

Public Relations Journal Vol. 7, No. 1
ISSN 1942-4604
© 2013 Public Relations Society of America

**The International Divide in Public Relations
Ethics Education: Advocacy versus Autonomy**

Shannon A. Bowen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
University of South Carolina
sbowen@sc.edu

and

Elina Erzikova, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Central Michigan University
erzik1e@cmich.edu

This study was supported by a grant from the Arthur W. Page Center at Pennsylvania State University

The International Divide in Public Relations Ethics Education: Advocacy versus Autonomy

Abstract

This study examines how ethics is incorporated into the curriculum and pedagogy of public relations, comparing Western European and U.S. educators. There is a wide divide in their views of ethics pedagogy: U.S. professors take the approach of professional ethics, while European professors focus on moral judgment or autonomy and the need to educate communication practitioners to become ethical agents in the philosophical sense. Although U.S. public relations educators are connected to the industry and appear to want the industry thrive, European educators see themselves as autonomous critics of public relations ethics and exhibit an intellectual distance from industry. Interviews were semi-structured and were conducted with a purposive sample of European (n=20) professors and U.S. (n=32) professors. Comparing participants suggests that European educators have an advantage in preparing students to face ethical dilemmas. Compliance with industry standards limits U.S. educators' ability to meet challenges of globalization and contemporary business, according to participants. Moral philosophers argue that autonomy is necessary in order to provide a rational, unbiased analysis of ethical dilemmas. Therefore, we conclude that an ideological divide exists in public relations education along international boundaries, related to advocacy for public relations and professionalism versus autonomy and critical reflection of the role of public relations in responsible business and in an ethical society.

Introduction

This paper is a qualitative study that seeks to understand the differences in ethical education among public relations educators. Ethical education in the United States and the three European countries is contrasted, comparing what educators value, consider ethical, and the concepts they employ in teaching ethics in their university-level courses. As numerous scholars noted, public relations often lacks legitimacy or credibility and holds divided loyalties between counseling management and acting as an advocate. Further, there are often discrepancies between intentions and outcomes, or best practices and reality. The present research seeks to understand the importance of educators ascribed to teaching ethics in public relations as part of illuminating views on what is being taught in light of growing demands for ethical rigor.

Although normative theories call for ethical rectitude, social responsibility, and integrity-driven behavior, the reality of the public relations industry provides ample examples of ethical misconduct. Many situations, all too common in practice, arise when ethical violations result in government inquiries, reprimands from regulatory agencies, class-action and individual lawsuits, federal indictments, and other criminal charges. All of these activities normally lead to negative media coverage; not only for the involved organizations but also for the public relations industry. Further, the consequences of unethical behavior can interrupt routine operations of any type of organization, hamper efficiency, diminish organizational reputation, damage financial worth or stock price, as well as decrease brand loyalty and other marketing indicators (Vershoor, 1998). Additionally, unethical behavior tarnishes the relationships an organization has with publics or stakeholders. Unethical behavior can quite *literally* destroy organizations (Chandler, 2007), as well as ruin the relationships with publics that public relations seeks to build.

Ethics has been conceptualized as good business because corporations that follow ethical guidelines retain valued employees, increase productivity, prevent liability issues, and enhance customer trust (McDaniel, 2004). However, the ethical concerns of public relations practitioners go beyond worries about the profitability of enterprises. In the United States, the term often used to describe public relations managers—the “ethical conscience of the organization” (Bowen, 2008; Pratt, 1991)—is understood in the broader societal context. To be the ethical conscience of an organization means to pursue the ultimate goal: To contribute to an overall ethical climate in society (Bivins, 2006; Bowen, 2009; 2006). This objective might be seen as idealistic rather than as potentially achievable. However, such an important issue as ethics requires high aspirations to make a difference, and those ideals can be put into practice, according to the U.S. occupational ideology (Paluszek, 1989).

Research shows that U.S. senior-level public relations practitioners describe themselves as ethical agents, who have faced years of pressure and striving to achieve dominant coalition inclusion (Bowen, 2002) and the level of ethical advisor Bowen (2008). Further, van Ruler and Vercic (2005), Bowen (2010), and Taylor (2010) argued that although a public relations practitioner is paid by an organization, his or her greater responsibility is to society.

Meanwhile, non-U.S. public relations scholars are somewhat skeptical about the qualification of the public relations counsel to act as an “ethical conscience” or “ethical guardian” (L’Etang, 2003). Since “public relations itself is seen as morally dubious” (L’Etang, 2003, p. 61), the claim of the “ethical guardian” appear to lack credibility, moral philosophy is not taught in public relations, professional ethics education is lacking, and codes of ethics offer “little guidance” (p. 64). L’Etang argued that ethical principles are far more complex than what is usually taught in public relations programs and wondered if a new specialization in

communication ethics was needed. Furthermore, both U.S. and non-U.S. scholars called for a more in-depth approach to examining the role of propaganda in the development of public relations (Lamme, L'Etang, & Burton, 2009; Moloney, 2006; L'Etang, 2003).

Fawkes (2012) noted that approaches to the conceptualization of professional ethics seem to reflect the split between the two approaches to professionalism: functionalist and revisionist. Although the functionalist group sees occupational ethics as “embodying the profession’s commitment to social value,” the revisionist group sees the issue from an opposite view, as “empty and self-promotional” (Fawkes, 2012, p. 119). It might be presumed that the functionalist/revisionist ideology shapes not only the research agenda but also the teaching philosophies of communication scholars.

This study examines western-European and U.S. college and university educators’ approaches to teaching ethics to communication management and public relations students. This comparative research aims to (1) explore possible similarities and differences in teaching philosophies and (2) help educators enhance their ethics instructions by rethinking their current methods and taking into consideration different domestic or foreign approaches. In an increasingly globalized world, educators’ global competency is the key to the preparation of ethically sensitive communication experts. Furthermore,

This study acquires special importance in the light of the U.S.-based Commission on Public Relations Education’s (2006) report that labeled the process of importing or significantly adapting the U.S. and Western European models of public relations education in Latin America and Asia as “standard practice.” No doubt, education should not be a tool of westernisation. However, as practice shows, the process of creating a new curriculum might involve borrowing ideas from well-established institutions. Therefore, in assessing the contemporary state of ethics

instruction in the West and the increasing rise of globalization, we are interested in learning to what extent universal moral principles, such as the concepts of dignity and respect, extend cross-culturally and how they are being taught by public relations educators.

Literature Review

This section outlines scholarship on teaching ethics at the university level, including recent research on ethics education in public relations.

