astate.edu	Where Shall I Go
Holly Hall	Arkansas State University	hollyhall@astate.edu	Where Shall I Go
Jay Rayburn	Florida State University	jrayburn@fsu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Patrick Merle	Florida State University	Patrick.merle@fsu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Stephen McDowell	Florida State University	Steve.mcdowell@cci.fsu.edu	Where Shall I Go
Cynthia Irizarry	Suffolk University	cirizarry@suffolk.edu	Where Shall I Go
Frank Irizarry	Suffolk University	firizarry@suffolk.edu	Where Shall I Go
OluwaTosin	Morgan State	Oluwatosin.adegbola@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go

Adegbola	University		
Umaru Bah	Morgan State University	Umaru.bah@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go
David Barney	Morgan State University	david.barney@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go
Laura Dorsey-Elson	Morgan State University	laura.dorseyelson@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go
Dana Shelley	Morgan State University	dana.shelley@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go
Patricia Wheeler	Morgan State University	patricia.wheeler@morgan.edu	Where Shall I Go

### Email Inviting Participation

Hello,

It's good meeting you here. This email is an invitation to participate in an online survey about how international public relations is being taught to undergraduates in the US. I am Matthew Wisla, an graduate student and adjunct instructor at Marquette University and this research is part of my Master's thesis project.

As you know, the field of how international public relations is being taught to US undergraduates has received little research attention over the years so **your input is appreciated and very valuable.** I hope you'll take the time to participate.

Participants in this research must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Work as a faculty member or adjunct instructor at a university in the US
- Teach an undergraduate course focused on international public relations, OR teach an undergraduate public relations course that includes a focus on international.

More about the survey:

- **Risks of Participation:** There are no known risks associated with this project, which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- **Participants Rights:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is not penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.
- **Confidentiality:** No identifying information about the participants will be reported in the research reports. Demographic and descriptive information about the participants will be generic and all data will be de-identified.

If you have any questions about this project you can contact Matthew Wisla at (847) 624-1961, or [matthew.wisla@marquette.edu](mailto:matthew.wisla@marquette.edu).

Thank you!

### **Introduction to Survey Participants**

Thank you for participating in this anonymous online survey about how international public relations is being taught to undergraduate students in the US. It should take about 20-30 minutes to complete.

This research is part of my thesis project. If you have any questions about this project feel free to contact me, Matthew Wisla, at (847) 624-1961, or [matthew.wisla@marquette.edu](mailto:matthew.wisla@marquette.edu)

As mentioned in the email and just to confirm here:

Participants in this research must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Work as a faculty member or adjunct instructor at a university in the US
- Teach an undergraduate course focused on international public relations, OR teach an undergraduate public relations course that includes a focus on international.

More about the survey:

- **Risks of Participation:** There are no known risks associated with this project, which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.
- **Participants Rights:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is not penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.
- **Confidentiality:** No identifying information about the participants will be reported in the research reports. Demographic and descriptive information about the participants will be generic and all data will be de-identified.

**Thank you! Your input is much appreciated and very valuable!**

## Pilot Survey Questions

What is your academic position/title?

- Professor
  Clinical Instructor  
 Associate Professor
  Adjunct  
 Assistant Professor
  Other

I teach at least one course on a regular basis to undergraduate students that:

- Focuses entirely on international public relations practices.  
 Includes a module or has a component specifically featuring international public relations practices.  
 None of the courses I teach to undergraduates include content specifically focused on international public relations.

How long have you taught at your current university/academic institution? (*in years*)

- 1 or less
  6-10  
 2-3
  11-15  
 4-5
  more than 15

Have you achieved tenure?

- Yes  
 No

Are you currently tenure track?

- Yes  
 No



While working as a full-time public relations practitioner did you work: *(check all appropriate responses)*

For a communications  
agency/consultancy?

In-house for a  
company/organization?

As a free lancer?

While working as a full-time public relations practitioner did you work: *(check all appropriate responses)*

For a communications  
agency/consultancy?

In-house for a  
company/organization?

As a free lancer?

How long did you work as a professional full-time public relations practitioner? *(total years)*

1 or less

2-3

4-5

6-10

more than 11

As a full-time public relations practitioner, did your responsibilities include markets outside of the US?

Yes

No

Throughout your career as a full-time public relations professional in the US what percentage of time did you spend on markets outside of the US?

5% or less

between 6-10%

between 11- 25%

between 26-50%

between 51-75%

between 76-100%

During your public relations career did you ever live and work outside of the US while you were employed by a US-based company or organization?

