

Images of Public Relations in New Zealand:
Perceptions of Key Stakeholders in Business,
Education and the Media

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MEMORANDUM

To: Barry King
From: Madeline Banda Executive Secretary, AUTECH
Date: 14 December 2006
Subject: Ethics Application Number 06/219 Perceptions of PR in New Zealand.

Dear Barry

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH) at their meeting on 6 November 2006 and that as the Executive Secretary of AUTECH I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTECH's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTECH's meeting on 22 January 2007.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 11 December 2009.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit to AUTECH the following:

- A brief annual progress report indicating compliance with the ethical approval given using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/ethics>, including when necessary a request for extension of the approval one month prior to its expiry on 11 December 2009;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 11 December 2009 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is also a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence and that AUTECH approval is sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to the participant documents involved.

You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that any research undertaken under this approval is carried out within the parameters approved for your application. Any change to the research outside the parameters of this approval must be submitted to AUTECH for approval before that change is implemented.

Please note that AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, should your research be undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all written and verbal correspondence with us. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the Committee and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely



Madeline Banda
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Graeme Sterne sterne@clear.net.nz

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Sterne".

Graeme Sterne

October 2011

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Abstract

This thesis examines the perceptions of some of the key influencers of the practice of Public Relations in New Zealand. These influencers were chosen on the basis of their ability to influence the employment, status, and public opinion of Public Relations. They included senior business managers, media editors, and tertiary educators. The study differentiates categories of perceptions within these groups and examines the reasons for these differences. It tests levels of negativity, especially in media representation. It examines various definitions of public relations, the roles and functions assigned to the practice and arguments over its legitimacy. As the study progresses it unveils an approach to public relations that provides significant insights for Western practice and the scope and limitations of the dominant definition of the field.

The study began with a Symbolic Interactionist theoretical framework (Blumer, 1969) and then drew on concepts from Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1991, 2000) to examine the factors shaping perceptions of Public Relations. As the study progressed it drew on hermeneutic examination of context and text, heuristic inquiry as the researcher reflected on his discoveries and ethnographic insights into New Zealand Māori approaches to Public Relations.

Public Relations is a much maligned practice (Callison, 2004; Tilley, 2005; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Public Relations practitioners and academics have sought to defend the practice by arguing that it is a profession with a growing body of knowledge. Various strategies have been offered to bolster its credibility, such as advocacy of excellent practice (Grunig, 1992), rebranding (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin, 2004) and practitioner registration (Sha, 2011). These arguments assume that Public Relations is in fact a profession and that it can and should advocate its professional standing and integrity to key opinion leaders such as senior managers (White & Mazur, 1995; Murphy, 2003). Descriptions of New Zealand Public Relations practice have relied largely on the views of practitioners. There has been limited research on perceptions of key consumers of Public Relations in New Zealand. This study fills a gap in the body of knowledge in terms of New Zealand Public Relations and analyses the contention that Public Relations is a profession.

The key research question was, “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” Flowing from that core question was a secondary question, “What are these perceptions based on?”

This study drew data from eighty-six interviews and 181 surveys. Data was triangulated by way of content analysis of 54 media articles, including business literature, and 33 text books, and a phone survey of the top 100 businesses in New Zealand. The data was analysed using a layered categorisation process cross-checked with other researchers, practitioners, cultural experts and with the participants themselves and then examined using Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus, trajectory, symbolic capital and symbolic violence.

This thesis argues that framing Public Relations as a profession dedicated to publicising messages is an impoverished construction that does not encapsulate the range of views of senior business managers and does a disservice to indigenous expressions of public relations. This study presents guidelines for an indigenous (Māori) approach to Public Relations that emphasises the importance of identity declaration, reciprocity and respect in a relational context where spiritual and emotional factors play a significant part in human interaction. This thesis contends that exploring indigenous principles of Public Relations in their own terms of reference will greatly enhance the international body of knowledge and practice. To capitalise on this, practitioners may need to review their positivist mindset in order to appreciate cultural expressions among different ethnic groups. Moreover, researchers may need to adopt new conceptualisations and methodologies in order to accommodate the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin the practices of public relations in different cultural settings.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

As a Public Relations educator and member of the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ) I began this study with a curiosity about the persistently negative reaction I received from colleagues and friends to the name “Public Relations”. There seemed to be a “disconnect” between the positive nature of the practice that I experienced as a practitioner-educator and what people said about it. I was also curious as to why media portrayal of Public Relations seemed to be predominantly negative. This study began with two research questions: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” and “What are those perceptions based on?” I began my journey with the hope that I might develop a deeper understanding of the fabric of Public Relations in New Zealand, with the intention of being able to pass insights on to my students, to other practitioners and to PRINZ.

A preliminary review of the existing literature revealed that studies on perceptions of Public Relations had been conducted in the USA (Callison & Zillman, 2002; Sallot, 2002; Callison, 2004), in Europe (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin, 2004), and in the United Kingdom (Murphy, 2003; L’Etang, 2004; Murray & White, 2005; Heyman, 2005). In New Zealand, a paper discussing the salience of the name Public Relations (Tilley, 2005) had been published and a Masters thesis describing Public Relations practice in this country (Sele, 2006) had been completed.

The American studies mentioned above focused on the credibility of practitioners. They defined Public Relations as a profession, mainly in a corporate setting, dedicated to open communication but struggling to shed negative media portrayal of Public Relations as propaganda. The van Ruler et al. (2004) study described four distinctive qualities of European Public Relations. They found that it was reflective, in that it analysed societal trends; managerial, in that it executed organisational goals and strategies; operational, in that it executed communication plans; and educational, in that it utilised internal advocacy to increase organisational capacity to respond to societal demand. Studies in the United Kingdom (UK) were conducted for the purposes

of establishing the value of Public Relations (Murphy, 2003), describing the maturing role Public Relations was playing in UK senior management (Murray & White, 2005), and demonstrating the qualities needed to be successful in the practice at senior level (Heyman, 2005). L'Etang's (2004) study described the development of Public Relations in the UK, illustrating its distinctiveness from the United States model. These studies suggested several strands of interest, namely, sources of practitioner credibility, claims and counter-claims about the legitimacy of the practice, media portrayal of Public Relations, distinctive New Zealand characteristics of Public Relations, and the role of Public Relations in New Zealand. Given the spread of these interests I decided to retain the two broad research questions but to focus on the views of key influencers of Public Relations to provide insights into perceptions of the practice.

The studies mentioned above used samples from students and academics (Callison & Zillman, 2002); shopping mall respondents (Sallot, 2002); randomly chosen telephone respondents (Callison, 2004); Public Relations practitioners and academics (Murphy, 2003; van Ruler et al., 2004; Heyman, 2005; Sele, 2006). One used CEOs as its primary sample (Murray & White, 2005). There appeared to be a need to research more directly among senior business managers. Management perceptions of Public Relations had been identified as a priority for Public Relations research (Sallot, 2002). Studies of the perceptions that business managers have of Public Relations are rare (McKinney, 2007). This seemed to be a significant omission. Senior managers such as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), Chief Operations Officers, and Marketing General Managers are usually members of the dominant coalitions within organisations and, as such, have defining influence over Public Relations as practiced in their organisations. They are also the key shapers of their companies' public relationships.

The media, specifically senior editors, also seemed to be a key group to include in my research. The media are key influencers who confer or deny legitimacy to organisations and to the practice of Public Relations (Gregory, 2003; White & Hobsbawm, 2007; Moloney, 2006). Therefore, media perceptions of Public Relations are vital in its portrayal to the general public. There have been a number of studies on media perceptions of Public Relations in the USA and the

UK, all indicating negative portrayal (Kopenhaver, Martinson, & Ryan, 1984; Ryan & Martinson, 1988; Spicer, 1993; Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993; Sallot, Steinfatt, & Salwen, 1998; Miller, 1999; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Jo, 2003; Shaw & White, 2004; White & Hobsbawm, 2007). During the course of this research a New Zealand study appeared on junior journalist perceptions of Public Relations which found that journalists are conflicted in their relationships with Public Relations practitioners (Tilley & Hollings, 2008). It found that while journalists fundamentally disagree with Public Relations as a profession, they find themselves enjoying collegial relationships with individual practitioners, some of whom are ex-journalists themselves. Overseas studies suggested useful areas to explore in the media–Public Relations relationship, such as the degrees of negativity within various media (Spicer, 1993; Pincus et al., 1993); the media relationship with Public Relations practitioners (Jo, 2003; Shaw & White, 2004; Tilley & Hollings, 2008); and the sources of negativity (Sallot, 2002; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Callison, 2004). There has been no research focusing on the perceptions of Public Relations held by senior journalists and news editors in New Zealand. This is another significant gap, since they are key decision-makers in the production of news and opinions. Senior media practitioners choose and shape stories, they exercise decision making power over representation and they relate on a regular basis to Public Relations practitioners.

Tertiary educators were another key sample group since they have a key role in shaping the perceptions of those they train and teach. Research in the area of Public Relations education has mainly focused on the connection between what is being taught by Public Relations educators and what is required in the industry (Stacks, Botan, & Turk 1999; CPRE, 1999; Turk, 2006; Wright & Turk, 2007; Toth, 2007; PRINZ Trends Survey, 2006, 2008; Kim & Johnson, 2009). The perceptions of Public Relations held by educators are assumed rather than being the subject of examination. This was of some concern to me because researchers had reported a yawning chasm (van Ruler et al., 2004) and a “disconnect” (Wright & Turk, 2007) between Public Relations education and Public Relations practice. Some research had focused on the portrayals of Public Relations in media texts (Pincus et al., 1993) and what journalism educators taught their students about Public Relations (Shaw & White, 2004).

There has been no research on the perceptions of Public Relations held by Management or Marketing educators and their textbooks. This suggested a need to explore the portrayal of Public Relations by educators and textbooks that might influence perceptions of students who would either practice Public Relations or come into contact with it as managers, marketers or journalists.

One area of interest that emerged from the literature was whether concepts taught by Public Relations educators were having an impact on other academic faculties. Hutton (2001) has suggested that Public Relations had been ineffective in educating business people and business schools about Public Relations because of a failure to define the practice, to develop sophisticated and progressive theory, and to develop its central tenet or core concept. He maintained that “Public Relations has created a vacuum that Marketing is now filling” (Hutton, 2010). These assertions needed examination.

So, the initial research question was broadly framed to allow for open expression of definitions, roles, and value statements. The concerns of the study were wide reaching and the range of participants needed to be carefully selected. The selection of participants was largely guided by gaps in the literature but also by the requirement of this investigation for participants to be members of socio-economic elite groups in New Zealand society who have the ability to influence employment and opinion shaping. These were senior business managers, media editors and tertiary educators. Two notable exclusions from this selection were the Government and Not for Profit sectors. These exclusions seemed justified, not merely because their inclusion threatened to sacrifice depth of analysis for broad coverage but because the Government and Not for Profit sectors utilise business, education and the media as sources for trained personnel and for their understanding of current practice. It is hoped that future research using the findings established here may analyse the excluded sectors.

1.1 Why a study on perceptions?

In this study, perceptions are regarded as configurations of meaning attached to the various definitions, role ascriptions and titles assigned to the term Public Relations. Perceptions are important to the practice of Public Relations, especially the perceptions of those who engage with it on a regular basis and whose decisions directly affect its practice. Some researchers have gone so far as to say that “credibility is the cornerstone attribute that PR practitioners must possess” (Callison, 2004, p. 372) and “a PR practitioner’s reputation for integrity and competence is their real license to practice” (Sallot, 2002, p. 164).

Perceptions affect the way Public Relations practitioners are treated, spoken about and portrayed. Ironically, as an industry which deals in building positive perceptions, Public Relations does not enjoy a favourable perception itself (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

Moloney (2006) claims that the name Public Relations or PR is a drag anchor. Oliver (2004) agrees that it has a pejorative association with smokescreens and spin doctoring. Coombs and Holladay (2007) claim PR is a misunderstood and misapplied term and that “critics delight in pointing out the inability of PR to manage its own reputation” (p. 14). “The PR industry’s most pressing client in need of an image boost may be the industry itself” (Callison & Zillman, 2002, p. 87). In the United States, Public Relations is disliked, distrusted, and denigrated for three reasons – conflict with journalists; the unethical behaviour of some practitioners; and the intrinsic nature of the Public Relations practitioner’s task of selective representation (Sallot, 2002). Sallot found that the credibility of message strategies is undermined when people realise that there is self interest behind them. As a New Zealand Public Relations practitioner and educator, I was interested to know whether these factors extended to perceptions of Public Relations in this country. An investigation that clearly describes perceptions of Public Relations and examines the reasons for these perceptions forms a basis for understanding and perhaps changing those perceptions.

Research on Public Relations in New Zealand has not examined perceptions of the practice directly. Perceptions have been discussed from a theoretical perspective by examining the role practitioners play in discursive struggles

(Motion & Leitch, 1996); the emergence of personal Public Relations (Motion, 1999); Public Relations as issues management (Jaques, 2002); the role of Public Relations in branding (Motion, 2001); social context (Motion & Weaver, 2005); and Public Relations as a community embedded enterprise (Schoenberger-Orgad & McKie, 2005). Research on Public Relations in New Zealand has also focused on power struggles in the contest for control over messaging. Examples of such studies include Public Relations as a supporter of capitalist power (Weaver, 2001); the Government's use of Public Relations to legitimise discourses and create identities (Roper, 2002, 2005, 2005a; Davenport, Leitch, & Rip, 2003; Motion, 2005); and how publics have been overlooked in Public Relations literature (Leitch & Neilson, 2001). Arguments have been proposed to re-conceive Public Relations as more than a managerial function serving corporate interests (Toledano, McKie, & Roper, 2003; McKie, Motion, & Munshi, 2004; McKie & Munshi, 2007). A critical examination of perceptions of the practice and of practitioners in New Zealand was a useful opportunity to add to the body of knowledge.

1.2 Why a study on New Zealand Public Relations?

Describing Public Relations in a country-specific setting has emerged as a significant pattern in Public Relations thinking (Moss & DeSanto, 2004, 2009; Gregory, 2004; Sriramesh, 2004; Brown, 2006; Sievert & Porter, 2009). There has been a growing realisation that countries and regions have their own expressions of Public Relations practice (L'Etang, 2004; van Ruler et al., 2004; Sriramesh, 2004; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). In part, this reflects a reaction to the dominance of Western ethnocentric thinking in the field of Public Relations but it also reflects a growing awareness of the fact that we are living in a global community that possesses a wide variety of communication approaches (Choi & Cameron, 2005). The development of country-specific descriptions of practice has been strongly advocated (McKie & Munshi, 2007; L'Etang, 2008; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009; Sievert & Porter, 2009).

Public Relations in New Zealand has been described by Motion and Leitch (2001) and Motion (2002). In a more recent description Public Relations in New Zealand was conflated into Australasian practice by Motion, Leitch and Cliffe

(2009). These descriptions drew on surveys and interviews of practitioners to explore perceptions of the practice and concluded that Public Relations was an emerging profession – a younger version of the practice overseas, particularly in the USA. Motion and Leitch (2001) mentioned the indigenous Māori as being a unique public in the New Zealand Public Relations landscape and noted the need for more research on how to communicate with Māori and other migrant groups. However, an indigenous perspective was not included in their description. A Māori perspective is an important area for any representation of New Zealand Public Relations, since Māori are the indigenous people of this country. As such, they are equal partners under New Zealand's founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi. To date there has been no research into Māori or Pacific Island expressions of Public Relations. This current study seeks to redress this omission by including Māori and Pacific perspectives. Hopefully this will open doors for further articulation of communication characteristics engaging Māori, Pacific Island and other ethnic groups in New Zealand to add to the international body of knowledge on Public Relations.

The inspiration for this study was to provide insights into best practice in Public Relations practice in New Zealand. As a reflexive practitioner, my desire to produce insights for practical change led to the selection of the Pragmatist approach developed by Dewey, Mead and Pierce and the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969). This approach offered a contrast to other Public Relations research in New Zealand, that has been primarily drawn from critical discourse analysis using the underpinning theoretical frameworks of Foucault and Habermas (Motion & Leitch, 1996; Weaver, 2001; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Weaver & Motion, 2002; Roper, 2002, 2005; Motion, 2005; Motion & Weaver, 2005).

As a researcher I have a strong identification with Mead's background. My own background is in Not-for-Profit organisations, education and social work. I am strongly drawn towards Mead's belief system, particularly his optimism for the possibilities of human change, his commitment to working for open, high-quality relationships, his belief in mutuality and reciprocity, and his belief that change occurs through dialogue and interaction. My personal commitment to education for personal and social change parallels Mead's interest in social work and his

penchant for the practical application of knowledge for the benefit of community and society both locally and internationally. This is an essential driver for this study in that I want to use the information collected for the betterment of Public Relations practice, for the improvement of media relations, for a clearer understanding of where Public Relations fits in the educational programmes offered and to improve my own understanding as a practitioner and educator.

1.3 The question of the legitimacy of Public Relations

Early in my literature search I discovered that studies on perceptions of Public Relations contained concerns and arguments about the credibility or legitimacy of Public Relations, particularly in the public mind (Callison & Zillman, 2002; Sallot, 2002; Callison, 2004); in the public sphere (van Ruler et al., 2004) and also among senior management (Murphy, 2003; Murray & White, 2005; Heyman, 2005). These studies tended to assume that Public Relations was an established management function, with growing credibility and influence, but needing to substantiate its role in the face of internal questions about its efficacy and value in the context of the constant undermining effect of negative media portrayal. These studies began from the position that Public Relations made a positive contribution to business processes and to society in general but that it found it difficult to convince others, particularly the media and therefore the general public, of its value and legitimacy. These findings suggested the need to research the institutional underpinnings of these attitudes.

The legitimacy of Public Relations is a central concern in practice and in Public Relations literature (Ehling, 1992; Pieczka & L'Etang, 2001; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Tench & Yeomans, 2009; Rensburg, 2009; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). It is also a central concern in this thesis. In this study legitimacy is defined as the license to operate and the parameters or jurisdiction of that operation. Legitimacy is reflected in ascribed value and status. It is a concern that lies at the core of Public Relations' identity. "Public Relations practitioners have struggled with a conflict in identity that encompasses a vocational idealism with regard to public information and public service on the one hand and advocacy, propaganda and political brokering on the other" (White, L'Etang, & Moss, 2009, p. 387). The

2008 PRINZ Public Relations Trends Survey found that only 61 per cent of its 734 respondents felt that PR/Communication Management was regarded as a reputable profession. The concern is also expressed in other countries. For example, Public Relations in South Africa is “still characterised by its search for identity, legitimacy, and professional recognition” (Rensburg, 2009, p. 328).

The reference to Public Relations as a profession is of critical interest to this study since it represents an attempt to establish the legitimacy of Public Relations. In a study on perceptions of the trustworthiness of the Police, Frank, Smith and Novak (2005) found that the public builds impressions from encounters, experiences, and from general impressions created in the media and discussed in conversations with people who interpret media messages. This suggested that legitimacy was not so much associated with professional credentials as with perceptions built on experiences of practitioners. Therefore, a study of perceptions of Public Relations should examine encounters and experiences reported by those who come into contact with practitioners and, secondly, it should examine media representations of the practice.

In the absence of consensus over the legitimacy of Public Relations, practitioners have had to advocate for themselves (Murphy, 2003) and for jurisdiction (Hutton, 2001; Van der Merwe & Venter, 2006; McKie & Ławniczek, 2009; Hutton, 2010). How and what should they advocate? PRINZ’s primary goal is “to shape Public Relations/Communications as a profession in New Zealand” (Strategic Plan, 2009–2014). The steps towards this goal are considered to be registration of practitioners, the ethical behaviour of members, the establishment of a body of knowledge, the integration of the body of knowledge into practice, and the engagement of all members in continuing professional development.

So, beginning with the two research questions: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations held by key stakeholders in New Zealand?” and “What are these perceptions based on?” this study explores the various positions that senior managers, media and tertiary educators take in relation to Public Relations. It explores whether media portrayals in New Zealand are in fact negative and, if so, why. The issues at stake in the struggle over the legitimacy

of Public Relations are also examined, as are portrayals of Public Relations to students by educators who teach in Public Relations-related Faculties. The study identifies some of the unique elements in New Zealand Public Relations that contribute to the international body of knowledge. This study concludes by examining what constitutes best practice in New Zealand, to inform Public Relations practice here and on the global stage.

Thus, the study is divided into three main parts. The first part consists mainly of an exploration of the literature that informs the theoretical framework that underpins the design of the research. These concepts are examined in chapters 2, 3 and 4. The second part of the study consists of the critical examination of perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand by presenting and analysing data collected from key informants. This is the focus of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The third part develops interpretations of the findings from the study by first presenting what I refer to as Māori Public Relations principles in Chapter 8. The thesis then goes on to examine the concept of Public Relations as a field of practice in Chapter 9, while Chapter 10 brings together what I consider to be the key contributions of this study to the Public Relations body of knowledge.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

It is my general thesis that every piece of literature on Public Relations embodies a perception of what the practice involves, how it should be defined, and arguments over its legitimacy. These perceptions can be explicit or implicit. In this chapter I will consider the range of theoretical approaches to and portrayals of Public Relations as attempts to construct particular images of the field. I will begin by reviewing research on public, business, practitioner and media perceptions of Public Relations. I will then review the dominant theoretical frameworks used by researchers to conceptualise Public Relations. Finally, I will explore the approach taken to produce country-specific portrayals of Public Relations, including New Zealand. Following this review, I will locate this study in the existing theoretical landscape and indicate my own approach to the field of Public Relations practice in New Zealand.

2.1 Studies on the public perception of Public Relations

Research on the subject of the public perception of Public Relations in the United States has been conducted by Callison and Zillman (2002); Sallot (2002); and Callison (2004). These studies presented Public Relations as a form of persuasive communication. Callison and Zillman (2002), for example, began with the premise that “public relations-based messages are persuasive at heart” (p. 86). They argued that effective persuasion requires a level of credibility on the part of the source and that source credibility is dependant on target audiences being willing to ascribe trustworthiness to the source. Since audiences are wary of Public Relations messages there is a constant need to establish both the credibility of the Public Relations messenger and Public Relations messaging. This compels Public Relations practitioners to operate from a negative starting point. These studies did not examine the struggle media has to establish its own credibility (Docherty, 2005; B&T Weekly, 2006; Cordasco, 2007) but they did suggest the need to examine credibility claims, media framing of Public Relations and self- and other-formulation.

Using Eagly, Wood and Chaiken's (1978) hypothesis that Public Relations practitioner credibility is compromised by a perceived self interest, Callison and Zillman (2002) found that Public Relations practitioners were not considered to be as credible as other sources, especially when responding to company-negative accusations. They also tested the impact of the Sleeper Effect (Pratkanis, Greenwals, Leippe, & Baumgardner, 1988) which argues that audiences become hazier in their attribution of credibility as they dissociate sources from their messages over time. They found that in-house sources were judged as less credible than external or independent sources, which confirmed the hypothesis that company spokespersons are considered less trustworthy because of self-interest.

The Callison and Zilman (2002) study was located in the theoretical field of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Risk Communication Theory (Ice, 1991; Coombs, 1995, 1999; Hearit, 2001; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Lukaszewski, 2005; Lerbinger, 2006). This field focuses on corporate communication strategies designed to generate trust or protect reputation in crisis situations. These studies examined the effectiveness of strategies such as denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence (Ice, 1991); tactical response preparedness (Lukaszewski, 2005); and proactive media strategies (Lerbinger, 2006). Coombs and Holladay (2002) examined the variables, assumptions and relationships that should be considered in selecting crisis response strategies. SCCT is also concerned with the reactions of the public to these messaging strategies. For example, Reactance theory examines the loss of trust and the generation of rival rationalities in a crisis situation (Gutteling & Kuttschreuter, 2002). These studies position the media as a key stakeholder in the generation of meaning. They tend to portray Public Relations primarily as media relations, although some argue for a wider definition of Public Relations Coombs & Holladay (2007). These theories reinforce the need to examine both the perceptions of Public Relations held by senior managers whose perceptions are played out through risk and crisis management strategies and the perceptions held by media leaders who are likely to engage closely with companies during crises.

Sallot's (2002) study on perceptions of Public Relations used an impression management framework derived from the work of Goffman (1959) and developed by others such as rhetorical theorists Crable & Vibbert (1985). Impression management is concerned with the strategies needed by an organisation to establish the legitimacy of its views and operations in the public sphere (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). It examines corporate strategies such as being reactive (fighting change), accommodative (adapting to change), proactive (influencing change) and interactive (adjusting to and influencing change) (Jaques, 2002). This approach espouses a view of Public Relations as communication management designed "to promote positive and favourable images of people or firms in public life, without actually appearing to do so" (Lacey, 2002, p. 109). In this context, Sallot's (2002) study examined audience responses to one- and two-way communication.

Both Callison and Zillman (2002) and Sallot (2002) set out to test the credibility of Public Relations. Sallot (2002) found that perceived motives influence credibility. Messaging was found to be less popular when perceived to be associated with self-interest. Sallot also questioned whether accreditation (or licensing) of Public Relations practitioners added to their credibility. She recommended that Public Relations should not rely on licensing to build credibility. "There is a danger that licensing appears to carry an unearned aura of respectability" (p. 162). She found that the licensing of practitioners helped build credibility but did not outweigh the impacts of perceived self-interest, communication style and the authenticity of the practitioner. Sallot concluded that "a practitioner's reputation for integrity and for competence is their real license to practice" (p. 164). More recently, Sha (2011) has found that accreditation does in fact create wider jurisdiction in practice however. Arguments over credibility are a central concern for this thesis because they represent positions taken in the field. The role of accreditation in building credibility needs to be examined alongside other mechanisms for building credibility such as practitioner performance and the power of claims and counter-claims designed to generate symbolic capital.

Callison's (2004) study, "The good, the bad and the ugly: Perceptions of PR practitioners", utilised the same theoretical framework as Sallot (2002) and Callison and Zillman (2002). It used a "real-world context within which various sources – company affiliated and not, public relations labeled and not – communicate" (p. 374). The 2004 study used the same source manipulation experimental design as the 2002 studies, supplemented by an opinion poll. The poll involved a demographics section, a section measuring attributes of Public Relations practitioners, and a section inviting responses to four different sources – a company president, a lawyer representing the company, a public relations specialist working for the company, and a newspaper reporter – all denying charges against a company in a fictitious scenario. These are intriguing choices given the struggles all four chosen sources have in establishing credibility in the public domain (Hess, 1995; Geary, 2005; Edelman, 2007). Callison (2004) found that source affiliation with the company is a drag anchor to building credibility because affiliation is associated with self-interest. It also found that perceptions were developed in a complex way and "any attempt to portray public perception of public relations practitioners must note that simply asking whether a source is credible or not does not reveal the subtle attributes that influence source effectiveness" (Callison, 2004, p. 386). This suggested that the research design of this thesis should to adopt a more nuanced approach to the exploration of perceptions such as asking participants to report incidents, to offer value judgments, to make suggestions to students of Public Relations and to suggest improvements to the professional practice if they considered improvements necessary.

2.2 Studies on business perceptions of Public Relations

An extensive study involving business perceptions of Public Relations was conducted by Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1995). The study, which became the foundation for Excellence Theory (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig, 1992; Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002), was not designed so much to test perceptions as to shape them. The purpose of the study was “to develop a profile of critical success factors and best practices utilising models developed in previous Public Relations research (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and by theoretical logic” (Grunig, 2008, p. 111). The profile was then used to gather empirical evidence by surveying organisations including corporations, associations, not-for-profits and government agencies in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The survey included 4,631 employees, 407 senior practitioners, and 292 CEOs from 327 organisations. It was followed by qualitative interviews with 25 of the most and least excellent organisations as judged against the profiles used in the survey.

The four models of Public Relations used in this study were: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetric communication, and two-way symmetric communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Press agency was defined as one-way communication directed at an audience to publicise someone or something. Its name derives from the press agent who garners publicity for a client. Press agency was considered one-way communication because it involved creating and publishing stories designed to propagandise an audience or to engineer consent (Bernays, 1947). It involved manipulation or persuasion, both of which the Excellence theorists considered unethical. Excellence theorists posited press agency as an early model of Public Relations which has evolved into more sophisticated and ethical practice (Brown, 2006; Grunig, 2008; Laskin, 2009). The assertions that press agency is unethical and that it is a disappearing practice can be tested in my study.

The public information model was also defined as one-way communication but involved less manipulation since its function was the dissemination of information in the interests of the public (Grunig, 1992). It was considered one-way because information was selected and formatted by the communicator.

Hence, the degree of transparency in the communication process was under the control of the communicator. This model aligned with the earliest forms of Public Relations in the UK generated by public utilities and local government to inform the general public about their activities (L'Etang, 2004).

The two-way asymmetric model has been presented as a more sophisticated version of communication involving the careful study of audiences to determine their needs and wants so that communication can be executed more effectively (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). It is two-way because it requires listening to feedback from target audiences in order to shape messages and tune messages to their needs. This model sits well with the Marketing approach whereby customers and potential customers are systematically researched to ascertain needs which can then be met successfully to produce profitable outcomes (Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009).

The two-way symmetric model is the signature version of Public Relations associated with the Excellence Theory. In fact, Excellence Theory is often referred to as the Symmetry Model, the two-way symmetric communication model or the Symmetry/Excellence Theory (Botan & Hazelton, 2006). Two-way symmetric communication involves the exchange of information and viewpoints between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of mutual understanding, adjustment and collaboration between organisations and their publics (Grunig, 2008). When Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined Public Relations as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (p.6), they acknowledged the operational existence of all four models in the organisations they studied but advocated the two-way symmetric model as being essential to excellent practice.

Excellence Theory has played a significant role in shaping perceptions of Public Relations in the research environment (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, & Jones, 2003; van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004; Laskin, 2009). Some even claim that it is impossible to discuss paradigms of Public Relations without referring to the Symmetry model (Botan & Hazelton, 2006). Grunig himself describes the theory as an “edifice” that research can “improve and furnish” (Grunig, 2006, p. 151), thus inviting iterations to the theory but not criticisms of

its fundamental assumptions. Confidence in its robustness is reflected in its name, “the Excellence Study”. Its language is imperious and all-encompassing. Claims such as “the Excellence Study found that the most effective public relations departments participated in the making of overall decisions in organizations” (Grunig, 2008, p. 101) create the impression that this theory offers comprehensive, definitive answers to perplexing questions in the field.

Its key assertions claim an elevated status for Public Relations. The theory asserts that excellent Public Relations involves empowerment of the Public Relations function through participation in strategic management; integration of all organisational communication through the Public Relations function; and independent reporting to the CEO rather than subordinating it under other management functions. It also advocates that Public Relations should fulfil a managerial function rather than a purely technical one. Others also insist that Public Relations should be a senior managerial function. For example, Murray and White (2005) propose that “although the Public Relations role is primarily media relations and internal communications, good PR should be coaching and advisory to top management ... contributing to the organisational strategy by being a communications radar for the organisation” (p.16).

Dozier and Broom (2006) elaborated these distinctions by identifying four generic Public Relations practitioner roles – the communication technician (one who implements communication plans at an operational level); the communication facilitator (one who acts as a go-between to create conversation between stakeholders and the organisation); the problem-solving, process facilitator (one who acts as a communication solution-finder); and the expert prescriber (one who gives advice to the dominant coalition). A “communication technician” is a lower-level organisational function mainly associated with the Excellence theory’s functions of press agency, public information and one-way asymmetric communication. It is most closely associated with publicity garnering. The other three roles are performed primarily at management level. The “expert prescriber” positions Public Relations at the senior management table with direct access to the CEO, offering insightful advice and strategic direction to senior management.

There are several assumptions embedded in the Excellence Theory that can be tested in a study on perceptions of Public Relations. We can examine whether the Excellence Theory is familiar to the key influencers included in this study. We can test whether the four models of Public Relations it espouses resonate with the sample groups. We can examine whether Public Relations is in fact experiencing an elevation in status and whether it is evolving from a mainly propaganda function to a more ethical version of two-way communication.

Excellence Theory has drawn its critics. Many argue that the two-way symmetric model is flawed in several key respects (Motion & Leitch, 1996; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Holzhausen & Voto, 2002; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Motion, 2005; Roper, 2005). The primary flaw is found in the lack of practical evidence of symmetrical communication as described in the theory. Leitch and Neilson (2001) note that:

In their extensive study of public relations practice within organizations J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1989) were unable to find many instances of symmetrical public relations. Thus, despite their efforts to create a descriptive theory J. Grunig and L. Grunig reluctantly acknowledged that the symmetrical model was primarily a normative theory (p. 129).

Furthermore, although Excellence Theory espouses two-way symmetric communication as the key identifier of excellent practice, all four models of communication are actually present in excellent organisations (Botan & Hazelton, 2006). Other researchers have questioned whether the aversion to the one-way publicity model inherent in the Excellence Theory is warranted given that it is sometimes employed effectively by organisations (Toledano & McKie, 2007; Laskin, 2009) and is preferred by some Chief Executives (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004).

The theoretical framework associated with the Excellence Theory has been accused of three fundamental biases: the “illusion” of symmetrical dialogue; a corporate orientation; and a Western managerial, rationalist bias (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). Cheney and Christensen view symmetrical dialogue as largely an illusion because of the power imbalance between corporate, government, private and community stakeholders. The criticism of corporate orientation is derived from the framing of Public Relations as a management

function and persistent discussion of its role from the perspective of a large organisation. The Western rationalist bias refers to the conceptual framing of Public Relations in the Western intellectual tradition, generated since the industrial revolution, which contains an inherent tendency to downplay or ignore elements such as faith, irrationality and emotion in favour of science, secularism and materialism (Brown, 2006). In an effort to avoid these biases and the hegemonic influence of the Excellence Theory in much Public Relations literature this study adheres to the principle of open exploration and inductive reasoning to allow formulations to emerge from the data.