Acknowledging the fact that there is not an agreed-upon definition of the term “moral education,” Callahan (1980) nevertheless proposed that ethics education is “an educational process with the goal of improving moral behavior, instilling certain virtues and traits of character, and developing morally responsible persons” (p. 71). Although Callahan (1980) doubted that a goal of improving moral behavior was realistic, he did not diminish the importance of ethics education, seeing its goal in helping “students develop a means and a process for achieving their own moral judgments” (p. 71).

A controversy exists within the literature about whether ethics education is effective in teaching moral reasoning. Bok (1976) argued that the effectiveness of ethics education has not been supported. Yet other researchers, such as the developmental psychologists Kohlberg (1969; Kohlberg, Levine, & Hower, 1984) and Gilligan (1982) found evidence that moral reasoning can be taught and is a rational, learned behavior. That evidence supports ethics education and has also been argued by moral philosophers such as Benhabib (1992) and Rawls (1971). Along with numerous ethicists from applied ethics, business ethics, and public relations, the authors believe the evidence is conclusive that moral reasoning is a learned behavior and, as such, ethics can be taught. Although there is an innate sense of the ethical in human beings, moral reasoning is truly

a higher order, rationalistic thought process in which one critically evaluates options, responsibilities, and what should be judged as good or true.

By the same token, Lisman (1996) saw the overarching goal of teaching ethics as helping students develop their capacities to become “contributing members of a liberal democratic society” (p.68). Thus, when professors pursue this goal, future practitioners would likely be equipped to perform their communication roles in accordance with societal expectations. Lisman identified the following capacities that students should develop in their undergraduate years: (1) autonomy, meaning to be self-directed and responsible; (2) fairness, the ability to regard self-interest impartially; and (3) citizenship, meaning to work cooperatively rather than competitively with others and to understand the democratic decision-making process.

A report by the Hastings Center (1980) said that ethical principles are already being *implicitly* communicated in various university courses, whereas the main goal of *explicit* teaching of ethics is “to uncover hidden assumptions, unchallenged and unexamined values, and treat the realm of morality with all the rigor and discipline that other areas of human study and concern already receive in the university” (p. 8). However, the fundamental societal changes in norms and values resulted in the perception of education as an economic investment, whereas the “fundamental purpose of and reason for education—that is, the search for truth—is forgotten” (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007, p. 7). Not surprisingly, some graduates of a prestigious university believed that money, fame, and power are main life achievements (Mendonca & Kanungo, 2007). Others hold compliance-based values and norms that constitute an environment in which professionalism operates as the lone guide to ethical behavior (Boylan & Donahue, 2003).

In this light, a question arises whether ethics courses, being rapidly introduced into universities’ curricula, are able to contribute to student perceptions of education in its original

meaning—as the process of acquiring knowledge and skills and developing character, and to have a positive impact on student moral development. Emphasizing the complexity of ethics education, Goodpaster (2002) noted that it is reasonably well-known how to communicate information and intellectual skills in a university environment; and it is reasonably understandable that ethics means “cultivating a moral outlook.”

Ethics Education in Public Relations

The U.S.-based Commission on Public Relations Education (2006) called for an emphasis on ethics across all public relations education. Although scholars’ opinions about the best methods to teach ethics vary, they agreed that ethics should be taught across the curriculum (Elliott & Koper, 2002; Hutchinson, 2002; Parkinson & Ekachai, 2002; Coombs & Rybacki, 1999; Toth, 1999; McInerney, 1997-1998; Bivins, 1991; Pratt, 1991; Harrison, 1990; Shamir, Reed, & Connell, 1990).

Harrison (1990) surveyed 134 department heads and instructors and found that 97 percent of them “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that ethics is essential in public relations education. By the same token, Bivens (1991) argued that “until our programs have reached a stage in which ethics is a required course for all those taking public relations, we will continue to give ill services to our students” (p. 44).

Misunderstanding of the nature of ethics education by public relations practitioners and other media practitioners is another academic concern. Christians (1979) worried about superficiality of ethics courses, when a simple discussion of classical cases or sensational situations constituted an ethics course. Plaisance (2007) echoed that concern. He argued that a professor’s goal is not providing students with the “right” answer for an ethical dilemma; instead, the professor should concentrate on cultivating students’ analytical skills.

However, a recent worldwide survey (Erzikova, 2010) revealed that public relations educators who have significant academic experience (more than 15 years of teaching) and do not have a substantial practical experience value ethics education less. This skepticism of experienced teachers has not been supported by research on the effectiveness of media ethics course by Gale and Bunton (2005): In a survey of public relations and advertising graduates, they found a correlation between the completion of an ethics course and the graduates' ability to identify ethical issues and perceive personal and professional ethics.

Heath (1991) argued that when the discipline is on its way toward professionalism, curriculum may follow or even *lead*. Thus, the impact of education on the industry comes from educators' dedication to frame and discuss each class as an ethical issue. Hutchinson (2002) suggested that educators should focus "more on what we morally should do" instead of emphasizing "what we legally can't do" (p. 308). In other words, American public relations educators believe more value should be attached to developing obedience to codes of ethics than to teaching students a compliance-based approach to avoid lawsuits (Erzikova, 2011).

Although codes of ethics are questionable in their inclusiveness and usefulness, they are relied upon heavily by U.S. public relations educators (Huang, 2001). This reflects the fact that in the corporate world, highest-level public relations executives often act as the voice of applied ethics, asking management to consider the duties and implications of decisions (Bowen, 2004). A more globally-focused approach to teaching ethics in public relations has also been espoused by Starck and Kruckeberg (2004) and others (Austin & Toth, 2011).

That perspective leads to an issue of ethics training versus ethics education. To train students to recognize and properly react to potentially problematic situations in public relations practice is an important task. Ideally, an outcome of training is knowledge of *how* to resolve

ethical dilemmas, whereas ethics education helps future practitioners *explain* their choices and see consequences of their decisions (Coombs, personal communication, November 15, 2007). This is why training is only a part of education, and the latter cannot be limited to or substituted by the former. According to Bowen (2007), moral philosophy provides public relations practitioners with ethical decision-making guidelines to solve complex moral dilemmas with integrity while communicating in the public interest. This view corresponds with that of public relations operating ethically, to help create an informed (Bowen, 2010) and engaged civil society (Taylor, 2010).

The concepts of public relations and persuasion are often linked to propaganda (Messina, 2007). According to Lamme et al. (2009), propaganda and public relations “share some theoretical and tactical underpinnings, such as the use of symbols, persuasion, and rhetorical devices” (p. 157). In his unflattering book, Moloney (2006) calls public relations “a means of social control”, “manipulative communications”, and “weak propaganda”. However, the normative purpose of the public relations practice is argued to be inherently ethical: To build and maintain relationships with key publics through ethical analyses of organizational policies and communications (Bowen, 2007). Bowen (2010) argued that public relations can go beyond the role of relationship building to providing the information that a democracy needs to function, allowing organizations to be known and understood by citizens and governing bodies. That view requires the moral autonomy to be an objective counselor to the organization, rather than being co-opted by it (Bowen, 2006). Although that autonomous perspective is practiced in some organizations (Bowen, 2002), it is believed to be a more uncommon view of public relations than that of advocacy or propaganda-derived public relations (Lamme, L'Etang, & Burton, 2009).