Yes

No

How long did you live and work outside of the US as a full-time public relations practitioner while working for a US-based company or organization? (*in years*)

- 1 or less                       6-10  
 2-3                                 more than 10  
 4-5

During your career as a public relations practitioner did you travel internationally for work?

- Yes  
 No

How many international business trips did you take as a public relations professional?

- 1  
 2-5  
 6-10  
 more than 10

In addition to your current teaching responsibilities, do you also work as a public relations professional?

- Yes  
 No

Do your responsibilities as a part-time public relations professional include a focus on markets outside of the US?

- Yes  
 No

In your capacity as a teacher, do you now or have you ever travelled internationally as part of your responsibilities? (*For example, as part of a study abroad program, professor in residence, etc.*)

- Yes  
 No

For the undergraduate class you teach that either focus on or includes international public relations, the student composition is mostly:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Freshmen              | <input type="radio"/> Sophomores & Juniors | <input type="radio"/> Seniors   |
| <input type="radio"/> Freshmen & Sophomores | <input type="radio"/> Juniors              | <input type="radio"/> Other, please describe:<br><input type="text"/> |
| <input type="radio"/> Sophomores            | <input type="radio"/> Juniors & Seniors    |   |

How long has this course been taught at your institution? (*in years*)

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> New last semester/quarter | <input type="radio"/> 5-10         |
| <input type="radio"/> 1-2                       | <input type="radio"/> more than 10 |
| <input type="radio"/> 3-4                       | <input type="radio"/> don't know   |

How frequently is the course is offered?

- Every semester/quarter
- Once per calendar year
- Every other year usually
- None of the above. Please describe:

How many years in total have you taught this course?

- New last semester/quarter
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-10
- more than 10

What is the primary textbook used in that class?

International and Intercultural Public Relations: A Campaign Case Approach, by Parkinson & Ekachai (2005)

The Global Public Relations Handbook, by Sriramesh & Vercic (2009)

International Public Relations, by Curtin & Gaither (2007)

Other (Please list the title, author(s), publisher, edition):

Global Public Relations, by Freitag & Stokes (2009)

Please describe two primary strengths of this textbook:

Textbook strength:

Another textbook strength:

Grading in this class is based on:

Tests & Quizzes

Other

Paper(s)

Other

Analyzing Case Study(ies)

Other

Class Participation

Does the class include a focus on cross-cultural values (such as Hofstede)?

Yes

No

Please list and briefly describe up to three (3) activities or assignments you use in the class to help students develop a culturally sensitive, professional perspective of foreign markets and cultures.

Please list and briefly explain the importance of up to three (3) critical skills undergraduates should be taught in courses on international public relations:

Skill #1:

Skill #2:

In the last 10 years, how many personal international trips have you taken?

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 trips   | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 trips         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 trips | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 7 trips |

Have you taken a course(s) either as a graduate or undergraduate student that was focused on or included international public relations or cross-cultural communication?

- Yes  
 No

Have you ever participated in a study abroad program as a university student?

- Yes  
 No

How many languages do you speak: (*in addition to English*)

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 (I only speak English) | <input type="radio"/> 2         |
| <input type="radio"/> 1                        | <input type="radio"/> 3 or more |

Your age is:

- |                             |                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 25-34 | <input type="radio"/> 45-54 | <input type="radio"/> older than 65 |
| <input type="radio"/> 35-44 | <input type="radio"/> 55-64 |                                     |

Highest degree earned:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- J.D.
- Doctorate degree

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.  
Your response has been recorded.

APPENDIX C  
TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were conducted to provide enriched data and additional context for information gathered in the online survey. Participants in the telephone survey were scholars with a demonstrated degree of thought and academic leadership in the area of teaching international public relations to undergraduates in the United States.

**Telephone Survey Participants:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Criteria (see below)</b>
Joyce Wolburg	Marquette University	Associate Dean	B, D, E
Bonita Dostal Neff	University of Indiana	Professor, Dept. Chair	B, C, D, E
Alan Freitag	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Professor, Research Associate Dean	A, B, C, D, E
Dean Kruckeberg	University of North Carolina, Charlotte	Professor	A, B, E
Rajul Jain	DePaul University	Assistant Professor	B, C, E
Patricia Ann Curtin	University of Oregon	Endowed Chair, Professor, Assessment Director	A, D, E
Rhonda Zaharna	American University	Professor	B, E