Critical Discourse Analysis critiques of the Symmetry Theory posit the power imbalance between various publics and organisations as a central concern (Weaver & Motion, 2002; Roper, 2005; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). These researchers are interested in the struggle for credibility and legitimacy between various competitors such as government, media, corporations and Public Relations practitioners, which can be seen as a contest for dominance in the public sphere. Each entity empowers their discourse by creating and defending dialogical structures to define themselves, others and the issues they are engaged in. This struggle is also empowered by macro-societal political and economic dimensions.

Critical Discourse analysts seek to demonstrate wider societal structures and structuration employed in the struggle to dominate discourse creation and aim to transform those societal, political and economic structures which limit human potential [and] seek to identify, challenge, and debate the strategies of domination that are implicit in such structures. (L'Etang, 2005, p. 521-522)

Leitch and Neilson (2001) have advocated a reconstruction of Public Relations theory to “redress the organisational and dialogic bias” (p. 127) and bring the public back into Public Relations. They claimed that “organisational PR theory presents publics as artefacts or constructs in which publics come into existence only when an organization identifies them as publics [and] portray publics as consumers of targeted organizational messages” (p. 128), thus failing to represent the self-formulation of groups outside the organisation’s definitional framework. The dialogic bias portrays publics “as active and equal participants

in a dialogue with the organization” (p. 128). These perspectives suggest the need to consider wider societal structuration in the construction of perceptions of Public Relations.

The dominance of Excellence Theory in Public Relations research prompted van Ruler et al. (2001, 2004) to develop alternative narratives for Public Relations in Europe. Drawing on a Delphi panel of 31 practitioners and academics, van Ruler et al. (2001, 2004) identified four overarching characteristics of European Public Relations: namely, that it is reflective (analyses societal trends); managerial (develops communication plans, goals and strategies); operational (executes communication plans developed by organisations); and educational (influences organisational capacity to be responsive to societal demands).

The study of European Public Relations provided interesting insights into the tensions that exist between theory and practice in the field. The disconnections between academic views and actual practice found in this study led the researchers to reflect on the possibility that European academia, heavily influenced by American thinking about Public Relations, was at variance with European business. It suggested that there was “a yawning chasm between the view on the profession of public relations by this community on the one hand and daily demand and supply in their countries on the other hand” (van Ruler et al., 2004, p. 42). By comparing the views of senior managers with tertiary educators and texts from a spectrum of disciplines we can examine whether similar patterns are present in the field in New Zealand.

The first tension between theory and practice noted in the European study lay in the naming of the practice. Although used in some European countries, the name “Public Relations” did not translate directly into many European languages. The scarce use of the term “Public Relations” led the researchers to conclude that it largely represented an Anglo-American concept. Many preferred to use the term “Communication Management” or used terms in their own languages that better described the practice.

Another tension lay in the espousal of two-way symmetrical communication adopted from the Excellence Theory by European academics. “Most of the recent literature on public relations claims that the aim of the profession is to build mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its public groups (Grunig, 1992; Heath, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2001)” (van Ruler et al., 2004, p. 39). This did not match with the realities of European practice. Twenty-four of the 27 participants in the study reported that CEOs preferred effective one-way communication.

No one stated that CEOs favour public relations for the purpose of building mutually beneficial relationships. Almost all participants stated that CEOs want a one-way relationship with the aim of adjusting the public groups or of simply informing society or informing others. (van Ruler et al., 2004, p. 40)

A further tension lay in the usefulness of the conceptual framework of the Excellence Theory in a European context. The Theory posits Public Relations both as a management function and as a profession. The participants questioned both assertions. While they agreed that Public Relations should be treated as a senior management function, in practice it seldom was. Participants also noted that “while PR should be seen as a professional domain [it] lacks an image of professionalism” (van Ruler et al., 2004, p. 39). They reported that:

[Public Relations] is not professional enough on the strategic and analytic level; the practice is too manipulative; outsiders do not really understand the nature of the profession; and managers misunderstand public relations believing it to be nothing more than tricks and tactics.
(van Ruler et al., 2004, p. 41)

Thus, the participants held the view that Public Relations lacked professionalism but simultaneously maintained that it was misunderstood and undervalued as a professional activity. This might suggest that Public Relations practitioners were not in fact well equipped to operate in a professional manner and that perceptions of the practice were accurate rather than misguided. The study illustrated a tension between what Public Relations academics would like Public Relations to be (regarded as a professional activity) and how it was in reality (not performing well at a senior management level). These tensions represent struggles that academics were experiencing as they attempted to

apply the Excellence Theory to European practice. They illustrate the importance of examining local expressions of Public Relations without the overlay of externally generated theorising to allow their distinctive flavours to emerge. These tensions also underline the need to keep the research question in a study of this nature as open as possible to avoid it being shaped too markedly by previous concerns and issues in the field.

The use of the terms “profession” and “professional” were central to this discussion. There are clearly several assumptions built into these terms about what a profession is, how it should perform, and whether Public Relations meets the associated criteria. The reference to Public Relations as a profession is a matter of theoretical debate (Pieczka & L’Etang, 2001; Pieczka, 2002; L’Etang, 2004; L’Etang & Pieczka, 2006; L’Etang, 2008). According to Trait theory professions need to display certain characteristics, such as, a clear sense of autonomy, defined boundaries, control over practitioner entry and performance, an agreed body of knowledge, and accredited educational qualifications and providers (L’Etang, 2004). More recent theorising suggests that claims to being a profession are simply that – claims. Academic interest has moved to the examination of jurisdictional claims and counterclaims as arguments for legitimisation. This view of Public Relations sees the practice as contested terrain (Cheney & Christensen, 2001), where various arguments are proffered to establish positions vis à vis other jurisdictional claimants such as marketing (Hutton, 2001), the media (Allen, 2004; White & Hobsbawm, 2007), other forces within senior management (Richter & Barlow, 2000; Murray & White, 2005; Heyman, 2005) and wider society (McKie & Munshi, 2007). This is a key concern discussed in greater depth in section 2.5 of this thesis, titled: “The question of legitimacy: Is Public Relations a profession?”

2.3 Practitioner views of Public Relations

Practitioners tend to be critical of theoretical knowledge. The reasons for this are embedded in the value placed on practical knowledge over theory-based knowledge (Piecicka, 2002, 2005). This helps to explain why there is a “yawning chasm” between Public Relations practice and Public Relations research in some countries (van Ruler et al., 2004). The Port of Entry study (CPRE, 1999) and the subsequent Professional Bond study (Turk, 2006) in the US both acknowledge that there is much to be done in bringing the two together. Wright and Turk (2007) have noted that “the disconnect between what PR practitioners want from universities and what academics actually deliver [in the US] remains uncomfortably large” (p. 575). New Zealand practitioners also have a divergent view from academics over what they value in Public Relations education (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2008).

A UK project, “Unlocking the Potential of Public Relations” (Murphy, 2003), commissioned by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), also looked at practitioner perceptions of Public Relations. It was an industry-based paper designed to provide “a broad overview of current Public Relations practices within the UK, define a number of good practice principles and give an indication of future direction” (Murphy, 2003, p. 2). The study used a Steering Group of 43 practitioners, industry association and DTI representatives and Public Relations researchers. It gathered data by surveying a range of small, medium and large organisations; through group discussions with senior respondents from the private and public sectors; and by interviewing leading academics in the field of Public Relations. The Steering Group generated working definitions of the purpose, critical success factors and key processes for Public Relations to inform the study design. For example, they defined the purpose of Public Relations as “to influence behaviour in order to achieve objectives through the effective management of relationships and communications” (Murphy, 2003, p. 13). Critical success factors were identified as: professional ethics and standards; universal acceptance; alignment to organisational objectives; creative approaches; committed people with appropriate skills and knowledge; sufficient budget and resources; and measurable impact on organisational performance. It is unclear what criteria were used to arrive at these factors.

The positioning of Public Relations as a mechanism for influencing behaviour to achieve objectives located Public Relations as a mechanism for persuasive communication. While acknowledging the importance of effective relationship management, it clearly recognised organisational self-interest as a key element in these relationships. Relationships were viewed not so much for the purpose of mutual adjustment between organisations and publics as they were for the purpose of facilitating organisational influence on publics. This view parallels the definition of Public Relations ascribed to CEOs by participants in the van Ruler et al. (2004) study and tends to contradict the view of the Excellence study that Public Relations is evolving from this function into a more strategic operational role characterised by two-way communication.

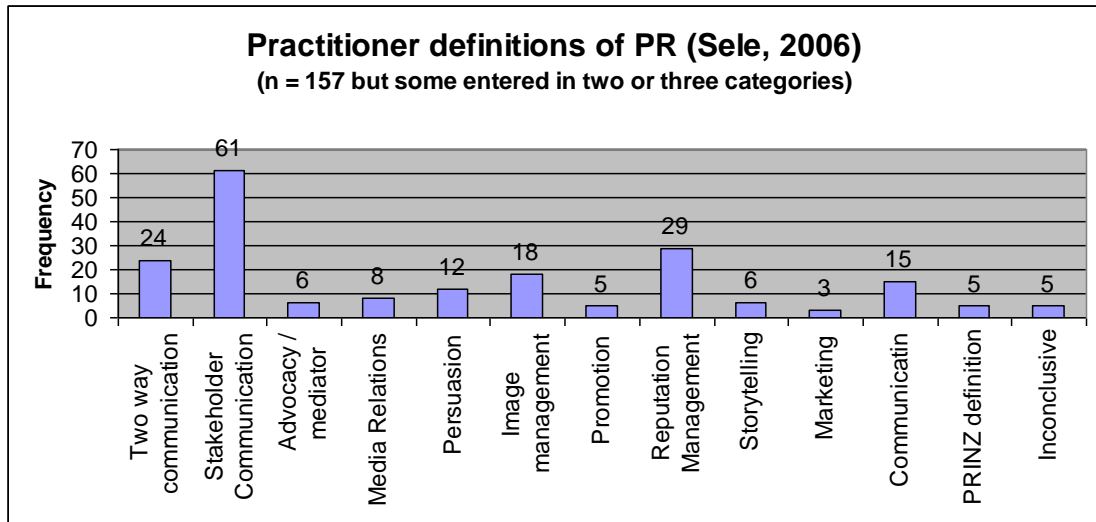
The Report referred to Public Relations as a “profession” that is “struggling for legitimacy”. While the participants seemed to portray an “increasing consensus as to the main purposes of PR” (Murphy, 2003, p. 66), senior management did not share in this unanimity. This disparity led the Group to urge that “public relations must be increasingly seen in the context of longer term strategic relationship management and engagement in emerging trends such as corporate social responsibility” (p. 2). This exhortation replicates the advocacy tone of the European study. The Group clearly felt that Public Relations was not regarded as it should be. It also cited struggles over jurisdiction, as “the overlap between PR and other communications functions continues to be an issue” (p. 2). This comment perhaps reveals a motivation behind the study, namely, to argue for a clearly delineated, influential role for Public Relations. The discrepancy between where Public Relations was placed and where it should be placed led the Group to conclude that Public Relations had to perform an educative function in order to negotiate its role. At this point the study claimed that the role of Public Relations had changed.

Whereas previously PR has been perceived as a tactical tool for influencing media coverage, the proliferation of communications, the need to engage with multiple stakeholders, and demands of greater corporate transparency, have placed PR at the heart of strategic management. (Murphy, 2003, p. 4)

But the evidence to support this change was anecdotal rather than evidence-based, which again suggests a research agenda embedded in the Report to find ways to relocate Public Relations at higher levels of operation in organisations. This agenda is made explicit later in the Report when it states that “the changing role of PR within many organisations creates the opportunity for PR practitioners to re-position themselves as strategic advisors and thereby become even more significant contributors to organisational success” (Murphy, 2003, p. 67). This agenda has some appeal to me as a Public Relations educator. I too would like to see practitioners be able to expand their expertise into the senior management teams of their organisations. This would fit the Pragmatic research imperative to use knowledge to effect change for the good of others. But this agenda cannot be an explicit goal for this study because it could risk tainting the generation of authentic categories in the data analysis process. A degree of transparency regarding my desire to improve educational and professional practice is acceptable however since I have accepted the authentic involvement of the researcher in co-creating meaning as an avoidable and essential aspect of qualitative research.

Practitioner views of Public Relations in New Zealand were examined in Sele’s (2006) Masters study. One of the key findings of this study was that sixty-nine per cent of the 157 New Zealand Public Relations practitioners in this survey agreed that it was not easy to explain what Public Relations is. They reported a wide range of titles (see Table 2.1). The range reflected the wide variations practitioners offer when defining their own practice. This does not imply that they do not know what they do but rather that they struggle to explain their roles to others. Practitioners want PRINZ to advocate for the profession with their senior managers because they frequently feel misunderstood or undervalued (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2006, 2008). Interestingly, only five of the responses used the PRINZ (Public Relations Institute of New Zealand) definition indicating perhaps either that they did not know it or that they did not agree with it or that it was simply not top of mind when asked to define Public Relations. This finding concurs with Edwards’ (2006a) contention that if you ask a variety of practitioners what they think Public Relations involves they will give a wide spectrum of answers.

Table 2:1 Practitioner definitions of Public Relations (Sele, 2006, p.39)



Sixty-two per cent chose to frame the practice in terms of communication, stakeholder communication, and image or reputation management. This corporate perspective is not surprising given that 62 per cent of the sample was made up of in-house practitioners. The study also found that New Zealand practitioners feel misunderstood when the public refer to them as spin doctors: “Practitioners commonly feel that the public misunderstand PR, believing it to be about spin, lying, deceiving and such” (Sele, 2006, p. 53). Eighty-one per cent were either concerned or somewhat concerned about the negative image. Only a few (11/157) blamed this on the media, however. The feeling of being misunderstood or conflicted when describing one’s own profession represents an internal conflict. On the one hand, practitioners represented their clients’ best interests. This required them to produce spin. On the other, practitioners were also required to operate at a strategic level where communication needed to be more transparent.

Studies involving practitioners are of value in so far as they reveal positions taken in the field. But they suffer from the same limitation as asking rabbits what they think of their lettuce patch. These studies underline the importance of sampling perceptions from a wider range of influencers and shapers of perceptions of Public Relations.

2.4 Studies on media perceptions of Public Relations

Literature on the relationship between the media and Public Relations has found that the media generally hold a strongly negative perception of Public Relations (Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993; Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Moloney, 2006; White & Hobsbawm, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Pincus et al. (1993) found that levels of negativity were not uniform across all media and that negative perceptions were derived from media educators and textbooks. The design of this study should enable the testing of these two findings in a New Zealand context. Cameron et al. (1997) suggested that levels of negativity could be associated with power differentials and that further research should explore this dynamic. DeLorme and Fedler (2003) concluded that the media's negative perception of Public Relations had its roots in the establishment of Public Relations as a practice dedicated to protecting the interests of corporate America, a view echoed by Stauber and Rampton (1995).

The media's negative perception of Public Relations is encapsulated in the pejorative use of the term "PR" to describe the practice. A number of the media referred to Public Relations as "spin doctoring", an ethically corrupt process of selecting information to present a client or view point in a positive light and one's opponents negatively, deliberately suppressing information that would contradict the image or story the "spin doctor" was trying to construct (Stauber & Rampton, 1995; Hager & Burton, 1999; Lacey, 2002). The negative portrayal of PR in some media invokes frustration among Public Relations researchers and those who spring to its defence (Tilley, 2005; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Coombs and Holladay (2007) contend that "the term [PR] is probably among the most misunderstood and misapplied in our social milieu!" (p. 1). In defending Public Relations they argue that the media portrayal is greatly oversimplified; that it overstates Public Relations' intrinsic corruption and that it is biased by an inherent aversion to big business. They also point out that public understanding of Public Relations is derived primarily from the media since the public have little direct contact with Public Relations apart from the media portrayal, and this has built a reservoir of negative feeling towards the practice.

A New Zealand study has found that the media was “conflicted” and “stuck in a love-hate relationship” with Public Relations (Tilley & Hollings, 2008). This study suggested that while the media disapproves of the Public Relations profession it finds certain practitioners acceptable on the personal level. It also found that the fact that many journalists have become Public Relations practitioners creates an equivocal relationship between the two groups. It suggests that the relationship is complex and the dynamics of personal relationship may be a major factor in the perception of Public Relations.

2.5 The question of legitimacy: Is Public Relations a profession?

The question of legitimacy permeates discussions of definitions, arguments over its role and function, and deliberations over its place in society (Pieczka & L’Etang, 2001). Critical theorists such as Motion and Leitch (1996); Pieczka and L’Etang (2001); Weaver (2001); and Roper (2005) suggest that the struggle over the definition of Public Relations and the shape of the profession is a struggle for social legitimacy. Toledano, McKie and Roper (2003) suggest that the diversity of definitions represents “a struggle around configuring public relations, democracy, and power” (p. 59).

The search for a universal definition is likely to be unsuccessful not because of the lack of clues to the real hidden meaning but because competing conceptions of the definition itself mean that contestation will be ongoing ... theorists are fighting about the status of public relations.
(Toledano, McKie & Roper, 2003, p.60)

At the broadest level the question is whether Public Relations has a place in society at all. Some news and popular media argue that Public Relations is a social pariah (Stauber & Rampton, 1995; Ewen, 1996; Beder, 1997; Philp, 2005; Common, 2005). Some argue that the influence of Public Relations needs to be resisted as a matter of professional integrity (Hager & Burton, 1999; Davis, 2000). Public Relations academics view the association of Public Relations with propaganda as a threat to its bid for social legitimacy. Propaganda has been associated with promoting hatred and violence in the World Wars and with large corporates manipulating public opinion to secure open pathways for promoting their own agendas. Public Relations academics and practitioners tend to dissociate themselves from the publicity model,

especially the notion of persuasion (Grunig, 1992; Pfau & Wan, 2006; Brown, 2006; Weaver, Motion & Roper, 2006). The debate about professional merit is grounded in historical ties to advertising and propaganda (Edwards, 2009). In order to establish a more acceptable occupational status, practitioners have sought to introduce more attractive depictions by emphasising excellent practice (Grunig, 1992), ethics (McElreath, 1996), relationship building (Ledingham, 2003) and the importance of beneficial social outcomes (McKie & Munshi, 2007). These depictions are commonly reframed as a form of Communication Management. The framing of Public Relations is a central concern for any study of perceptions of the practice. Reconfigurations, adjustments, claims and counter-claims are all attempts to build a case in the terms of the perception-builder and to impose that case onto the field.

As noted earlier, the description of Public Relations as a profession is a matter of theoretical debate (Piecka & L'Etang, 2001; Pieczka, 2002; L'Etang, 2004; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; L'Etang, 2008). Pieczka and L'Etang (2001) provide a useful summary of the history of the study of professions starting from early sociologists such as Spencer, Durkheim and Weber, who suggest that “the profession is anchored in the social division of labour, instrumental rationality, and the institutional structures through which they are articulated. Thus, it is inextricably linked with the rise of the modern industrial society” (pp. 223–224). The study of professions has produced an interest in the characteristics of a profession. Marston (1968) proposed eight traits or characteristics of a profession: a defined area of competence; an organised body of knowledge of some consequence; self consciousness; competence of entrants determined by controlled access; continuing education; support for research; assistance with education of competent replacement; and independence. Grunig & Hunt (1984) condensed these traits to five: a set of professional values (which they insisted must include serving others as being more important than attaining personal economic gain, and autonomy, which they defined as doing what is right rather than what others want you to do); membership in a strong professional organisation; adherence to professional norms; an intellectual tradition associated with an established body of knowledge; and technical skills acquired through long periods of prescribed professional education.

According to Trait theory, Public Relations needs to control its own boundaries; perform a public service; be constrained and regulated by codes of ethics and/or practice; be granted social legitimacy; have clear jurisdiction over specific tasks and a body of knowledge; accept members through accreditation; offer continuing professional development; require specialised education; offer essential, unique services; place emphasis on public service and social responsibility over self interest; give autonomy to and place responsibility on practitioners; and enforce codes of ethics and standards of performance (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2001; Cutlip et al., 2008). There is abundant evidence in the literature to suggest that Public Relations does not fulfil many of these requirements. For example, only four countries require licensing by regulation – Brazil, Nigeria, Panama and Peru (Molleda & Alhassan, 2006). Despite many countries having Public Relations Associations they do not have the support of legislation to enforce accreditation, their codes of ethics, their regulations or their sanctions on poor practice (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009).

In the US, for example, Cutlip et al. (2008) suggest that the application of the principles of professionalism among practitioners is inconsistent. They note that not all practitioners are members of the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America); not all are engaged in continuing professional development; not all are trained in specialised education; the community is not convinced Public Relations provides a unique, essential service; the community is not convinced that Public Relations is above self interest; and the PRSA cannot enforce its own code of ethics so many practitioners do not use the Code. This leads Cutlip et al. (2008) to the conclusion that “a strict interpretation of the criteria precludes qualifying public relations as a profession” (p. 48). Seitel (1998) also asserted that “Public Relations is not yet a profession because there is nothing to prevent someone with little or no formal training from hanging out a shingle as a PR specialist” (p.4). This conclusion concurs with the assessment of the profession in the UK that Public Relations is “not a profession; it would be better described as a practice or industry” (White, L'Etang & Moss, 2009, p. 382).

Many of these observations hold true in other countries as well. In Malaysia, Abdullah and Threadgold (2008) found that Public Relations had no distinct domain of expertise, no exclusive jurisdiction and no universal standard of

accreditation even though senior managers, practitioners and academics agreed that accreditation was a crucial requirement. Senior managers in their study also thought practitioners were not very professional. The participants in this study also considered the Public Relations knowledge base was at a low level. They disagreed over whether academics could deliver an acceptable level of practitioner training. Academics thought they could do so, but practitioners thought that academic education did not match reality. Furthermore, they all saw the Code of Ethics as cosmetic because there was no way to enforce it.

In South Africa, Niemann-Struweg and Meintjes (2008) applied Wyllie's (1994) guidelines on professionalism to Public Relations in that country. These guidelines include: having a well-defined body of scholarly knowledge; practitioners completing standardised and prescribed courses of study; examination and certification by a governing body; and oversight by a governing body with disciplinary powers. The majority of the 49 participants in their study felt that the South African Public Relations industry needed to be more professional. They considered that there needed to be central legislation and control but that professionals appeared to be uninterested in PRISA (the Public Relations Institute of South Africa).

Professionalisation of the industry depends predominantly on the control and regulation of a credible governing body. However, a governing body can only be credible if it is backed by the active involvement of PR practitioners.

(Niemann-Struweg & Meintjes, 2008, p. 229)

In the authors' estimation, "traditionally the PR industry in South Africa has been a haven for failed journalists" (p. 227). They concluded that Public Relations in South Africa was not a profession and that "the future of the profession is in the hands of its practitioners" (p. 224), by which they meant practitioners needed to voluntarily submit to the requirements of accreditation and the professional control of a strong regulatory Public Relations Association.

Many of these conditions apply to New Zealand. The practice does not have legislative support for licensing, accreditation, codes of ethical practice, or sanctioning poor practice so it will be useful to examine views of the profession and the concept of professionalism in with these traits in mind.

Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar (2006) however, propose that “Public Relations is a profession which has a specialised body of knowledge; a professional Association (PRIA and PRINZ) which accredits members, advises tertiary education institutions on content, has a code of ethics and offers continuing professional education” (p. 25). They consider these elements important in order to protect the profession’s jurisdiction but they concede that although mastery of particular intellectual skills through education and training is vital for professionalism, the absence of licensing means that such training is not mandatory for entry to the profession in Australia or New Zealand. Although both associations have a Code of Ethics, they do not disclose how widely the Code is used. As Harrison and Galloway (2005) have pointed out, codes of ethics have an embedded inadequacy in that they leave the practitioner to interpret what they mean and how they apply. In fact, the PRINZ Trends Survey (2008) indicated that although 65 per cent of 609 respondents thought the PRINZ Code of Ethics was relevant to their work, only 6 per cent had it on display for consultation and only 5 per cent actually consulted it regularly to guide their work. Tymson et al. (2006) also suggest that a profession must accept a duty to broader society rather than merely to one’s own clients or employer. But they admit that how these requirements are objectively measured and how standards of conduct and performance are maintained and controlled is neither easy nor defined.

When practitioners and researchers refer to Public Relations as a profession they locate Public Relations as a modern phenomenon (Brown, 2006). According to this portrayal, Public Relations’ earliest proponents were American circus promoter PT Barnum, government propagandist Ivy Lee, and corporate advocate Bernays (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Public Relations is said to have accelerated globally as a profession after the World Wars when it was established in places like New Zealand and Australia (Peart & Macnamara, 1996; Johnston & Zawawi, 2000, 2004, 2009; Motion, Leitch, & Cliffe, 2009).

Tymson et al. (2006) also trace the history of Australian Public Relations back to the days of press agents, publicity officers and press spokesmen, in which the first registered practitioner described himself as “an expert in public persuasion, propaganda and publicity” (p. 40).

As a profession in New Zealand, Public Relations was launched in 1954 with the opening of an agency at the Star Hotel in Auckland (Motion & Leitch, 2001). Initially, the “profession” was populated largely by ex-journalists who plied their trade primarily as publicity agents for private companies and government agencies (Tymson et al., 2006). No formal training for the New Zealand profession existed until the late twentieth century (Motion, Leitch, & Cliffe, 2009). Consequently, a tradition developed whereby anyone who had the inclination and the requisite knowledge of media processes could claim to be a Public Relations practitioner. Although there is now a professional association (PRINZ), practitioners can still self-appoint since there is no legislative or industry requirement to meet any particular training, proficiency or ethical criteria for entry into the industry in New Zealand. These circumstances provide a historical backdrop for a study of perceptions of Public Relations and illustrate why a hermeneutical interest in context is important to such a study. Circumstances such as these structure the practice in participant’s minds as they compare Public Relations to their own disciplines and definitions of profession and professionalism.

Trait Theory is not the only way of looking at a profession however. Pieczka and L’Etang (2001) identified a 1960s fissure in the development of theory on professions when the power approach (Hughes, 1958; Hughes 1971; Macdonald, 1995) parted ways with the trait approach. The power approach is more interested in how a profession lays claim to professional status rather than whether it meets certain trait requirements.

The term *profession* came to be seen as a symbolic label or ideology. Thus, the power approach examines ways in which professions win social approval to define and control their work and their relationships with other actors such as clients. (Macdonald, 1995, p. 5)

The power approach is interested in concepts such as licence and mandate, “the idea that the profession depends on social approval to carry out certain activities in exchange for money” (Pieczka & L’Etang, 2001, p. 225). Other elements that contribute to social legitimacy include the ability to establish jurisdiction over a specific area of operation, especially in the face of competition (intra-professional differentiation); attempts to standardise knowledge and rules of operation (codification); the belief in sets of qualities which defy codification (interdeterminacy); and autonomy to operate according to principles agreed by the profession without interference or pressure to compromise these principles. Pieczka and L’Etang (2001) conclude that the profession is best understood in terms of “a unique configuration of national factors” (p. 226) rather than a uniform pattern which can be applied to every nation, a concept which L’Etang (2008) later calls cultural practice. The power perspective locates suggests that any study on perceptions needs to consider the interplay of various players in the field who hold or try to hold power to define, to influence, to deny, and to support their favoured interpretation.

Professions can be seen as ambiguous communities that rely on their ability to argue for social legitimacy (Tully, 2008). The power approach to defining the term “profession” focuses attention on the validity and strength of various claims of legitimacy, value and credibility (McDonald, 1995). It examines claims and counterclaims regarding professions and professionalism. Consequently, academic interest has moved to the examination of claims and counterclaims to establish positions vis à vis other jurisdictional claimants such as marketing (Hutton, 2001), the media (Allen, 2004; White & Hobsbawm, 2007), senior management (Richter & Barlow, 2000; Murphy, 2003; Murray & White, 2005; Heyman, 2005) and wider society (McKie & Munshi, 2007). From a power perspective, Public Relations is definitely contested terrain in business, the media and in academic literature.

The claims made about Public Relations therefore constitute a struggle for social legitimacy. There is inevitable disagreement over what constitutes a legitimate argument. Some argue that practitioner competence is crucial in building positive perceptions of Public Relations (Macnamara, 1999; Jo, 2003). Practitioners themselves claim that their own competence is the key to positive

perceptions of Public Relations among management. “Good PR practitioners make good PR ... the individual is by far the most important factor” (Murphy, 2003, p. 3). According to this argument, practitioner reputation is highly personalised (Macnamara, 1999; Murphy, 2003; Jo, 2003; Jo & Kim, 2004). In this context, Murray and White (2005) indicated that practitioners “need to be forceful enough and informed enough to contribute to solutions to communication and reputation challenges” (p. 24). They found that the calibre of Public Relations practitioners was the key to influence at the senior management table. When CEOs dealt with high calibre advisors their perceptions of the value of Public Relations were higher.

Recently, however, Sha (2011) has contended that registration and accreditation are more significant factors than age or experience for enhancing professional status. But Heyman (2005) has contended that “success in the field is complex and multidimensional and can not be homogenised” (p. 4). His interviews with 97 senior Public Relations executives in the UK revealed that they considered their value was measured by holding a decision-making position (22.7 per cent), helping the business to grow (20.6 per cent) and becoming a trusted advisor (16.5 per cent). Only 6.2 per cent thought that it involved building good relationships and even fewer (5.2 per cent) thought being credible was a key attribute for internal success. These findings are intriguing. The executives in Heyman’s study did not rate relationship building (Ledingham, 2003) or credibility (Callison, 2004) as highly as being aligned with the economic interests and power configurations of their client organisations.

The DTI/IPR Report (Murphy, 2003) listed critical practitioner success factors as: demonstrating creativity; the ability to maintain professional ethics and standards in stressful and challenging circumstances; the ability to secure sufficient budget and resources; the ability to align practice with organisational objectives; and the ability to demonstrate measureable impact on organisational performance. Many of these qualities and skills emphasise a practitioner’s dexterity in the context of senior management environments rather than ethical behaviour for example (Tilley, 2005, McKie & Munshi, 2007). The successful practitioner must be able to fit into the senior management team culture (Heyman, 2005; Gregory, 2008) and has to be adaptable and able to articulate

the benefits of communication management at the senior management table (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2008). These findings suggest that senior Public Relations practitioners and Communication Managers are engaged in a struggle to align themselves with other members in the dominant coalitions of their organisations. In the course of this struggle they need to advocate for their own value. Their arguments for legitimacy and value constitute positions taken in the field in relation to other members of their senior management teams.

According to the power approach, the legitimacy of a profession is dependant on the strength of the claim to being one (Macdonald, 1995). Powerful advocacy has been linked to the ability to evaluate and report in the language managers value (Watson, 2005). It is imperative to win favour with the CEO. Winokur and Kinkead (1993) found that in the United States the attitude of the CEO is critical for the success of Public Relations: “A correlation exists between the attitude of CEOs on PR and the successful employment of PR in sustaining and developing a desirable organizational image” (p.16). Murray and White (2005) conducted a study of 14 CEOs in the United Kingdom “to determine what CEOs perceive to be the value of PR and how they assess the contribution PR makes to their overall business and organisational performance” (p. 3). They asserted that Communication Management was already considered mission-critical, an essential part of doing business, because “CEOs are living in challenging times, with unprecedented demands from a wide variety of stakeholders, a hostile environment where mistakes are quickly uncovered and there is swift retribution” (p. 20). But others claim that there is patchy understanding of Public Relations among senior managers, and ask how it can add value (DeSanto & Moss, 2004). While researching director level practitioners in the United Kingdom, Dolphin (2002) found that there is

... a lack of understanding of what PR is and what practitioners actually do [which] has proved to be a barrier to PR gaining equal recognition alongside other functions within organisations and, in particular, a barrier to practitioners having a seat at the top management table.

(White, L'Etang & Moss, 2009, p. 390)

The ability to influence senior managers is fundamental to the legitimacy and value of Public Relations practitioners. Murray and White (2005) argue that there is “an increasing burden on PR practitioners to educate management in

the role of communication in relationship building” (p. 24). Public Relations has been described as a soft activity, lacking the theory and structure associated with other business activities such as medical or architectural practice (Richter & Barlow, 2000). The DTI/IPR Report (Murphy, 2003) found that practitioners needed to be able to “influence behaviour in order to achieve objectives through the effective management of relationships and communications” (p.13).

Berger (2005) has pointed out that engagement with the dominant coalition, the group that controls decision making in the organisation, is problematic. The dominant coalition, frequently male dominated, is mainly hegemonic in its exercise of power, exercising power over others. The practitioner, especially if she is female, may operate in a relational way, exercising power with others. If this is not respected by the dominant coalition she is considered to lack business acumen. Similarly, when Public Relations operates as a relationship builder, it runs the risk of being seen as a soft science, “nice to do, but having no measureable economic value. Inclusive approaches do not make sense in an us-against-them, dog-eat-dog business world” (Berger, 2005, p. 17). Berger concluded that power relations in the dominant coalition may in fact be a gendered dialectic. By “refocusing PR on mutually beneficial relationships” (Coombs & Holladay, 2007, p. 23) practitioners may well be alienating themselves from the dominant coalition – especially if it is male dominated. So, arguments over legitimacy constitute far more than theoretical or structural position taking. Because they contain subjective elements such as prejudices, personal biases, experiences, cultural values, collegial opinions and contextual organisational considerations they require careful qualitative examination. The struggle for power in this context is a key consideration.