In the United States, advocacy, or “the act of publicly representing an individual, organization, or idea with the object of persuading targeted audiences to look favorably on—or accept the point of view—the individual, the organization, or the idea” (p. 1) is seen by some as a central function of public relations (Edgett, 2002). Rhetoric, or the art of persuasive communication, has been regarded as a facilitator of debates in democracy since ancient Greece (Heath, 2001; 1993). The basic belief of the advocate approach is that public relations act as an advocate in the debate, and truth will eventually be discovered through arguments, so that audiences can decide independently where veracity lies. Proponents (Heath, 2001; Cheney & Vibbert, 1987; Botan, 1997) of the rhetorical perspective and public relations argues that it is the duty of the communicator to clearly and vehemently advocate organizational positions, as opposed to taking the more objective or deliberative position of advisor.

The literature thus suggests that there are a variety of conceptualizations of ethics in public relations in Western scholarship. Given the fact that public relations scholars are educators as well, this study aimed to examine their teaching philosophies regarding ethics instruction. The study poses the following research question:

RQ: What are the differences and similarities in European and U.S. educators’ philosophies regarding teaching ethics to public relations students?

Method

The qualitative research paradigm is best able to explore concepts in which little research has been conducted or competing sociological paradigms are at play. The researchers needed to explore deeply ingrained and difficult to articulate beliefs among educators regarding their ethical values systems, the role of professionalization in public relations, and how they incorporate, or do not incorporate, ethics into their courses. Qualitative research excels when one

needs to understand the phenomena, answer questions of how or why (Yin, 1994), and ascertain the ethical values behind decision-making (Hertz & Imber, 1995).

Quantitative research would have been unable to capture the nuances of such uncharted territory, as probing was necessary to fully understand the answers to many questions and reveal complexity of the topic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, educators hold different levels of understanding of moral philosophy and disparate uses of ethical terminology, making qualitative research advantageous so that the researchers could determine validity through explication, repeat questioning and, probing, and the use of reflexive procedures to confirm our interview data.

Sample and Data Collection

A purposive convenience sample followed by a snowball sample of public relations educators were recruited from four major academic conventions in the U.S. and by listing major universities with public relations education in three countries, and soliciting participants through personal contacts. The sample was selected to represent different nationalities, genders, age groups, and teaching experience.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), “Sampling involves decisions not only about which people to observe or interview, but also about settings, events, and social processes” (p. 30). For the U.S.-based authors, it was crucial to conduct interviews with European educators in offices at their universities. Classroom observations and conversations with students (not included in this report) helped better understand European participants’ teaching philosophies.

Because of a limited budget and time constraints, only seven universities in three European countries were included in the sample. While a Northern European country, United Kingdom, was chosen because of close historic, economic, and cultural ties with the United

States, the two Western European countries -- Germany and the Netherlands -- were chosen because of previous contacts that facilitated access to participants. The sample is a convenience sample of educators rather than a probability sample; a convenience sample is acceptable in qualitative research because we seek to explore rather than make generalisations.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires U.S. investigators to obtain approval to conduct a study that involves human subjects. After IRB approval was granted, 52 public relations educators were interviewed in a semi-structured interview format; 32 of those educators were based in the U.S., and 20 were based in Europe: Germany, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. In this study, males volunteered at a higher rate than did females, and the overall sample consisted of 30 males and 22 females. Their ages ranged from late twenties to early sixties. Six participants had a Masters degree and 46 had a Doctorate degree. The majority of participants had their degrees in Communication and related fields, and their teaching experience at the university level varied from 2 to 40 years.

Semi-structured interviews were used to cover a standard set of questions to allow time for exploration of emergent thought patterns (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Face-to-face interviews lasted one hour on average. All interviews were conducted in English; they were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Interviews with volunteers were conducted until the point of theoretical saturation was reached in the data. That is, when interviews did not lead to new information but repeated themes already present in the data, the point of saturation is reached.

The Institutional Review Board requires investigators to uphold privacy and the confidentiality of the information gathered during a study (Forster, 2002). Informed consent signed by participants guaranteed them full confidentiality. To comply with IRB rules, encourage candor and ensure validity of data, confidentiality and anonymity was promised to participants,

ensuring that identifying factors such as their University would not be used. It is important to note that the informed consent form allowed participants to indicate whether they preferred to be identified by country or only by continent. Therefore, the results section of this research reports data by continental affiliation (only) for several participants who indicated that requirement on their informed consent form. Data were anonymized by using number coding.

The differences between the groups of European and U.S. teachers were examined in relation to how public relations education includes or does not include ethics, whether the approach to ethics is normative or positive, proscriptive or descriptive, or is one based on simple compliance. Further, the participants were asked about how they view ethics in the public relations industry, how they teach ethics in the classroom, and the normative role that they believe ethics plays in public relations education. Participants were not asked to speculate about differences between countries; rather, we used an inductive approach and allowed findings to emerge naturally from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analyses

With the permission of participants, interviews were transcribed. They were then reviewed by the researchers for similarities that emerged naturally from the data. Those similarities were given broad and sometimes temporary code names. Data were then coded according to those code names by pattern matching (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One researcher collected and coded data, and a second researcher re-analyze the data to concur or contest the themes that emerged.

Codes were sometimes refined, collapsed, or renamed to better match the emerging pattern. Researcher two challenged, tested, and help to refine the codes established by researcher one. The validity and reliability of the patterns that emerged were acceptable, and disparate items

were discussed and resolved between the coders. Items that could not be resolved were either classified as outliers or the researchers requested further explication from the participant, allowing the participant to reflexively comment on the data. Rather than seeking to draw numerical or majority type of conclusions, we sought to explore and understand the infrequently-studied concept of public relations ethics pedagogy. The data presented in this article represents only the opinions of the participants in the research, but can help us understand broader trends in public relations ethics education.

This qualitative research sought to explore and examine the values of public relations educators in teaching ethics, rather than to make generalizable conclusions. Patterns that emerged naturalistically from the data were of interest to the researchers, and as more data were collected it was clear that distinct groups of opinion naturally coalesced. More research is warranted, specifically of the quantitative nature, to further investigate the findings presented here and to see if the divisions that we present below also arise in quantitative research.