**Telephone Survey Invitees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Criteria (see below)</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Bonita Dostal Neff	B, C, D	University of Indiana
Alan Freitag	A, B, C, D, E	UNC, Charlotte
Robert Wakefield	B, C	BYU
Dean Kruckeberg	B, D	UNC, Charlotte
Barbara DeSanto	B, C, E	Kansas State

Rajul Jain	B, C	DePaul
Krishnamurthy Sriramesh	B, C, E	Purdue
Alexander Laskin	B, E	Quinnipiac
Katerina Tssetsura	D, E	University of Oklahoma
Patricia Ann Curtin	A, D	University of Oregon
Kenn T. Gaither	A, D	Elon University
Ashli Quesinberry Stokes	A, B, E	UNC, Charlotte
Joyce Wolburg	B, E	Marquette University
Rhonda Zaharna	B, E	American University
Colleen Connolly-Ahern	B, E	Penn State Univ.

**Criteria for Consideration as a Telephone Survey Participant:**

- Author or co-author of an undergraduate textbook on international public relations
  - Author or co-author of at least one research article on the topic of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates
  - Been selected to present at an academic conference on the topic of teaching international public relations to U.S. undergraduates
  - Be the Chair or Director or hold a similar position of responsibility (currently or formerly) within a U.S. university where international public relations is being taught to undergraduates
- Be the teacher of a course in international public relations or advertising that's regularly taught in to U.S. undergraduates

**Introductory Script for Telephone Interview:**

Prior to discussing the questions during the telephone survey, the following was read to each participant:

“You have been asked to participate in a research study via this telephone interview. You must be age 18 or older to participate. The purpose of this study is to research how international public relations is being taught to undergraduate students in the United States. The study involves gathering information from professors and instructors in institutions where the courses are taught and the interview will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. Your participation is much appreciated! For accuracy, this conversation is being recorded.

“Note: There are no foreseeable risks associated with the project, nor are there any direct benefits to you. Your responses will be anonymous and will not be associated with your name or other identifying information. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.”

**Interview Questions:**

1. Discuss the benefits/rationale for teaching international public relations. What’s the value to students?
2. What are the most important skills undergraduates should be taught in international public relations courses? Why?
3. What skills/qualities of the instructor in international public relations courses are the most valuable? Briefly discuss up to three.
4. Discuss the most successful kinds of in-class exercises and assignments – and what makes them effective.

5. What in-class exercises and assignments have you tried that have not worked?  
Why?
6. How do you keep up with developments in international public relations?

### **Verbatim Responses**

To protect the identity of survey participants, for the purposes of this research their responses are being recorded and analyzed anonymously. Below are the relevant verbatim comments aggregated for each question.

#### **1. Discuss the benefits/rationale for teaching international public relations? What's the value to students?**

- Does any public relations activity today stop at the border? Students today may not never have a direct international assignment, but the likelihood is enormous that as some point they are going to have international engagements. And, if they don't have an appreciation for the complexity of encoding, transmitting and decoding messages that cross borders and cultures, then they're going to fail.
- There are tremendous complexities when messaging across cultural boundaries and if we don't understand that we can't serve our clients well.
- Agencies and companies are global so public relations is being done all round the world so if students are serious about PR and want to advance in their careers they'll need an international understanding of how public relations is practiced. You might as well get that perspective immediately.
- Most of the large PR firms are owned internationally so your bosses are ultimately overseas. And identify businesses around the university and you'll find out how many are owned outside the US.

- Social media and everything else you do in the US travels fast. You need to be sensitive about the impact of what you say. How it will play out in other countries.
- It broadens their knowledge of the public relations practice and the understanding that things differ around the world.
- Students need to think about what's involved in cross-cultural communication and it's not simply about learning another language. There is a lot behind knowing how to deal with a culture.
- It helps them in the workplace. Even if they don't go on international assignments or work with international clients, the workplace itself has become a global milieu with people from all over the world working in PR. So when you teach students international public relations you're not only preparing them for their career when they get the chance to work on international projects or with international clients, but on a personal level you help them develop a cultural awareness to their future colleagues who might be from different nationalities. It will help them navigate the workplace better.
- Understanding the profession from a varied, broad perspective can help students avoid fundamental mistakes in the workplace. Even if they never leave the US.
- At an individual level, regardless of what your profession is, it's good to have a better sense of other people in the world and to grow as a person as you learn about other cultures and other people.
- Even if you don't choose to work in another country, at some point in your career you'll probably benefit from having an international perspective. It's unlikely that

your work would be 100 percent domestic so having an understanding of, at least, how to work internationally will help.