Engagement with the senior management team is problematic for another reason. Public Relations practitioners want to have access to the dominant coalition. But their involvement can lead to a loss of autonomy, the ability to propose suggestions in line with their ethics or the principles of good practice when they confront the trajectory of organisational thinking: “Public relations professionals are not immune to pressures of organizational compliance” (Berger, 2005, p. 14).

There is little doubt that Public Relations has effectively served capitalism and powerful economic producers for many years but whether it has served or can serve stakeholders and society as well from the inside or outside the dominant coalition is a contested issue (Motion & Leitch, 1996; Weaver, 2001). (Berger, 2005, p. 14)

Given the tensions involved in aligning with the senior management team while maintaining a sense of autonomy, Berger (2005) has suggested that the Public Relations practitioner is obliged to adopt the function of being an advocate for their own position, using either sanctioned or unsanctioned resistance. Sanctioned resistance involves enhancing one's professional skill through education; performing at high levels and documenting and communicating results; adapting the best practices of other professionals and organisations; building alliances with other individuals or groups; rational argument based on substantive evidence of economic advantages; and exercising political astuteness. Unsanctioned resistance involves: covert actions (leaking information); providing alternative interpretations to the grapevine; whistle blowing; and association-level activism. Berger (2005) advocates that "greater attention [should be] paid to power relations and to equipping graduates with the skills of an advocate" (p. 23). This builds on Serini's (1993) observation that power and autonomy are important characteristics of a profession. Serini (1993) found that "professionalism did not provide the practitioner with total autonomy. Rather, professionalism provided them with the credibility needed to negotiate for autonomy" (p. 1).

The legitimacy of Public Relations is undermined by the lack of evidence to support the claims it makes about itself. "There is no evidence that PR does what it says it does in terms of producing goodwill and mutual understanding" (Moloney, 2006, p.2). This is a serious drawback in the context of business where results are the lingua franca of the dominant coalition. Public Relations practitioners emphasise long term relationship management (Murphy, 2003), but Public Relations is heavily linked to business interests (Motion & Leitch, 2001; Callison & Zillman, 2002; Roper, 2005a). Practitioner alignment with corporate interests is a key to their success (Heyman, 2005). So the perception of their relationship-building is inevitably linked to the interests of their clients. Besides, organisational imperatives constrain Public Relations practice because practitioners are under intense pressure to justify pragmatic expenditures and

justify spending outlays (Bruning, Castle & Schrepper, 2004). Consequently, some academics advocate that Public Relations would have greater legitimacy if it achieved results for a wider range of publics such as activist groups, minorities, community groups and environmental groups (Motion, 2002; McKie & Munshi, 2007; Craig, 2007). Such results would empower the legitimacy of Public Relations among these groups but not necessarily in wider society however.

In summary then, the literature on the legitimacy of Public Relations is equivocal. Some literature argues that Public Relations is not a profession and that its legitimacy is grounded in individual practitioner behaviour. Other interpretations assert that Public Relations is a profession but that there is debate over the validity of these assertions. Public Relations academics and some practitioners have sought to withdraw from any association with propaganda and to clothe themselves with a more acceptable relationship-building discourse or they advocate a name change. Claims to legitimacy by building mutuality in relationships are compromised because Public Relations is so heavily linked with business interests. Thus, practitioners have to advocate for their own legitimacy by influencing the CEO or senior management team. The struggle for legitimacy, especially in the estimation of the senior management team, creates a competitive field of contested claims about Public Relations.

2.6 Conceptualisations of Public Relations in theory

There is no universally agreed definition of Public Relations in the literature (Grunig, 1992; White & Mazur, 1995; Toledano et al., 2003; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Toledano et al. (2003) argue that finding an agreed definition for Public Relations is not necessary. They prefer to explore a range of definitions suggesting that “the different definitional parameters indicate a struggle around configuring public relations, democracy, and power” (p. 1). Variations in definition reflect differences in conceptualisation and theoretical underpinnings (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002). These conceptualisations include: Excellence Theory, Reputation Management, Impression Management, Crisis and Issues Management, Relationship Management, Contingency Theory, a dialogic perspective, and a social cultural perspective. Commonly, writers propose their definitions as redefinitions or reconfigurations (Moloney, 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; McKie & Munshi, 2007). The construction of a theoretical landscape as a contested terrain offers Public Relations researchers the opportunity to present their particular versions. As Yeshin (2006) has noted with regard to the debate surrounding the definition of another relatively new discipline, Integrated Marketing Communication:

Much debate surrounds the very nature of integrated marketing communications; with the consequence that several alternative definitions have been proposed... They [the theoreticians] argue that the theoretical concept of IMC is ambiguous. This provides the basis for researchers to adopt whichever term best fits their research agendas at any given time. (p. 58)

This phenomenon can be viewed as a struggle for dominance where each writer seeks to generate symbolic capital through the construction of a discourse of definitional frames, idiosyncratic meanings, and arguments for legitimacy. Symbolic capital has been referred to as the resources available to an individual on the basis of honour, prestige or recognition (Calhoun, Karaganis, & Price, 2002). It is a collation of cultural, social and economic capital into symbolic authority. This authority is symbolic in so far as it is empowered by those who accept and endorse it. Some writers choose to align themselves with other powerful players to leverage their own authority. Others set themselves against dominant representations in order to establish a

distinctive, alternative position. In so doing, they create a persona for themselves and their institution within the field of Public Relations research. For example, American researchers tend to adopt the Excellence Theory framework. Some European researchers have sought to extricate themselves from this hegemony to establish their own versions of Public Relations. Some New Zealand researchers have sought to establish their credentials by using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach.

Excellence Theory is fundamentally Systems Theory applied to Public Relations as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). In this construct, Public Relations is seen as being part of an organisational system, contributing to that system’s efficiency and effectiveness. The Public Relations practitioner serves “as a communication manager in the dominant coalition ... to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organization” (Heath & Coombs, 2006, p. 199). This provides the theoretical frame for describing Public Relations as Strategic Communication Management (Grunig, 1992; White & Mazur, 1995). In the Strategic Communication Management approach, the Public Relations practitioner acts as a boundary-spanner, assimilating and communicating information across the organisation. Their function is to listen, to interpret, to respond to interests and needs, and to facilitate positive relationships (Baskin, Aronoff, & Lattimore, 1997; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Van Leuven, 2004; Heath & Coombs, 2006). As a co-creator of meaning, the boundary-spanner is also expected to create dialogue to build understanding and mutuality (Botan & Taylor, 2005; Grunig, 2008).

This view of the role of Public Relations is predicated on the assumption that organisations are in fact prepared to adjust their behaviour based on stakeholder feedback and expectations. “The price of influence is being influenced” (Baskin et al., 1997, p.10). However, the rhetoric that advocates benefit to both the organisation and its publics may in fact be little more than rhetoric. Attempts to communicate with stakeholders are frequently seen as a self-interested strategy (Hazelton & Keenan, 2000): “Mutual benefit is not easy to achieve and may well mask the darker intent and ability of the organisation to persuasively promote the conclusion that the relationship is more mutually beneficial than it is” (Heath, 2001 p. 552). Coombs and Holladay (2007) point

out that “in order to perform well, an organisation needs a sense of order to prevail in its network of stakeholders. Because conflict among them can impede performance, a goal of public relations is to maintain harmony” (pp. 25, 26). Consequently, the maintenance of harmony may in reality be maintenance of hegemony. Its fundamental driver becomes the removal of factors impeding organisational performance (Stauber & Rampton, 1995; Motion & Leitch, 1996; Davis, 2000; Weaver, 2001; Motion & Weaver, 2004; Roper, 2005; Schermerhorn, 2010). The conflict between the normative academic representations of Public Relations and the pragmatic, largely positivist views of practitioners and senior managers is a key to understanding the “yawning chasm” that has been detected by some researchers (van Ruler et al, 2004).

Public Relations has also been constructed as Reputation Management (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001; Argenti & Forman, 2004; Kotler et al., 2009). Variations of this construction include Impression Management (Sallot, 2002; Callison & Zillman, 2002; Callison, 2004), which stresses the role of Public Relations in managing views of the organisation; Situational Crisis Management (Coombs, 1995, 1999; Lerbinger, 1997, 2006; Hearit, 2001; Lukaszewski, 2005), which defines Public Relations as a range of rhetorical strategies utilised in a reputational crisis; and Risk Management (Heath & Gay, 1997; Palanchar & Heath, 2007) and Issues Management (Cralle & Vibbert, 1985; Jaques, 2002, 2010), which define Public Relations as a management surveillance function, proactive in assessing environmental threats before they become crises. All of these models tend to embody a corporate view of Public Relations (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; McKie & Munshi, 2007). This view sees Public Relations as an agent acting on behalf of a powerful client to manage its reputation, primarily by managing its messages in the traditional media and now in social media.

Reputation Management theories leave the role of Public Relations open to interpretation by the organisation. If reputation is seen as the management of impressions, then Public Relations’ function is to build client credibility (and its own) in which case the attention is on creating trust (Callison, 2004). If Reputation Management is interpreted as protecting image, then it can involve managing media (Lerbinger, 1997, 2006) or employing buffering tactics (Ice,

1991), which may involve spin doctoring to secure positive media coverage in order to enhance and protect the brand (Ries & Ries, 2000; Kotler et al., 2009). Issues and Crisis Management approaches emphasise Public Relations' role in environmental scanning, proactive communication and strategically managing media statements in the light of these (Coombs, 1995; Grunig, 2006). This view of Public Relations places it in the heat of battle with the media in the contest over the construction of dominant interpretations. The language surrounding this theoretical approach such as "protecting image", "buffering", "secure positive media coverage", "managing media statements" and "managing media" all legitimise the representation of a point of view on behalf of a client in context with other views, especially in the media and social media environment.

There has also been a strong emphasis on theorising about Public Relations as Relationship Management (Ferguson, 1984; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Hon, 1999; Huang, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, 2001; Ledingham, 2003; Bruning, Castle, & Schrepper, 2004; Heath & Coombs, 2006; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Relationship Management portrays Public Relations as a relationship builder, facilitating "the exchange of resources between organizations [that] lead to mutual benefit, as well as mutual achievement" (Ledingham, 2003, p. 184). This involves such things as personalising the organisation by assigning human qualities to it (Bruning & Galloway, 2003); determining common interests and goals (Ledingham, 2003); and developing dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2006). Huang (2001) emphasised the relational dimensions of control mutuality (the distribution of power in relationships); trust-building, relational satisfaction, commitment and social relations (*gao guangxi*). These are important concepts in a cultural setting where relationships are highly valued. This high value may not be shared by dominant coalitions however (Berger, 2005). Relationship Management theories emphasise the practitioner's role as mediator, relationship builder, communication facilitator, and conflict resolver with various stakeholders (Ledingham, 2003). These relational terms imply a state in which stakeholders seek win-win solutions to their differing agendas. These are supposed to be generated through mutual understanding and mutual adjustment. This presupposes a degree of goodwill on both parts and a commitment to conversation. These are not insignificant assumptions. Relationship Management theory recognises that although the relationship is

mutually dependant, it is not always mutually beneficial (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001). Relationship Management theory has been criticised for not giving sufficient attention to this imbalance (Motion & Leitch, 1996; Roper, 2005). Researchers have noted that there seems to be limited evidence of mutuality in relationship-building (Millar & Heath, 2004) or of the two-way symmetric model of communication in practice (McKie & Munshi, 2007).

Contingency Theory (Cameron, Cropp, & Reber, 2001; Shin, Jin, Cheng, & Cameron, 2005) conceptualises Public Relations as organisational dialogue and is based on the premise that stakeholder agendas are in various states of conflict. Conflict necessitates the negotiation of relationships along a continuum between advocacy (where stakeholders pursue their own self-interested goals) and accommodation (where parties yield to the other's interests). These arrangements are contingent on a variety of factors such as threats, individual characteristics, industry environment and cultural considerations. This Theory conceptualises Public Relations as the over-arching tool that organisations use to change the minds of their publics (Shin, Jin, Cheng, & Cameron, 2003). An important aspect of Contingency Theory is that it opposes the persuasion of stakeholders by coercion because it threatens the relationship with the stakeholders. This theoretical construction provides a useful backdrop to the study of perceptions in so far as it recognises that dialogic participants formulate and reformulate their positions as they engage with one another and the environment of their interaction.

A dialogic perspective also assists the study of perceptions of the practice. It defines Public Relations as a process whereby people engage in advocacy, promotion or debate (McKie, Motion, & Munshi, 2004). According to this view, Public Relations promotes discussion and is therefore beneficial to society (Toledano et al. 2003), as a community-builder (Kruckeberg, Starck, & Vujnovic, 2006), as a mechanism for empowering disempowered voices (Chay-Nemeth, 2001; Motion & Leitch, 2001), as a facilitator of social change (Moloney, 2006), and as a mechanism for societal transformation to expose and address social justice issues, to promote ecological responsibility and to create economic growth (McKie & Munshi, 2007). This view shares the Pragmatic research value placed on doing good for society. It also shares the Symbolic Interactionist

assumption that people act on the basis of their perceptions. It argues that perception building needs to have a deliberate ethical edge.

European academics have tended to emphasise a dialogic view of Public Relations as a mechanism for influencing meaning through discourse construction. For example, the Constructivist approach (Merten, 2004) defines Public Relations as the strategic use of communication processes to construct images of organisations. A Consensus Orientated approach (Burkart, 2004) emphasises the role of public consent in the process of meaning creation. The Transitional approach (Ławniczak, 2004) defines Public Relations as a mechanism for changing social awareness. The Reflective approach (Holmström, 2005) posits that “communication is about maximising, optimising or satisfying the process of meaning creation in order or solve managerial problems” (p. 3). It should be noted however that these approaches represent a contest in the academic realm which does not necessarily reflect practice (van Ruler et al., 2004).

Interestingly, one perspective that has not been clearly articulated is the perspective of Public Relations as persuasion (Pfau & Wan, 2006; Messina, 2007; Fawkes, 2009). This is a key omission since persuasion is an important element in theories proposing Public Relations as Reputation Management, Crisis Management, and in Public Relations practice in some cultures (Sievert & Porter, 2009). One reason for limited theorising about Public Relations from this perspective may be that persuasion is considered by many Public Relations researchers to be an abusive communication process designed to produce or coerce consent from audiences (van Ruler et al., 2004). There is also an aversion to the negative association with propaganda (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Peart & Macnamara, 1996).

2.7 Country-specific portrayals: Why are they necessary?

The importance of defining Public Relations in a country- or region-specific cultural context has emerged in recent times as a significant pattern in Public Relations thinking (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995; Moss & DeSanto, 2004; Gregory, 2004; Brown, 2006; Kent & Taylor, 2007; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). Cultural definitions from specific countries and regions have emerged for three main reasons. One is that there has been a reaction to the dominance of the Excellence Theory in Public Relations literature and research (McKie, 2003, 2005; van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2001, 2004; Zhang, Shen, & Jiang, 2009). Another is that Public Relations researchers and academics have become more aware of the need to engage in cross-cultural communication in multinational practice (Tilson & Alozie, 2004; Toth, 2007). The third reason has been the growing awareness of alternative models of Public Relations operating in various parts of the globe (Sriramesh, Kim, & Takasaki, 1999; L'Etang, 2004; van Ruler et al. 2004; Sriramesh, 2004; Sievert & Porter, 2009; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009).

This trend reflects attempts to expand the global body of knowledge and to capture wider perspectives in international practice. The drive to describe Public Relations in European terms (van Ruler et al. 2001; van Ruler & Verčič, 2004) has led to country-specific descriptions for countries such as Germany (Bentele & Junghanël, 2004), Italy (Muzi Falconi & Kodilja, 2004), and Austria (Nessmann, 2004). Descriptions have also emerged for the Netherlands (van Ruler et al., 2004), the United Kingdom (L'Etang, 2004, 2008) and from Africa, Asia, South America and Middle Eastern countries. For example, Holzhausen (2005) found culture-specific models of Public Relations practices developed by South African practitioners, such as the *ubuntu* model focusing on harmony and reconciliation. In South Korea the concept of *cheong*, attachment to a person or object as a consequence of long term relationship factors such as intimacy, affection and self-sacrifice, has been elaborated by, for example, Berkowitz & Kim (2004). Chinese *guanxi*, the cultivation of personal relations or human networks for personal gain, and *mianzi*, preserving face, have been elaborated by, for example, Huang (2001). Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki (1999) have provided insights into Japanese concepts of *onjoshugi*, managerial paternalism,

and *katachi de hairu*, entering fulfilment through the rules. In Singapore, Chay-Nemeth (2009) has explored the implications of *kiasui*, the fear of losing out, for Hokkien Chinese. Latin America has produced six versions – communication (informing through the media); promotional (supporting marketing); ethical (promoting best practice); motivational (used to build internal morale); contact (as a reference point for enquiries); and event planning (Montenegro, 2004). These culture-specific representations hint at deep-seated values and principles operating in culturally defined settings. They invite further investigation and suggest that the emergence of a global body of Public Relations knowledge needs to articulate these settings and principles.

Emerging models recognise that Public Relations functions in different ways in different cultural settings. Sievert and Porter (2009) have described “patriotic” models in Egypt, Yemen and Singapore, and “commando” models in China, Vietnam, Burma, Zimbabwe and Cuba. Emerging descriptions are sometimes simply identifying existing models. “Public relations has been practiced in Asia for millennia” (Sriramesh, 2004, p.322), and has taken many forms and these forms are changing. These models position Public Relations not so much as a practice or a profession but as a social and cultural expression. It has even been suggested that Public Relations can be conceived of as being a normal part of everyday life, in its simplest form, as people relating to people (Lattimore et al., 2004).

Some academics have argued for a closer connection between theorising about culture and Public Relations. Many have specifically emphasised the need for greater understanding of how Public Relations operates in different cultural settings (Sriramesh, 1992, 2003, 2004, 2009; Botan, 1992; Wu, Taylor, & Chen, 2001; Moss & DeSanto, 2004; Gregory, 2004; Holzhausen, 2005; Wu & Kwame, 2007; Kent & Taylor, 2007; Hebbani, 2008). McKie and Munshi (2007) have encouraged Public Relations practitioners “to trust their own instincts and develop culture- and country-specific practice based on the economic, social and political realities of their countries” (p. 47). L’Etang (2008) has pointed out that, “public relations is a cultural practice and so it is important to understand the fundamental principles that structure society” (p. 25). Quoting Jacques Coups de Frejac, Grunig (2009) has noted that “there cannot be any good PR without a

careful appraisal of others in order to be in harmony with their culture” (p. 631). This thesis strongly aligns with these sentiments because, despite these calls, cultural perspectives have yet to gain significant traction.

Sadly, culture has yet to be integrated into the public relations body of knowledge. Much of the literature and scholarship in our area continues to be ethnocentric with a predominantly American, and to a lesser extent British and Western European, bias. (Toth, 2007, p. 507)

Perhaps the tide has turned. The *Public Relations Review* has published many country-specific descriptions of Public Relations practice. The IPR (the Institute of Public Relations, Miami) and EUPRERA (the European Public Relations Education and Research Association) are encouraging examination of local expressions in practice. Sriramesh’s & Verčič’s (2009) *Global Public Relations Handbook* included greater coverage of many areas previously absent from the literature such as South America, the Caribbean, Australasia, Eastern Europe and African nations.

2.8 How have country-specific descriptions been framed?

There has been a tendency for country-specific expressions of Public Relations to measure the maturity of that country’s profession against Western criteria derived from the Excellence Study (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). Thus, writers propose the “evolution” of Public Relations in Korea; Public Relations in “transition” from pre-professionalism to professionalism in Singapore; and an “adolescent with growing pains” in China. These depictions of Public Relations are shaped by a preoccupation with its portrayal as a profession rather than as a social cultural expression. It is the contention of this thesis that nations and indigenous groups within specific countries have practiced forms of public relations for centuries but they are here described as a recent, emerging profession of Public Relations.

The depiction of Public Relations as a profession (Ehling, 1992; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grunig, 2008) has distorted our understanding of the range of relationships that exist between people and groups and led us to ignore histories of culturally specific practices (Brown, 2006). The representation of

Public Relations as a profession tends to espouse a corporate, management framework and favours Western rationalism (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Argenti & Forman, 2004). This representation requires a democratic setting, as understood in the West, in order to function (Sriramesh, 2004; Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001). These representations distract attention from the articulation of culturally inflected versions of Public Relations. Instead they focus attention on management approaches that emphasise the relationship between trained practitioners and the general public and how professional the practice is becoming (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). They portray Public Relations as a recent phenomenon, signalled by the formation of Public Relations associations (Gabrielsen, 2004) or the establishment of academic disciplines (Areco, 2004).

Country-specific portrayals of Public Relations are often framed on the premise of political democracy (Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001; Tilson & Alozie, 2004; Verčič & Sriramesh, 2008). The democratic premise predisposes the writers to subscribe to the concept of informed publics (Peart & Macnamara, 1996; Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001) and that organisations need to establish consent to operate (Mersham et al., 2009). However, in countries and cultures that do not operate according to Western democratic principles, public consent is not necessarily a critical criterion for effective organisational operation or public communication (Munshi & Kurian, 2005; Brown, 2006; Sievert & Porter, 2009).

In some cases, theoretical criteria compel researchers to reject models of actual practice. For example, van Ruler et al. (2004) identified seven roles played by Public Relations practitioners in the Netherlands but rejected three of these roles as “unacceptable” even though they actually exist in Dutch Public Relations. Her reasoning was that “the practitioner must always bear the receiver in mind and effects must always be measured” (p. 138). This reflects the application of a definitional framework with strongly embedded bias towards two-way communication practice.

2.9 Public Relations in New Zealand

A primary concern of New Zealand research on Public Relations has been how Public Relations uses power relations (Motion, 2001; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Weaver & Motion, 2002; Leitch & Davenport, 2002; Motion, 2005; Motion & Weaver, 2005; Roper, 2005). For example, Motion and Weaver (2005) have examined the New Zealand Government's use of consultation tactics and discourse colonisation strategies to mask manipulation. Roper (2005) has examined Public Relations strategies used to create political identities during election campaigns. In these studies Public Relations is largely portrayed as the articulation of corporate or government decision-making.

Another emphasis in New Zealand research on Public Relations has been its construction as an agent for social benefit (McKie, 2003; McKie, Motion, & Munshi, 2004; McKie & Munshi, 2007; Toledano & McKie, 2007). McKie et al. (2004), for example, argue that "Public Relations is not something that occurs only in organisations, it is part of everyday lives when people are engaged in public advocacy, promotion, or dialogue" (p. 1). Toledano and McKie (2007) have illustrated how Public Relations was used in Israel to produce socially beneficial outcomes for local communities. McKie and Munshi (2007) have written a compelling argument for the engagement of Public Relations to address issues of ecological, economic and social justice at a societal level.

Some New Zealand Public Relations researchers have taken particular exception to the Excellence Theory on the basis that it fails to accommodate power differences among publics (Leitch & Neilson, 2001); the rhetoric of two-way communication can be a mask for one-way manipulation (Motion & Weaver, 2005); it lacks empirical support and has not been accepted across other disciplines (McKie & Munshi, 2007); and it overstates the rejection of one-way communication as an expression of effective Public Relations (Toledano & McKie, 2007).

A key motivation for this study was that at the outset of the study in 2006 there had been no substantive research directly addressing perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand. A paper had been produced positioning Public

Relations as a management function to facilitate organisational transparency through open communication; ensure consistency of internal practice; and facilitate responsiveness to external demands (Tilley, 2005). During the course of this study, Tilley and Hollings (2008) produced a paper on New Zealand journalists' perceptions of Public Relations based on the question "What do you think of public relations?", which they inserted into their 2007 New Zealand Big Journalism omnibus survey. The survey was distributed to journalists through chief reporters and editors using an open question approach to gather "quick reactions to the term "public relations" given as a word stimulus, in a manner that could be likened to word association games" (Tilley & Hollings, 2008, p.4). Their study did not claim to be representative of all journalists but it did include responses from 514 of New Zealand's 4,000 journalists. The study mainly drew its data from reporters. "More than 97 percent of the respondents were *not* in any kind of senior managerial (general manager, editor, or publisher) role, and half the respondents were under 40 years, had less than 10 years' experience, and earned under \$50,000 a year" (p. 4). The study displayed some similarities to my study in that it used a qualitative approach "to allow themes to emerge from total textual content during multiple close readings, during which the researcher maps the full extent of the content by taking notes of repeated or similar ideas, and identifying reoccurring key words or language patterns" (p. 5). The research design was chosen so that broad patterns could emerge from the process rather than looking for patterns from a "pre-built coding frame" (p. 5).

Descriptions of Public Relations in New Zealand have been represented by Motion and Leitch in the *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath, 2001); as an amalgamation with Australia in the *Journal of Communication Management* (Motion, 2002); and under an Australasian regional description in *The Global Public Relations Handbook* (Motion, Leitch, & Cliffe in Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). The representation of New Zealand perspectives on Public Relations in Heath (2001) drew on a survey of New Zealand's Top 100 companies designed to map the features of in-house Public Relations practice in New Zealand and interviews with senior Public Relations consultants. It described Public Relations as an "industry which originally developed through the efforts of demobilised army and air force press officers following the end of World War II" (Motion & Leitch, 2001, p. 660). Thus, its history is traced to its emergence as a

profession with the establishment of PRINZ (the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand) in 1954, the establishment of the first Public Relations education courses at Wellington Polytechnic in the 1960s and the development of what they call “an indigenous body of public relations theory” (p. 661) at their home institution. They identified evidence of New Zealand Public Relations following international patterns such as a strong relationship between Marketing and Public Relations and the development of a Code of Conduct. They also suggested that “Public Relations practice was not well respected in New Zealand” (p. 662).

On the issue of cultures within New Zealand they noted that more research was needed on how to communicate with indigenous Māori people.

There are no primarily Maori Public Relations consultancies and few Maori practitioners. However, practitioners generally are becoming increasingly aware of the need to adapt their communication strategies to speak meaningfully to Maori. (Motion & Leitch, 2001, p. 663)

Similarly, they identified that “multiculturalism has arisen because of the growing number of immigrant groups in New Zealand. “Just as consultants are having to learn to develop campaign strategies for the Asia–Pacific region, so too are they having to acknowledge that a growing proportion of the national audience does not have English or Maori as its first language” (p. 663). In their concluding remarks, Motion and Leitch advocate that Public Relations theory must take account of differences like these. Apart from a paper by Comrie and Kupa (1998), asking whether Public Relations can become bicultural in New Zealand, little has been written about the subject of indigenous Public Relations in this country.

In *The Global Public Relations Handbook* (2009), Motion et al. maintain that New Zealand Public Relations is aligned with international practice. They suggest that the presence of international consultancies such as Weber Shandwick, Hill and Knowlton, and Burston Marsteller “ensures that the standard of public relations in New Zealand and Australia reflects international best practice” (p. 101). This is an ironic reference since Shandwick NZ Ltd’s conduct was the subject of a PRINZ hearing in 1999. The PRINZ findings were

blocked by Shandwick, which led PRINZ to instigate an investigation by QC Hugh Rennie over Shandwick's handling of environmentalist protestors when employed by Timberlands West Coast Ltd. Motion et al. also state that "competition from local providers ensures public relations is adapted to fit local circumstances and priorities" (p. 101). They identify the development of bicultural and multicultural policies as being among the challenges facing Public Relations in Australasia.

Motion et al. (2009) also report a lack of data on the number of practitioners with Public Relations education. This is a view taken from Peart (1998). However, more recent surveys report that 75 per cent of practitioners have at least a degree or post-graduate qualification and 52 per cent have a specific PR/Communications qualification. Twenty-one per cent have undertaken PRINZ's APR (Accreditation in PR) qualification (PR Trends Survey, 2008).

So, there was a need for a study on perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand. Such a study needed to connect much more closely with perceptions in the marketplace rather than theoretical constructions. It needed to draw samples from key influencers in the field, especially senior business managers, senior media editors and tertiary educators rather than relying on practitioners' views of the practice. It needed to examine the claims to being a profession. Most importantly, any research on perceptions of Public Relations needed to contain a more substantial and nuanced appreciation of Māori principles of Public Relations.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This study utilises a Qualitative Research approach. The ontological basis for the study is that meaning is constructed through processes of co-creation and negotiated understandings. These understandings represent “individual and collective reconstructions sometimes coalescing around consensus” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 101). This study views perceptions as configurations and constructions that consist of definitions, opinions, value judgments, portrayals and metaphors. These constructions sometimes coalesce and sometimes diverge. The reasons for these patterns of coalescence and divergence are a central concern of this study.

The epistemological approach to knowledge creation adopted for this study is therefore inductive rather than deductive. It is an exploration of localised data to discover generalised patterns. This suggests a methodology that explores multiple realities as represented by the participants in the context of interaction. Since the researcher and the participants are both involved in the co-creation of meaning they cannot be separated from the knowledge they are constructing, the context they are operating in and the relationship they generate. As categories of perceptions began to emerge there was opportunity to interpret their significance. Hence, this ontological and epistemological position is located in the Constructivist or Interpretive paradigm of research, similar to Participatory Action Research but in contrast to the Positivist and Critical Theorist paradigms.

Positivist research presupposes reality and sets out to test it by formulating a hypothesis, constructing methods designed to distance the researcher from the data in an attempt to examine subjects objectively and then deductively arriving at conclusions based on valid evidence. Its methodology espouses a strong preoccupation with establishing the statistical validity of data on the basis of sufficient numeric sampling, careful application of measurement techniques, and controls designed to isolate variables. These preoccupations represent a “belief in the scientific method and studies that can be replicated” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 104). A Positivist approach was rejected for this study because

I do not believe in the extraction of the researcher from the research process, especially in social interaction. The researcher is an integral part of the co-creation of meaning. Furthermore, meanings and constructions can be somewhat imprecise so it is important to allow them to emerge in an atmosphere of open inquiry involving inductive reasoning.

Critical Theorists apply a predetermined theory or ideological framework to their research with a view to exposing unjust societal structures for the purpose of transforming them and the people caught within them. This approach is sometimes called Orientational Qualitative Inquiry because the orientation of the researcher determines the focus of the inquiry. While I believe that any research is to some extent influenced by the researcher, I rejected a Critical Theorist approach because I wanted to engage participants with an open-minded, un-predetermined approach as much as possible. This does not preclude further studies using an orientation such as social justice or equity however. Neither does it deny the significant interest in Public Relations research on the construction of discourse to generate positions of power (Heath, Motion, & Leitch, 2009), for example.

In general, Public Relations research has been categorised into three types: research *on*, *for* and *in* Public Relations (Grunig, 2008). Research *on* Public Relations seeks to define the practice and its processes. Research *for* Public Relations is designed to assist the development of the practice. Research *in* Public Relations is conducted on behalf of the industry to benefit the contractor. “When academic scholars conduct research *on* the profession, they often develop ideas *for* the profession that practitioners can use *in* the profession” (Grunig, 2008, p. 90). Most studies on perceptions of Public Relations fall into the category of research *on* Public Relations. The Excellence study represented research “*on* the profession in order to identify best practices and to improve the profession” (Grunig, 2008). The study on Parameters of Public Relations in Europe (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi, & Flodin, 2004), the Callison and Zillman (2002), Sallot (2002) and Callison (2004) studies are all examples of research *on* Public Relations since they address how Public Relations is perceived by various stakeholders.

This thesis on perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand falls primarily into the category of research *on* Public Relations since it examines how various stakeholders define Public Relations, and secondarily into the category of research *for* Public Relations since it seeks to inform Public Relations practice and educational practice in New Zealand. The US studies "Port of Entry" (CPRE, 1999) and the "Professional Bond" (Turk, 2006) both recognise that educational preparation of Public Relations practitioners is key to their performance. It is recognised that the matching of education with practice, particularly cultural practice, needs attention (Sriramesh, 2003; Chia, 2009)

3.1 Theoretical approach

This study utilises the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism generated by Mead and articulated by Blumer (1969) to explore the generation of perceptions. Symbolic Interactionism provides a useful theoretical framework particularly for exploring interpersonal interaction. Symbolic Interactionism was conceived in the period 1890–1910 by Mead and later articulated by Blumer (1969). The naming of the tradition is credited to Blumer in 1937 (Shalin, 2000). It traces its roots to the Pragmatist School and was initially applied in sociological and psycho-sociological studies with the goal of offering practical insights into social work issues and practice by the likes of Dewey, Mead and Addams, who were contemporaries at the University of Chicago (Forte, 2007). This methodology has been, and still is, used widely because of its advantages in producing insights into the construction of perceptions in the context of human relationships (Denzin, 2004, 2009).

Contemporary Symbolic Interactionists emphasise the reflexive, situated nature of communication (Denzin, 2009). They examine how language produces meanings within interactional contexts. This reflexive or narrative concern is shared by a number of research fields "from phenomenology, to hermeneutics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminism, narratology, cultural, discursive and dialogical psychology, interpretive sociology and cultural studies" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 85). In a sense this study is phenomenological in that it is interested in perception formation. However, while this study is interested in individual constructions (perceptions), its main focus is on the interplay of these

perceptions rather than on their clinical psychological generation as might be studies in research based on psychoanalytical phenomenology, “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view” (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>). This study also adopts a wider view of perception formation involving macro-social forces operating on, and constructed by, the individual (Bourdieu, 1991). It draws on hermeneutics in so far it is interested in texts and contexts but hermeneutics, semiotics and narratology are more appropriately applied to literary analysis. Elements of semiotics have been useful in the approach to this study since symbols, signs and symbolic terminology are significant for communicating perceptions and status and the Symbolic Interactionist is very interested in the meanings attached to them. An ethnographic approach became more important as the study progressed. As I ventured into the examination of cultural expressions of Public Relations I began to accept the ethnographic proposition that cultures should be enabled to speak for themselves and that the authentication of cultural expressions of Public Relations practice lies within cultures rather than external to them.