Findings

Because we reached a point of theoretical saturation in our data collection, certain themes and patterns naturally emerged from the data, and certain areas of commonality became apparent. Participants generally held mixed feelings about the effectiveness of ethics education, but had varied approaches to ethics pedagogy. In the aggregate, participants agreed that to leave ethics out of a curriculum means to fail to prepare students for a career in the public relations field – an industry that is often saturated with moral anxiety, as discussed in our literature review.

Participants agreed that the public relations field is rife with ethical dilemmas, conflicts, divided loyalties, and other problems that require ethical understanding. At that point, their views

on many factors diverged, in terms of normative approaches, on how much independence students should hold in their learning, globalization, and – perhaps most importantly – an advocate role versus an autonomous advisor role.

Normative Ethics Versus Professional Ethics

Despite their self-reported commitment to ethics education, European and U.S. educators disagreed at the most basic level: the normative approach to teaching ethics to public relations students. We found this agreement indicative of the larger ideological divide between advocacy and autonomy because it affects how future public relations practitioners see the role of the field, what texts they read when learning public relations ethics, what concepts they consider germane to ethical issues, and, ultimately, how and when they identify an issue as an ethical concern.

European participants associated ethics instruction with meta-ethics and normative ethics. They saw their role as facilitators of critical discourse that helps students understand the nature of moral thought and practice. U.S. educators appeared to subscribe to practical or professional ethics and saw their role as interpreters of an ethos, or a set of values and norms that constitute the environment considered acceptable in the field.

The Role of Education

The ideological divide between the European approach as normative ethics versus the American approach as professionalism-based ethics might be explained by the differing perception of the overall task of higher education. American public relations professors reported this task to be communicating professional values and providing students with an understanding of current practice. The U.S. professors seem to hold professional standards of ethics because they felt that doing so would predispose their students to be successful upon entering the job market for careers in public relations.

For European professors, education is the leading-out process, or enhancement of students' academic knowledge and liberation of their minds (Boylan & Donahue, 2003). The more critical and philosophical approach of the European participants might be explained by their history of many of the great philosophers rising from that geographical area and in that educational tradition.

Interaction in the Classroom

The divergent ideologies between Europe and the U.S. also emerged in how professors self-reported that they interacted with students in the classroom. The difference in American and European professors' philosophies was evident in what educators believed the key to effective student learning: again the researchers noted a difference between the professional or practical approach and the normative or autonomous approach.

The U.S. participants we interviewed thought the best way to teach ethics was to make the instruction "real and relevant" by first employing cases from the news with a "local angle" that "makes students be interested" in the cases. Secondly, the U.S. educators studied reported that their primary technique of instruction is to "talk through ethical scenarios." Cases were used to illustrate the ethical principles aligned with professionalism in a real-world context. Readings were primarily case studies, current news reporting cases, and related to professional standards.

The European respondents we interviewed reported that the best method of teaching ethics was to assign students to read writings of world-known philosophers. Foundational texts of philosophy were used, as were critiques of those texts by other philosophers. Those foundational readings were followed by the discussion of main schools of philosophy, the primary philosophers of each tradition, and a review of their strengths and weaknesses. Eventually, a critical discussion of the ways in which those philosophies were or were not

employed in the public relations industry was used as tool of applied ethics instruction.

Participants agreed that learning the foundational works of leading moral philosophers was the most important part of the European approach to ethics education in public relations.

View of the P.R. Industry

European and U.S. educators self-reported divergent approaches to how they consider, teach, discuss, and view the public relations practice during their teaching. American professors seemed to believe in a distinctive role of public relations in society. A U.S. respondent said, “By the very nature of the profession, we are powerful and influential in society. We have to be aware of that and aware about how our actions do impact society.” A participating seasoned scholar linked the function, ethics, and democracy:

We have a role in society; we have a role in a democracy that we have to perform, and there are certain things that we can’t do because they are unethical from the professional point of view.

Driven by the perceived powerful role in society, American public relations educators tended to create a rather normative or ideal image of the field, whereas Europeans inclined to provide their students with a more critical picture of public relations practices.

European professors felt obligated to examine manipulative public relations practices in their classroom discussions. One instructor asked, “Is it ethical to pretend that spinning doesn’t happen?” And then he concluded, “It would diminish PR education if we didn’t talk about embarrassing issues.”

According to European educators’ perceptions, an individual is constrained by “too many factors and too many actors” in public relations practice. One instructor said he writes down

theoretical statements of public relations scholars and quotes of public relations practitioners on a blackboard, inviting students to discuss differences between “normative and real PR.”

Autonomous Self-Education Versus Prescriptive Instruction.

In accordance with traditions of European higher education, European participants advocated for the importance of education based on autonomous self-discovery and analytical thinking. A number of Europeans regarded U.S. textbooks that provide public relations students with various check lists and tip sheets as disservice. This approach is seen as especially uncritical and professionalism-based, resulting in a prescriptive approach to ethics in U.S. education. European public relations educators often expressed disagreement with the “too functional and straightforward method” of teaching public relations that emphasizes conformity to the industry, and lacks “room for a personal interpretation” of public relations practices. A European educator explained the differing goal that is set in their educational system:

I want students to say, “When I face with an ethical dilemma, I understand that I can look at it from more than one point of view, I can analyze it using different theories. But at the end, I need to make a judgment, and this is my judgment, and my values will make me behave this way or that way.” I want my students to understand that an ethical choice is a self-conscious choice based on reflective thinking.

Like others in the study, this professor thought that a personal moral code should always be primary, whereas professional ethics codes should be secondary for any communication practitioner. Learning to reason through moral dilemmas autonomously, according to one’s rational moral reason, was valued by the large majority of European educators.

Another European professor said that he assigns undergraduate students to read “hundreds of pages of original texts every week” and emphasized their autonomy because

“students need to learn by themselves” instead of “being supplied with recipes about how to act.” In this regard, an American educator (Duffy, 2000) argued that “Textbooks must not only prepare students in practical matters, such as how to plan a public relations campaign, but in ideological matters” (p. 311).

Another European educator appeared to have the same teaching philosophy of independent study (“the essence of university life”). He also assigns his undergraduates to read original texts, and these manuscripts come from major academic communication journals. Asked about whether students perceive such assignments are being too difficult and time consuming, the professor said that the students “complain but they still do then” because the students understand that they are expected to read academic texts in the university.

Though the function’s status as a true profession is debated, U.S. educators often spoke of teaching professional standards. Although there are certainly differences among U.S. educators, an uncritical acceptance of professionalism standards and teaching was found to be a common approach because it espouses the standards of the profession to which students should ascribe, and operationalises those standards through codes of ethics. One educator at a *P.R. Week’s* (2011) top-ranked U.S. public relations program explained, “We think professionalism should be the basis for all ethical decisions. We have great professional codes of ethics and we encourage students to rely across those in all of our public relations classes.” Reliance upon codes of ethics, rather than determining the philosophy and principles behind them is a prescriptive ethical approach.