- You can't learn about every country, but if you know about cultural values and where to look for information you'll be better prepared when the need arises.

**2. What are the most important skills undergraduates should be taught in international public relations courses? Why?**

- Understanding messages that are coming from other cultures. Because the message isn't usually simply in the words. It's in the context, it's in the relationship between the interlocutors sharing the messages. And tremendous mistakes can be made if you don't understand that.
- The ability to recognize different constructs of message delivery in intercultural settings.
- The skill of going beyond the very simple dos and don'ts, or cultural norms, of how to function in a culture. For example, how to exchange business cards. It's critical to understand the why behind the cultural norms, what does the norm reveal about the people and their behaviors. Because once you get beyond the superficial dos and don'ts then it's easier to understand other cultural syndromes and be receptive to them.
- US practitioners especially have been surrounded all their lives by a certain American media structure (ownership, access, audience expectations, how well is the media trusted), but it's important to recognize that there are different media models in various cultures.
- Language skill are important and we require students to take a language.

- Students need to know how to write and use various social media and other platforms in other countries. The ability to communicate is at the top of the list.
- Knowing how to imbed strategic thinking into your PR communications and being aware of cultural nuances are critical. So the communication has impact.
- Learn to dig deeper. To develop the critical thinking skills that allow you to get beyond the tip of the cultural iceberg and get down to understanding another culture, like their sense about government or how they see their society.
- To have an understanding of culture and how it impacts public relations. Even if it's just a basic understanding of the indicators of culture, like high-context/low-context or Hofstede's cultural dimensions, will help them understand how you address PR situations in another different cultural context.
- There should be an understanding of the range of variables that impact our practice, like media systems and government regulations.
- Language skills are a huge plus. Although language study shouldn't be required for public relations, students should nonetheless be encouraged to increase their language skills.
- An important skill is learning to write for an audience that is not from your culture.
- Be a global citizen of the world, which means understanding why it's the way it is.
- Know how to understand and communicate with publics. That requires knowing their culture and understanding where they are coming from.

- Having a basic knowledge about cultural values is critical. Hofstede's system which compares multiple cultures, for example, or others.
- Know how the profession works in other countries. The US is a leader in the industry, but things have not developed in the same way in other places and it's to understand that. Because the use of things like social media and third-party endorsers are not the same all over, but student might assume they are.

**3. What skills/qualities of the instructor in international public relations courses are the most valuable? Briefly discuss up to three.**

- You better have international experience and the related skills. And we really need young scholars to go out and get those experiences.
- They need to be tireless in creating or identifying opportunities for students. For example, establishing and maintaining study abroad opportunities for students requires tremendous, frequently thankless, hours of work on the part of those organizing the programs, but it must be done. It takes tireless, year-round effort without much reward.
- The teacher has to have some international experience so they know how to adapt and what it's like to be in various cultures.
- The instructor has to be able to interactivity with students so the instructor can ferret out where students are coming from and whether they really do understand.
- Be able to push students out of their comfort zone in a way that they still feel supported and are willing to give it a try. So they can get into another culture.
- Have the ability to support students to keep 'peeling back the onion' so they deeper and deeper into understanding another culture until they get it. Sometimes

that leads them to questions their own values and you need to be able to help them through that process.

- As PR practitioners, we are basically encoders and decoders of meaning. There is a huge impact of culture in both places so as we advocate for our organizations in the public sphere understanding culture is a very important skill.
- How is the world going to change in the future? We don't know so that puts a burden on US to have a flexible mindset when setting up courses so students are prepared for a global, diverse work experience.
- Scholars are responsible for bringing a world view into the classroom.
- Knowledge of cultural values and the profession in other countries are important in enlightening and guiding students of international public relations.
- International experience isn't a requirement in order to teach it, since not everyone is going to have that, but it's certainly a plus. The person who hasn't lived in another country probably has a little more work to do when preparing to teach international public relations.

**4. Discuss the most successful kinds of in-class exercises and assignments – and what makes them effective.**

- It is vital that public relations scholars include in the curricula an opportunity for students to acquire cross-cultural communication skills in a professional, strategic communication setting.
- The standard is giving students a problem like introducing a US product into a host country. What I didn't like about that is it usually comes down to a marketing exercise that isn't all that well grounded in public relations or strategic communications.