The location of Symbolic Interactionism in the Pragmatist School was suited to my goal of seeking outcomes that could inform my teaching and the practice of Public Relations in New Zealand. It has a fundamentally dialogic approach which lent itself to the examination of the formulation of perceptions in the context on interaction. It accepts the closeness of researcher to participants. It supports the research practice of selecting key informants to provide insights into the field under investigation and lends itself to the use of qualitative data-gathering in the form of interviews and direct observation. It also anticipates pluralistic voices to emerge from the discovery process and encourages the gradual emergence of patterns of coalesced or divergent constructs.

Symbolic Interactionism provides the opportunity to describe and analyse participant definitions, descriptions and arguments within an open interpretative framework. It does not privilege particular cultural, gender or political persuasions but it expects these to be present. It provides an approach where nuances in linguistic construction can be examined in the interpersonal context of participation in this research project and in the light of macro-social

influences on meaning construction. The concern of this study is not so much directed at the intricacies of linguistic construction or the psychoanalysis of participants as the overarching frames they articulate and the reasons for advocating them.

The term *symbolic* refers to the objects, actions and beliefs which represent the underlying foundations of discourses (Forte, 2007). Objects involved in the interview process, such as room decor and personal dress, are symbolic of how a person or organisation wishes to be seen. Actions such as gestures, seating proximity and verbalisations act as symbols of perceived status and frames for conceptualisations, and they reflect the value placed on the social interaction involved in the research process. Beliefs are both articulated and implicit. Articulated beliefs are generated in the context of social interaction – a combination of what the person actually believes and what they agree to in the interview discussion. Thus, they are influenced by the interviewer to some degree. Implicit beliefs are discovered when we take the time to examine metaphors, repetitions, reflections or corrections. Symbolic Interactionism offers a framework for examining opinions articulated by participants in a study such as this. It also offers a framework for examining the drivers behind the construction of these opinions.

Symbolic Interactionism utilises the concept of *naming*. How we name others matters to them and to us. “Words have default assumptions built into them. We assign names and symbols, ascribe meaning to them and develop a discourse around them” (Mead, in Griffin, 1997, p. 85). Naming frames the “self” and the “other” in communication. Naming can also contribute to the cultivation of symbolic capital and be operationalised as symbolic manipulation (c.f. Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence). The names used to describe the self, Public Relations and other actors have a direct impact on status, roles and relationships in industry, media, education and Public Relations. “Symbolic interactionism offers insights into the creation of symbolic messages and their impact on the one who speaks and the one who hears” (Griffin, 1997, p. 92). This anticipates an examination of the language, terms and phrases used by individuals and an analysis of the meanings attached to them in the context of discourse creation, particularly at the interpersonal level.

The act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world ... the more widely it is recognized, the more authorized. A hierarchy of credibility determines which labels stick. Labeling occurs in a particular historical and situational context. [We] must examine the part played by words in the construction of social reality and the struggle over classification... There is no social agent who does not aspire, as far as his circumstances permit, to have the power to name and create the world through naming: gossip, slander, lies, insults, commendations, criticisms, arguments and praises. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 105)

The word *interaction* refers to the process by which people generate meaning through relational interaction and personal reflection (reflexivity). The concept of *human agency*, the ability of individuals to construct meaning in an autonomous way, is central to Symbolic Interactionism. But, like Bourdieu, Interactionists do not believe that meaning is constructed purely in the reflexive processing of human thought. They argue that experience, social structures, interactional skills and subjectivity are dialogical processes. "Every individual is a practical social agent, but human agents are constrained by structural rules, by material resources, and by the structural processes connected to class, gender, race, ethnicity, nation and community" (Denzin, 2004, p. 82). Symbolic Interactionism encourages the examination of names, symbols and embedded metaphors in the explanations provided by participants. It encourages the exploration of recurring images and the beliefs they reflect in the context of the interaction.

Symbolic Interactionism is based on three key premises (Blumer, 1969): that human beings act toward things on the basis of their perceived meanings; that the meaning of things is reflected in the language (symbols and names) we use in social interaction; and that meanings emerge through interaction between people.

(1) That human beings act toward things on the basis of their perceived meanings

Symbolic Interactionism holds that people create shared meanings (narratives) through their interactions, and those meanings become their reality (Patton, 1990). Symbolic Interactionists study how narratives represent experience. They report and analyse the “stories people tell about what they have figured out about their experiences in social life” (Lemert, 1997, p.14). It was not Mead’s purpose to develop a standardised and scientific vocabulary for the concepts he worked with. “Concepts such as self, identity, and social reconstruction [in Mead’s work] lay somewhat undeveloped” (Forte, 2007, p. 406). This is where Bourdieu is very useful as we will see later in this chapter. But Mead was anxious to emphasise the place of the individual (agent) in creating structures through narrative. In his view, individual agents contribute to the construction of reality through their definitions (naming) of things, through the perceptions they share, repeat, modify and challenge in their interaction with one another. This does not negate the influence of social, economic and political structures but Mead rejected the notion that structures alone shape and create subjective realities.

Symbolic Interactionism holds the view that, once formed, perceived meanings form the basis for action. Consequently, the views held by a CEO are crucial to the role definition of a Public Relations practitioner. Media views of Public Relations (PR) are projections of deeply held beliefs about the self and Public Relations (the other). The exploration of perceptions is at the heart of this study. It focuses on describing and analysing the perceptions of Public Relations offered by participants in the belief that these perceptions form the basis of how participants will enact Public Relations practice and act towards Public Relations practitioners. This premise links action with perception.

The first premise also foreshadows the requirement for practical outcomes from the research. Pragmatists like Mead believed passionately that theory and practice should not be separated. They were committed to thinking which leads to action, to science which enhances and informs work. For the early Interactionists, “the best knowledge helps community members solve problems of living together, and facilitates the construction of democratic and caring social

organizations” (Forte, 2007, p. 370). For Mead, truth was defined in terms of its consequences for action. Thus, Pragmatists and Interactionists believe that theory and research must serve the ends of agents who can and will use the knowledge gained through the research process. Therefore this study has an imperative to produce a set of practical recommendations that can be used for the ongoing dissemination of findings. Because of the specific cultural requirement of reciprocity, it is especially important for this study to offer practical benefit to Māori in response to the contributions made by Māori participants (Tilley & Love, 2005).

Symbolic Interactionism anticipates the ability to influence the views of others. A key procedural principle of Symbolic Interactionism is the belief that behaviours can also be changed by changing perceptions. Mead was optimistic about the possibility of human change. He came from a Wesleyan Puritan family which taught and practiced a social gospel. From this background he derived a belief in the worth of every individual, in social justice, and in improving the quality of human community both locally and internationally. Mead’s academic ideas were strongly influenced by the socialist, Progressive school of thinking. Mead was “something of secularized Christian in his expectations regarding the possibilities of overcoming and broadening one’s interests, and in his belief in mutuality and reciprocity” (Aboulafia, 1999, p.157). The possibility of change arises from the exchangeability of definitions and fields of discourse among human beings. Individuals and groups exist in a vast sea of intermeshed “fields of interaction” in which each identity is formed by a bundle of privileged perspectives sustained by a power arrangement. The Interactionist sees society as made up of individuals and groups ready to make the leap from one symbolic reference frame to another. “Definitions are permeable rather than fixed and universal. We hold to fuzzy realities, more like overlapping fields. Thus, power depends on the ability to universalize the particular and to particularize the universal” (Forte, 2007, p. 373).

(2) That the meaning of things is reflected in the language (symbols and names) we use in social interaction

Humans connect to each other through symbolic interaction. Symbols can be discursive (words, metaphors), expressive (facial or body language), and physical (clothing, body ornaments, room decor). Discursive symbols such as names, opinions and “facts” have default assumptions built into them. “The way people name and interpret the world is worthy of exploration to uncover the embedded sources of discourse creation sometimes only discovered when we stop to examine them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 243). A key question for the Symbolic Interactionist is: “What common sets of symbols and understandings have emerged to give meaning to social interactions?” This study explores commonly held understandings of what Public Relations is and how it is portrayed in business, media and academic settings. The term “spin doctor” is a discursive symbol which can be used disparagingly to refer to unethical Public Relations practitioners who twist the truth to suit their clients’ interests. This term is commonly used by journalists to disparage the practice of Public Relations or its practitioners. It may also be used to mock those who have left journalism to join Public Relations. In this case, the term may have a sarcastic edge which can translate into open hostility towards such practitioners.

Expressive elements of interaction such as non-verbal language may be evident at the time of communication. For example, a study participant may choose to participate in an interview in a physically relaxed manner while gazing out of the window for periods of time, perhaps suggesting disengagement and aloofness or reflection and concentration. Behaviours also convey perceived status. Some participants may choose whether to sit behind their desks or closer to the interviewer. The offering of tea, coffee or water portrays friendship and professional informality. These gestures indicate perceived power relations, relationship-building, scene-setting, and a level of commitment to the researcher and the research process.

Symbolic Interactionism suggests that physical elements such as the venue for interaction, the presence of recording equipment and the demeanour of the participants all impact on meaning generation. For example, an interview may take place in a venue that is familiar to the interviewee such as a personal

office. This might empower the interviewee to speak more freely than in a more public place. The presence of recording equipment may constrain the responsiveness of the interviewee. These symbols are significant whether people are aware of them or not. A Symbolic Interactionist approach requires awareness of both conscious and inadvertent elements of meaning-creation.

This study privileges individual narratives in order to capture the flavour of the individual participants in their contexts. Although anonymity is maintained, direct quotations from the participants are used to support and illustrate interpretations made by the researcher. Observations are then drawn from the narratives to identify patterns. These favourite (sometimes repeated) stories and symbols reveal personal and social identities used to inform the participants as to how they should operate within and across the fields involved in the research. Observations regarding expressive and physical symbols provide insights into the perceptions of Public Relations offered and help to demonstrate how they were formulated in the interaction associated with this study, since “a person is embedded in a social and cultural milieu, and his or her behavior is a response to transactions with others who share common memberships in this milieu. The person cannot be separated from the social matrix” (Forte, 2007, p. 381).

Historically, Interactionists have demonstrated a nuanced appreciation for cultural pluralism and a long history of theoretical concern with diversity (Forte, 2007). Mead was a dedicated internationalist, as was Blumer. Their theorising was respectful of differences, comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, and oriented towards inventiveness and temporary agreements. Mead explicitly called for “international mindedness” on the basis of these values. This study deliberately includes participants who could be expected to hold diverse views about Public Relations. For example, efforts were made to include a representative sample of business leaders. The study included a full range of senior news producers. The inclusion of Māori and Pacific media participants provides perspectives not portrayed in Public Relations research in New Zealand. It extends to business school participants (especially from marketing) and educators from media schools in a deliberate attempt to include sources considered by some as antagonists against Public Relations (Hutton, 2001; Shaw & White, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

(3) That meanings emerge through interaction between people

Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the importance of meanings that emerge as people define situations through interpersonal interaction. “Meanings are modified through an interpretive process which involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Meanings are subject to modification and adaptation (even in the interview itself) in a process Mead called *minding*, where interpretations are made in the individual’s thought processes by means of inner conversation. Tracking the precise constructions of meaning is problematic and complex. “The interactionist researcher holds that social circumstances are always changing; that reality is interpreted; that humans are capable of self communication and thus unpredictable, not determined; and that social roles are dynamic and creative” (Forte, 2007, p. 373).

Faced with this dynamic scenario, the Symbolic Interactionist researcher seeks to take a snapshot of the interaction by focusing on the discourse itself in the context of the interaction. Data can be triangulated by using content analysis and cross checking with participants to clarify meaning but, ultimately, explanation of narratives is not precise. Symbolic Interactionism is based on the assumption that the study of meanings is sometimes imprecise for the very reason that narratives are often imprecise and incoherent. In this sense imprecision is a mark of authenticity.

The essence of symbolic interactionism, like the essence of art, is its representative quality (Skidmore, 1975). People, like artists, attempt to emphasize or clarify meanings about a self, a relationship, a situation, and an environment that may be obscure or not fully appreciated. Artists use paints, film, sound, language, or other mediums: but people primarily use language. A successful interaction, like interpretation of a work of art, depends on an accurate understanding of the other’s creative acts and intentions. (Forte, 2007, p. 375)

Symbolic Interactionists frequently employ metaphors to describe discursive systems because they are illustrative but allow for adjustment and personal interpretation. Ideally these metaphors are drawn from the participants themselves but this is not obligatory. In the end, Symbolic Interactionists themselves construct interpretations about the world which reflect the point of

view of the author. They do not seek to establish some form of objective truth. The interpretations are an insight, an interpretation. After all, “all accounts however carefully tested and supported are, in the end, authored” (Hall, 1997, p.14). This does not however preclude the testing of narratives to avoid a totally subjective interpretation. Thus the researcher draws subjective conclusions (an interpretation) from the imprecision and offers them for ongoing discussion and interpretation.

While it is acknowledged that factors involved in the interactive process are important, this study pays primary attention to analysis of the answers offered by the participants and less attention to the relational and phenomenological processes involved in the research interaction. The focus of the study is on the meanings and their underpinnings offered in the public domain rather than the psychological processes involved in their formulation. Although Symbolic Interactionism offers a framework for examination of the psychological and relational forces shaping perceptions, it is not the intention of this study to explore these dimensions in depth. Rather, this study explores the constructs and representations of Public Relations offered by participants (structuring) and analyses these constructs against the backdrop of macro-societal forces (structuration). The focus is on definitions, role descriptions and arguments for legitimacy offered in the public domain.

A key concern for Symbolic Interactionist research is where to locate the researcher. Since meaning is created in the context of social interaction, the researcher is intrinsically involved in the production of meaning in the interview process. The researcher is both analyst and actor. Hence, the researcher’s approach is necessarily reflexive since there is no point outside from which one can gain a neutral, disinterested perspective. Consequently, the researcher needs to identify his/her own position. Reflexivity is a necessary condition of critical social theory (Calhoun, LiPuna, & Postone, 1993).

We shall consider the matter of reflexivity further in the discussion of Bourdieu’s theoretical approach. But in the interests of transparency, I need to declare several personal motivations for this study at this point. Firstly, I hold a position on the PRINZ National Executive in the capacity of research coordinator. In that

capacity I have a personal commitment to offering useful information and advice to Public Relations practitioners in New Zealand and internationally. Secondly, as a Public Relations educator and trainer I am personally and professionally committed to providing the best possible training of practitioners for the workplace. Thirdly, as a researcher I am interested in gaining a clear picture of the definitions of Public Relations that are actually in use (not just those in textbooks on Public Relations) and the meanings attached to these definitions. I have a firm belief that Public Relations is not just for the government and the corporate sector. It has much wider application for not-for-profit organisations, community groups, advocacy groups, individuals and small businesses. I also suspect that the many ethnic communities in New Zealand are disenfranchised by a corporate definition which privileges American (or Western) histories and views of Public Relations at the expense of their own histories. Fourthly, I believe in research which has practical outcomes. So I want to be able to offer useful recommendations to PRINZ regarding best practice for the industry; to provide a backdrop for discussion with Public Relations educators and trainers; to add knowledge to the Public Relations research community; and to be in a position to make recommendations to groups outside the corporate sector on how to use Public Relations to achieve their goals. Finally, I began this project hoping to find insights which could contribute to an authentic New Zealand model of Public Relations.

This now leads us to a discussion of the approach taken to analyse the data. To assist with the analysis I called on concepts from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1991), particularly his concepts of field, structuration, agency, trajectory and different types of capital. These concepts provide a useful framework for analysis of the construction of discourses as each agent seeks to accumulate symbolic capital in an attempt to assert dominant positions in a field.

3.2 Using Bourdieu to enhance the study of perceptions of Public Relations

There has been growing interest in the examination of Public Relations using sociological approaches (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007; Edwards, 2009). They suggest that social cultural theorists such as Habermas (1989), Luhmann (1984), Foucault (1980), Bourdieu (1990) and Goffman (1959) help to address the concern over power differentials among publics by helping us understand how power influences relationships and discourse creation. Sociological approaches offer insights into the impact organisations and individuals have on each other as they interact. They encourage deconstruction of communication strategies to reveal the forces at work behind the façades of truth and sense-making that various discourses attempt to create. The insights provided by thinkers like Bourdieu provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of discursive struggles than Systems Theory or Rhetorical perspectives which focus more on operational descriptions of how Public Relations works and how arguments are constructed without examining their impact as a matter of priority. They also offer a rationale to support the pragmatic motivation towards empowering people to transform structures and organisations.

Examples of the use of sociological approaches to investigate Public Relations include Burkart's (2004) use of Habermas to explore Consensus Orientated Public Relations that has proved "very useful for understanding the macro societal context" (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007, p. 295). Another example is Holmström's (2005) application of Luhmann's (1984) work on reflexivity and reflection that has yielded useful insights on such phenomena as organisational narcissism, where organisations take their own world view for a given. Bourdieu is "especially useful in describing communication as conflict based rather than consensus based" (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007, p. 297). Scheufele (2003) has used Goffman's (1959) concept of framing to provide insights on impression management. Bentele and Wehmeier (2007) also suggest that Weber's work on legitimacy and legitimation can help to explain how "any organization must gain support for a particular myth about itself and cultivate the belief in its own right to exist" (p. 297) and that Giddens' (1979) structuration theory can help us understand how Public Relations acts to replicate social structures as well as to

change and transform them. Their conclusion is that a move towards social and cultural theoretical frameworks invites a shift in Public Relations research “from a functional and positivist perspective to a qualitative and ethnomethodologist one, which is a good thing” (p. 298). Munshi and Kurian (2005) have added to this discussion by pointing out that Public Relations literature generally fails to address diversity of publics and the unequal distribution of power among them.

To date, Pierre Bourdieu has rarely influenced Public Relations theory-building (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007) but there is growing interest in the use of Bourdieu to inform Public Relations research (Edwards, 2006, 2009; Ihlen, 2007).

Bourdieu has been used in Pieczka’s (2002) work on “the role knowledge plays in the constitution of the profession and particularly in the links between knowledge and professional practice” (p. 301). Harris (2005) also used Bourdieu to discuss the ethics of gambling organisations sponsoring community events in order to appear socially responsible. Edwards (2006) used Bourdieu to “provide a new starting point for addressing public concerns about the merits of public relations and the power that public relations has in democratic societies [since] Bourdieu gives us a framework to both analyze and interpret the profession in its social context” (p. 229). Edwards (2009a) also used Bourdieu to illustrate how practice constitutes a struggle for power – especially symbolic power, where actors either dominate or are dominated. This study applied understandings of capital and symbolic power to establish a link between Public Relations and its effects on society. In a study on how good journalism is defined, Kunelius (2006) used Bourdieu to demonstrate how journalism’s claims to serve the public are often an illusion, “journalism becoming just another consumer product among others” (p. 683). Bourdieu’s work is particularly helpful in the investigation of power relations and socially constructed meaning. He stands alongside Foucault, Habermas, and others whose works find fruitful application in providing sociological insights in the field. Foucault and Habermas have provided the theoretical frameworks applied by Critical Theorists such as Leitch & Davenport (2002); Motion (2005); Weaver, Motion, & Roper (2006); and L’Etang & Pieczka (2006). Bourdieu can be positioned as more of an interpretive rather than a Critical Theorist.

Bourdieu and Mead were “without doubt intellectual soul mates” (Aboulafia, 1999, p. 153). They shared a commitment to discovering knowledge that has practical application, and, although espousing divergent views of human nature, an optimistic view of the human ability to change. Bourdieu strongly subscribed to the Pascalian view that human beings were overwhelmingly consumed by self interest (Bourdieu, 2000). Mead believed in the basic goodness of human nature and was optimistic about the human desire to live in a more perfect human society (Blumer, 1969). Mead’s optimism is balanced by Bourdieu’s insights into the realities of power that work to limit people’s freedom to assume new perspectives. But the similarities do not stop there.

[They shared] a social conception of mind and agency; a penchant for non-positivistic approaches to the empirical sciences; a dedication to the interdisciplinary; views that link certain kinds of problem solving behavior to reflection; a commitment to giving the bodily and dispositional their due; a concern with lived, non-scientized time; recurrent appeals to ‘open’ systems; improvisation, and the role of conflict in change; a pluralistic vision; a preference for analyzing language in terms of use; an emphasis on reasonableness as opposed to a transcendental notion of reason ... (Aboulafia, 1999, p.154)

Bourdieu (1990, 1991, 1992, 2000) uses concepts such as field, habitus, agency, trajectory, capital, structuration and symbolic violence to illustrate the dynamic, relational nature of meaning-construction. He employs the metaphors of life as a drama where people act out certain roles within a sector (field) or across sectors and the metaphor of players in a sports game using their skills and knowledge of the rules of the game to achieve success for themselves or for their team. His concept of “field” can be described as “institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitute an objective hierarchy and produce and authorize certain discourses and activities” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. x). Actors within a field position themselves in relation to others. The existence of various positions is generated by the position-taking of actors as they encounter one another. Public relations, marketing, media, education, business and academia can all be conceptualised as fields. The concept of field provides a frame for relational analysis and position-taking. It represents a multidimensional space of positions negotiated by agents. As such, “each field is a site of struggles over power to

define the field, between determinate agents; its own accumulation of history; its own logic; its own forms of capital” (Calhoun, et al. 1993, p. 6).

Actors operate from a personal framework (habitus) that uses both scripted (structured) and unscripted responses to interact with other members of the cast. “Habitus is the way individuals formulate themselves and engage in social practice” (Webb et al., 2002, p. xiv). Habitus can be understood as

... on the one hand, the historical and cultural production of individual practices – since contexts, laws, rules and ideologies all speak through individuals, who are never entirely aware that this is happening – and on the other hand, the individual production of practices – since the individual always acts from self-interest. (Webb et al., 2002, p.15)

The habitus is formed through a process of interaction with other actors within the field and actors outside the field who have the power to influence its operation. The habitus is regarded as a structuring mechanism that generates strategies for actors. In Bourdieu’s (1990) own words:

It is a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

The habitus entails a combination of internalised messages and reconstructed meanings negotiated in the dialogic process. These produce discourses designed to defend, maintain or claim power in an ongoing struggle for dominance (capital). Capital can take symbolic, social, cultural or economic forms of power and represents the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others (Calhoun et al., 1993).

Agency is a crucial concept in Bourdieu’s thinking because it emphasises the role of personal strategising as each actor seeks to maximise personal advantage in particular fields. This strategising is designed to “structure” the environment to satisfy the individual’s needs and aspirations. Agency does not represent a fixed disposition. It contributes to a negotiated trajectory generated

in the habitus. “Agents take advantage of the possibilities offered by a field to express and satisfy their drives and their desires” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 165). Bourdieu advocates a relational mode of thinking where social constructs such as professions, roles, definitions and legitimacy can be best understood as positions negotiated in the context of relationships and wider societal influences. Relationships exist within fields, “where members of a particular group practice according to unconscious rules and norms” (Edwards, 2006, p. 229). The relational setting for the generation of perceptions and discourses is a crucial component of Bourdieu’s model.

A field has a dialectical relationship with habitus and is understood as a social space or network of relationships between positions occupied by actors. The different positions are structured and anchored in forms of unequally shared power and capital. Conflict and competition characterize the relationships between the actors as they try to accumulate, conserve, or convert different types of capital.

(Ihlen, 2007, p. 270)

The processes of negotiation, structuring and formulating perceptions constitute a “logic of practice” which acts to legitimise ways of thinking and operating (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu calls the unthinking commitment to the logic, values and capital of a field “illusio”. Illusio forms the internal conviction among the actors that the drama is worth performing. “Doxa”, the espoused discourse used by leaders in the field, represents the articulation of illusio. Those who have access to the rules of this logic are in a position to accumulate capital of various kinds: economic (money, property), cultural (knowledge, skills, educational qualifications) and social (connections, membership of a group). These can be actual capital or symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1985). “In the business field economic capital is prized, whereas in the academic field, scholarly significance is more highly valued” (Ihlen, 2007, p. 270). Those who are skilled at negotiating fields possess cultural literacy which can be described as

... a self-reflexive understanding of the person’s own position and resources within the field(s) or institution(s) in which they are operating; an awareness of the rules, regulations, values and cultural capital which characterize the field of activity; and requires the ability to manoeuvre and negotiate conditions of the moment.

(Schirato & Yell, 2000, p. 57)

Power can be operationalised to acquire symbolic capital and to exclude others in a process called symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991, 2000). Symbolic violence uses terminology, frameworks and embedded assumptions to privilege one group of actors over others. Decisions made by senior management can exemplify two forms of violence. Dismissal is a form of violence because the dismissed have lost their immediate source of economic capital. Justification for the dismissal is a form of symbolic violence. Language is one of the main tools used by journalists, politicians and educators to exercise symbolic violence.

Edwards (2006) uses Bourdieu to describe “the strategies used by in-house practitioners to accommodate the continual flux of power dynamics within their organizations in order to justify their job effectively” (Edwards, 2006, p. 230). She also illustrates how social structures shape the dominant relations that constrain organisational activities. For example, Edwards examines the struggle that Public Relations engages in at a macro-societal level with marketers, journalists, analysts and critics to maintain its position in the field of communication. She illustrates how “symbolic power is generated by dominant groups misrepresenting their interests to the public, thereby normalizing social structures and habitus that support their position” (Edwards, 2006, p. 230).

Kunelius’ (2006) examination of the journalistic field also reflects broader struggles in the field of power, “the field where discourses of dominance and legitimation are played out” (p. 684). He illustrates how Bourdieu’s understanding of power relations can inform arguments for legitimation in the discursive struggle to establish and maintain definitions in the public domain.

Participants in this study can be described as being in the *field* of Public Relations since Public Relations scholars, textbook writers, senior business managers, media and tertiary educators all engage with Public Relations at some level. These different people and groups of people can be seen as players in the Public Relations game. As players they have some degree of free choice (*agency*) about their moves. But they are also influenced by their *habitus*, the way they formulate themselves and others and the rules they use to engage in social practice. The combination of their *habitus* and individual *agency* coalesces into a personal trajectory.

Perceptions of Public Relations among the groups involved in this study will represent different trajectories active in a common field of practice. Roles, definitions and arguments for legitimacy used by each group in this study can be seen as constructions created from individual trajectories within their social environments to achieve dominance in the field. Since the espoused discourse (*doxa*) involved in the game is usually generated by leaders in a given field (Bourdieu, 1991), it is important to focus on the articulations of senior media, managers and academics representing each of the subject areas related to Public Relations. This articulation will be empowered by perceived social and economic capital since “field has a dialectical relationship with habitus forming a network of relationships between positions occupied by actors” (Ihlen, 2007, p. 270). It will also be influenced by the constructions of others in the more general field of New Zealand society (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1
Positioning of some key influencers of Public Relations in New Zealand

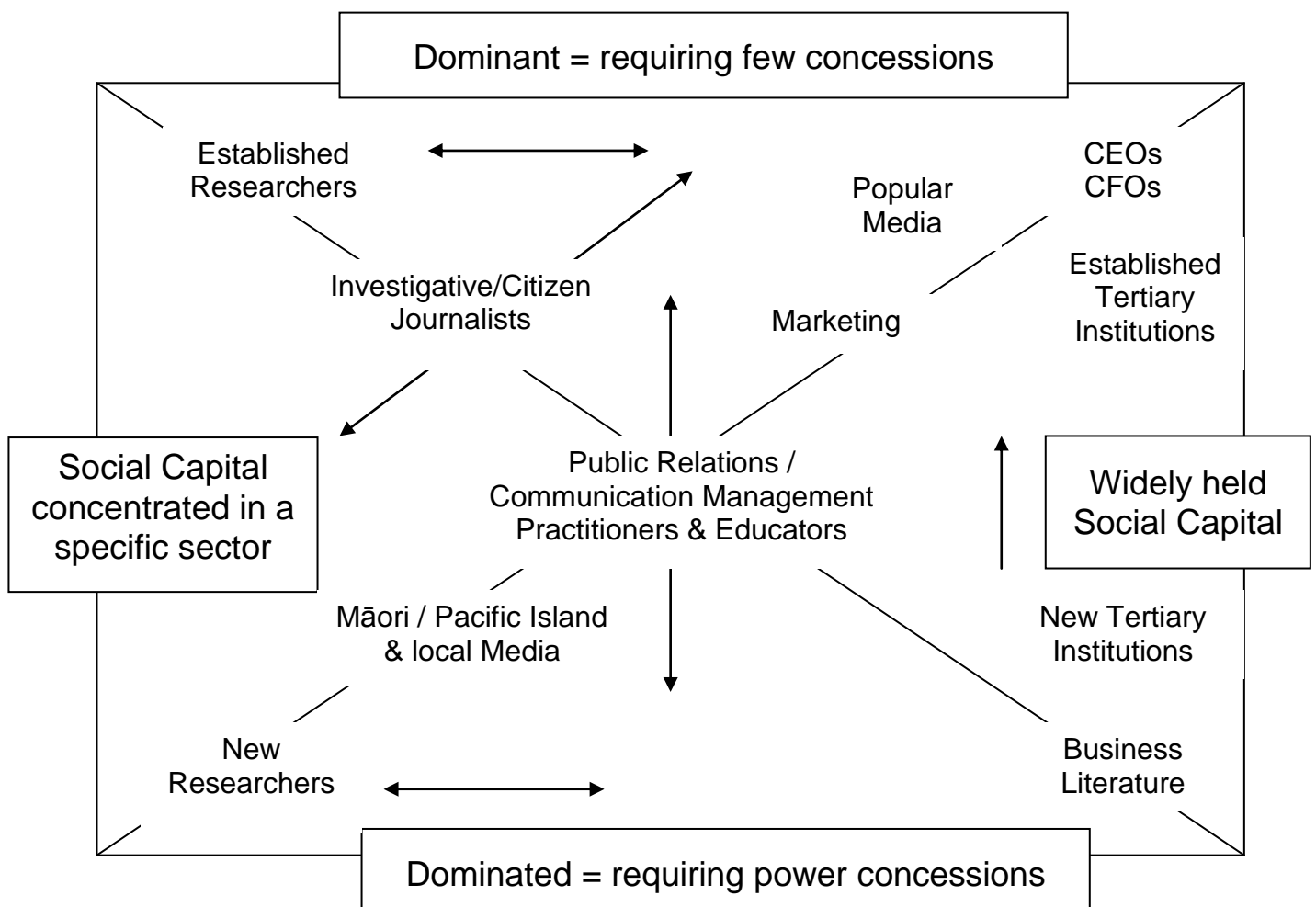


Figure 3.1 illustrates the dynamic positioning of some of the key influencers of Public Relations in the New Zealand socio-economic and socio-cultural field. Each position is dynamic and negotiated. A representation of these positions is more realistically four-dimensional since it is multi-dimensional and represents a state in time that is either a temporary or more long-term arrangement. However, as a starting point, we can use Bourdieu's concept of social capital to position agents with more widely-held social capital on one extreme of a continuum (left to right) and those with more specialised social capital on the other. Senior business leaders (especially CEOs and CFOs), popular media, business literature and tertiary institutions can be positioned as holding relatively widely based social capital. Marketing is located closer to the business managers. Public Relations holds a negotiated position. Investigative journalists experience fluctuations in their social capital. While they can be very influential their ability to capture an audience has been compromised by the erosion of exclusivity because of new (online) media, reductions in resourcing and the pressure of economic forces to produce material suited to popular readership. Citizen journalists, bloggers and tweeters using social media also contest for audience influence (followers and re-tweeters who pass on their messages to others in the field). Researchers and smaller media have specialised social capital. Researchers may increase their social capital by producing outputs that are valued by agents beyond the research community.

The Dominant–Dominated (vertical) continuum is used differently from Bourdieu's conceptualisation of dominance. Bourdieu suggests that agents requiring high levels of endorsement (what he calls consecration and marketability) to sustain their position are actually more dominated than those who enjoy relative freedom. He calls this the reversed economic world because the less market-bound agents are not so dependent on economic profit for their power (Bourdieu, 1983). In the above representation dominance is used to depict relative power in the business, media and educational fields in New Zealand society. In this sense CEOs, CFOs, senior researchers and certain elements of the media hold power over others by endorsing or sanctioning them. Public Relations and Communication Management practitioners and educators have to negotiate their positions. Their central position on this diagram illustrates one of the compelling reasons for this research. Their

position is negotiated and depends on several competing variables. Ethnic, local and business media are more dependent on resources and endorsement from others for their power. New researchers are required to use prescribed research protocols, establish their work within the framework of existing research and achieve specific standards to achieve status in the research community. Similarly, educational institutions have to earn their status in the context of institutions competing for resources and esteem in local and international arenas.