Another U.S. educator explained, “I structure my course around the question ‘what do public relations *professionals* need to know about ethics?’ and then we use professional roles and standards from there.” Most -- but not all -- public relations educators in the U.S. portion of the

study relied on prescriptive professional standards for teaching ethics. Those who did not describe using the same approach that Europeans did, but they were in the minority. Although at least two of the U.S. professors interviewed here were critical of codes of ethics or using them to teach ethics in public relations, most that we interviewed commonly employed the practice of relying on codes or professional standards. Clearly, professional standards dominate ethical instruction in American public relations.

Public Relations Education and Globalization.

Some European educators studied here believed that their universities had a much more diverse undergraduate population than American universities. A European educator said that it affected the ethics course: “We cannot be ethical dictators who try to impose some rigid ethical standards on people who come from very different assumptions and different experiences in the world.” In the opinion of this European educator:

Students should emerge from here being critical and reflective, showing awareness of issues, showing the ability to appreciate both sides of a question before drawing the conclusion, and not trying to adopt some unreal pure PR ethics which doesn't recognize that PR is based on the real working world.

Another European instructor said that he treats his “Understanding Public Relations” course as a “very international course” in which ideas from any country are welcomed. In his view, an opportunity to freely express a personal view is the practice that distinguishes a university course from a training course.

While spotlighting differences in American and European public relations education and analyzing their causes, European professors emphasized that in the same manner as public relations practices worldwide cannot be treated as “right or wrong,” public relations education

cannot be judged from an ethnocentric point of view. As one European educator said, “PR is a kind of mirror to society. PR people are social beings and what they do reflects society.”

Accordingly, public relations education in general and teaching approaches in particular are social and culturally bound phenomena, and these participants argued that they should be analyzed taking from consideration of a multi-level societal context (university, region, country, and continent).

A European professor and author of books about public relations, said that while a “set of techniques used by PR practitioners are very similar around the world,” public relations practitioners use them in a variety of ways, “depending on the nature of the media, the nature of society, and people’s values.” In his opinion, for example, the U.K. is much more similar to the U.S. than many other European countries, nevertheless, European public relations practice is quite different from the practice in the U.S. Overall, according to this European participant, public relations programs and especially ethics instruction should prepare future practitioners to work in both native and foreign environment.

U.S. public relations educators seek global and international issues as being part of a distinct course in public relations, rather than as combined with ethical principles. For example, one American seasoned educator believed that his goal is “to get students to recognize ethical issues in a real world situation,” meaning to help them see how general principles apply for specific situations. However, the educator admitted that he could not say with certainty what ethical standards for the practice of public relations are applicable on a global scale.

Many universities in the U.S. offer a stand-alone course in global public relations, and that course appears to not be concerned with ethics to any notable extent. Additionally, some professors of public relations in the U.S. include an international perspective in courses not

related to ethics. For example one educator at a top-ranked U.S. program in the rankings conducted by *P.R. Week* (2011) indicated:

I try to include an international component in all of my courses, but especially in the campaigns course. The book I use is international, and the cases are international.

However, we do not talk about ethics much; I guess that really is not my area and we cannot fit everything in.

The researchers note that these findings are symptomatic of the divide between prescriptive and autonomous public relations. Prescriptive approaches do not deal well with international divides because many professional codes of ethics cannot handle the complexity that arises cross culturally. Autonomous approaches can analyze internationalization more thoroughly because they are searching for moral principles that underlie cultural differences. Overall, while American public relations educators appeared too concerned with the internationalization of the public relations field, it was seen as a distinct and separate topic from ethics. European professors reported that they used their ethics discussions to incorporate diverse international and cultural perspectives within their public relations courses.

Professionalism & Codes of Ethics Versus Moral Philosophy & No Reliance on Codes

When talking about the necessity of evaluating student learning outcomes in the ethics course, an American professor remarked that educators cannot be successful in this task because there is “no way to evaluate the success in something that hasn’t been described yet,” meaning that the industry has not articulated its ethical standards. He explained what he saw as the failure of PRSA to articulate its ethics:

The Public Relations Society’s [of America] ethical standards are basically about trade protection: “don’t break the law,” and “don’t steal somebody else’s clients.” As far as any

kind of substantive ethical standards for the profession, it's all watered down and it's voluntary.

Moreover, in this professor's opinion, the field does not seem to be engaged in active debates about what these standards should be. So far, the industry has been restraining the trade, and, he explained, "This is not ethics, it is business arrangement." Other U.S. educators also mentioned the lack of debate and critique of ethical standards within the industry as a problematic issue in the classroom. The literature supports that evaluation; Benson (2008) argued that academics should "distance themselves from their too-close historic association with business" (p. 20) and develop more close ties with non-governmental organizations.

A gap between students' formal education and their actual understanding of ethics was another concern of the American public relations educator community. One American professor said that an informal meeting helped her realize that a student, who "performed very well in class while recognizing ethical dilemmas in scenarios, did not apply ethical theories for herself." The educator said that the student wanted to mention in her resume the fact of conducting research. The instructor asked for details, and the student answered that she wrote student research papers for money. It appeared, according to the professor, the student thought about herself as a "good businesswoman," and did not see anything wrong in being paid for research papers, despite that this practice is a clear violation of university academic integrity policies. The instructor concluded: "The only way to know if you sparked, launched, cultivated, or nurtured ethical thought and behavior is seeing it over time." Another U.S. participant echoed, "You can make students learn but you can't make them behave ethically." Some American educators noted the difference in reading and understanding that code of ethics and in applying the moral principles behind it, as evidenced in these comments.

Addressing the issue of public relations professionalism and ethical behavior, another American educator linked the concepts: “If you want to be a professional, do the right things because the difference between PR professionals and those who are selling their time to a higher bidder is expertise and ethical standards.” All but two of the public relations educators on the American side of this study referred to professional standards of ethics as a means of ethical decision-making, and as a means of ethical instruction in their courses.

European professors emphasize the importance of studying various philosophical approaches to ethics, so that students are familiar with a range of approaches they could use to resolve a moral dilemma. Educators from the European side of this study argued that reviewing these various philosophical perspectives allowed future public relations practitioners a better understanding of their role in society and their ethical responsibilities than did simply relying on professionalism to guide their standards. Because scholars have argued that studying moral philosophy results in more thoroughly considered and consistent ethical decision-making, the researchers note that the European approach probably provides a superior means of analyses of ethical dilemmas for future public relations practitioners.

This study showed that the balance of theory and practice was a challenging endeavor for American public relations educators. As one educator said,

If you go too philosophical, you lose them [students]. If you go absolutely practical, they don't understand how to apply the situations in specifics. Try to find a balance where they can reason through abstractly but still see practical application. That's a hard work.