- Require each student to have a series of structured conversations with a partner, usually a fellow student, who is from another country. I always recommend they pick a conversation partner who is as different from their own culture as possible. Then I have a series of four semi-structured interviews based on topics based upon which the students draft 10 to 12 open-ended questions. The conversations are progressive in that they build upon each other in trying to get behind cultural practices. We also ask about family relationships, social media, mass media, career aspirations and relationships with friends. The students have these conversations over the course of the term and then they write two- to three-page reflection papers on each of the conversations. And then make a brief report to the class. Those class sessions are usually the best of the whole semester because the students get engaged with each other.
- During study abroad trips, I have students go out in pairs and get permission from a business like a car dealership or a coffee shop and just sit there for a couple of hours and observe. Note the transactions and how do people act. Is it different from how people act in your home nation?
- I usually have students do country studies as individuals or in small groups. The task is to be from a certain country, say the UK, and they have been contracted by a company from another country, maybe India, to that company is engaged in expanding into a third country. The product is usually for business-to-business, like a tubing manufacturer who makes tubes for toothpaste and tanning lotion, not a consumer product. The student must prepare a written report and an oral report to the Indian company on what they should expect in terms of communicating in

the new country. For example, how to approach and think about things like interpersonal communication in the new country, human resources for employees, how it might affect business discussion and how the media might figure into everything.

- I outline a problem and say, “OK how would you approach it if you were in Japan?” And we discuss the cultural imperatives you would need to know.
- Using case studies or other means, create an interactive environment in the classroom so students are required to think in the context of other cultures. Experiential. It’s not a lecture.
- I always have students pick an organization and have them write a plan for them to go into another country where they aren’t currently. What would they need to do to operate effectively in that country? As part of that students must interview people from that country to get an understanding from native informants. They have to look at government, economics, religion and other thing to understand how all of that would affect what they’re trying to do. And I keep pushing them the whole way to keep digging deeper to uncover where the issues are.
- They need to have a background in understanding international public relations so they can bring a real-world cultural aspect to the classroom. It is important for them to know how communication takes place in different cultural contexts.
- You have to be very up-to-date on what is going on in the world. Because sometimes students will question a certain world view of what’s going on based on their world view so the instructor needs to understand current events and cultural contexts. Then you can be patient and understanding with students.

- Case studies or examples that students find on their own helps students learn about the industry and other cultures. Projects and assignments with an active learning component are helpful.

**5. What in-class exercises and assignments have you tried that have not worked? Why?**

- The standard is giving students a problem like introducing a US product into a host country. What I didn't like about that is it usually comes down to a marketing exercise that isn't all that well grounded in public relations or strategic communications. I tried it one year and the results were so superficial and simple-minded that I never did it again.
- Presenting a theory about how something works or how to do something along with a case study is not enough. One big problem some professors have is connecting theory to the case study. So what we do is pose reflective questions that get students thinking so they focus and fully understand how the theories and executions relate.
- Cultures that are more comfortable with ambiguity than we are can be challenging. If you pick an example that's too nuanced and complex then US students get lost. I once tried to use Japanese anime as a way into this cultural topic but all the characters were grey, neither all good or all bad where the students expected especially animated characters to be black or white. The anime probably created more confusion than understanding about cultural differences.
- Interview a practitioner with international experience. I team up students in small groups based on their interest area and put them in touch with a practitioner who

either works in that region or who has had experience there. The students find out what skills are needed to practice PR in that area. Students love to hear it from practitioners.

- I ask students to pick a recent real campaign and analyze the case and provide recommendations on what could have been done differently. Then I change something about the case or context so they have to apply it in a different way.
- For assignments where are commenting on international readings or raising questions about them, its best to have the students submit their questions and input with enough time prior to the class so you can review everything and develop some discussion points. Having students provide their input on the day of class doesn't always work out well.

#### **6. How do you keep up with developments in international public relations?**

- My Fulbright Scholarships have been great because I get to meet with so many different colleagues from around the world.
- Conferences on international public relations that are held around the world.
- I try to push my faculty to incorporate a more global perspective in what they do. That's good for them, their students and me.
- A lot of my students have international backgrounds and I keep in touch with them. I use that to my advantage to find out what's going on in their country.
- Whenever possible, I travel and teach outside of the US.
- "How do you keep up?" You don't. You can only keep up with one little piece of it at a time.

- I read all the PR news digests that come to my in-box but their coverage of international is not good. So it's hard to keep up.
- Students hate it when I ask them to write a theory paper if the assignment doesn't include a practical component. They want a real-world tie in.
- One thing about me, I'm a news junkie.
- By the time a textbook comes out it's already out of date so the instructors need to stay up-to-date and engaged with current events around the world through the news and professional associations.
- It helps to have students generate questions and comments about what they're studying in class that week because introduces news and new sources of information into the classroom. The assignment is useful because students as a group will be following more and different news sources than a teacher will.