So, this study utilises a Symbolic Interactionist theoretical framework for data gathering and analysis. It includes a hermeneutical recognition of the important of context and text. As a reflexive researcher it includes elements of heuristic inquiry, especially a stakeholder interest in the field of Public Relations. As the study progressed into an examination of cultural protocols its methodology extended to ethnographic concerns. All of these methodological approaches are located in the domains of Qualitative Inquiry. They share the ontological position that reality is constructed in a relational context where meaning is co-created. This involves the researcher in close contact with the participants through interviews and discussion. Its epistemological position is that research data should be analysed in an inductive process. It then utilises a Bourdieuan framework for further analysis and interpretation to explore the accumulation of symbolic capital by each participant. The task is to deconstruct and analyse these positions and the space of position-taking (*prises de position*) in which they are expressed. This study constitutes a form of analysis in situ to establish each position relative to the others as participants struggle to impose the legitimacy of their claims. Rather than impose an operational definition of Public Relations this study examines the various positions taken, the underpinning arguments used to support each position and the contextual and relational elements that contribute to their construction.

Chapter 4

Research Design

Symbolic Interactionist methodology involves the researcher in close contact with participants. This study borrows from the heuristic inquiry tradition which recognises that meaning is constructed collaboratively and that the interaction process is inevitably influenced by the presence of the researcher and the dynamics associated with interaction. This methodological approach supports the use of semi-structured interviewing as a primary method of gathering data interview context. Surveys were also used as a way of introducing the subjects that would be part of the interview process. Surveys were indicative only. The research was conducted in four phases: (1) gathering senior business, media editor and tertiary educator perceptions through interviews and surveys; (2) processing the data to discover patterns embedded in each context; (3) cross referencing these patterns with content analysis of literature; and finally (4) bringing the findings together for comparison and reflection.

Since I am an engaged Public Relations practitioner and educator, I was concerned to ensure that the data collection phase was transparent. As a reflexive researcher I considered it necessary to disclose to participants my connection with PRINZ. In my role as a National Executive member I had some added credibility with participants who know what PRINZ stands for and some antagonism from those who do not think PRINZ is an effective professional association. In the interests of transparency, I declared my connection with PRINZ when introducing myself and whenever the participants made reference to PRINZ. I also took care to minimise personal bias by following Webb, Schirato and Danaher's (2002) five-point approach to studies of this nature.

The first of these five points is for the researcher to make explicit the project's intentions and procedural principles so that the reader can make sense of what is happening and why. The preceding chapter has provided the theoretical framework, and its setting in the literature. Although the detailed analytical approach was not disclosed to participants, the intentions and procedural principles were made explicit. This chapter discusses the procedures followed and the reasons for them.

Secondly, the researcher should have an awareness of “the rules, regulations, values and cultural capital which characterise the field of activity” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 57). This requires knowledge of participants’ social contexts and cultural literacy (Schirato & Yell, 2000). This involves subjective assessment of the contexts and structures which shape and are shaped by the participants and of the participants’ ability to be self reflective with regard to their own positions and resources within the fields in which they are operating. This awareness is integrated into the analysis as it unfolds.

Thirdly, the researcher needs to take into account the physical context of the research – body language, irony, proximity, room decor, and so on. The interviews were not video recorded but observations of behaviours, tones, seating, venue choice and room decor were noted and included in the analysis.

Fourthly, Webb et al. (2002) suggest that the researcher needs to “objectify his/her own social position and try to “forget it”; to be free as far as possible from pre-conceived notions and values” (p. 57). This element is problematic for a study of this nature. It is questionable whether a researcher can forget his/her position (Bourdieu, 2000). Both Mead and Bourdieu acknowledged and, to some extent, celebrated the involvement of the researcher in the research process – from design, through to data gathering, analysis and presentation of findings. Rather than seeking to extract the researcher through objective reporting, Bourdieu (1990) advocated the acknowledgment of the researcher’s subjective involvement. It was not authentic for me to pretend to be an objective inquirer since I have a background in Public Relations practice, am a current member of PRINZ, am acquainted with some of the participants, teach Public Relations and have been exposed to ideas and perspectives on the subjects under investigation through engaging with many different sources on these subjects. It was possible, however, to adopt the role of the open inquirer and to treat the participants as interested and experienced actors (Kunelius, 2006).

Researcher influence in the interview was taken into consideration (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As the researcher, I influenced such things as the selection of topics, the intellectual approach and the degree of disclosure in the interview

process. To facilitate disclosure I had to demonstrate knowledge in the business field and competence in interview technique, for example. This was achieved by a small amount of conversation about current issues affecting business currently. I used prior knowledge or material provided on the participant's company website or at the reception desk to inform these comments. Sometimes, I asked a question about what I had seen or read which built the impression of my genuine interest in the company. I also dressed to match the level of formality expected in the interview situation, ran to time and kept a sense of pace and purpose in the interview. One CEO commented at the end of our interview, "You have not spent your whole life in academia have you."

It was a reasonable and important expectation to suspend categorisation or judgment in order to listen to the contributions of each participant. Symbolic Interactionist research is aimed at discovery rather than confirmation of a predetermined theoretical framework. This research was designed to allow definitions and perceptions to emerge from the participants rather than be shaped by the researcher. Symbolic Interactionist methodology lends itself to qualitative data collection since it seeks to explore the nuances of meaning creation in their relational context. It allows for the generation of interpretations as they emerge from data collection and analysis. It also encourages the explicit examination of the researcher's role in the research process. This placed a requirement on me to maintain openness in the inquiry to enable the exploration of a range of sometimes contradictory perceptions of Public Relations and to avoid imposing preconceived categorisations. In his discussion of qualitative interviewing, Babbie (2004) suggests that:

[A] qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent. Ideally the respondent does most of the talking. (p. 300)

The fifth requirement is that the researcher needs "to have the ability to manoeuvre and negotiate conditions and contexts 'of the moment' " (Webb et al., 2002, p. 57). Heuristic inquiry encourages the subjective involvement of the researcher in the collaborative construction of meaning through a process of establishing connectedness, developing meaning through interaction and

moving towards synthesis (Reinard, 1994). I became an agent, asking questions, taking notes to establish the interview context, responding to comments, seeking clarification, enjoying humour, to deliberately engage in interactional behaviours as an equal participant in a relaxed atmosphere. As Fontana and Frey (2005) have noted, “an increasing number of social scientists have realized they need to interact as persons with the interviewees and acknowledge they are doing so” (p. 696).

The Symbolic Interactionist researcher should be as much a part of the participant group as possible. “Interactionist researchers try to gain acceptance as group members and then immerse themselves in and empathize with the participants in a community” (Forte, 2007, p. 383). Semi-structured interviews are an excellent way to maximise personal interaction. Interviews were the primary and sometimes sole source of data in this study since some participants did not return the preliminary surveys that were sent out to them. The interviews were not regarded as neutral tools for data gathering (Reinard, 1994). Each interview involved interaction and rapport-building between the researcher and the participant(s). Attempts were made to minimise status differences by having a friendly chat to break the ice, the use of follow-up questions, and checking the accuracy of what I thought the participant was saying. This was to try and avoid the situation where the researcher engages in a one-way pseudo-conversation (Oakley, 1981) where “the interviewer feigns ignorance or deflects questions and does not demonstrate authenticity” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 658). Reciprocity and genuineness were especially important contributors to the conversations with Māori and Pacific Island participants because they expected to relate in a warm relational environment created by making connections with other Māori and people of Pacific Island descent, references to elements of culture, and occasional use of terminology drawn from their own language.

4.1 Choosing the participants

For this thesis, three major sample groups were chosen on the basis of their ability to influence employment, status, and opinion formation. Senior managers were chosen because they are members of the dominant coalitions of their businesses. In their leadership positions, they determine status and roles through the allocate resources, by making decisions about the operational structure of their operations and by their relational treatment of colleagues. They also influence opinion through media statements. Senior news producers are key opinion shapers. They decide on which stories will be told, how these stories are shaped and amplified and how subjects are represented through their various media channels. Audiences consume media messages and replicate these stories, frames and impressions in everyday conversation and through social media communication. Senior tertiary educators are in an influential position where they decide on subject material, shape content to suit their own predispositions and provide critical commentary on the views of their own and other fields. Graduates carry these impressions with them into employment. Research on perceptions of Public Relations needs to target key end-users, such as senior business managers, news producers and key perception-formers such as tertiary educators. I believe that a strength of this approach is that it accesses data from key shapers of the profession. Furthermore, I believe senior managers are in a position to reflect on their own positions and resources within their fields.

The sample selection meant that this study was not a comprehensive coverage of all influencers and shapers of perceptions of Public Relations. Rather it was a selection of some of the more vocal, visible and accessible ones. There are other samples groups that could have been chosen. The Government is a key influencer of perceptions through its ability to legislate, through public statements, and through employment of graduates. This group was not selected in the interests of limiting the scope of the study and because the public sector recruits from the private sector and from tertiary graduates. Future research into this area could profitably include this sector however. Not for Profit organisations were also considered but not included because although they employ graduates they tend not to possess the same level of influence over

public opinion as the managers of the larger companies mainly because their views are less often represented in the media. Another group that was considered and rejected was the Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) sector. A large proportion of businesses in New Zealand are in this sector but they tend not to have full time communication staff and are not regular employers of Public Relations consultants so they have more limited contact with the practice. The general public was not used as a sample since they did not fit the chosen selection criteria of key influencers or opinion shapers. Social media is an increasingly influential factor in perception formation but was not included because of the difficulty of securing face to face contact with bloggers and tweeters, an essential criterion for sample selection using Symbolic Interactionist methodology.

Research on management perceptions of Public Relations was identified as a priority for Public Relations researchers as early as 1994 (Sallot, 2002). Yet few studies have actually asked management what their perceptions are. Studies on the perceptions of Public Relations have selected samples from undergraduate students (Callison & Zillman, 2002; Sinaga & Callison, 2008), mall shoppers (Sallot, 2002), and telephone respondents (Callison, 2004). The DTI/IPR report (Murphy, 2003) on perceptions of Public Relations in the UK, the van Ruler, Verčič, Butschi, & Flodin (2001, 2004) study on the characteristics of European Public Relations and the Sele (2006) study on the state of New Zealand Public Relations all sampled from Public Relations practitioners and academics.

The selection of senior managers as a sample group for this thesis contributes to filling the research gap identified by Sallot (2002). It positions this study closer to studies such as Murray's and White's (2005) study on reputation management, which sampled directly from CEOs, and McKinney (2007), who used a sample of Vietnamese business managers to measure the value they placed on Public Relations. For this research, senior managers from large businesses were chosen because they are in a position of economic power as employers of graduates and of Public Relations consultants. They are also influential as opinion leaders and influencers at societal and government level so they have a significant role in shaping Public Relations practice. Forty-two companies were chosen from the Deloitte's Top 200 New Zealand companies

list (Deloitte, 2005). The first selection phase involved stratified and cluster sampling (Babbie, 1994). The stratification included two layers to represent the range of business operations in New Zealand. The first layer involved the selection of the top 10 companies as defined by the Deloitte's financial criteria followed by the selection of two from each of the 16 categories used by the *New Zealand Management* magazine (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Selection of businesses from Deloitte's Top 200 categories (New Zealand Management magazine, December 2005)

Key: Number of companies in category / number contacted from category

Oil, Gas, Minerals, Electricity, Water*	IT & Computer Hardware	Communications & Media	Retail, Wholesale & Distribution
10 / 4	4 / 2	6 / 2	10 / 3
Industry & Community Services	Processed Food & Beverages	Transportation	Primary Production
3 / 2	11 / 4	10 / 4	10 / 5
Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals	Manufacturing	Insurance	Diversified Corporates
6 / 2	10 / 2	6 / 2	6 / 2
Banking & Finance	Tourism & Entertainment	Automotive	Construction & Trade
6 / 2	4 / 2	6 / 2	3 / 2

Cluster sampling was applied to the 16 categories in two ways. The first was designed to achieve an even geographic spread. Achieving a proportionate distribution of companies with head offices in Auckland and outside of Auckland was important because Auckland is New Zealand's largest city and there is a "them and us" feeling between Aucklanders and the rest of New Zealand. It is not uncommon in New Zealand for people to describe themselves as living "south of the Bombay Hills", the southern perimeter of the Auckland region. So, deliberate attempts were made to replicate the proportions in the listing for those in the three largest cities and those outside them. Auckland had 62.5 per cent of the listings in the top 200, so 26/42 companies approached for

interviews were from Auckland. Wellington-based companies comprised 15.5 per cent of those listed in the top 200 so 6/42 companies contacted were from Wellington. Four companies in Christchurch were contacted. Companies based outside of the three largest cities comprised 15 per cent of the total, so 6/42 were contacted. Secondly, cluster sampling was applied to achieve a reasonably even spread throughout the range from the distribution in the listing. A disproportionate number came from the top 20 because the top 10 companies were automatically included, but six came from the 21–40 range; and between one and three came from each of the other 20-point ranges in the distribution from 1–200.

The media were chosen as a sample group because of their pivotal role in cultivating reputations and impressions. Media negativity towards Public Relations has been well documented (for example, Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Shaw & White, 2004). This negativity is also prevalent in New Zealand (Tilley & Hollings, 2008). It was one of the goals of this research to see whether the media would be a major source of opinions on Public Relations. The media was therefore a crucial group to include in a study on perceptions of Public Relations.

The media section of the research included all of New Zealand's major news outlets and all key Māori and Pacific Island media (www.nichemedias.co.nz). Although New Zealand has a high number of media outlets and publications per capita, they are owned by a small number of owners. (For a thorough description of media ownership and reach in New Zealand, see Rosenberg, 2007). The sample for this study included representatives from both of New Zealand's two major television companies, one government owned and the other privately owned. The radio sample included both government and privately owned networks and stations. New Zealand's two largest newspapers were included. A range of mainly English-speaking Māori and Pacific Island media representatives was included. Pacific Island newspapers were not included in the sample because they are published in the language of the relevant islands and it was decided that the complication of language translation placed them outside the scope of this study. Other ethnic media outlets were

excluded from the sample for the same reason. Magazines chosen included a range of business magazines and two well-known Māori and Pacific magazines.

Several of these media outlets also have online elements to their news publication. Two editors with specific online responsibilities were included. The sample did not include social media such as Twitter, Facebook or Blogs since the focus was on long-established influencers. Access to some of these sources is sometimes exclusive as noted when a confidential journalists' blog (not included in this study) was shared with me after one of my interviews. This blog contained a discussion that made direct (but confidential) reference to Public Relations practitioners. Nevertheless, the sample chosen provided a thorough coverage of New Zealand urban news media. As Babbie (1994) has noted, "samples need not be representative in all respects; representativeness is limited to those characteristics that are relevant to the substantive interests of the study" (p. 189). As it stands, the media sample represents a range of circulation size, ethnic representation, state and private ownership and type (radio, television, newspapers [some of which are also online] and magazines) with a specific skewing towards business media.

The tertiary educators were chosen because they have the potential to influence graduate perceptions. Seventy-four percent of New Zealand Public Relations practitioners have at least a degree and 39 per cent a post graduate qualification (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2008). Fifty-two percent have a specific Public Relations /Communication qualification. The percentage of graduates with Public Relations/Communication qualifications is gradually increasing while the percentage of Public Relations practitioners coming into the practice from journalism is decreasing. In 1998, 53 per cent of Public Relations practitioners came from either journalism or broadcasting (Peart, 1998). In 2008 the proportion had fallen to 20 per cent (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2008).

Educators are disseminating versions of Public Relations practice that are entering the workforce. Researchers have wondered, "Are academic programs (sic) in part responsible for perpetuating stereotypes and contributing to negative perceptions about public relations?" (Shaw & White, 2004, p. 493). Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield and Cropp (1993) suggested the need to specifically

study journalism educator attitudes to Public Relations. This may also be true for Marketing and Management educators who are influencing successive cohorts of business graduates.

The sample included 100 lecturers and course leaders from an NZCA (New Zealand Communication Association) database supplemented by suggestions from all Polytechnics and Universities offering Public Relations or Communication courses. No suggested names were excluded. I persisted in asking for names from the various institutions till I reached the 100 mark. This provided a sample drawn from seven of New Zealand's eight universities and 14 polytechnics across New Zealand.

The approach taken in this thesis provides a contrast to that taken by previous studies on the perceptions of Public Relations. Firstly, I asked for perceptions directly from the key influencers rather than indirectly through the examination of media portrayals and public perceptions (Callison & Zillman, 2002; Sallot, 2002; Callison, 2004) or through the opinions of Public Relations practitioners and academics (Murphy, 2003; van Ruler et al., 2004; Sele, 2006). This aligns with studies such as Kopenhaver, Martinson and Ryan (1984); Pincus et al. (1993); Allen (2004); and Tilley and Hollings (2008), that asked media directly about their perceptions and Shaw and White (2004), who researched educational perceptions directly from educators.

Sampling directly from opinion leaders in business, media and education also contrasts with the approach taken by Callison and Zillman (2002). Their research utilised an experimental methodology in which undergraduate participants from first-year Communication classes were presented with mock news articles. Callison and Zillman (2002) acknowledged two limitations in this methodology. One was the disinterest towards the scenarios on the part of some students. The second was the selection of first-year students who may not have been in a strong position to self-reflect on their own positions and the resources within their fields: Callison (2004) recognised the methodological shortcoming of relying too heavily on a student subject pool and sought to address some of the limitations of the 2002 study by incorporating a wider sample using telephone interviews.

The open declaration of methodology in my study contrasts with the Delphi Study used by van Ruler et al. (2004), which was “adopted from the Rand Corporation where it was developed by employees to assess future, complex and ambiguous subjects” (p. 37). The methodological framework behind the study is not discussed by van Ruler et al. (2004) beyond the comment that the process involved iterative and anonymous group interviews among a starting group of 31 practitioners and academics carefully chosen for the expected quality of their contributions. The selection criteria for the experts chosen for this study were that they should represent as many European countries as possible; that each country should have one academic and one practitioner; and that respondents should be knowledgeable in public relations in their country. It might have been helpful if the researchers had separated the academic responses from the practitioner responses to see whether there were inherent discrepancies between the two since, as the study reported, “academics have not yet succeeded in getting their ideas on communication put into practice” (p. 45).

The sampling among business leaders contrasts with the methodological approach used in the Murphy (2003) study where a questionnaire was sent to in-house Communication practitioners and Public Relations consultants (812 returned) combined with four three-hour discussions with eight in-house Public Relations practitioners, nine consultants and seven leading Public Relations academics. This study indicated that practitioners felt that public perception of the Public Relations industry was negative; that Public Relations was poorly integrated with other communication functions such as marketing and advertising; that there was a lack of trust between journalists and Public Relations practitioners; and that the media-centric Public Relations culture in the United Kingdom prevented organisations from having their views heard without re-interpretation. Apart from the last finding, Sele’s (2006) study found similar perceptions among Public Relations practitioners in New Zealand.

4.2 Data collection

The primary forms of data collection for this study were surveys and semi-structured interviews supplemented with content analysis of media articles, business literature and textbooks. A total of 86 interviews were conducted between December 2006 and December 2009 with 32 business leaders, 30 senior media editors and journalists, and 24 tertiary educators from a range of academic disciplines. Surveys were sent out to 42 of New Zealand's top 200 companies, 39 media editors, and 100 tertiary educators. Cross-checking of data involved a phone survey of 100 of New Zealand's top 200 companies (Deloitte, 2006), content analysis of 54 articles from news media and business literature and 33 textbooks identified as recommended reading for courses in Marketing (4), Advertising (3), Management (4), Human Resources (1), Media (3), Communications (2) and Public Relations (16).

Surveys and interview questions were constructed through a process of drafting; testing by a reference group and then redrafting before distribution (see Appendices A–F). The reference group consisted of a cross section of representatives from the target groups for the research. It included two representatives from senior business, one from PRINZ, three from the media (one each from mainstream, Māori, and Pacific Island), and two from the tertiary sector (including one Māori). The reference group was also used to test the pitch to be used when contacting participants to set up interviews.

The reference group suggested how to approach members of their sample group, offered names of possible participants and, in some cases, offered themselves as referees. The business representatives suggested a change to the pitch so as to reduce the initial expectation of 90 minutes for survey completion to 30 minutes to make participation more palatable to senior managers. The media representatives suggested offering phone interviews as a more attractive option for media participants. This proved to be a very useful suggestion in terms of increased participation but it also had the disadvantage of stripping away many non-verbal elements from the communication context. The Māori and Pacific Island media representatives offered to make personal introductions where I did not already have established relationships. Given the

relational environment in which Māori and Pacific Island people operate, this was a significant advantage in securing interviews. The tertiary representatives did not suggest any changes to the approach pitch but suggested names and institutions to contact.

4.2.1 Instrument design for the surveys

Core prompts were kept substantially the same for all surveys. The following were identified as core prompts:

The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Public Relations is ...

This was an opening prompt designed to capture first impressions and get the participant thinking about Public Relations from their own starting point.

I get most of my ideas about Public Relations from ...

This was designed to capture the range of sources impacting on participants. Options included: Media; Public Relations practitioners themselves; Board members; other senior management / media representatives / academic colleagues; past experiences; magazines; industry associations; marketing personnel; seminars; family member(s); academic study; other. Participants were invited to select the main ones but could choose more than one item.

The Public Relations person I know the best is ...

This was designed to invite comment on any personal connection to Public Relations practice.

Business: To be a good Public Relations practitioner you need the following qualities ...

Media: The ideal Public Relations practitioner is one who ...

Educators: What is the definition of Public Relations you use with your students?

This was a key question as it directly invited perceptions of Public Relations, one of the key research concerns. It was deliberately placed at this point in the survey in the expectation that participants would be warmed up by this stage and ready to articulate a quality response to this key research question.

Demographic information was captured across all surveys. This involved: gender; age; career path; educational background; media preferences (radio; television; Websites; magazines; newspapers; books); and most significantly current influences on views (political affiliation; religious affiliation; governing Board; media; internet family; other senior colleagues; industry information; mentors; books; academic courses; other). In addition, tertiary participants were invited to provide information on their level of experience in the Public Relations industry and how long they had been teaching at tertiary level. These two elements are considered important factors in the delivery of Public Relations education (Turk, 2006).

All surveys ended with an invitation to make any further comments on Public Relations in New Zealand. This was designed to leave the door open for anything not already covered or which might have arisen as a result of our engagement.

The reference group also suggested minor nuances in the survey questions for the purpose of contextualising the data-gathering. The following are the customised prompts and questions:

Senior managers were invited to use a Likert scale to rate the impact of various elements close to the field of Public Relations. The rating ranged from 1: Not Important, to 7: Vital.

In terms of achieving our company's goals I would rate the following ...

Advertising	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marketing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Public Relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Internal communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Government relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Community relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This instrument was designed to invite evaluative comment on status and discussion of whether Public Relations was primarily about publicity or about wider applications in the organisational stakeholder relationship spectrum. The conversation around this question was open and participants could suggest alternative categories. This question was not asked of the media and educator participants since it was considered that they were not all directly involved in decision making which involved these elements.

Prompts were used for the senior managers to test whether they had an accurate estimate of salaries and to invite comment on relative value. The estimates could be measured against the actual figures from the PRINZ PR Trends surveys (2006, 2008). The senior managers could comment on what they considered value for money.

I estimate that PR practitioners are paid between \$x and \$y

The participants were offered the option to distinguish between Public Relations consultants; in-house directors; in-house managers; and practitioners at a starting level. They were also invited to offer their opinion on whether they considered these ranges to be “about right, over-rated, under-rated, highly under-rated or highly over-rated.”

The positioning of Public Relations vis à vis other business operations was tested by asking senior managers “Where is PR placed in your company?” They were offered the options of external consultants, internal Public Relations personnel (and if so, how many), or not having a specific Public Relations person. If the company had internal Public Relations staff they were asked the title of the job they held and the position title of the person to whom they reported. This was designed to access information about status that might not be reflected in the opinions. For example, a senior manager might espouse a high value of Public Relations but the company might actually place their Public Relations staff in a lower level of operation. A follow-up question designed to test this aspect further was asked of the senior business managers where they were asked to identify the position in their company that had primary responsibility for the following:

- a. Reputation management
- b. Crisis management
- c. Issues surveillance
- d. Tracking changes in stakeholders
- e. Quality of public presentations
- f. Sponsorships
- g. Cause-related relationships
- h. External web content
- i. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- j. Media relations
- k. Government relations
- l. Relating to activists
- m. Internal communication
- n. Event management
- o. Measuring communication effectiveness

These categories were reformulated by the reference group to reflect what they saw as the key areas of company communication.

Four questions in the tertiary survey also explored the issue of placement by asking where Marketing and Public Relations were taught and should be taught, and where journalism and Public Relations should be taught.

Two distinctive questions for the media managers were designed to invite comment specifically on the relationship between Public Relations and the media. The first was “According to the 2006 PRINZ Trends survey, 42 per cent of PR practitioners come from a background in journalism or broadcasting. Why is this percentage so high?” The second was “Some PR practitioners have adopted the name Communications Managers. What do you think of this trend?” This latter question was designed to invite comment on the significance of the name Public Relations. A distinctive question for tertiary educators invited them to identify the main sources used to teach about Public Relations. This was intended to identify any predominant textbooks.

The reference group assisted the process by suggesting wording changes to increase the contextual authenticity of the vocabulary used. One of the key discussions was around whether to use the term Public Relations or the shortened version, PR. It was decided to use PR as this was a term in common use and few saw the need to make a distinction between the terms unless the participant wanted to do so. It was considered that the questions gave sufficient opportunity to do this if the participant thought it important. Other alterations involved changing the wording from “corporate reporting” and “staff communication” to “external communication” and “internal communication” to make the language more industry-aligned. To clarify the question about estimates of remuneration they suggested removing reference to “without consulting your HR people” as this was confusing for senior managers who might look to Finance for answers to such questions. They also suggested additional categories such as “industry associations” for the sources of information question and the addition of “Government Relations” and “Community Relations” to the list of communication functions.

4.2.2 Instrument design for the interviews

The instrument design for the interviews was similar to that of the surveys. A core of key questions was asked of all groups but other questions were adjusted to align with the context of the interviews. Since this was the primary method of information gathering it was considered important to keep the majority of the questions unchanged. The core questions were: How would you define good PR? Do you consider that PR as a profession needs to make any changes? If yes, what should PR practitioners do differently? What advice would you give to students currently studying PR at University? These questions were considered pivotal to the main research question regarding perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand.

Another core question about the relationship between marketing, Public Relations and the media was adjusted for each group. The senior executives group was asked, “What is the relationship between marketing and PR?” The media executives group was asked, “What is the relationship between media

and PR?” and the tertiary educators group was asked, “What is the relationship between marketing, PR and journalism?”

Changes were made to the first interview question for each group. The draft first question was considered useful for the business participants and was retained for their interviews. It invited a one-line response to the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Social responsibility | e. Iwi consultation |
| b. Advertising | f. Public relations |
| c. Triple bottom line | g. Cultural capital |
| d. Marketing | h. Media |

It was designed as an icebreaker question to help establish a sense of pace and progress in the interview situation which would help establish rapport with the researcher. The reference group agreed that this would be achieved for the business participants but suggested a change for the other two groups.

The opening question for the media interview was an invitation to “Tell me a story which, in your mind, illustrates what PR is all about.” This question was specifically designed to invite the kind of responses media would enjoy, namely, storytelling, to facilitate an immediate connection with the researcher. The intention was to encourage stories that would provide insights into the relationships between media and Public Relations practitioners.

The opening question for the tertiary educator interviews was a replication of one of the survey prompts, “The first thing that comes to mind when you think of Public Relations is ...” The follow-up prompt was, “The most recent event I can remember involving a PR practitioner is ...” These questions were designed to access first impressions and locate the participant in relation to recent experience of PR practitioners.

Two distinctive questions were asked of each of the participant groups. Senior managers were asked, “To what extent would additional resourcing of PR in your organisation have a positive impact on achieving organisational goals?” This was a similar question to the PRINZ survey (2006) and was designed to

give an indication of the relative importance placed on Public Relations by the participant and their company. A second question for the senior managers was, “How well equipped is your Board to handle a PR crisis? For example, do they have an Issues Management policy?” The question was designed to test the depth of commitment to communication planning and senior management perceptions of the Public Relations proficiency of Board members as key stakeholders.

The two distinct questions were asked of senior media managers. Firstly, “What percentages of your news items contain content from PR press releases?” This question was designed to explore Johnston and Zawawi’s (2000, 2004) finding that although Australian media were highly critical of PR, they were heavy users of press releases produced by Public Relations practitioners. The exact percentage is not as important as the description of the degree of collaboration. Secondly, they were asked, “What are characteristics of the best PR people to work with?” This question was designed to test the research findings on the media–Public Relations relationship which suggest that antagonism is partly based on the behaviour and quality of Public Relations practitioners (Allen, 2004; White & Hobsbawm, 2007).

Two distinctive questions were designed for the tertiary educators. The first question, “What are the most important things to tell your students about PR?” was designed to expose embedded definitions and perceptions. The second question, “Many in-house PR practitioners are calling themselves Communication Managers or similar. What do you think of this?” was designed to explore the dynamics around the issue of the name, particularly the issue of renaming. This was intended to provide insights into the question of legitimacy attached to the name “Public Relations”.

4.3 The Māori research component

Special consideration was given to the research component involving Māori. This was not Māori-centred research but it was research involving Māori (Smith, 2006). Consequently, steps were taken to conduct a respectful process wherever the research involved Māori participants and concepts. According to Smith and Cram (2001) these steps should involve:

Whanaungatanga: the building and maintaining of relationships in the Māori context. Russell Bishop (1998) defines it as the process of establishing meaningful, reciprocal and familial relationships through culturally appropriate ways, establishing connectedness and engagement and therefore a deeper commitment to other people.

Manaakitanga: sharing, hosting and being generous. This is a value that underpins a collaborative approach to research, one that enables knowledge to flow both ways and that acknowledges the researcher as a learner and not just a data gatherer or observer. It also facilitates the process of 'giving back', of sharing results and of bringing closure if that is required for a project but not for a relationship.

Aroha: literally translated as 'love' in English, but is also a term used for respect. To treat people with respect is to allow them to define their own space and meet on their own terms.

Mahaki: humility. This is about finding ways to share knowledge, to be generous with knowledge without being a 'show-off' or being arrogant.

Mana: power, dignity and respect. *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* – Do not trample on the mana or dignity of a person. This is about informing people and guarding against being paternalistic or impatient because people do not know what the researcher may know.

Titiro, whakarongo ... korero: To look and listen first and then maybe speak. This value emphasises the importance of looking/observing and listening in order to develop understandings and find a place from which to speak.

Kia tupato: Be cautious. This suggests that researchers need to be politically astute, culturally safe, and reflective about their insider/outsider status. It is also a caution to insiders and outsiders that in community research things can come undone without the researcher being aware or being told directly.

To address *whanaungatanga*, the *kaumatua* in charge of the Māori studies department from the host institution was consulted before proceeding with the research activities. He required a face to face consultation with a designated representative. This consultation was essential for introducing me, my supervisor, the purpose of my research, the expected outcomes, and the benefits for Māori from their participation in the project. The representative was tentative at first because he did not know me. The conversation lightened up when I showed interest in his background and connections among Māori and when I described my own family background, where I was born, my connections with Māori over the years, who the Māori were at my home institution and the level of support I had from them. Similarly, time was spent in each interview chatting to establish rapport. Special attention was made to establishing my connections with Māori in my past and at my home educational institution.

With regard to *manaakitanga*, the Māori Studies representative was relieved to know that I understood the requirement for reciprocity in the research process and we discussed how this might work out in practice. On the matter of reciprocity, he indicated that financial payment was not necessary but that investment back into Māori tribal groups or communities by way of training sessions or consultancy to increase capacity in the area of Public Relations skill as understood in a modern New Zealand European world would be acceptable.

The use of semi-structured interviews offered the opportunity to treat participants with *aroha* and to “look, listen, and then speak” by allowing them to define their own space and discuss concepts in their own terms. The Māori and Pacific media members of the reference group were both known to the researcher. This personal knowledge was essential in drawing together a list of media personnel to contact and in providing introductions. These members provided personal introductions. They also offered guidance on how to engage in conversation. For example, I was advised to begin each encounter with some personal introduction; to listen with my heart and not just my ears; to be aware that some of the Pacific participants might be titled people and this would require a respectful attitude when asking questions; that I should be ready to share food and if this happened I should be willing to participate in prayer to bless the food.

With regard to *mahaki* and *kia tupato*, I needed to make an effort to share my findings in a humble and careful manner. This meant carefully introducing them with appropriate disclaimers, acknowledgements and by offering Māori present in my audiences the opportunity to correct or comment on my findings according to their own protocols and understandings.

Māori research protocols also required that I should be part of a research team that understood and could guide me as a non-Māori in how to gather, interpret and use the information gathered from Māori participants (Tilley & Love, 2005; Smith, 2006). I utilised the local *kaumatua* at my home learning institution by consulting with them about the proposed questions, the interpretations of the data and for suggestions for future use of the material. I also approached respected Māori academics to gain their insights on the content and the way I was using the data. These people included Sir Mason Durie, Dr Ranginui Walker and Dr Pita Sharples.

I was encouraged to use the standard questions but to “go with the flow” in the conversations I had with Māori and Pacific Island participants. This fitted well with the concept of meaning being constructed in the context of conversation that both Symbolic Interactionism and Bourdieu espouse. I was able to listen for metaphors, look for symbolic actions and reactions, and enter interpersonal conversation with the knowledge that we would construct meaning together. In the case of one participant this led to an extremely fruitful engagement over the subject of Māori Public Relations.

4.4 How approaches were made to participants

Approaches were made to companies during the months of December 2006 and February 2007 in three different ways. At first approaches were made by phone using the number offered on the company website. This would locate the call with media liaison, reception, sales or recruitment. The conversation script ran as follows:

“Hello my name is Graeme Sterne, a senior lecturer at Manukau Institute of Technology. I am conducting a research project on Public Relations among the top 200 companies in New Zealand. Your company is on that list. Would it be possible to speak to your CEO? I would like to hear your company’s views on some questions I have. Could I speak to your CEO please?”