Overall, it appeared that U.S. educators constantly appeal to the PRSA Member Code of Ethics and Professional Standards in their teaching, whereas European instructors focus on theoretical systems of analytical decision-making found in moral philosophy (e.g., virtue ethics,

Kantian deontology, Rawl's theory of justice, or act and rule utilitarianism). Only two of the U.S. educator participants emphasized that public relations graduates should be aware that they would be expected to advise management on key decisions in ethically challenging situations and thus, should comprehend ethical theories based in moral philosophy. One American educator said, "The question is how much knowledge, practice and reasoning abilities they have," explaining that good intentions should be backed up with experience, self-confidence, and critical thinking as offered by moral philosophy.

Journalism vs. Public Relations, or Who is responsible for P.R.'s image?

Regardless of the country in which they teach, participants were concerned with the tension that often exists between journalism and public relations practitioners. A world-known American public relations educator made it clear that this situation negatively affects the educational process:

I am not convinced and never will be convinced that journalists are inherently more ethical people than public relations people are. But journalists love to feel it. Law and ethics is often taught by a journalism faculty member, and PR students come out feeling bad about themselves because PR people are characterized as liars and journalists are characterized as heroes of society.

American and European educators seem to agree on this point. A European educator said that in her country, if someone wants to offend a journalist, he or she would call him or her a "PR person." Another European educator said that the image of public relations is worse than the true practice. This teacher noted that a change in this negative reputation or a "breakthrough" seems impossible because journalists are attuned to bad public relations practices, considering scandals newsworthy, and ignoring positive deeds by public relations.

A European educator whose research focused on relations between journalists and public relations managers found that journalists expect public relations people to be advocates for their companies and do not expect them to reveal “the whole truth” in an ethical manner. This professor also noted that journalists tend not to challenge their assumption of this role because they want to “get easy to digest, straightforward information,” and do not want to “complicate things.”

Although a number of participants believed that journalists contributed to creating a negative reputation for public relations, a European expert in organizational communication believed that this “unwanted” image was built in the 1970-1980 by American communicators. In his opinion, in that time public relations people “tried to influence public opinion too heavily.” Later on, “they learned from the science that PR is limited in its ability to influence people’s minds.” However, there are still a lot of efforts to “green-wash a questionable image.” This professor is used to discussing “window-dressing” practices with his students as a dishonest approach to public relations. As an example, he asked them to think about “why an American fast food company supports sports?” Students saw elements of “window-dressing” or “green-washing” in the company’s efforts, but in general, they agreed that helping athletes is better than “doing nothing.”

Another European educator said that ordinary people believe that “PR people are dishonest and journalists are honest, but they don’t know how much newspaper information comes from press-releases prepared by PR practitioners.” A European participant who teaches both public relations and journalism students noted that the recent tendency of employers to pay less and make journalists work more negatively affects their relationships with public relations practitioners. He said that a persistent theme of his lectures is that good public relations

managers value honesty – they are open and truthful, and if some reason they cannot provide journalists with accurate information, they would say, “Sorry, I cannot comment on this,” instead of misleading them with “fluffy words.”

Stand Alone Ethics Course or Integrated Ethics?

Participants appeared to have divergent opinions on what format of ethics instruction—a free-standing ethics course or ethics incorporated throughout the curriculum—is the best way to engender effective student learning. However, in this case, the differences of opinion did not correlate with the international groups – participants from both Europe and the U.S. were represented in each group. The majority of respondents believed that the most effective way is to have a free-standing course and use ethics discussion in every course in every class meeting.

A group of nine participants most-strongly argued that effective public relations education should include “a stand-alone PR ethics course, maybe media ethics course, certainly, separate from law.” In one professor’s opinion, “Ethics needs to be slow cooked, in the sense that it needs to be integrated in everything we do, as oppose to a garnish we sprinkle on the top at the end of the course, “By the way, everything that PR professionals do should be ethical.” This opinion represents a number of participants who think that “ethics deserves to be a separate capstone course.”

Professors offered numerous ideas for integrating and teaching ethics, either as a stand alone course or an integrated topic, included shadowing practitioners, keeping journals, and writing a moral code. Ethics instruction included in numerous courses was also discussed. This group of American and European professors believed in the approach of integrating “ethics throughout the curriculum.” Explaining how ethics could be integrated into every course, one participant explained:

Ethics needs to be taught as an essential part of every course because every choice that is made—whether a strategic planning choice or wording choice—has an ethical component to it. Any time when you make ethical choices that can affect others you are making ethical judgments, and you have to be mindful of applications of these ethical judgments.

These findings led the researchers to conclude that ethics instruction is best accomplished as a dual-pronged, intensive focus in the curriculum. From analyzing these data, we argue that using an independent ethics course to learn the deep ethical reasoning based on reading moral philosophy is vital, as supported as ethical analyses and discussion integrated throughout the curriculum in other courses. Integrating ethics across the curriculum also validates and reinforces the importance of a stand-alone, intensive ethics course. In this manner, students can learn both ethical theory and can see it applied in numerous courses.

Conclusion

This exploratory research found two exceptionally different paradigms of public relations ethics education: the American paradigm that is based on professionalism and the ethics of advocacy versus the European paradigm that is based on moral autonomy and critically advising or acting as an ethics counsel. Although some American professors stridently adhere to the autonomy or critically advising approach (with only a few in this study), they were the exception. This study shows that both approaches have value and create understanding about the public relations industry among students, and both discuss the importance of being ethical. There, the two groups diverge in their agreement.

Although there are certainly differences by country, and some respondents wish to be identified by continent only, rather than country. The European scholars who participated in this study seem to provide their students with a competitive advantage by offering a deeper

understanding of moral reasoning than do their U.S. colleagues. European participants in this study explained that their students read the great philosophers before engaging in applying their ethics to public relations situations. U.S. participants (with a few exceptions as noted above) did not use moral philosophy to begin teaching ethics, but began by talking about professionalism, professional standards, and codes of ethics. We find that the latter approach is lacking in depth and does not offer students the tools with which to approach complex moral dilemmas. Years of systematic research on moral development (Kohlberg, 1967; Kohlberg, Levine & Hower, 1984; Gilligan, 1982) allow researchers to understand that students can be taught to reason ethically, and progress through predictable levels of development in their analytical reasoning ability when applied to moral dilemmas. Skipping philosophical schools of thought and analysis and critical discussion of those approaches while moving directly to applied ethics does not allow students the opportunity to develop understanding of moral principles and obligations, develop an appreciation for the public interest or dignity and respect of autonomous individuals, or develop the analytical skill that is necessary to conduct ethical decision-making.