APPENDIX D  
EMAIL SURVEY

**Email Inviting Participation**

Sent three times from PRSA to PRSA Educators Academy members:

**To:** PRSA members who work as professors

**Subject Line:** How Int'l PR Is Taught in US (PRSA Survey)

Hello,

I am Matthew Wisla, a graduate student and adjunct instructor at Marquette University. I'd like to invite you to participate in a research study assessing how international public relations is being taught to undergraduates in the US. There has been little research on this topic, and I'm evaluating it as part of my Master's thesis project.

**Your input is appreciated and very valuable.** Please **click here** or paste this URL into your browser to start the survey: **INSERT URL**.

**This survey should take approximately 10 minutes.** No identifying information about the participants will be reported in the research reports. Demographic and descriptive information about the participants will be generic and all data will be de-identified. There are no known risks associated with this project.

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at [matthew.wisla@marquette.edu](mailto:matthew.wisla@marquette.edu).

Thank you,  
Matt

Matthew Wisla  
Marquette University

**Footer:** The PRSA Research Committee has reviewed this survey; your participation is encouraged.

### Online Survey Questions

1. What is your academic position/title?  
 Professor  Associate Professor  Assistant Professor  Clinical Instructor  Adjunct  Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. At least one course I teach on a regular basis to undergraduate students:  
 Focuses entirely on international public relations practices.  
 Includes a module or has a component specifically featuring international public relations practices.  
 None of the courses I teach to undergraduates includes content specifically focused on international public relations. (end survey, go to Thank you)
  
3. How long have you taught at your current university/academic institution? (in years)  
 1 or less  
 2-3  
 4-5  
 6-10  
 11-15  
 more than 15
  
4. Have you achieved tenure?  
 Yes (go to Q.7)  No (go to Q.6)
  
5. Are you currently tenure track?  
 Yes  No
  
6. How long have you been teaching at the university level in the US? (total years)  
 1 or less  
 2-3  
 4-5  
 6-10  
 11-15

more than 15

7. How long have you been teaching public relations courses at the university level in the US? (total years)

1 or less

2-3

4-5

6-10

11-15

more than 15

8. Were you born in the US?

Yes (go to Q. 11)  No (go to Q. 10)  I'd rather not say (go to Q. 11)

9. Where were you born?

Canada  China  India  Japan  Southeast Asia  Western Europe

Other \_\_\_\_\_  I'd rather not say

10. Prior to becoming a teacher in higher education, were you a professional full-time public relations practitioner in the US for any length of time?

Yes (go to Q. 12)  No (go to Q. 21)

11. Did your responsibilities include markets outside the US?

Yes (go to Q. 13)  No (go to Q. 23)

12. Over the course of your career did you work: (check one, two or all three as appropriate)

For an agency/communications consultancy  In-House  Free Lance

13. How long did you work as a professional full-time public relations practitioner? (in total years)

1 or less

2-3

4-5

- 6-10
- more than 11

14. Throughout your professional public relations career, what percent of your time was spent on markets outside the US?

- 5% or less
- 6 to 10%
- 11 to 25%
- 26 to 50%
- 51 to 75%
- 76 to 99%
- 100%

15. During your professional public relations career did your responsibilities include traveling or relocating to markets outside of the US?

- Yes (go to Q. 17)  No (go to Q. 21)

16. During your professional public relations career did you ever live outside of the US?

- Yes (go to Q. 18)  No (go to Q. 19)

17. How long did you live and work outside the US in your career as a public relations practitioner? (in years)

- 1 or less
- 2-3
- 4-5
- 6-10
- more than 11

18. During your professional public relations career did you ever travel internationally for work?

- Yes  No (go to Q. 21)

19. How many international business trips did you take as a public relations professional?

- 1
- 2-5
- 5-10
- more than 11

20. In addition to your teaching responsibilities, do you currently work part-time as a public relations professional?  
 Yes     No (go to Q. 23)

21. Do your responsibilities as a part-time public relations professional include markets outside the US?  
 Yes     No

22. In your capacity as a teacher, do you now or have you ever travelled internationally as part of your responsibilities (as part of a study abroad program, etc.)?  
 Yes     No

23. For my class that either focuses on or includes international public relations students are mostly:  
 Freshmen  
 Freshmen & Sophomores  
 Sophomores  
 Sophomores & Juniors  
 Juniors  
 Juniors & Seniors  
 Seniors  
 None of the above; Please describe your typical undergraduate makeup for this class \_\_\_\_\_