The answers were one of the following:

1. “Let me put you through to his/her PA (Personal Assistant).”
2. “Ah, we don’t have Public Relations here. Our CEO doesn’t believe in it”.
3. “I usually handle questions like this. Can I help you?”

My response to #1: “Thank you ... hello my name is ... the research involves filling out a 30 minute survey followed by a 40 minute interview. If I send you a copy of the questions would you be willing to show it to him/her?”

If I met resistance I switched tactics to suggest, “Maybe I could talk to someone in a senior position who handles the Communication portfolio?” This was not ideal, as I wanted to maintain the principle of asking the end user and avoiding Communications General Managers. However, I was generally able to secure a senior management person, several were in-house Communications practitioners. Others were General Managers with Communication in their portfolio. This in itself provided an interesting dimension to the findings.

My response to #2: “Oh that’s interesting. Is there someone else I could speak to? ...someone in Marketing or community relations or media relations perhaps?”

Again, this was not the CEO but it provided an alternative route to the senior management table.

My response to #3: “Thank you, I am interested in your views but I need to speak to someone in the senior management team because I am looking at how they view Public Relations.”

The difficulty in getting through to the CEO meant I had to adopt a second approach to make direct contact with the CEO’s Personal Assistant. This proved to be more productive as the PA was usually keen to be helpful and either had access to the CEO’s diary or had the authority to endorse my contact with another senior manager. This approach usually took the form of, “I know your CEO is very busy but is there a window where I could maybe get 5 minutes to see what he/she thinks about this project? Maybe I could send through the survey and an explanation?” This produced an array of responses ranging from “He’s so busy we can’t even talk to him” to “She’s out of the country so much I doubt whether you will get to speak to her” to “Please send the questions through so we can have a look at them.”

A third approach was through my network of contacts with senior Communication General Managers. A copy of the interview questions, the survey and the instruction and consent information was sent to each company as they considered participating. An exchange of email and telephone messages ensued until agreement to participate was reached.

Approaches were made to 39 media outlets including 32 news editors, two managers and five senior journalists during the period 9 November 2007 to 21 December 2007. These approaches were by either email or phone calls. Material such as interview questions, information sheets and surveys were only sent if consent was given to consider the invitation. Once this material had been sent a further conversation took place to establish consent to participate.

For the third phase, a survey was sent to 100 lecturers and course leaders in the fields of Public Relations, Communication and Marketing. The surveys were introduced by email invitation during November–December 2008. Approaches

for interviews were by either email or phone calls. Material such as interview questions, information sheets and surveys were only sent if consent was given to consider the invitation. Copies of the interview questions and information sheets were emailed to participants to alert the participants to the type of information we would be discussing in the interviews and to give them a basis for deciding whether to opt in or not.

4.5 Participation rates

Engaging private sector senior managers in research of this type is not easy. Face to face interviewing regularly achieves response rates between 60 per cent and 85 per cent (Stewart, 2002). The response rate of 66.7 per cent for this study was therefore pleasing (see Table 4.2). This study captured data from five of the top ten New Zealand companies. Fifteen of the 28 companies were in the top 40. There was however an uneven distribution of participants. The Primary Production sector, a key sector in the New Zealand economy, contained three top 10 companies all of whom declined to participate. The top telecommunications company in New Zealand (also in the top 10) was embroiled in controversy and did not participate either. Primary Resources, Food and Beverages, Transportation, and Retail/Wholesale and Distribution were well represented. Industrial Services, Communications and Media, and Automotive were not represented. There was also a lower response rate from the non-Auckland-based companies (38 per cent) as against Auckland-based companies (85 per cent).

**Table 4.2 Responses of businesses from Deloitte's Top 200
(*New Zealand Management* magazine, December 2005)**

Key: 42 / 28 = number contacted / number who agreed to participate

Primary Resources	IT & Computer Hardware	Communications & Media	Retail, Wholesale & Distribution
4 / 4	2 / 2	2 / 0	3 / 3
Industry & Community Services	Processed Food & Beverages	Transportation	Primary Production
2 / 0	4 / 4	4 / 4	5 / 1
Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals	Manufacturing	Insurance	Diversified Corporates
2 / 1	2 / 1	2 / 1	2 / 2
Banking & Finance	Tourism & Entertainment	Automotive	Construction & Trade
2 / 2	2 / 1	2 / 0	2 / 2

A total of 32 senior managers from 28 companies were interviewed (see Table 4.3). If they were not the CEO then they had responsibility for management of the Communication portfolio in their companies. This was important because they were all members of the dominant coalitions and had direct influence on the practice and place of Public Relations and Communication Management in their companies. The large proportion, almost half, from the Communication / Public Affairs group could have skewed responses towards a more sympathetic appraisal of the role of Communication Management in the companies represented. It might also have affected the estimations of the value of external Public Relations consultants since they were competing for the same space in the field as Communication specialists. Of the managers interviewed, 24 were male, eight were female. All of the women were in the Corporate or Public Affairs group. This sample was too small to draw definitive conclusions about gender representation in the senior management teams but this could be a fruitful avenue of investigation in future. It could be that gender stereotyping of females into Communication roles also has an effect on the lower status ascribed to the role in relation to other senior management team positions. Three companies with female CEOs were invited to join the study but all were unable to participate. Interviews were conducted at the participants' places of work.

Table 4.3 Senior managers who participated in the study

CEOs	Marketing GMs	CFOs / Legal Counsel	Corporate / Public Affairs GMs
8	4	5	15

Media participation rates were very high (see Table 4.4). The overall response rate was 30/39 (77 per cent). As a consequence, this study was able to represent a relatively comprehensive range of New Zealand media. The high response rate was partly due to the relational recommendations and endorsements made by the pilot group and by participant recommendations made to facilitate this research.

Table 4.4 Spread of media interviews
(Bracketed figures indicate number of approaches made).

	Mainstream	Māori	Pacific Island
TV	2 (3)	2 (3)	2 (2)
Radio	2 (2)	2 (3)	2 (3)
Newspapers	7 (10)	-	-
Magazines	8 (9)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Online	1 (2)	-	-
Total	20 (26)	5 (7)	5 (6)

The interviews were well received but, as discussed earlier, the use of tape recordings was abandoned. One important suggestion from the reference group was to offer the option of telephone interviews to respondents. A significant number of the media respondents (12/30) expressed a preference for phone conversations (see Table 4.5). Unfortunately several chose not to fill out the survey as a result. Ten of the participants completed the survey. This did not compromise the research process since the surveys were supplementary to the main data-gathering exercise and the interviews were rich in content.

Table 4.5 Media participant response preferences

Face to face Only	Phone Only	Face to face and email	Phone and email	Face to face and written responses	Phone and written responses
12	8	-	2	6	2

Twenty-eight out of 100 tertiary educator surveys were returned. Twenty-four in-depth interviews were conducted with senior lecturers and programme directors from a spread of disciplines including: public relations, communication studies, marketing, business, management, journalism and broadcasting. Because the survey was anonymous it is possible that some of the participants involved in the surveys may also have been interviewed but since there was no requirement to correlate the data this did not affect the substantive solidity of the results. More importantly for the requirements of this study the data represented all seven of the Public Relations programmes offered in New Zealand and three of the five journalism/broadcasting schools. It also covered representatives from the related fields of marketing, management and human resources. Selection for the interviews was based primarily on achieving coverage of all the required sectors but another selection factor was the level of seniority of the participant in the chosen schools. Interviews were conducted with nine senior Public Relations /Communications educators, six journalism/broadcasting educators (representing three of the five schools) and nine marketing, business and management educators. Sixteen of the 24 interviews were conducted face to face. The rest were conducted by phone.

4.6 How the interviews were conducted

The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were semi-structured (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Questions and prompts were provided by the researcher to guide the interaction; during the interaction there was room for divergence into interesting aspects of participants' answers within the time frame available. Most interviews ran to time. None ran over without the express agreement of the interviewee. I made a point of consulting my watch at 40 minutes and suggesting "We need to finish soon." Several participants offered extensions on the time frame. Some offered additional material for the research project or introductions to others who might be interested in the research.

The interview approach was like a conversation in which the researcher becomes an insider with the participants co-researching a slice of life together. Notes were taken and clarifications sought. Narrative was encouraged and noted and phenomenological exploration took place on-site by direct interaction

with the participants in an atmosphere they were familiar with. The interview approach was designed to discover rather than confirm existing theoretical or ideological perspectives so any views expressed by the participants were taken as a legitimate expression of opinion at the time. Efforts were made to create an atmosphere of mutual trust (Oakley, 1981). For example, interviews were conducted in venues nominated by the participants. Some, especially the educators, chose their own offices; others, particularly business people, chose Board or meeting rooms. Media participants favoured public places such as restaurants, cafes or hotel foyers or over the phone.

Initially, audio tapes were used to record data from the interviews but the use of tapes was abandoned part-way through the media interviews because they appeared to make some of the participants ill at ease despite having offered their permission. One asked not to have the tape running at all because “it makes me nervous.” Another showed sufficient signs of non-verbal agitation that I asked if it would be better to not use the tape, to which they agreed. Several opted for phone interviews and the recording of these was sometimes problematic depending on my physical location at the time of the call. Given that one of the aims of this research was to create an atmosphere conducive to information sharing it was decided to abandon the use of tape recorders in favour of note-taking and verbal clarifications during the interview. In an extra effort to ensure accuracy of note-taking, participants were regularly invited to complete sentences or to fill in gaps so that my record represented the exact words they had used. Clarifications, corrections, and elaborations were elicited by means of funnel questioning, reflection and occasionally reading back the notes taken. Summaries were also offered to all participants. Participants who took up the offer of a summary of findings were provided with one and were invited to comment on it. Three people took up this offer and provided feedback.

NVivo was considered as a tool for analysing responses but was rejected for several reasons. Transcripts from the interviews would have been possible from the thorough notes taken but the primary reason for not using NVivo was that the construction of categories was intended to evolve from the data rather than being confirmed through a process of imposed categorisation. I wanted to refrain from imposing categorisations onto the data as long as possible while I

considered its implications. I preferred to maintain a personal link with the material as I worked through it over and over. I was comfortable with intuitive understandings as they emerged so long as they were grounded in authentic participant comments. The number of participants was manageable using manual processes.

Mutuality of understanding can never be perfect and minor errors in mutual grasping of meanings are expected. What is important is that “the researcher needs to come to a consensual agreement about meanings through episodes of coherent and constructive communication in which interactants select symbols from cultural dictionaries significant to each other” (Forte, 2007, p. 323). Coherence refers to the ability of each interactant to present and interpret meanings in the context of the conversation. According to Silverman (2000), observational data from interviews should also include descriptions of contextual aspects of social interaction. So some of the non-verbal aspects of communication in the interview process such as the office setting and decor, the circumstances of the interview (rushed, interrupted, intense, relaxed), interpersonal space, and kinesics (gestures and postures) were also recorded during note-taking or immediately after the interview.

4.7 Post-interview procedures

A great deal of attention was paid to checking categories and characterisations. This was achieved by means of a mixture of peer review and feedback from leaders in the field. Blind peer review of sections of my findings was conducted by academic journal reviewers for the business and media perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand and for the place of Public Relations and marketing at the senior management table in New Zealand. Practitioners were also involved in reviewing material. For example, feedback on the business perceptions was received from the PRINZ National Executive and senior practitioners. Similarly, academic peer review was performed after conference and seminar presentations. Media perceptions were similarly tested by a senior media editor, a senior journalist and a panel presentation to Public Relations practitioners. Māori perspectives were tested by consultation with key leaders from the Māori community, including a Māori PRINZ colleague, a Māori educator colleague

from my own institution, local tribal leaders (kaumatua), and several renowned Māori scholars. The Māori model of Public Relations was also subject to peer review from practitioners from the 2008 World PR Festival and from questions raised by post-graduate students from UILM (Milan) and NYU (New York).

Triangulation is not an essential element of Symbolic Interactionism since it does not attempt to subscribe to objectivistic requirements. Source material has its own validity. Nevertheless, validity and reliability of data is always a research concern. This concern can be eased by the use of external reference points to add to the quality of the observations and the use of external interpreters to assist in the interpretation of data. Here, perceptions and definitions could also be triangulated by use of content analysis of media articles, textbooks and business literature (Spicer, 1993; Anderson & Lowery, 2007). For example, media perceptions of Public Relations offered in the interviews were compared with an examination of media releases on the subject of Public Relations. A content analysis of 54 articles using the key search words PR or Public Relations was conducted over the period March 2005–March 2007. The analysis included 29 articles from major dailies, 18 from provincial and local papers and seven from magazines. Perceptions of Public Relations offered by educators were compared with an examination of 33 textbook representations. Perceptions offered by business leaders were compared with business literature representations. Analysis of 1786 job titles from the PRINZ website was conducted to cross reference the definitions and roles portrayed. A phone survey was conducted involving the top 100 companies from the Deloitte's Top 200 list (Deloitte, 2006). This survey was conducted a year after the initial interviews. Responses were obtained from 81 of the 100 companies. The survey consisted of two questions. The first question was: "Where does PR report in your company?" The second question was: "What is the relationship between PR and Marketing?" These questions typically led to a brief discussion of the type of company, whether PR was externally sourced, and sometimes the history of "how things ended up the way they are". The respondents were Personal Assistants to the CEO, the Human Resources General Manager, or the Communications or Marketing General Manager. This survey provided a wider quantitative picture as a backdrop to the qualitative interviews.

One of the goals of this study was to explore the sources of perceptions. Tertiary educators, their students and graduates draw some of their perceptions from textbooks so a content analysis of textbooks was conducted. It covered texts listed as recommended reading in disciplines related to Public Relations. These included: Marketing (Yeshin, 1998; Pickton & Broderick, 2001; Clow & Baack, 2007; Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009); Advertising (Ries & Ries, 2002; Mackay, 2005; Yeshin, 2006); Management (Wood et al., 2001; Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2009; Samson & Daft, 2009; Schermerhorn, 2010); Human Resources (Macky & Johnson, 2008); Media (Tucker, 1992; Goode & Zuberi, 2004; Tully, 2008); Public Relations (Harris, 1998; Haywood, 1998; Theaker, 2002; Oliver, 2004; Tench & Yeomans, 2006, 2009; Moloney, 2006; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Van Leuven, 2004; Seitel, 2006; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009; Smith, 2008; Peart & Macnamara, 1996; Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009; Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001; Johnston & Zawawi, 2000, 2004, 2009); and Communication (Bell & Smith, 2006; Eunson, 2008).

This chapter began with an explanation of how the requirements of Symbolic Interactionist research methodology informed the research design. It emphasised the importance of the role of the reference group in helping to adjust the pitch to maximise successful engagement with a hard-to-reach group, CEOs; in aligning the questions and prompts with the contexts of the sample groups; and in selecting core and distinctive questions and prompts for the surveys and interviews. It explained the rationale behind question selections; the reasons for and processes of selection of the particular sample groups; and the special effort taken to consult with Māori before embarking on the research journey. It outlined the process of making contact with each group; the challenges in securing participation and how these were overcome. It specified attempts made in the interview process to secure authentic, accurate records. Finally it described the efforts made to triangulate data through employing a phone survey and content analyses to enrich the quality of data gathered. The next chapters will present the findings.

This concludes the foundational setting for data-gathering. So far this study has explained the reasons for conducting this research, explored the relevant literature, provided a clear theoretical framework for data-gathering and analysis and shown how its methodology informed the research design. The next three chapters will examine the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand from the key participants. These will be considered in three overarching themes: the definitional frames, the roles and functions of Public Relations, and the question of the legitimacy of Public Relations.

Chapter 5

Definitional Frames

Definitions are the frames people use to represent their understanding of a subject (Entman, 2003). They incorporate ideological persuasions, theoretical underpinnings and personal experiences that make up the habitus of each definition holder. Frames are subjective constructions developed through a process of self reflection and reaction to responses from others to produce a trajectory or personalised way of explaining things (Bourdieu, 1990). These constructions are attempts by their holders to structure the world around them. They are also subject to the structuration of wider forces operating in society (Bourdieu, 1991). Definitions are contested in the public sphere as definition-holders seek to establish the legitimacy of their versions (Habermas, 1989). Within the field of Public Relations, for example, Grunig (1992) observed that “it is common for Public Relations practitioners, to reject the definitions of researchers because they do not coincide with their fundamental beliefs” (p. 32). The same can be said for researchers who reject the definitions of practitioners because they consider them non-academic or too simplistic. Frames are discursive constructions that employ words, titles, phrases, metaphors and references empowered by their textual and cultural context to produce symbolic capital (Fairclough, 1995). These constructions are co-created in conjunction with others (Kent & Taylor, 2006). Thus, definitions and names represent contested views in a process of co-construction (Bourdieu, 1991). This chapter examines definitions as attempts to assert dominant constructions in the field of Public Relations by senior business managers, media editors and tertiary educators in New Zealand.

5.1 Definitions of Public Relations among senior managers

Two dominant views of Public Relations emerged from the senior managers: the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management (SCM) model. The Publicity model was the most commonly used definition of Public Relations. It was basically constructed as Media Relations for the purpose of garnering positive publicity for an organisation and protecting the organisation when under attack in the media (Hallahan, 2010). Typically, this version

reported to Marketing or was hired on a contract basis. In contrast, the SCM model redefined Public Relations as a key facilitator in the strategic direction of the organisation in areas such as environmental scanning, issues monitoring, liaising with senior managers and providing insightful advice and support to the CEO. It had strong resonance with the construction of Public Relations as Communication Management as espoused in the literature (Grunig, 1992; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; White & Mazur, 1995; Murray & White, 2005).

In the subsequent discussion General Managers are identified by the following abbreviations: Marketing (Mktg); Chief Financial Officer (CFO); Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Communication (Comm); and Legal Secretary or Counsel (LC).

5.1.1 The Publicity model

This study found that New Zealand senior business managers associated the term Public Relations, often referred to as PR, predominantly with gaining publicity. This was achieved for the company primarily, sometimes exclusively, through media liaison, managing media coverage in a crisis situation, and securing positive publicity for the company. “PR is the ability to harness media coverage” (Mktg, 1). “PR is reputation management and dealing with the media” (CFO, 1). This view cast the media as oppositional players in the field, “a bunch of rascals ... disappointing” (CEO, 1) and although they “are just doing their job” (CEO, 2) the relationship with them could be “problematic” because “the media distrust all people corporate” (CFO, 2). According to this view, Public Relations was a bulwark against the media. “PR is media liaison. We must be very, very careful what we say. The media are intrusive” (CEO, 3). This negativity was not shared by Communication General Managers, some of whom considered that “a healthy relationship with the media is not difficult” (Comm, 1). But the common view among non-Communication senior managers was that the relationship between the company and the media was uncomfortable.

Public Relations was seen as “a means for getting your story told. Good PR facilitates this to people you want to reach using media relations, sponsorships, and environmental initiatives” (CEO, 4). Publicity created a platform for articulating the company’s views.

PR is about getting your story across, where there is an open relationship and factual information with a good balance between spin and stonewall. Good PR is when you get the facts across and understood without too much aggro or hype. (CEO, 2)

“Getting your story across” meant engaging in a contest to assert a dominant point of view. This produced conflict over versions, hence the need for “spin” (persuasively-framed position-taking) and “stonewalling” (blocking media investigation). The expectation was that their story would get a reasonable hearing without too much “aggro” (aggression, acrimony) or “hype” (overinflated exposure). So the company hoped that its version (the facts) got a chance to be heard. This was supposedly facilitated in the context of “an open relationship”.

The Publicity model was strongly aligned with Marketing. All of the Marketing General Managers considered Public Relations as a contributory part of the marketing mix and explicitly embraced spin as desirable. “PR supports marketing because our primary interest is in being profitable. We are not altruistic. PR is a branch of advertising. PR is anything we want to tell the world about our product” (Mktg, 1). The explicit goal of this model was to persuade customers to trust the brand and buy the product through carefully crafted messaging designed to present the company in the best possible light. This located Public Relations firmly in Grunig’s & Hunt’s (1984) Press Agency or Two-way Asymmetric space. “PR is part of the marketing mix. It is clear messaging, telling stories around the brand” (Mktg, 3). It was a proactive attempt to promote brand and product qualities that would support sales and advertising. “PR is an active effort to present our organisation’s activities in a favourable light to achieve business objectives with various constituencies” (Mktg, 4). “PR articulates the message you want to present. It fits under marketing” (CFO, 3). “Good PR impacts perceptions by manipulating the press” (Mktg, 2). The word “manipulate” indicated an explicit desire to influence or control the messaging. Of course, this created a problematic relationship with the media who, understandably, resented manipulation and saw it as an affront to their ethic of free expression.

One of the salient features of this type of Public Relations was that it was considered successful if it was undetected by the consumer. “The popular perception of PR is often far removed from reality and frequently the best PR is

when the public is totally unaware of the fact that there has been any PR involvement in a particular issue” (CFO, 1). This was not an attempt to engage in two-way communication or mutually beneficial relationships. It was a strategy of unilateral, subliminal persuasion.

The Publicity model of Public Relations was commonly employed at a lower level in the organisation and was commonly assigned to consultancies. “Consultants are best at brand PR” (CFO, 2). “The PR consultant does lower level stuff – coverage, publicity” (CEO, 5). “We use external PR consultants for crisis management and for big launches because they are in the hub of the media community” (CFO, 5). However, this made Public Relations a commodity that could be bought in when needed. “We engage PR on an ‘as required’ basis” (CEO, 6). It was procured to achieve media coverage and if it didn’t achieve this, it was discarded. “We had a wee bit in Australia but decided we weren’t getting enough coverage” (LC, 1). It was also seen as something that various senior executives in the company could do. “We don’t do PR as such. We make releases to the NZX. We all contribute a bit to the Annual Report. The CEO writes his own statements” (LC, 1).

The Publicity model was regarded with ambivalence. It was simultaneously considered lacking in substance but valued for its creative flair. “Brand PR is fluffy and requires all the creativity I don’t have” (CFO, 2). It was particularly valued by sectors such as FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods). “We make extensive use of PR consultant for events, launches, internal communication and crisis management” (CFO, 1). “MPR [Marketing PR] delivers strategy to the stakeholders” (CEO, 1). But consultants were also considered to be of limited value and sometimes a liability if they concentrated on procuring media coverage at the expense of other strategic objectives. So, there were divided opinions as to the value of PR consultants.

5.1.2 The Strategic Communication Management model

The Strategic Communication Management (SCM) model advocated communication that matched the strategic imperatives of the company. “PR must be related to the real business” (CEO, 2). The SCM model anticipated engagement of a wider range of stakeholders than the Publicity model. For example, SCM was proactive in “providing informed comment to Government” (CEO, 2) and “delivering what you say you will deliver to customers” (CEO, 8). SCM adopted a less adversarial approach to “securing fair representation in the media” (CEO, 3) rather than expecting to assert one’s own version over others. The SCM model espoused “honest, timely communication, saying some things that are hard to say” (CEO, 1) such as admitting mistakes and making apologies.

The strategic component of Strategic Communication Management (SCM) entailed judicious communication, “being relevant to the public we are in [since] people watching rugby matches don’t put their names in the tender box” (CEO, 2); being responsive, “changing in advance of public opinion” (CEO, 8); and seeking feedback from key stakeholders, such as “asking the staff. They know because they are in the same demographic as our customers” (CEO, 8). Judicious communication was contrasted to attempts to obtain media coverage.

Four of the companies participating in this study had restructured their Communications portfolio within a year or so of the interviews taking place. The reasons given for the restructure suggested a need to achieve more strategic substance in the Communication function.

We have just had a change here. It used to be publications and media-based events. These things are fluff. We needed more structure. It needs to be strategic, proactive, relating to stakeholders before there are problems. PR is relationship, reputation, issues management.
(CFO, 4)

This statement employed the language of the SCM model. It raised the question as to whether the model of communication needed to change or whether the practitioner was unacceptable. It reflected a change in philosophy over the definition of Public Relations, which cost a practitioner their job.

Companies also used the transition argument to remove consultancies and replace them with internal Communication Departments.

Our PR company had a strong emphasis on media relations. We want to develop a new style. It's about forming relationships with people. We have recently brought the communication capacity internal. PR companies are good for media contacts and crisis management but we are not into schmoozing. We want clear consistent messages to all stakeholders not just column inches. (CFO, 5)

Some CEOs had decided to dispense with consultancies because they were associated with past mistakes. "Glossing things up isn't too helpful. We tried the smoke and mirrors approach. It doesn't work" (CEO, 6). This CEO now made his own press statements and interviews. "I prefer to do the media stuff now even if it means being a little bit raw" (CEO, 6). One CEO suggested effort would be better spent on performance than on promoting an image. "It's about doing your job, not painting a pretty picture. You should be in the press when you have something sensible to say" (CEO, 4). The references to glossing things up, smoke and mirrors, and painting pictures portrayed Public Relations as shallow and disingenuous. In order to achieve a more authentic representation, some CEOs had decided to take more direct control of their own media relations rather than employ someone to handle it for them. "The CEO owns it and drives it rather than a spokesperson" (CEO, 8).

In-house General Managers took pains to distance themselves from the term Public Relations. None of the senior communication practitioners interviewed for this study had PR or Public Relations in their job titles. They preferred titles such as Communication, Public Affairs, Corporate Affairs, or Community Relations. Some expressed a strong aversion to being associated with PR.

I have a virulent dislike for the word "PR". The first thing I did when I became GM was change it to "Communications". Now PR is part of Communications. The Absolutely Fabulous view is not accurate. It's hard work, demanding, not glamorous or conducive to family life. It's a 24:7 operation. (Comm, 2)

It was not surprising that in-house practitioners wanted to differentiate from external consultants. They were vying for the same economic and professional space. To achieve this they renamed Public Relations as Communications, and

redefined it as a mature business practice. This redefinition was designed to escape the popular view of Public Relations practice as glamorous, amateurish and pretentious. This also hinted at an attempt to overcome a gender-based stereotype associated with Public Relations.

I absolutely loathe the term “PR”. The moment you use the title an image comes to mind of some bimbo woman, light and fluffy – no substance, not spinning but not capable with serious matters. I prefer the term “Corporate Affairs”. Good PR is transparent communication which builds credibility over time. (Comm, 3)

This view matched the CEO view that depicted Public Relations as shallow, insubstantial, lacking in credibility and transparency. These attributes were replaced with the rhetoric of “substance” and an ability to cope with “serious matters”. The use of the term “transparent” was also significant because it suggested exposing information rather than hiding it, a key distinction between the Publicity model and the SCM model. This distinction was also shared by other senior managers. “PR has a very bad reputation in corporate circles. PR is for branding; Corporate Affairs is for managing issues by two way communication with a range of stakeholders, for example, conferences, events, internal communications” (CFO, 2).

Authentic performance was seen as the essential platform for SCM. In fact, it was asserted that this was “real” Public Relations rather than the Publicity model. “Be real, not just talk. Media coverage is not the Holy Grail” (CEO, 7). “PR comes from achieving. Good reputation speaks for itself. Walk the talk. You don’t have to do PR if you are doing a good job” (CEO, 2). Although both definitions were evident among senior managers, SCM was valued more highly than the Publicity model.

Adopting a low-key, genuine persona characterised by integrity and transparency was seen by these CEOs as a necessary part of achieving business objectives in the New Zealand context. According to this view, Public Relations began inside the company. It aligned SCM with company performance and with behaving well. “It’s about reputation protection and enhancement. We must behave responsibly. You can’t promote a reputation that doesn’t exist” (CEO, 5). This was an inside-out approach. Behaviour inside

the company was reflected in external practices and communication. This approach either distinguished Public Relations from SCM or reframed it. “PR is about running your business. There is an ambulance role, crisis management. But it [Public Relations] should be embedded in the business” (CEO, 8). This parallels the views of CEOs in the United Kingdom who said that Public Relations had more to do with the way you do business than the way you talk about yourself (Murray & White, 2005). It represents a shift in emphasis but it should be noted that it maintains the existence of both models nevertheless.

The finding that senior managers espoused two models of Public Relations, the Publicity model and the SCM model, contrasted with both Public Relations literature and in-house Communication Management practitioners who describe Public Relations as an extremely diverse practice that is difficult to define (Edwards, 2006; Murray & White, 2005). Both models existed alongside each other in practice but there was a tendency for senior managers (except for Marketing General Managers) to disparage the Publicity model and those who practised it. Consultants were strongly identified with the Publicity model. In-house practitioners were equally firm in their dissociation from the Publicity model and the term Public Relations, preferring to be called Communication General Managers or Public Affairs General Managers. The CEO view of Public Relations was strongly orientated towards communicating authentic performance and favoured the SCM model.

5.2 New Zealand media definitions of Public Relations

The New Zealand media participants defined Public Relations as Media Relations, the Publicity model viewed from a media perspective. The Media Relations model was based largely on their experience of Public Relations practitioners which revolved around the handling of press releases, phone calls, emails, invitations to coffee conversations and events designed to promote a person, product or point of view. This study found three versions of media relations: Antagonists, Professional Rivals, and Business Partners.

5.2.1 Antagonists

The “Antagonists” version of Public Relations was the most commonly held by media. The stories offered by participants in response to the question “What is Public Relations all about?” can be placed in three tonal categories (see Table 5.1). Positively toned stories made favourable references to Public Relations, PR or Public Relations practitioners. Negatively toned stories were critical or disparaging of Public Relations. Neutral toned stories made non-judgmental reference to Public Relations. Mixed toned stories included a mixture of positive and negative comments that had the overall effect of neutralising the tone. Neutral and mixed toned stories were placed in the same category. Neutral or mixed toned stories were associated with the Professional Rivals version of media relations, positive stories with the Business Partners version and negative stories with the Antagonists version. Although most offered stories from two or more categories, there was a clear predominance of negatively toned stories (69 per cent). Most participants offered at least one negative story some offered several.

The Antagonists version of Public Relations was portrayed in a graphic metaphor by one business magazine editor as “the gum under my shoe”. This metaphor expressed how annoying Public Relations could be in relating to the media. Once you have stepped on gum it is difficult to get off your shoe. It makes a mess of everything you step on subsequent to the encounter and you wish you had not made contact. The emotion behind this metaphor was repeated by a senior journalist, who described Public Relations as “repulsive,

kissing your arse”. This reference conjured up images of obsequious, unwelcome, offensive behaviour on the part of Public Relations practitioners. Consequently, this relationship was antagonistic. “I avoid them whenever possible. They are sworn enemies” (senior journalist).

Table 5.1: Tone of media stories describing “what public relations is all about”
(n=64, from 30 sources)

Negative	Neutral or Mixed	Positive
Annoying practices e.g. indiscriminate press release distribution, phoning to see if “I have the email”, pressuring me to publish (14)	PR involves contact with the public in the broadest sense, not just media relations (3)	PR involves cultivating perceptions cleverly (3)
PR is paid lying (or spinning) (7)	PR’s job is to gain publicity. PR is spin but that’s acceptable (3)	PR is working in win–win partnerships. We work with PR companies on promos sometimes (3)
PR commonly involves ethically questionable practices (4)	PR, a necessary evil (2)	PR does a good job of gaining publicity (some of it for our organisation) (2)
I was treated badly by someone in PR (4)	PR is gifts arriving on my desk at the end of the year. I don’t mind them but they don’t influence my decision to publish (1)	PR is a good resource. I don’t know what I would do without it (1)
Poorly handled crisis management (3)	PR practitioners are well paid, I accept that (1)	PR provides third party endorsement (1)
PR costs too much (1)		PR is where there are well paid jobs. Not the media (1)
PR is irrelevant to us (3)		
Mainstream does not represent our (Maori and Pacific Island) perspectives (7)		
Used as a tool against Maori and Pacific Islanders (1)		
44	9	11

According to this view, Public Relations is anathema to journalism. The data suggests that this animosity was largely generated by the behaviour of Public Relations practitioners themselves. The majority of the 64 stories about Public Relations in the interviews were about how Public Relations practitioners frustrated the media by their attitude or behaviour. Examples of objectionable behaviour included refusal to answer calls, not respecting exclusivity agreements, not answering within deadlines, not keeping promises to connect journalists with the people they promised to connect them with, giving evasive answers, stonewalling and, in the worst case, direct or indirect obfuscation. These behaviours were the subject of discussion in the confidential blog I referred to earlier.

There was also an underlying philosophical tension between Public Relations and the media. The fundamental purposes of the two practices were at odds. Public Relations was seen as promoting a client's views by securing media coverage, "lifting the profile of your client" (business news editor A). "PR promotes one angle. They are paid to promote one side" (business news editor B). The promotion of a client's interests may include supplying biased or misleading information: "The tension it has to live with is the connotation of manipulation" (television news editor). "Their whole job is to sell stories, to interest us in covering things" (television news producer). This was in fundamental opposition to how media saw their own purpose of investigating issues and exposing cover-ups.

According to the Antagonists view, Public Relations attempted to manipulate both relationships with journalists and perceptions themselves: "It is "lies, lies, and damn statistics" (radio news editor). It massaged information to paint a rosy picture. "Most PR is one sided communication, full of hyperbole, exaggeration, and full of adjectives. It is spin doctoring" (business magazine editor). It distorted the truth by providing a jaundiced view and by telling half truths. "PR is putting the best possible interpretation on something in the public eye to create a positive perception" (radio news editor). "PR is managing perceptions, mitigating negative impacts, filtering information, and covering up unsavoury stories" (magazine editor). This was objectionable to the media, who claimed they were telling an accurate, objective, balanced story.