Additionally, European professors appear to exercise autonomy from the industry that allows them to act as critics when unethical situations arise, and students can learn from these situations by critiquing the field. Public relations professors in the U.S. indicate that they are closely tied to the industry, supportive of the industry and preparing their students to enter it, and see their role as advocating for the industry rather than critiquing its ethical missteps.

Setting themselves aside from the industry is a wise choice, because it allows them the moral autonomy necessary to critique the field and to learn the deeper philosophical thinking that does not cheer on, but critically questions. U.S. educators are, unfortunately, often tied to professionalism in a way that does not allow them to be objective observers of the industry but

causes them to act as champions, instead. As this research explains, European educators have the moral autonomy to reflect on normative and descriptive practices in the public relations field, and many educators in the U.S. system do not have that autonomy from industry.

Research (Taylor, 2010) argued for public relations as the enactment of a civil society, and van Ruler and Vercic (2005) and Bowen (2010) offered her conceptualization for public relations as responsible to a higher social good, creating information flow, and an informed society, over simply representing an organization or client as an advocate. In that theoretical perspective, public relations as an advocate only for ethical truth and serves both organizations and clients with rectitude and reflexivity, aware of the greater responsibility to society. Studying moral philosophy allows the public relations practitioner to engage in reflective, ethical decision-making as a higher-order level of critical thinking and analysis than simply disseminating messages on behalf of a client (Plaisance, 2009). We believe that in this way the public relations field grows to represent its true ethical potential, at least in the normative and theoretical sense, and hopefully in practice.

Based on the interviews conducted, we conclude that a university education should challenge students to develop these critical and analytical reasoning skills. Prior researchers have also arrived at that conclusion when discussing the role of ethics education (Christians & Traber, 1997; Plaisance, 2009). Reflexively, the authors agree that activities within the public relations field are too often unethical and that more serious ethical study and ethical reflection are needed.

Additionally, taking a more critical and autonomous approach to reasoning about ethics allows public relations specialists to not only serve their organizations and contribute to the bottom line of the business, but also to serve the greater good, fulfilling their obligations of ethical communication in creating a well-informed society, corresponding to the idealist views

espoused by some participants in this study. More research is warranted on a split in the field between autonomy and advocacy, or between issues management (ideal, counseling, autonomy) and public relations (propaganda, professionalism).

Wines (2008) argued, education helps students “to take charge of their intellects” and prepare them “to take a meaningful role in participatory government as an active and informed citizen” (p. 485). This research concludes that by emphasizing the autonomous perspective, as illustrated through most of the names supported by European education, moral autonomy can help public relations practitioners live up to the highest level of ethical responsibility and can help to repair the ailing reputation of the field.

This study has at least two limitations. First, it is based on self-reports which can be associated with the social desirability issue, or respondents’ bias to give responses deemed as proper by others. As an example, social desirability bias means that one report ethical behavior when one has not even considered ethics, simply because ethics is socially desirable.

Second, the majority of study participants are active members U.S. based organizations -- the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, International Communication Association, National Communication Association, and Educator’s Academy of the Public Relations Society of America. Opinions of these educators-activists might not represent views of the overall population of public relations teachers in the U.S. and Western Europe. At the same time, study participants are those educators who define and promote the agenda in communication education and, accordingly, shape public relations curricula. Therefore, their insights into ethics instruction were worth exploring.

With cautious enthusiasm, the authors note that the provocative findings about the two divergent approaches to ethics education public relations are based upon interviews with only 52

participants from four countries. We have no doubt that more nuanced results could result with further study. Because of the legitimacy gap of the public relations function clashing with calls for it to act as an ethical advisor to senior management, we believe that studying ethics education in the field is perhaps the most important challenge faced by public relations. Further study of these crucial differences in ethics education is not only warranted but also essential if the field seeks to be accepted as a profession, an advisor, or an ethical conscience.

References

- Adrian W (2005) Truth, freedom and (dis)order. *Christian Higher Education*, 4: 145-154.
- Austin LL and Toth EL (2011) Exploring ethics education in global public relations curricula: Analysis of international curricula descriptions and interviews with public relations educators. *Public Relations Review*, 37: 506-512.
- Bivins TH (1991, Winter) A theory-based approach to public relations ethics. *Educator*, 39-44.
- Bok DC (1976, October) Can ethics be taught? *Change*, p. 30.
- Botan C (1997) Ethics in strategic communication campaigns: The case for a new approach to public relations. *Journal of Business Communication* 34(2): 188-202.
- Bowen SA (2004) Organizational factors encouraging ethical decision making: An exploration into the case of an exemplar. *Journal of Business Ethics* 52(4): 311-324.
- Bowen SA (2006) Autonomy in communication: Inclusion in strategic management and ethical decision-making, a comparative case analysis. *Journal of Communication Management* 10(4): 330-352.
- Bowen SA (2007) *Ethics and public relations*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.
- Bowen SA (2008) Foundations in moral philosophy for public relations ethics. In: Hansen-Horn TL and Neff BD *Public relations: From theory to practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 160-180.
- Bowen SA (2009) All glamour, no substance? How public relations majors and potential majors in an exemplar program view the industry and function. *Public Relations Review* 35: 402-410.

Bowen SA (2010) The nature of good and public relations: What should be its normative ethic?

In: RL Heath (Ed) *The Sage handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 569-583.

Boylan M. and Donahue JA (2003) *Ethics across the curriculum. A practice-based approach*.

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Callahan D (1980) Goals in the teaching of ethics. In: Callahan D and Bok S (Eds) *Ethics*

teaching in higher education. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 61-80.

Cheney G and Vibbert SL (1987) Corporate discourse: Public relations and issue management.

In: Jablin FM, Putnam LL, Roberts KH and Porter LW (Eds) *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 165-194.

Christians CG (1979) Beyond quandaries: A plea for normative ethics. *Mass Communication*

Review 6: 28-31.

Commission on Public Relations Education (2006) *The professional bond—public relations*

education and practice. New York: Public Relations Society of America.

Coombs WT and Rybacki K (1999) Public relations education: Where is pedagogy?

Public Relations Review 25: 55-63.

Currie J, DeAngelis R., de Boer H, Huisman J and Lacotte C (2002) Introduction. In: Currie J,

DeAngelis R, de Boer H, Huisman J, and Lacotte C (Eds) *Globalizing practices and university responses. European and Anglo-American perspectives*. Westport, CT:

Praeger, pp. 1-21.

De George RT (2010) *Business ethics* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.

Duffy ME (2000) There's no two way symmetric about: A postmodern examination of public

relations textbooks. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17: 294-315.