24. How long has this course been taught at your institution? (in years)  
 New this semester     1-2     3-4     5-10     more than 10      
 Don't know

25. How many years in total have you taught this course?  
 New this semester    1-2    3-4    5-10    more than 10
26. What is the primary textbook used in that class?  
 International and Intercultural Public Relations: A Campaign Case Approach, by Parkinson & Ekachai (2005)  
 International Public Relations, by Curtin & Gaither (2007)  
 Global Public Relations, by Freitag & Stokes (2009)  
 The Global Public Relations Handbook, by Sriramesh & Vercic (2009)  
 Other (Please list the title, author(s), publisher, edition):  
 \_\_\_\_\_
27. Please list two primary strengths of this textbook for teaching international public relations practices?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
28. Do you include cross-cultural values or orientation (such as Hofstede's) in your class(es)?  
 Yes    No
29. What skills/qualities of the instructor in international public relations courses are the most valuable?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
30. In the last 10 years, how frequently have you traveled internationally on personal trips?  
 0 trips    1-3 trips    4-6 trips    more than 7 trips
31. Have you taken courses at either the graduate or undergraduate level in international public relations or cross-cultural/intercultural communication?  
 Yes    No
32. Have you ever participated in a study abroad program as a university student?  
 Yes    No

33. How many languages do you speak?

1 (English)

2

3 or more

34. Age:

25-34    35-44    45-54    55-64    65 or older

35. Highest degree earned:

Bachelor's degree    Master's degree    J.D.    Doctorate

## **Background On Coordinating With PRSA On Research Projects**

[http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/Research/AcademicResearch/#.VvqGo\\_krLIU](http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/Research/AcademicResearch/#.VvqGo_krLIU)

### **Academic Research Requests for PRSA and PRSSA Membership Lists**

#### **Application: Academic Research Request to use PRSA and PRSSA Membership Lists**

PRSA is committed to advancing thought leadership in the profession. Fostering quality research conducted by scholars and professionals that will advance the theory and practice of public relations is critical to achieving this goal. Research projects often call for surveys of public relations practitioners. The following provides details on the policies and procedures for gaining access to PRSA and PRSSA member email lists.

Research proposals will be evaluated quarterly by a committee of experienced professionals and academics, overseen by the Research Committee chairs. The purpose of the Research Committee is to work with scholars and professionals to ensure quality research that benefits our PRSA or PRSSA members and advances the profession. To accomplish this, the Research Committee will review survey proposals submitted for distribution to PRSA and PRSSA members. When considering whether to accept a survey, the Research Committee assesses factors such as the relevance and appropriateness of the survey to the PRSA or PRSSA membership, the benefit of the survey results to PRSA or PRSSA members, the history of similar surveys sent to the PRSA or PRSSA membership, the number of surveys scheduled, and the survey's organization and design. Therefore, this is a highly selective process and submitted research must follow all guidelines. Surveys will be distributed strategically so PRSA or PRSSA members are not inundated with surveys. The review process for using PRSA or PRSSA mailing lists will be rigorous, but it will not be a blind review. Any survey that has the potential to impact the reputation of PRSA will be flagged and sent to the appropriate staff member managing the research function for review who will determine if the risk to PRSA is sufficient such that the research should not be submitted to PRSA members; any such decision by staff not to proceed with a given research project is subject to review by the PRSA Chair at the request of the submitting researcher(s).

PRSA staff will work with researchers of approved projects to pull appropriate samples of members email addresses. Electronic communication will be sent to members from PRSA including a link to the survey instrument provided by the researcher. The invitation email will indicate that the PRSA Research Committee has reviewed the research. Researchers will have one calendar year for project completion from the date of

distribution, and a one-page executive summary must be completed by that date. “Completed” means submitting a research manuscript to the *Public Relations Journal (PRJ)*. There is no guarantee that the paper will be accepted for publication in *PRJ*, but the journal retains the right of first refusal for articles written using data from surveys sent to PRSA or PRSSA members.

Requests must include the following five items, or they will not be reviewed:

- A completed application form;
- An Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval certificate from the individual’s university, or a signed document indicating why IRB approval has not been completed (IRB approval must be received before distribution)
- A copy of the proposed online survey invitation email
- A copy of the proposed survey instrument (showing skip logic is used); and
- A 3-5 page project description written clearly and concisely containing:
  - A brief description of the relevant literature
  - A justification for the survey constructs identifying any previous studies they are based on with explanations for any changes
  - Research questions or hypotheses with a list of which survey items apply to each
- At least one member of the research team MUST be a member in good standing of PRSA.