The media was additionally vexed by the fact that advocacy by Public Relations for a client or client's perspective on an issue was not always explicit. "Most successful companies have no fingerprints on them" (radio news editor). Undeclared advocacy is embedded in the way stories are framed. It could be seen as "advertising dressed up as news, special pleading, representing money and influence, promoting people's agendas" (senior television journalist), or as "managing public perceptions" (senior business journalist). This was an understandable perception of the Publicity model given that the model espouses and sometimes calls itself "media management" (Lerbinger, 1997, 2006). Most journalists saw themselves as resisters of such management. The Antagonists version spawned derogatory labels such as "spin doctor", "spin merchant", "paid liar" and "darksider". These labels painted Public Relations practitioners as villains and the media as virtuous heroes.

Although public sector Public Relations was not the focus of this study, participants made several references to their contact with it. "Political PR is synonymous with spin, distorting the truth. Bullshit. Giving the good side" (business magazine editor). This area of Public Relations came in for particularly sharp criticism: "Government PR is talking up good points and mitigating harmful effects" (news editor). "PR and spin are synonymous – distorting the truth – spin doctors are associated with government positions" (business magazine editor). "There's a huge amount of spin involved in official sources" (senior television). "Press secretaries are the worst [they are] paid liars" (business magazine editor). This area of Public Relations definitely fell into the Antagonists media relations category.

In order to cross-check the interview findings and the literature indicating negative media portrayals of Public Relations in the US and UK (Spicer, 1993; Jo, 2003; White & Hobsbawm, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2007), in Australia (Common, 2005) and New Zealand (Tilley, 2005), a content analysis of 51 print media articles published in New Zealand newspapers between March 2005 and March 2007 was conducted (see Table 5.2). The analysis used tonal descriptors commonly employed by media content analysts, namely, negative, neutral and positive tones (Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993; Spicer, 1993; Henderson, 1998). Negative tone involved terms and associations that

reflected unfavourably on Public Relations. This included the use of terms with negative connotations such as “the persuasive arts” ... “media manipulation” ... “weasel words” ... “slick image campaigns” (The Press, September 9, 2005, p. 2) and “Original spin: PR is an evil plot by capitalist conspirators” (Herald on Sunday, November 26, 2006, p. 8). It also included the use of negative contrasts such as “It was all for a good cause but it was pure PR” (NZ Herald, October 21, 2006, E1) and “The council was calling in a spin doctor when there was a simple way to improve communication” (Northern Advocate, October 26, 2006, p.3). Neutral tone was measured by either bland reference to “a new public relations campaign” (Southland Times, January 20, 2007, p. 6) and “a public relations project” (Wellingtonian, June 14, 2007, p. 3). Positive tone was measured by references to Public Relations that were either complimentary or supportive such as “police campaign to take the sting out of tasers” (NZ Herald, July 17, 2006, p. 8) and “The power of public relations ... helping organisations become better communicators” (NZ Herald, November 9, 2006, p. 20).

Table 5.2: Tone in media articles mentioning PR or Public Relations

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Major dailies	12	7	10	29
Provincial or local papers	8	1	7	16
Magazines	2	3	1	6
Totals	22	11	18	51
Percentages	43%	22%	35%	100%

All 18 of the positive stories were based on press releases from PRINZ, mostly about awards for good Public Relations practice, or from Public Relations people advocating for the profession. Eight of the neutral articles were announcements about career appointments and contained neither positive nor negative attribution. If the Public Relations stories and announcements are removed from the statistics we can clearly see that media coverage of Public Relations is almost exclusively negative (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Media coverage without announcements and PR articles

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Major dailies	12	-	-	12
Provincial or local papers	8	-	-	8
Magazines	2	3	-	5
Totals	22	3	-	25
Percentages	88%	12%	0%	100%

In New Zealand, articles such as the Christchurch Press article by journalist Matt Philp (2005) “Turning on Spin” asked the heavily biased question “Does the public relations industry deserve its reputation as a cunning purveyor of cynical spin?” It referred to Public Relations as “media manipulation”, “the industrialisation of message massaging”, “propaganda campaigns”, and “machinations designed to smear adverse expert opinion”. This article was reproduced in other New Zealand newspapers such as the Manawatu Standard (21 September, 2005, p.17) and the Waikato Times (24 September 2005, p, 4). Although Philp acknowledged that “the media distorts and promotes”, he did not provide any illustrations of this distortion. Instead, he provided several examples of the Public Relations industry “skewing the democratic process”, of “taking advantage of the thinned ranks of journalists to inculcate client messages”, and of “massaging facts, so that instead of shedding light they cloud public discourse”. He claimed that the overall impact of such practices was to produce a “corrosive cynicism” (The Press, 17 September, 2005, Mainland 1).

A further content search of business literature was conducted on the most widely read business magazines, i.e. *New Zealand Management*, *New Zealand Marketing*, *NBR (National Business Review)*, *Unlimited*, *Business to Business*, *NZ Business* and popular magazines *North & South* and the *New Zealand Listener*. This search found sparse reference to Public Relations. There was no regular column in *New Zealand Management* or *NBR* during 2006 and 2007, for example. The only Public Relations article in the *NZ Business* magazine was written by “Marketing Maestro”, Brian Meredith (31 July, 2007).

Two articles about Public Relations in business literature adopted an extremely negative tone (see Table 5.4 below). The first, a *North & South* magazine article (Coddington, November, 2001) entitled “Spinning, Spinning, Spinning”, made 16 references to “spin doctors”, nine to “spin” and seven to “spinning”. It referred to “PR flunkies” and “snake oil merchants”, “devious tactics” such as the false launch of a product to cure cancer, and media manipulation, such as undermining a scoop by alerting rival media of a story. Coddington claimed that media collusion contributed to the problem. “The BNZ America’s Cup campaign was the first mass manipulation of the public by spin doctors and advertising men using compliant media” (p. 64). The article claimed that Public Relations “is carried out behind the scenes” (p. 63); that it is “characterised by objectionable practices such as distorting the truth” (p. 64); that its practitioners are arrogant ex-journalists who now act as gatekeepers (blocking journalist enquiries), know how to play the media game, infiltrate the news and seem to “wheedle their way into positions of influence” (p. 64). Coddington suggested that “cynics would suggest the words ‘public relations’ and ‘professional ethics’ have no business appearing in the same sentence” (p. 64).

A second negative article printed in *The New Zealand Listener* made reference to Public Relations in a “media” column where it referred to Public Relations practitioners as “darksiders” (Bowron, 2006, p. 53). The NBR made frequent disparaging references to “PR disasters” (28 March, 2007); “PR spin” (1 December, 2007); “PR stunts” (27 April, 2005; 5 November, 2009); “a PR gag” (1 December, 2007); “using money to fund flash PR operators” (20 February, 2008); “PR flacks” (29 October, 2008); and “a PR nightmare of the week” (20 August, 2008).

New Zealand Management magazine took a more neutral approach. It published several articles on Public Relations subjects: “The importance of being Honest” (June 2002); “Polishing the Corporate Windows” (2004); “Reputation and Identity” (December, 2004); “Investor Relations” (November, 2005); “Crisis Communication” (August, 2007); “Tuning into Blogging” (October, 2007); “Reputation: A global issue – it’s hard to build and easy to lose” (November, 2007); “Measurement Communication” (May, 2009). Only one article mentioned the term Public Relations. This magazine preferred terms

related to the SCM model such as “corporate communication” (December, 2004; August, 2007); “investor relations” (November, 2005) and “governance” (November, 2007).

New Zealand Marketing magazine covered Public Relations in annual feature articles in 2005 and 2006. It portrayed Public Relations exclusively under the Publicity model. In 2005 a series of practitioner comments were stitched together into an article on what it takes to be a good practitioner (Young, 2005). A similar style was adopted for the 2006 article “Spinning, Spinning, Spinning” and by *NZ Business* (31 March, 2007). These articles featured quotations mostly from consultants. This is not representative of Public Relations practice in New Zealand. Only 31 per cent of practitioners are consultants (PRINZ Trends Survey, 2008). The consultants described Public Relations as eliminating negative media coverage; massaging the public mind; raising money for a worthy cause; successfully pressurising an editor to resign; and providing successful [movie] promotion (Young, 2005). According to this view, Public Relations was largely about the Publicity model delivered in a commercially viable way – about delivering value for money; thriving on challenges; handling incidents; understanding audiences; educating clients on how and when to involve Public Relations professionals; arm wrestling with other agencies to resist function creep; and developing a communications repertoire to keep up with the “explosion of diversity and uncontrolled spread of new species” (Moore, 2006, p. 23). Most of these perspectives reflected a view of Public Relations as a pragmatic struggle for generating business.

Table 5.4 Tonal references to Public Relations in business magazines

Extremely Negative	Critical	Matter of Fact	Neutral
The NZ Listener North & South	NBR NZBusiness	Unlimited	Management Marketing

Apart from *New Zealand Management* magazine, the portrayal of Public Relations as media relations was common in business literature. “Good PR is what others say about you” (Burns, Unlimited, 2005, p. 66). “Good PR is getting your story out there” (Gibson, *NZ Business Herald*, 25 April, 2008, p. 31).

Alistair Campbell, who operated as media relations for Prime Minister Tony Blair, was said to have “put PR on the radar” (Young, 2005, p. 25). References to Public Relations practice gave the impression that it was a collection of techniques which can be gathered into a Toolkit (Unlimited), used for spinning in a battle for what is reality (Marketing, 2006), and aimed at “getting results for clients” (Young, 2005, p. 25). This perception was elaborated in the 2006 *New Zealand Marketing* magazine article which suggested that Public Relations needed to build its own reputation; had its roots in American Public Relations; was still about protecting business interests; was all about consultants; and needed “true communication professionals not self appointed PR experts” (Moore, 2006, p. 24). In summary, Public Relations was represented in the business literature as being superficial, self-promoting, and ethically challenged.

5.2.2 Professional Rivals

The “Professional Rivals” version of media relations recognised that Public Relations and the media had different purposes but were mutually dependant even though they “would like to think they don’t need each other” (news editor). The Professional Rivals relationship was characterised by the practical realities of information supply and demand – Public Relations sought to get stories told (supply); the media needed stories (demand). In this relationship, power was exercised by both parties to create leverage. The media sought to distance themselves from Public Relations’ attempts to win favour. Public Relations provided access to story leads, key spokespeople, and technical, sometimes sophisticated, market information. The media could refuse to publish a Public Relations version. They could also contest a Public Relations’ version of an issue by conducting “media investigations”. The Professional Rivals model involved a form of game-playing or jousting, especially with ex-colleagues. “Sometimes PR people ask me why journalists don’t return their phone calls. Sometimes journalists just like to cause Public Relations people as much anguish and pain as possible” (business editor).

According to the Professional Rivals version, Public Relations was “a necessary evil” (radio news editor). This comment recognised that even though Public Relations might be undesirable and unhelpful, it played an essential role in

news gathering. It was unhelpful when it acted as an obstruction to investigative journalism. At the same time, Public Relations was needed to secure interviews with key subjects, offer answers to questions and liaise between media and senior managers or celebrities. “It’s a symbiotic relationship but I don’t need them that badly” (business magazine editor).

The Professional Rivals version recognised that journalists and Public Relations practitioners shared similar drivers. Firstly, both were in the business of making a financial profit for their employers. Secondly, both parties offered their own versions of truth. It was part of the logic of practice. At a pragmatic level, media organisations employed Public Relations agencies. Instead of antagonism, this model was characterised by a relationship of mutual watchfulness, recognising each other’s professional boundaries, and acknowledging that each was plying their trade within but not past the limits of those boundaries. A senior news journalist, a business editor and a news editor all suggested that references to Public Relations as “the dark side” were “a bit tongue in cheek”. “The relationship is not as bad as journalists make it out to be. We are not the best of buddies but pretty good” (trade magazine editor).

Media relationships were warmer when Public Relations facilitated media goals by acting as an open conduit between media and key sources of news, facilitating media interviews, answering questions, securing quotes, and providing media with leads. Public Relations practitioners wanted coverage, the media wanted Public Relations practitioners to collaborate, “working with you to get access to senior managers” (senior columnist). The relationship could only be comfortable and mutually beneficial when characterised by unpressured information-sharing. The rules of the professional game required the practitioner to offer leads and introduce contacts to interest the media in publication or further inquiry. In return, the media offered some concessions by not releasing everything they knew or by treating the rival with restraint. “It is a lot harder to say bad things about someone who is being honest with you” (television editor).

5.2.3 Business Partners

The “Business Partners” version of Media Relations saw Public Relations as a business colleague where media and Public Relations practitioners found sufficient common ground on which to openly collaborate. There were four examples of this relationship among the sample of 30 media participants. One was of a smaller media outlet partnering with a corporate to offer health benefits to a local community. The second involved a business magazine partnering with a company in a panel discussion of interest to mutual clients. The third example involved a business magazine in a partnership where a Public Relations company set up a competition for a particular category of awards for which the magazine provided coverage. The fourth example involved a Public Relations consultant who had contacted a business magazine openly declaring the client’s desire to publicise a particular story. At the time, the magazine was working on its anniversary issue and wanted a feature. The Public Relations consultancy went to great lengths to make key spokespeople, background material, travel and accommodation available. An article ensued in which consultancy involvement was acknowledged. Editorial comment was generally favourable to the company. The magazine felt they had been given every support in the context of an open, ethical relationship. These examples were all from smaller media outlets and not from mainstream news media.

Business editors were generally more positive towards Public Relations than news editors. News editors were very reluctant to admit to using Public Relations sources, most claiming that the percentage of Public Relations material in their coverage was between zero and 10 per cent. Johnston and Zawawi (2000) have shown that this percentage is a lot higher. News media steer away from any suggestion of collusion as a matter of principle. In contrast, business media found press releases “useful” or a “good source of information”. Business editors were more likely to work closely with Public Relations practitioners to procure information and explanation.

I don’t know what I’d do with out them. I am quite dependent on help from comms people for technical information to explain things to me as an amateur. They are a fantastic resource to provide background ... we lack resources and are incredibly reliant on PR practitioners.

(Business news editor)

This was consistent with the finding that Public Relations has a closer alliance with business than with other sectors of society (Moloney, 2006) and that business media are more likely to be warm towards Public Relations than news media (Pincus et al., 1993).

5.3 Tertiary educator definitions of Public Relations

Definitions proposed by educators from the disciplines of Management, Marketing, Human Resources (HR), Public Relations and Communications (PR/Comm) included in this study fell into four categories. Some made little or no reference to Public Relations; others used the Publicity (or Media Relations) model, some referred to Public Relations as Transparent Communication, and others to Strategic Communication Management (see Table 5.5). The definitions were grounded in personal backgrounds and experience rather than theoretical considerations although they showed strong correlation to textbook representations. For example, the Human Resources educators reported that they had no academic contact with Public Relations thinking, it was not mentioned in their textbooks and they made little or no reference to Public Relations in their classes despite both having knowledge of Public Relations through working with publicists for their departments. This suggested that tertiary educators are a strongly influenced by textbooks in their field.

One exception was a media educator with a journalistic background who had been strongly influenced by a Public Relations practitioner-educator who held a view based on the SCM model. This media educator had become convinced of the efficacy of the SCM model, now espoused it himself and consequently also changed what he taught his classes about the subject. Another media educator had arrived at his conclusions from exposure to the market. "Before teaching I thought it was manipulation and spin. Now, through a PR practitioner colleague I have changed my mind. PR is reputation management through a consistent, long term strategy" (Media, 6).

The distribution of espoused definitions are represented in the following table (Table 5.5)

Table 5.5 Definitions of Public Relations among tertiary educators

Little / No Reference	Publicity / Media Relations	Transparent Communication	Strategic Communication	Total sample size
	Marketing (5)			5
		Management (2)	Management (2)	2
HR (2)		HR (2)		2
Media (1)	Media (3)		Media (2)	6
	PR/Comm (4)	PR/Comm (5)	PR/Comm (13)	13
3	12	9	17	

Some participants offered definitions in more than one category. For example, the two Management educators defined Public Relations as both transparent and strategic communication. Both Human Resource (HR) educators made “little or no reference” to Public Relations in class but advocated for transparent communication.

Some chose not to introduce Public Relations into their classes at all. One lecturer bluntly stated, “I don’t talk about PR” (HR, 1). A Marketing educator reported that “I don’t tell students a lot about PR. It’s a tool in an integrated tool set, one of the smaller tools in marketing” (Mktg, 4). This illustrated what one participant called “death by omission” (Mktg, 2) whereby Public Relations was effectively removed from the curriculum by not referring to it.

All 13 Public Relations/Communication educators preferred a strategic communication (SCM) definition but also acknowledged the existence of other approaches such as the Publicity model and the Transparent Communication approach. It should be noted that both of the Management educators had personal career backgrounds in Public Relations, which they suggested had a significant impact on their perceptions. Future studies might consider capturing the views of Management educators who do not have a Communications or Public Relations background.

5.3.1 The Publicity model

Marketing educators used the Publicity model exclusively to describe Public Relations purely as an agent for producing publicity for Marketing. “PR is about raising profile” (Mktg, 2). As such it could embrace spin as a legitimate form of communication. “Good PR accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative. [Isn’t that spin?] Could be (smile)” (Mktg, 1). It also embraced undercover operation. “PR is like a stealth bomber, an invisible function, flying under the radar to target consumers” (Mktg, 4).

The Marketing educators all reported that they presented Public Relations as a part of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). “PR is a viable discipline in the IMC mix” (Mktg 1). Although two of the Marketing educators observed a change in Public Relations practice towards a strategic communication approach they both nevertheless taught their students that Public Relations belonged in the marketing mix. “It fits in the marketing promotional mix – advertising, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, personal selling” (Mktg, 3). This could be partly due to the fact that many marketing educators are taking old marketing courses and texts and adapting them under the guise of IMC (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, & Ilchul, 2008).

A range of attitudes towards Public Relations was evident among the Marketing educators. At the respectful end of the scale, one Marketing educator suggested that Public Relations was valued but still considered a part of Marketing rather than making a separate or strategic management contribution. The middle (accommodating) position saw Public Relations simply as a partner in the Marketing mix. One participant dismissed Public Relations, framing it as something a manager could do for themselves. This person suggested that:

PR is common sense. It is expensive and I don’t need it. It’s something I can do myself. You need to learn the art of a good sound bite and photo. PR is about raising profile. I tell students you can do it yourself if you’re smart. It’s one in an armoury of tools in the Marketing tool box. You would need it if you were naive about target markets, opening doors, media training and public speaking. (Mktg 2)

Three of the six media educators defined Public Relations as media relations, a mechanism used by large organisations to secure or control publicity. They all saw it as spin. “PR is a necessary evil. It has its uses. It can aid the flow of information into media. But it is self-serving so it has to be taken at face value” (Media, 1). They also saw it as an unhelpful blockage to the journalistic process. “PR is obstructive to journalistic practice. I tell students to persist and break through the resistance” (Media, 2). “PR is important in understanding how news is constructed. Public Relations shapes media and those who are in the news. The celebrification of news comes from Public Relations practices. It’s a race to the bottom, inculcating a cynical attitude to spin doctors” (Media, 3). All three media educators were all extremely negative towards Public Relations based on the belief that Public Relations intruded into the news-gathering process.

Some educator views were also iterative. During one interview a media educator began with a circumspect view and then proceeded to a denunciation of Public Relations practice. Another began with an Antagonist view and ended with a Professional Rival view. “There are language games going on. Public Relations is where the best journalists go to betray their profession. Public Relations suppresses information that should be in the public realm because it is negative to the client. It is the deliberate suppression of the facts. You can’t blame an organisation for wanting to present itself in the best light” (Media, 3). The iterative nature of these opinions illustrates how the habitus is in a process of formulation and reformulation as individuals reflect on what they are saying.

Other educators demonstrated polyvocality, holding a mixture of views simultaneously. For example, a Marketing educator portrayed an extremely diverse range in his personal repertoire of definitions. Firstly, he suggested an evolution from media relations to SCM. “PR has changed. It used to be publicity but now it’s way bigger than marketing. It’s corporate positioning.” Then he reverted to the Publicity model:

I use a marketing paradigm ... IMC. Drucker says “marketing is what companies do.” I tell students that PR is representing the corporate to its publics. PR fits in the marketing promotional mix... to focus and manage all the communications of an organisation’s Integrated Marketing Communications. (Mktg, 3)

Next he proposed the PRINZ definition. “It is planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics,” and finally, a Management view, “Public Relations is about reputation, the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. PR is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour” (Mktg, 3). This eclectic collection of views sometimes conflicted, sometimes overlapped whether the holder of them was aware of the dynamics or not. These three responses illustrate how agents generate meaning in the process of discussion. Their trajectories altered even as we spoke and as they reflected on what they had said in response to the questions.

There was very clear pattern among Public Relations/Communication educators. Only four of them mentioned the Publicity model in practice. All 13 were opposed to defining Public Relations as Publicity. Some chose to deliberately distance themselves from the term Public Relations by using Communication Management terminology instead. “We do not teach PR as such. It’s more of a professional approach to how organisations communicate” (PR/Comms, 4). This was a significant finding because it located the PR/CM educators in a contradictory space to the business managers and media editors in this study. It suggested that the models of PR/CM taught by some New Zealand tertiary educators are misaligned with the realities of the marketplace and constitute alternative (perhaps normative) descriptions of the practice.

5.3.2 The Transparent Communication model

Several (9 out of 29) educators espoused a view of Public Relations that they called Transparent Communication. They advocated open communication where organisations were willing to disclose unpalatable information, accept criticism and respond to feedback from stakeholders. This view embraced the generation of publicity but rejected the use of spin. “It’s generating positive publicity for an organisation. It’s not spin. It shows the positives as well as the negatives. There has to be a balance” (HR, 1). The word transparency also contained the ethical imperative of honest communication. “PR is presenting accurate information” (HR, 2). It matched the CEOs’ strongly internal focus on authentic performance that would then produce reputational credit externally. “I don’t talk about PR. I emphasise the need to manage people as well as meet the bottom line to show social legitimacy” (HR, 2). This was a view of communication where internal performance provided the platform for communicating to external stakeholders. “If you are sorted internally, you have a clear inside/out direction and reputation” (Mgt, 1). Good performance produced opportunities to talk about good practice. “If you act in a socially responsible manner then you can maximise PR opportunities” (HR, 1).

Transparent Communication involved creating dialogue with stakeholders. “I present it [PR] in a Communications frame rather than a PR frame. Every issue is a Communications issue. It’s bloody important. It’s not about making s--- smell sweet. It’s about facilitating conversations” (Mgt, 1). In this respect, it was the closest model to the Two-way Communication model.

It is noticeable that this model was espoused primarily by Human Resource and Communication educators. The Management participant who espoused this model also had a Communications background. Those most likely to espouse open communication came from a social science background rather than a strictly business background. Their interests were strongly influenced by the imperative of human communication and connection rather than simply by the imperative of commercial advantage. This helps to explain the divergence in views between educators with a Marketing or Management mindset. It also reflects the strong influence of structuration on views held in a field.

5.3.3 The Strategic Communication Management model

The view that Public Relations has undergone a transformation from Publicity to Strategic Communication Management was articulated across the range of responses but primarily by Public Relations/Communication educators. One senior Marketing educator reported, "I have seen PR move from reporting to Personnel to reporting to the Head of Marcoms Group and to the CEO. It's moved from crisis to management communications" (Mktg, 5). A senior media educator also noted that, "PR is a growing, increasingly influential industry. 21st century organisations understand the importance of message communication in a variety of ways. Media is a small part of what PR people do. It is not the dark side" (Media, 5). This view is rare among media educators, but represents a significant viewpoint held by a noted New Zealand media educator who has produced textbooks on media and has a high profile as a media commentator. Another media educator expressed the view that Public Relations had changed from purely media relations but the transition articulated fell short of the SCM model. "It [PR] was media relations now it's being prepared for the inevitable crisis. It involves professionalism and an attempt at ethical orientation" (Media, 6).

There were conflicting views among educators about whether Public Relations had actually transformed. "PR ranges from spin doctors to relationship building. Ideally, it should be about two way communication [and] measurement but in fact I'm not sure we strategically and systematically go about doing that" (PR/Comms, 5). Some said that it needed to change but had not yet done so. One advocated for a change of mindset among educators (and possibly the wider community) regarding the definition and scope of Public Relations.

PR needs to change ... needs to be bigger ... it's in a corporate niche. A lot of people are doing it without realising it. Almost everyone needs to study it. Relationships are at the core of business and society. It should produce an impact on society to make it more ethical, equitable and sustainable. I don't talk to them much about PR except to explore how PR shapes you and your world without you being aware. Media has lost its power. PR has gained it. Look at the numbers of journalism students compared to PR students. (Mgt, 2)

This view had several important linguistic signals embedded in it. One was the personification of Public Relations as an agent able to transform itself. This left the question unanswered as to who will actually make the proposed change. Was it the practitioners? Was it the academics who talk about Public Relations? Was it the media framing of Public Relations? Was it senior management who employ Public Relations? Was it graduates who would carry educator views out into the marketplace? Was it Public Relations researchers themselves? The framing of a need for change helped to establish a platform for advocating what that change would look like but it did not answer the questions about how that change would actually take place.

Secondly, the generalisations that “a lot of people are doing it without realising it,” and that “relationships are at the core of business and society” implied that Public Relations was wider than current conceptions, that it embraced macro-societal dimensions. The implicit assumption in this statement was that these dimensions needed to be influenced in a certain direction, that direction being determined by educators who would presumably decide what was “ethical, equitable, and sustainable.” This discourse was grounded in the assumption that educators are in a position to transform society.

Thirdly, the references to media losing its power and student numbers transferring to Public Relations suggested a power struggle in the academic field over attracting students to study in particular subject areas. This had less to do with philosophical differences between journalism and Public Relations than economic factors attached to student enrolment numbers and reputational factors attached to the relative strength of disciplines within and between educational institutions.

Public Relations/Communication educators espoused the Strategic Communication Management model as if it already existed. They explicitly refused to be associated with the Publicity model. “PR is communication with stakeholders. I don’t see it as spin doctoring. It should be strategic, evaluated, part of an integrated approach” (PR/Comms, 8). The SCM model described by these educators was actually closer to the Transparent Communication model but they described it as SCM. It involved the creation of relational connections

with stakeholders through communication, especially regarding issues of mutual interest. “Good PR is regular dialogue with stakeholders – messages designed to communicate effectively. I tell students they need to understand stakeholders...the way the networks work ... it’s like a railway timetable. You need to learn issues management techniques ... measured communication integrating dialogues” (PR/Comms, 1). There was a strong emphasis on the relational aspects, especially on dialogic communication. “PR is communication, a symmetrical two-way dialogue. It is regular dialogue with stakeholders” (PR/Comms, 1). This definition saw Public Relations as a network of relationships developed through communication over a period of time. “PR is communication. It is networks and how you link to industry or groups in a reference group” (PR/Comms, 1). “It’s building relationships between organisations and stakeholders” (PR/Comms, 7). It also entailed reputation-building for the Public Relations practitioner. “The most important thing is honesty, integrity, ethics. All you have is your reputation” (PR/Comms, 2).

The emphasis on relationship-building through communication implied an ethical acknowledgement of the other’s position and a need to accommodate that position. “PR is managing relationships through ethical communication” (PR/Comms, 6). It also involved respect for the audience, “put yourself in their position. How would you like to be told? Don’t be manipulative” (PR/Comms, 3). It incorporated the concept of two-way communication to build mutual understanding. This was intended to build relationships characterised by trust.

Good PR is stakeholder relationship management – building mutual understanding with key stakeholders, using communication as a tool to achieve this. I tell students it’s stakeholder relationship management; being an advocate for your client; being an advocate for stakeholders to your employer using the techniques. Good stakeholder relationships are the basis for smooth operation of an organisation. Francis Fukuyama says, “a lack of trust creates a tax on society”. (PR/Comms, 5)

This comment contained a distinctive emphasis on internal advocacy on behalf of external stakeholders to the client organisation itself. It also contained a clear articulation of the argument for trust-building that went beyond securing a hearing to a relational negotiation of meaning and intention. It positioned the practitioner as a boundary spanner and change agent for both the organisation and its publics. It represents a unique position in the field of business.

5.3.4 Idiosyncratic versions

Public Relations/Communication educators each brought their own personal emphases to what Public Relations should be. Some advocated that Public Relations should be an agent of social change. As noted above, one educator emphasised that Public Relations had an internal and external advocacy role. Two others saw it as something similar to journalism: “PR is truth told well.” Another simply saw it as a pragmatic service, a necessary function that exists because people pay for it. Another saw it as “a wonderful, broad, general, diverse profession encompassing so many different aspects, an undiscovered general profession.” Two emphasised the importance of redefining Public Relations to the general public and to senior management given that it is so frequently disrespected, undervalued and misrepresented. They saw Public Relations as a worthy profession under siege from negative representation.

Some educators held eclectic views of Public Relations. For example, one Public Relations/Communication educator incorporated the ethos of an undercover operation characteristic of the Publicity model, “good PR should be heard but not seen”, with an inside-out management philosophy, “actions speak louder than words”, then reverted to the Publicity model, “it’s a really good story well told. I tell students to understand their audience so you can tell your story well” (PR/Comms, 6). Another advocated that Public Relations is a mix of strategic messaging, research-based practice, communication management, persuasion and relationship management.

PR is strategic management of communication. It has a body of knowledge behind it. It’s a major undertaking, a disciplined, systematic process. I tell students to aim for professional PR – be well informed, be persuasive. You must manage the practice and the process. It’s all about attitude underpinned by careful research. PR is managing relationships. (PR/Comms, 9)

This approach had tensions embedded in it which may or may not be recognised by the holder. It represented a view that Public Relations was diverse and could be seen from a variety of perspectives, all of which deserved attention. This disposition can be viewed as a personal trajectory in which the participant sought to establish a position as an inclusive, knowledgeable expert

on the subject of Public Relations using a range of definitions without committing to one in particular.

In seeking to clarify definitions, educators frequently referred to textbook and Public Relations Association definitions such as the CIPR definition from the United Kingdom: “PR is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.” Others used elements from the PRINZ definition: “PR is deliberate planned communication between an organisation and its publics” (PR/Comms, 4). But the PRINZ definition was not used universally. Some insisted that the definition of Public Relations was contested and therefore students should explore the range and arrive at their own best-fit definition. “PR is defined in multiple ways – it is a contested term and students need to be encouraged to find for themselves what PR really is” (PR/Comms, 4).

Overall then, tertiary educator definitions of Public Relations fell into four categories. Human Resource and Management educators made little or no reference to Public Relations in their classes but did teach about authentic performance and transparent communication. Marketing and Media educators adhered to the Publicity model. Public Relations and Communication educators steered away from the Publicity model and adhered to the Strategic Communication Management model. Their descriptions contained significant reference to relationship-building and reputation management through networking and two-way communication processes. This placed their version of SCM close to the Transparent Communication model which meant that their version of SCM was not the same as that generally advocated by business managers.

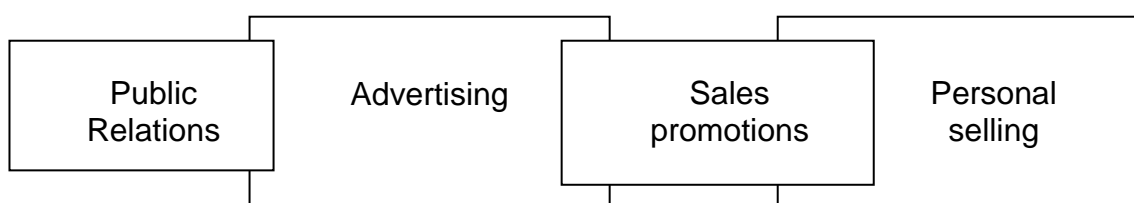
5.4 Textbook definitions of Public Relations

A content analysis of textbooks available to tertiary educators related to the Public Relations field was conducted to cross-reference educator perceptions. Causal linkage between textbook portrayals and educator perceptions was not established but a strong correlation between them was evident. The texts included in the content analysis were chosen from lists of recommended reading in disciplines related to Public Relations. These included: Marketing (Yeshin, 1998; Pickton & Broderick, 2001; Clow & Baack, 2007; Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009); Advertising (Ries & Ries, 2002; Mackay, 2005; Yeshin, 2006); Management (Wood, Wallace, Zeffane, Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 2001; Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2009; Samson & Daft, 2009; Schermerhorn, 2010); Human Resources (Macky & Johnson, 2008); Media (Tucker, 1992; Goode & Zuberi, 2004; Tully, 2008); Public Relations (Harris, 1998; Haywood, 1998; Oliver, 2004; Tench & Yeomans, 2006, 2009; Moloney, 2006; Lattimore et al., 2004; Seitel, 2006; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009; Smith, 2008; Peart & Macnamara, 1996; Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009; Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001; Johnston & Zawawi, 2000, 2004, 2009) and Communication (Bell & Smith, 2006; Eunson, 2008).

5.4.1 Marketing and advertising texts

Marketing texts defined Public Relations as Marketing Public Relations (MPR) and included it in the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) mix (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Overlapping categories of the marketing communications mix
Exhibit 1.2 Pickton & Broderick (2001), p. 7



Marketing texts presented Public Relations as a marketing activity alongside events and experiences, interactive marketing and word-of-mouth marketing as a part of IMC. “PR fits in the marketing mix under promotion alongside sales promotion, advertising, sales force, and direct marketing” (Kotler et al., 2009, pp. 21, 509). The definition of IMC encompassed a wide range of communication within an organisation. As such, it assumed jurisdiction over PR.