- Edgett R (2002) Toward an ethical framework for advocacy in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research* 14: 1-26.
- Elliott G and Khoper E (2002) Public relations education from an editor's perspective. *Journal of Communication Management* 7: 21-33.
- Erzikova E (2010) University teachers' perceptions and evaluations of ethics instruction in the public relations curriculum. *Public Relations Review* 36 (3): 316-318.
- Fawkes J (2012) Interpreting ethics: Public relations and strong hermeneutics. *Public Relations Inquiry* 1(2), 117-140.
- Forster DG (2002) Privacy and confidentiality In: Amdur RJ and Bankert EA (Eds) *Institutional Review Board: Management and Function*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, pp.169-175.
- Gale K and Bunton K (2005) Assessing the impact of ethics instruction on advertising and public relations graduates. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 60: 272-285.
- Goodpaster KE (2002) Teaching and learning ethics by the case method. In: Bowie NE (Ed) *The Blackwell guide to business ethics* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 117-141.
- Harrison SL (1990) Ethics and moral issues in public relations curricula. *Journalism Educator* 45: 32-38.
- Heath RL (1991) Public relations research and education: Agendas for the 1990s. *Public Relations Review* 17: 185-194.
- Heath RL (2001) A rhetorical enactment rationale for public relations: The good organization communicating well. In: Heath RL (Ed) *Handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, (pp. 31-50).

- Hertz R and Imber JB (Eds) (1995) *Studying elites Using qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hostetter DR (2007) *Universitas and moral excellence. Higher education and the judicious use of knowledge*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America.
- Hutchinson, LL (2002) Teaching ethics across the public relations curriculum. *Public Relations Review* 28: 301-309.
- Kant I (1785/1964) *Groundwork of the metaphysic of morals* (Paton HJ, Trans). New York: Harper & Row.
- Kohlberg L (1969) Stage and sequence: The cognitive developmental approach to socialization. In: Goslin DA (Ed) *Handbook of socialization theory of research*. Chicago: Rand McNally, (pp. 347-480).
- Kohlberg L, Levine C and Hewer A (1984) Synopses and detailed replies to critics. In: Kohlberg L (Ed) *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, pp. 320-386.
- Lamme MO, L'Etang J and St. John B III. (2009) The state of public relations history. *American Journalism* 26(1): 156-159.
- L'Etang J (2003) The myth of the "ethical guardian": An examination of its origins, potency and illusions. *Journal of Communication Management* 8(1): 53 – 67.
- Lisman CD (1996) *The curricular integration of ethics: Theory and practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Gilligan C (1982) *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lincoln YS and Guba EG (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

McDaniel C (2004) *Organizational ethics. Research and ethical environments*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company.

McInerney PM (1997-1998, Winter) Ethics throughout the curriculum. *Public Relations Quarterly* 42: 44-47.

Mendonca M and Kanungo RN (2007) *Ethical leadership*. New York: Open University Press.

Messina A (2007) Public relations, the public interest and persuasion: an ethical approach. *Journal of Communication Management* 11(1): 29-52.

Miles MB and Huberman AM (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Moloney K (2006) *Rethinking public relations: the spin and the substance*. London: Routledge.

Owen-Smith J, Riccaboni M, Rammolli F and Powell WW (2002) A comparison of U.S. and European university-industry relations in the life science. *Management Science* 48: 24-43.

Paluszek J (1989) Public relations and ethical leadership. *Vital Speeches of the Day* 55: 747-750.

Parkinson MG and Ekachai D (2002) The Socratic method in the introductory PR course: An alternative pedagogy. *Public Relations Review* 28: 167-174.

Plaisance PL (2007, Winter) An assessment of media ethics education: Course content and the values and ethical ideologies of media ethics students. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 378-396.

Pratt CB (1991) Public relations: the empirical research on practitioner ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics* 10: 229-236.

P.R. Week (2011) P.R. Education Program of the Year. P.R. Available:

<http://www.prweekus.com/pages/login.aspx?returl=/pr-education-program-of-the-year->

2011/article/197762/&pagetypeid=28&articleid=197762&accesslevel=2&expireddays=0
&accessAndPrice=0 (accessed 24 Sept 2012).

Rizvi F, Engel L, Ruthkowski D and Sparks J (2007) Equality and the politics of globalization in education. In: Verma GK, Bagley CR and Jha MM (Eds) *International perspectives on educational diversity and inclusion. Studies from America, Europe and India*. New York: Routledge, pp. 3-20.

Rothblatt S and Wittrock B (1993) Introduction: universities and 'higher education.' In: Rothblatt S and Wittrock B (Eds) *The European and American university since 1800. Historical and sociological essays*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-15.

Rubin HJ and Rubin IS (2005) *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shamir J, Reed BS and Connell S (1990) Individual differences in ethical values of public relations practitioners. *Journalism Quarterly* 67: 956-963.

Starck K and Kruckeberg D (2004) Ethical obligations of public relations in an era of globalization. *Journal of Communication Management* 8(1): 29-40.

Sullivan RJ (1989). *Immanuel Kant's moral theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor M. (2010) Public relations in the enactment of civil society. In: Heath RL (Ed) *The Sage handbook of public relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 5-15.

Toth EL (1999) Models for instruction and curriculum. *Public Relations Review* 25: 45-53.

Verschoor CC (1998) A study of the link between a corporation's financial performance and its commitment to ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics* 17: 1509-1516.

Wines WA (2008) Seven pillars of business ethics: Toward a comprehensive framework.

Journal of Business Ethics 79: 483-499.

Yin RK (1994) *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH EUROPEAN and US PUBLIC RELATIONS INSTRUCTORS

Thank you for agreeing to share your perspective about teaching ethics to public relations students. I would like you to ask a few questions that will help me understand your teaching philosophy and practice.

1. Do you think ethics education is essential for public relations students? Why?
2. What kind of approaches do you employ in your ethics classroom to insure students' effective learning?
3. What kind of resources and material do you find the most effective in the ethics classroom?
4. What are some ways to improve students' ethical capacity, or the ability to comprehend ethics issues?
5. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your ethics instruction?
6. Do you believe that ethics education has a long-term effect on PR students? On what kind of evidence your opinion is based?
7. In your opinion, what is the most important goal of ethics education?
8. What is the best format for teaching ethics (e.g., a free-standing ethics course or ethics incorporated throughout the curriculum?)

Appendix II

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND EVALUATIONS OF ETHICS INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS CURRICULUM

The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of PR instructors toward teaching ethics in the undergraduate curriculum. Your opinion is valuable to me and will help me better understand teaching perspective of those who educate future professionals.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview which will last about an hour.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. To analyze the data, qualitative methods will be employed. Subject identities will be kept confidential, and the files will be destroyed when the project is finished (or no later than three years from today's date). When reporting the results, no individuals will be identified. Depending on your preference, your country or only continent will be mentioned.

This study is not being funded.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Research Compliance officer at _____. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Completing interview constitutes your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Investigator

Date