Researchers will be instructed to follow these guidelines:

- Provide clear instructions.
- Provide a realistic time of how long the survey will take to complete.
- Review for spelling and grammatical errors.
- If applicable, include filter questions at the beginning to eliminate unnecessary respondents.
- Review the length of the survey; longer surveys typically receive lower response rates.
- Delete unnecessary, repetitive questions or statements.
- Make demographic questions mutually exclusive and exhaustive.
- Ensure all questions are relevant to the purpose of the study.
- Check questions for clarity and understandability.
- Provide and Use appropriate skip logic.
- Ensure confidentiality by removing any potential identifying questions.
- Remove questions that a public relations professional or student would not have the knowledge to answer.

Researchers will be instructed to review once the application is completed:

- Did you complete the application?
- Do you adhere to the above guidelines?
- Do you have IRB approval?
- Is this study best suited for a PRSA or PRSSA sample?

Research Review Process:

- Requests will be accepted throughout the year, but will be held until the appropriate submission deadline as detailed below. Four review periods each year will be designated for the approval/denial of research proposals for use of the PRSA membership list. Deadlines for submissions are as follows:
  - Jan. 15 (for submissions to be reviewed by Feb. 15).
  - April 15 (for submissions to be reviewed by May 15).
  - July 15 (for submissions to be reviewed by AugUST15).
  - Oct. 15 (for submissions to be reviewed by Nov. 15).
- The research committee will vote to accept, reject, or return the survey as a revise and resubmit. A revise and resubmit survey is due within 30 days from notification so it can be reviewed at the next PRSA Research Committee meeting. Any changes to a survey after initial review are not allowed without a re-review. Approved requests will be sent to the PRSA Board of Directors Liaison for the Research Committee. If no comments are received within 15 days, the request will be approved.

*Approved by PRSA Board of Directors, March 2013.*

APPENDIX E  
EMAIL SURVEY: VERBATIM COMMENTS

Email survey recipients provided 28 responses when asked to list the skills/qualities of the teacher that are most important in international public relations courses. Verbatim comments are below:

- A familiarity with intercultural communication, and possibly more than familiarity is helpful. Experience traveling abroad and working abroad is also helpful. Experience with cross-cultural communication, which could have been achieved through years in journalism, and not necessarily public relations, is also important. And finally, a willingness to assimilate new material. I'm converting all our strategic communication classes to have more an international component.
- Personal experience of living in different cultures An open minded approach to differences and how to learn from them. An ability to help students become interested in other countries and cultures
- Thinking beyond USA-only mindset
- Public relations experience abroad
- Awareness of current events, international business, cultural sensitivity.
- Cultural awareness; first-hand experience with culturally diverse clients; cultural values; respect for diversity; professional expertise.
- Someone who has lived/worked outside of the US Someone who has had to work in international markets while based in the US

- Knowledge and understanding of the material, some past int'l PR work experience, some International travel for personal or professional reasons.  
Optional - Capacity to master a second or third language
- PR experience (but not necessarily international), openness to new ideas, knowledgeable about current practice, understanding of issues and ideas related to cross cultural communication
- The ability to address fostering relationships and generating goodwill in multiple cultural contexts.
- Cultural sensitivity and knowledge of current events that may potentially affect public relations, such as the recent Brexit vote
- Knowledge of a second language; experience working overseas; familiar with Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory
- Bilingual, global mindful, solid sociological background
- Values diversity 2. Strategic Communication focused 3. Has at least some experience abroad herself
- Experienced Knowledge in field Open-minded
- Staying current on practice and trends
- Knowledge of and exposure to cultures other than US Understanding how those difference affect PR practice
- Recognition of various cultural values beyond simple language, move toward globalization in business and public relations.
- Question is overly complicated for a simple answer.

- Experience, foreign connections
- Cultural competence
- Familiarity with the nuanced differences in management and communication styles among the varied countries and cultures.
- Some PR experience with/in other nations Some familiarity with cross/intercultural communication
- Experience working in non US markets - combined with a solid academic foundation
- Theoretical foundation, understanding of communication technology that has created globalism, but also its obverse, multiculturalism. Understanding of cultural, historical and ideological dimensions are critical to international practice.
- Deep practical experience; foreign language skills; inspiring; understanding of various international settings such as diplomatic, business, NGO.
- Knowledge about all markets
- Understanding of PR Understanding of cross-cultural communication
- Understanding of culture