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, avenues, and sources within a company into a seamless program that maximizes the impact on consumers and the other end users at a minimal cost.

(Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 9)

Occasionally, Marketing texts used Public Relations definitions. For example, Pickton and Broderick (2001) used Grunig’s and Hunt’s (1984) models of one-way and two-way symmetric communications. However, in contradiction of Grunig and Hunt’s rejection of propaganda and preferred version of Public Relations as two-way communication, Pickton and Broderick proposed that “the role of Public Relations is essentially one of propaganda. Public Relations is seen as a flow of information *from* an organization *to* its publics. The sole purpose is to gain editorial coverage through publicity...This approach represents a great deal of PR in practice” (Pickton & Broderick, 2001, p. 486). To illustrate, they pointed to Public Relations practitioners who acted as publicists for sports stars, celebrities and politicians. They also pointed out that many Public Relations definitions failed to emphasise the promotional functions (p. 485) and media functions (p. 492) of Public Relations. Pickton and Broderick (2001) also discussed the definition of Public Relations as “[t]he planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” (pp. 64, 482).

Public Relations (or PR) was not listed in the index of Yeshin’s (2006) advertising text, but was incorporated into an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) diagram (p. 58). Although IMC was a much-debated term (Yeshin, 2006), one thing was clear – it was focused on the marketing agenda of “meeting needs profitably” (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 4).

More recent Marketing texts have demonstrated a shift in thinking in the field. This may well reflect that Marketing has been reinventing itself using Public Relations concepts (Hutton, 2001, 2010). The new models were focused much more directly on the consumer. The 4Ps of traditional marketing, the “old marketing mix” (Mackay, 2005, p.12) had been replaced by 4Cs, each looking at Marketing from a customer perspective rather than a product and sales perspective. Kotler added three more Cs, all developments on the customer (See Table 5.6). This shift has significant implications for the relationship between Marketing and Public Relations. The new definition was much more orientated towards two-way communication, relationship-building and relationship management. This construction drew Marketing and Public Relations into definitional conflict. Both were contesting for the practice of communication and relationship-building. Marketing posited Public Relations as a one-way form of communication trying to influence customer perceptions through the media (the Publicity model). This contradicted the espoused value Public Relations theoreticians, educators and practitioners place on two-way communication in the SCM and Transparency models.

Table 5:6 The old and new Marketing mix
(Mackay, 2005, pp. 14, 15; Yeshin, 2006, p. 77)

The old Marketing mix	The new Marketing mix
Product	Consumer value
Price	Cost to the consumer
Place	Convenience (of purchase for the consumer)
Promotion	Communication (with the consumer)
	Competency (of the customer service)
	Customer relationship management
	Context of the transaction (how the interaction fits with the way the customer does things)

Haywood (1991, 1998), who has chaired both the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Public Relations in the United Kingdom, has argued that “Public Relations is all about creating favourable opinion. Marketing is about managing customer relations favourably and profitably. Public Relations should be considered at the strategic level and not just thought of as an add-on communications technique” (Haywood, 1998, p.1). He contended that “Public Relations is concerned about policies that will win public goodwill even before any communication activity is undertaken. For this reason, it can be unwise to think of public relations only as communication or even an element in some integrated communications mix” (Haywood, 1998, p.2). He suggested that there are marketing and non-marketing audiences. “There are audiences where Public Relations has responsibilities which are not traditionally considered part of marketing – shareholders, government, neighbours, employees” (Haywood, 1998, p.7).

While he agreed that “the Public Relations that is supporting marketing should be managed and directed by marketing ...[the wider] PR is an expression of corporate strategy rather than marketing strategy and hence belongs outside the marketing discipline” (Haywood, 1998, p. 8). “If you accept the definition of marketing as being about satisfying customer needs profitably then it is clear that the discipline is responsible for part of the business – but not all of the business” (Haywood, 1998, p. 16). This discussion reflected a power struggle between Public Relations and Marketing. It indicated a twin model definition that closely reflected the perceptions of senior managers in New Zealand business.

Harris (1998), an American Public Relations practitioner and author, held a view similar to Haywood. “IMC is simply the strategic coordination of all the elements of a marketing campaign... advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and marketing public relations” (p. xi). He claimed a larger space for Public Relations as a reputation manager. “The principal role of the corporate communications departments and public relations firms far exceeds its marketing support function. It is to counsel management on relationships with all the stakeholders on whose understanding and support corporate health and survival depends – to manage corporate reputation” (Harris, 1998, p. xiii). These views were not shared by the Marketing texts included in this study.

5.4.2 Management and Human Resources texts

The most striking feature of the representation of Public Relations in Management and Human Resources texts was that there was virtually no reference to it. Public Relations did not feature in the indices and was barely mentioned in the texts of Wood, Wallace, & Zeffane (2001), Robbins et al. (2009), Schermerhorn (2010), Samson and Daft (2009) and Macky and Johnson (2008). Bell's and Smith's (2006) text *Management Communication* did not mention Public Relations in its index or in its chapters on gender communication, communication for international management or even in the chapter on Crisis Communication and Media Relations. In the only reference to Public Relations in Robbins et al. (2009), for example, the practice was mentioned in a comment embedded in a discussion of the introduction of ethical practices into the organisation.

Managers can do a number of things if they are serious about reducing unethical practices in their organisation. They can seek to hire individuals with high ethical standards, establish codes of ethics and decision rules, lead by example, delineate job goals and performance appraisal mechanisms, provide ethics training, conduct social audits and provide support to individuals facing ethical dilemmas...these actions have the potential to improve an organisation's ethical climate...but sometimes corporate ethics programmes can be **little more than public relations gestures**, having minimal influence on managers and employees (emphasis added).
(Robbins et al., 2009, p.189)

This comment represented Public Relations as little more than a "gesture". The context of this statement implied that such "gestures" were basically ineffectual because they lacked substance and were designed to give impressions that may not actually exist. They had "minimal influence" on managers and employees. As we have already seen, these attitudes towards Public Relations resonated with attitudes among some senior managers.

While Management and Human Resources texts did not refer to Public Relations, they did refer to communication and relationship management. There was a chapter dedicated to Communication in all the Management texts. It was portrayed as an important function of management but it was spread throughout the organisation rather than concentrated in a position as such.

“Communication is something managers need to do well ... communication permeates every management function” (Samson & Daft, 2009, p. 624). Robbins et al. (2009) claimed that “everything a manager does involves communication” (p. 376). The context of this definition was internal communication designed to control operations or motivate staff. In Macky’s & Johnson’s (2008) Human Resources text, communication was entirely focused on internal stakeholders. The importance of internal communication was also discussed under the heading of leadership, “to inspire effort, to communicate vision, to build enthusiasm, to motivate commitment and hard work” (Schermerhorn, 2010, p.435). Leadership communication was framed as motivation of staff, internal communication, introducing corporate social responsibility, intercultural communication, and shaping organisational culture and members’ perceptions of the organisation. Communication had a pervasive presence in the company but was not located in a specific function or responsibility, such as a Communications Manager or General Manager.

External stakeholder relationship management was given some consideration. Robbins et al. (2009) suggest that “managers of high-performing companies tend to consider the interests of all major stakeholder groups as they make decisions” (p. 92). These relationships were considered important because stakeholders could inhibit organisational performance.

Organisations depend on their environment as a source of inputs and as a recipient of their outputs. Many of the environmental forces – both specific and general – are dynamic and create uncertainty for managers. The greater the environmental uncertainty an organisation faces, the more the environment limits managers’ options.

(Robbins et al., 2009, p. 93)

This was not an argument for two-way communication with the embedded assumption of mutual adjustment as proposed by some Public Relations texts (Lattimore et al., 2004). It was an argument for securing a mandate to progress organisational goals. There was no clear indication as to who was responsible for the relationships however. Robbins et al. (2009) suggest that “through various approaches, managers are learning how to manage external relationships better in order to minimise the constraints” (p. 93). “Various approaches” could include the appointment of a Communication or Public

Affairs General Manager but this was not explicit. Neither was it clear as to exactly how “managers are learning how to manage external relationships”.

Significantly, Public Relations or Communication Management did not appear in the organisational charts of Management texts (see Figures 5.2, 5.3).

Figure 5.2 Levels of organisational strategy
(Figure 8.3 Robbins et al., 2009, p. 280)

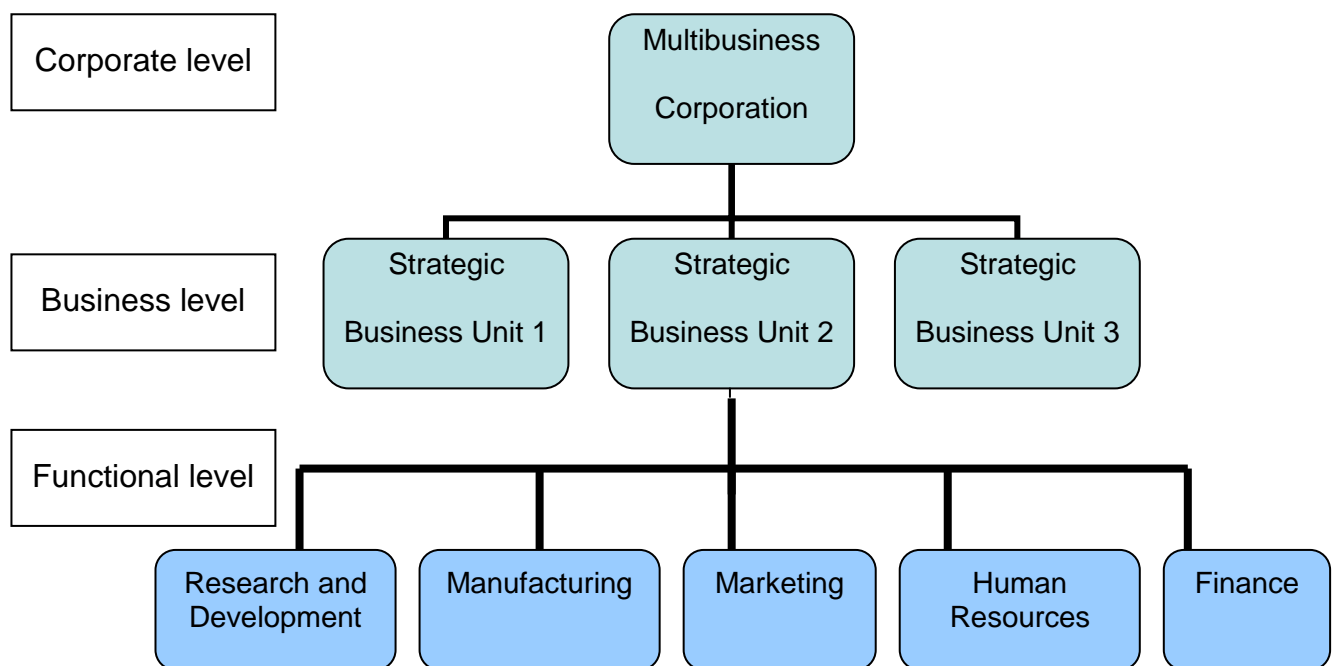
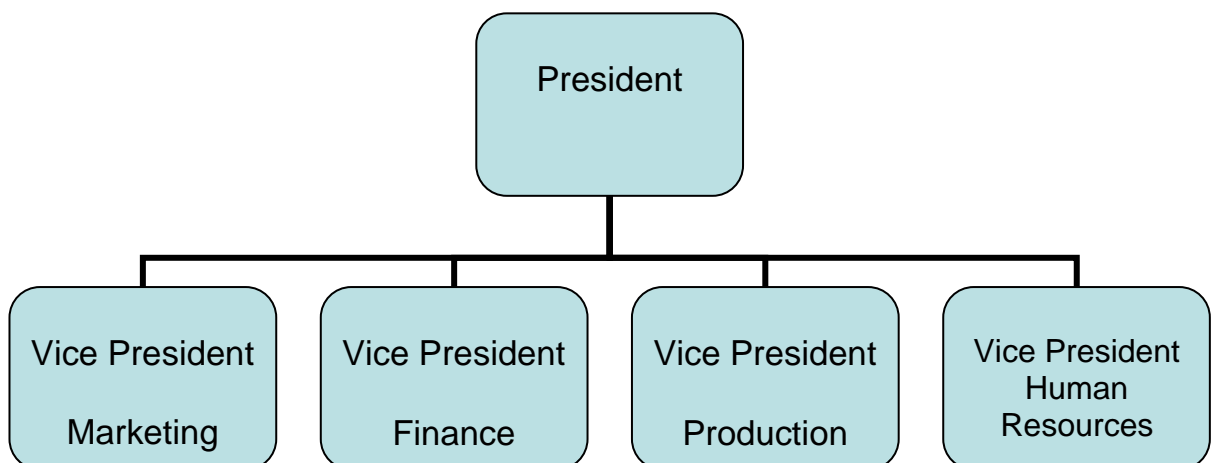


Figure 5.3 Functional structures in a business firm
(Schermerhorn, 2010, p. 241, Figure 9.2)



From these diagrams, it is clear that the textbook writers consider that Marketing has secured a position at the senior management table but that Communication has not. This questions the validity of the assumption in Public Relations texts (Seitel, 2006; Cutlip et al., 2008; Tench & Yeomans, 2006, 2009) and research (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Murray & White, 2005; van Ruler et al., 2004) that Communication Management has established itself as a management practice. The lack of precision in Management texts as to where Communication fitted in an organisation suggested that it belonged to everyone and no one at the same time. CEOs and managers were supposed to espouse it as an essential part of their work, stakeholder relationships were also important but no one had the direct responsibility for communication, except perhaps the CEO by default.

Three possible explanations for this disconnect presented themselves. One was that Communication Management had not in fact established itself. This would mean that the claim to senior management status was nothing more than a claim. Another was that Communication had a place at the senior management table but that Management textbook writers were reluctant to accept Communication Management as a senior management function or were working from outdated assumptions. The third possibility was that Management, Marketing and Public Relations textbook writers were contesting to establish the dominance of their particular views. In this case, Management textbook writers sought to exert control over Communication Management by omitting it from their texts. This is what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence, where those holding positions of power use their cultural and social capital to exert hegemony over others and prevent them from establishing their own capital.

As the hierarchical nature of these charts suggests, Management texts typically define communication as a one-way, downward activity designed to achieve organisational goals.

Management communication is purpose-directed, in that it directs everyone's attention toward the vision, values and desired goals of the team or organisation and influences people to act in a way to achieve the goals. When managers lead, they communicate to share a vision of what the organization can be and motivate employees to achieve.
(Samson & Daft, 2009, p. 625)

The emphasis was on having power over people, especially employees, and processes to achieve company goals. “The function of communication is control, motivation, release for emotional expression, information sharing” (Schermerhorn, 2010, p. 377). Thus, in Management texts communication was one-way, asymmetrical and control-orientated. “When we communicate with others, we are usually trying to influence other people’s understanding, behaviour or attitudes. We are trying to share meaning in some way – to inform, instruct, motivate or seek information – to achieve coordinated action” (Wood et al., 2001, p. 507). When applied externally, the communication control model was called impression management. “Impression management is the systematic attempt to influence how others perceive us ... to convey a desirable image to other persons” (Schermerhorn, 2010, p. 328). It was asymmetrical in that it made minimal or no reference to canvassing community or public interests and no reference to adjusting to these interests. “Public Relations is similar to advertising, except that the goal is to influence public opinions about the organisation itself” (Samson & Daft, 2009, p. 109). It was all about influencing publics to accept the company’s viewpoint. Examples included Richard Branson’s self promotion (Schermerhorn, 2010) and companies in the tobacco industry arguing for smokers’ rights and freedom of choice (Samson & Daft, 2009).

5.4.3 Media texts

New Zealand media texts such as Tucker (1992), McGregor and Comrie (2002), Goode and Zuberi (2004) and Tully (2008) referred to Public Relations primarily as media relations. Goode's and Zuberi's (2004) *Media Studies in Aotearoa/ New Zealand* text did not mention Public Relations or PR in the index or in any of the chapters. In the other three texts, Public Relations was framed as a mechanism used by companies, celebrities, sports teams and government offices for propagating their messages, managing (and sometimes prohibiting) media access, and relating to the media. This meant answering media questions, handling media requests for interviews, and producing press releases for distribution. Apart from Tully (2008) there was no mention of a strategic approach to communication management. Media texts made no distinction between in-house and consultancy-based Public Relations practitioners. Media texts consistently portrayed Public Relations practitioners as spin doctors to be regarded with skepticism. The difference in Tully's (2008) case was that he suggested that media also had its own spin and therefore should not be so ready to write off Public Relations sources. All the texts advocated treating Public Relations with careful scrutiny. They exhorted journalists to be alert to Public Relations tactics and to remain committed to investigating before publishing information.

5.4.4 Public Relations and Communications texts

Definitions of Public Relations in Public Relations texts stood in stark contrast to those in texts from all the other disciplines. Public Relations texts depicted a growing profession with a multiplicity of expressions. Texts from the United Kingdom took the view that there was no single definition of Public Relations, that Public Relations should be strategic in nature and that it was better described as Communication Management. White and Mazur (1995) described Public Relations as "an umbrella term which can cover a wide range of areas including: corporate communications, issues management, product publicity, investor relations, financial communications, lobbying, public affairs, media relations, community affairs, crisis management, sponsorship..." (p. 12). Theaker (2002) described Public Relations as "a complex and hybrid subject ...

the discipline concerned with the reputation of organisations ... with the aim of earning understanding and support” (p. 4). Oliver (2004) suggested that “no single best practice is universally applicable to all organisations because of differences in strategy, culture, management style, technology and markets” (p. xvii). Edwards (2009) suggested that “the likelihood is that if you ask three practitioners and three academics to define PR, all six answers will be different in some way” (p. 4). Edwards suggested that Public Relations is a relatively young profession and therefore it is still generating clarity around its basic functions and roles. Moloney (2000) argued that “PR is too multifaceted to be incorporated into a single definition” (Edwards, 2009, p.5). Tench, D’Arthey and Fawkes (2009) suggested that “this lack of an agreed definition is still a problem for the practice” (p. 36).

Public Relations texts from the United States such as Lattimore et al. (2004); Seitel (2006); Cutlip et al. (2008); Wilcox & Cameron (2009); and Smith (2008) tended to be heavily influenced by Grunig’s & Hunt’s (1984) definition of Public Relations as a management function. They emphasised relational mutuality, the acquiring of societal consent, and Public Relations’ struggle to establish its credentials as a profession. For example, Cutlip et al. (2008) stated that “public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 5). Wilcox and Cameron (2006) positioned Public Relations as “a communication function of management” (p. 6). This was consistent with Grunig’s (1992) insistence that Public Relations “must be a management function” (p. 11) and that “excellent Public Relations embodies a worldview of symmetry, idealism, criticism, and management” (Grunig, 1992, p.10). This definitional framework positioned Public Relations as an essential part of senior management. It also sought to differentiate Public Relations from the Marketing definition which “reduces PR to a technician role” (Grunig, 1992, p.10). In some cases the element of symmetry or mutuality included organisational responsiveness. Lattimore et al. (2004) stated that “public relations is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change” (p. 5).

Some writers reflected the pragmatic view that authentic performance was the basis for Public Relations. “Public Relations, simply defined, is the practice of doing the right thing – of performing – and communicating the substance of that performance” (Seitel, 1998, p.1). Theaker (2002) emphasised authentic performance when she stated that “Public Relations is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you” (p. 4). This echoed Haywood’s (1991) contention that “true public relations is more than skin deep. The most successful campaigns project a truth that is as close to reality as possible” (p. 16). The concept that actions speak louder than words lies close to the position held by senior managers in New Zealand.

Most texts offered Harlow’s (1976) definition derived from 472 association and academic definitions available at the time of his investigation.

Public Relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication as its principal tools. (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008, p. 5)

This definition emphasised Public Relations’ status as a management function, its functions as relationship-builder with stakeholders, issues and crisis manager, key informant to management, ethical conscience, environmental scanner, and professional operator. This definition was also quoted more recently in Sriramesh and Verčič (2009).

The World Assembly of Public Relations Association’s 1978 definition was offered in texts such as Wilcox and Cameron (2009) and Peart and Macnamara (1996).

Public relations practice is the art of social science in analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and public interest. (Peart & Macnamara, 1996, p.16)

This definition implied organisational willingness to participate in corporate social responsibility. Not all organisations are willing to subscribe to this assumption however as evidenced by the fact that at the sixth World PR festival it was considered necessary to promote the Stockholm Accord as a call to action for Public Relations practitioners to act as advocates for sustainable practices (<http://www.wprf2010.se/2010/02/22/the-stockholm-accords/>).

Southern hemisphere Public Relations texts followed the UK texts that claimed that Public Relations was difficult to define. For example, Peart and Macnamara (1996) claimed that “there is no one agreed definition of Public Relations [and suggest] perhaps that is why PR is often confused and misunderstood” (p. 18). Tymson et al. (2006) offered a range of definitions, preferring the use of guidelines to defining Public Relations. Mersham et al. (2009) contended that “definitions and perceptions of public relations vary among practitioners, academics and business people” (p. 1). Southern hemisphere texts emphasised ethical practice, dialogue creation and relationship-building. For example, South African writers Skinner et al. (2001) saw Public Relations as the total communications of an organisation and based their thinking on the assumption that organisations (in a democratic society) needed public consent to operate and flourish. Hence, dialogue and ethical communication were essential elements of Public Relations in their view. The Australian text by Johnston and Zawawi (2000) stated that “Public Relations is a management function that uses communications to facilitate relationships and understanding between an organisation and its many publics” (p. 4). In a later edition, Johnston and Zawawi (2004) stressed that “Public Relations is ethical and strategic management of communication and relationships to build coalitions and policy” (p. 6). Their most recent edition claimed that the term is “often misunderstood, leaving many people – including senior management – unsure of the profession’s parameters” (Johnston & Zawawi, 2009, p. 3). They suggested that variations in job titles reflected a desire to clarify this confusion. Another Australian text suggested the Public Relations should be clearly distinguished from Publicity (Tymson et al., 2006). This text strongly favoured a definition of Public Relations as “a management function which deals with the establishment and maintenance of relationships between two or more individuals, organisations and stakeholders” (Tymson et al., 2006, p. 31).

Southern hemisphere Public Relations texts followed in the pattern of using Association definitions. For example, Peart and Macnamara (1996) used a definition that was in vogue at the time in the UK (IPR), Australia (PRIA), South Africa (PRISA) and New Zealand (PRINZ): “The deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain understanding between an organisation and its publics” (p. 16). This definition is still used by PRIA and PRINZ and is offered in more recent texts such as Tymson et al., (2006), Mersham et al. (2009), and Johnston and Zawawi (2009).

Eunson (2008) in an Australian communications text took a broader view, suggesting that Public Relations could be defined in a multiplicity of ways. The author began with his own definition, “Public relations communication is the communication of ideas to the broader public ... responsible for managing the relationships between an organisation and publics” (pp. 640, 643). He then pointed out that Public Relations was also defined as spin. He included a description of Grunig’s & Hunt’s (1984) four models. He also referred to the transformational influence Public Relations could have on an organisation (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002) and included the definition of Public Relations as Integrated Marketing Communication (Guth & Marsh, 2003).

Public Relations textbooks proposed idiosyncratic perspectives considered important by their author(s). Grunig and Hunt (1984) were emphatic that “Public Relations is Communication Management” (p.10). Seitel (1998) claimed “All of us, in one way or another, practice public relations” (p.1) and emphasised relationship-building for organisational purposes: “the goal of effective public relations is to harmonize internal and external relationships so that an organization can enjoy not only the goodwill of all publics, but also stability and long life” (p. 7). Johnston and Zawawi (2004) emphasised ethical and strategic elements: “Public Relations is ethical and strategic management of communication and relationships to build coalitions, policy, manage issues, achieve sound outcomes in a socially responsible way” (p. 6). Haywood (1991) emphasised reputation management: “Public Relations is the projection of the personality of the organization the management of corporate reputation, the organized two-way communications between the organization and the audiences critical to its success” (p. 4). Several emphasised the importance of

Public Relations as a mediator of meaning between the organisation and the publics it interacted with (Lattimore et al., 2004; Mersham et al., 2009). Seitel (1998) suggested that “Public Relations practitioners are basically interpreters. On the one hand they must interpret management to the public and on the other the public to management” (p. 8). Tymson et al. (2006) concluded that “stripped of its fundamentals public relations means communicating effectively with others” (p. 27).

The concept of diverse and idiosyncratic definitions was projected into the marketplace. Some suggested that, in the end, Public Relations definitions should be adapted to whatever the company wanted (Theaker, 2002). “Each company should define its PR to suit” (White & Mazur, 1995, p.6). However, the plethora of academic and practitioner definitions led some to ask, “Shall we abandon the search for a decent description?” (Tench, D’Artrey, & Fawkes, 2009, p. 41). Others maintain that healthy debate is useful and necessary (Toledano, McKie, & Roper, 2003). The argument of this study is that definitions matter because they shape expectations, practice and role performance. This study found that while job titles are diverse, the definitions are not as diverse. The portrayal of Public Relations as a diverse profession can be seen as a mechanism employed to argue for a wider role for Public Relations.

So, textbook definitions varied from discipline to discipline. Marketing and Advertising textbooks subsumed Public Relations into the IMC mix as “Marketing PR”. Public Relations was cast as the communication function charged with the responsibility for publicising the best features of the company and its products. Media texts predominantly viewed Public Relations as media relations, which functioned as spin doctoring. Human Resource and Management texts tended to ignore Public Relations all together. Although they acknowledged the importance of communication and communication management, they framed it as a generalised function of management rather than a senior management function. In their view, Communication Management had not secured a place at the senior management table. They also tended to frame communication as a one-way mechanism for controlling people and their perceptions of the organisation. Public Relations and Communication texts presented a unique view of Public Relations that no other discipline shared.

They saw Public Relations as a senior management function, operating in a two-way symmetrical communication process to produce mutually beneficial relationships.

This chapter has discussed the two primary models of Public Relations used by senior managers in New Zealand – Publicity and Strategic Communication Management. It then identified three versions of Public Relations that have arisen from within the context of media relations – Antagonists, Professional Rivals and Business Partners. Finally, it established distinctive definitions that exist among Marketing, Advertising, Management, Human Resources, Public Relations and Communication educators and texts – Public Relations as Publicity, as Transparent Communication, as Strategic Communication Management and as idiosyncratic interpretations. Each definitional frame embodied a range of assumptions about the nature and purpose of Public Relations. The next chapter will examine the roles and functions of Public Relations that flow out of these definitional frames.

Chapter 6

Roles and Functions

As indicated in the previous chapter, definitional frameworks of Public Relations tended to cluster according to the specific fields of experience and backgrounds of those who held them. Marketers, Marketing educators and their textbooks were inclined to espouse the Publicity model. Media practitioners, educators and texts were inclined to define Public Relations almost exclusively as media relations. Management practitioners, educators and texts showed a preference for Strategic Communication. Public Relations and Communication practitioners, educators and texts preferred to define Public Relations as transparent or two-way communication. Each of these preferred clusters produced their own extrapolations of the roles and functions of Public Relations and its practitioners. This chapter examines the roles associated with the various definitional frames to provide texture to the answer to the research question “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?”

Senior business managers espoused two distinctive operational models of Public Relations – the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management model. This chapter demonstrates how the Publicity model was expressed in the role of the Publicity Manager. The Strategic Communication Management model was articulated in three distinct roles – the Strategic Communication Manager, the Communicator of Authentic Performance and the Transparent Communicator. These articulations were spread across the senior managers but tended to cluster according to their portfolios (see Table 6.1). Each role description can be seen as a position taken by agents in the general field of business operation.

Positions were self-defining as well as other-defining. Chief Executives positioned themselves as responsible for the reputation of the organisation and wanted Public Relations to communicate authentic performance (as distinct from flamboyant images of success). They were more equivocal towards the role of the Publicity Manager because it exposed them to risk. Chief Financial Officers positioned themselves as controllers and wanted Public Relations to operate within the parameters of sound financial strategy. Consequently, they

preferred Public Relations to perform the role of strategically managed communication. Marketers positioned themselves as leading the organisation's sales efforts and wanted Public Relations to serve Marketing objectives. They espoused the Publicity Manager role for Public Relations with minimal reference to the other roles. Communication General Managers positioned themselves as managers of all the organisational communications and therefore wanted Public Relations to be characterised by stakeholder relationship management and transparent communication. Furthermore, they wanted to distance themselves from the Publicity Manager role. Their positions in the organisation were not always secured so their positioning statement can be seen as claims designed to establish and maintain the legitimacy of their role in the organisation.

Table 6.1 Senior manager Public Relations role descriptions

Categories	Dominant description	Secondary description	Equivocal or negative description
CEOs	Communicating Authentic Performance	SCM	Publicity Manager (equivocal)
CFOs	SCM	Communicating Authentic Performance	Publicity Manager (equivocal)
Marketing	Publicity Manager	-	-
Communications	SCM	Transparent Communicator	Publicity Manager (negative)

6.1 The Publicity Manager

The function or role of the Publicity Manager was primarily described in terms of being a media liaison person. “Public Relations is media management” (CEO, 3). This placed Public Relations as an agent for the company to manage the media in the context of a potentially adversarial relationship given that journalists resist being “managed”. “It’s a PR versus media game involving press releases, media liaison” (CFO, 3). According to this view, the function of the Publicity Manager was

... to think strategically and creatively about how to promote the client’s business, have a good knowledge of the media and media relationships, event management, produce news releases, produce promotional materials, internal communications, newsletters, intranet, handle crisis communications. (CFO, 1)

The purpose of this role was “getting our story across by creating an open relationship with a good balance between spin and stonewall ... to get the facts into circulation ... to transform the facts of issues into information which the public and informed commentators can equally understand” (CEO, 2). The ultimate goal of the Publicity Manager was to secure positive coverage. “We engage PR to keep a high profile by staying in the press” (CEO, 6). This role correlates to Dozier’s and Broom’s (2006) description of the technician role.

Senior Managers from all four categories identified the Publicity Manager role as a function of Public Relations. While most recognised that they used and even needed this function in their companies, they did not embrace it with equal esteem. References to the role ranged from positive to equivocal to negative. Marketing General Managers stood out as the one group who supported this role exclusively and positively. This was not surprising given that this role description positioned Marketing as a core function in the organisation.

PR fits under marketing’s 4 Ps as promotion. PR is a support role within marketing. Brands need PR. There are probably other corporate areas, government relations and issues management but the main area is in MPR. We want clear key messages and positive out-takes about the company from that messaging. So PR people need to know who to contact and how to approach them. PR also takes advantage of opportunities for example, causes to support, community work to get involved in, and environmental initiatives. (Mktg, 3)

The description used by this Marketing General Manager reflected a dominance mentality. “PR fits under ... we want ... so PR people need to ... takes advantage of ...” It was the language of confident control and assertive direction. It defined the parameters of operation by acknowledging a wider role for Public Relations but identifying the “main area” of Public Relations as MPR (Marketing Public Relations). The role description asserted control over Public Relations. “PR is communication manipulated by marketers to get their message to the market. It’s MPR ... getting journos to write about you so they can impact perceptions” (Mktg, 2). It served Marketing’s needs. “We want clear key messages and positive out-takes about the company” (Mktg, 2). According to this view, the Publicity Manager’s role was to act purely and simply as one of Marketing’s tactical options. “A practitioner has to write press releases. That’s about all” (Mktg, 2).

The Publicity Manager’s job was to secure a hearing for the company’s point of view amidst the various opinions and messages circulating in the public domain.

PR is an active effort to present our organisation’s activities in a favourable light to achieve business objectives with various constituencies. It is getting the right messages to the right people. So, good PR is tight messaging. It has cut-through with stakeholders. It is engaged with the media all the time to ensure both sides of the argument are presented. (Mktg, 4)

This involved managing the media, the “ability to harness media to proclaim good things we have done, getting good press, good perceptions of us” (Mktg, 1). The word “harness” represented a power claim in the field of information dissemination. It represented a self-construction of the Marketer as the manager or controller of messages. The Marketer determined the “right messages” and charged the Publicity Manager with the responsibility of “ensuring” that arguments were presented in the public domain in order to achieve a “favourable” impression on various constituents.

Self-interested persuasion was an important part of this role description. The Publicity Manager’s job was to persuade audiences to accept company messages: “Good PR is articulating your message you want to present and people understanding and embracing it amidst the noise” (CFO, 3). These

messages were framed as “positive messages about the company” (Mktg, 3). These descriptions fitted the definition of spin because they involved a version of truth designed to present the company in the best possible light. They were also unashamedly committed to profit-making. “PR is publicity, brand awareness. Good MPR produces sales. It is not altruistic” (Mktg, 1). The Publicity Manager was also aligned with Marketing interests in launching new products, and promoting or protecting the company’s reputation. “MPR involves getting the ground ready for your products and protecting them from attack by unhappy campers” (CFO, 6). “It gets us into the media for product releases and about company issues. So the practitioner needs to be able to write press releases, internal newsletters and come up with ideas for publications. PR is anything we want to tell the world about our product” (Mktg, 1).

CEOs and CFOs held an equivocal view of the Publicity Manager role. It was valued and employed differently at different stages of the business cycle. “PR’s importance is increased at certain growth stages in the business. In the early stages it is needed 9/10 to explain value propositions; later it is needed 5 or 6/10 as delivery of service begins to speak for itself” (CEO, 1). Thus media publicity was desirable to create awareness but once that had been achieved, the priority for publicity diminished. Furthermore, some sought to avoid publicity. CEOs and CFOs were unenthusiastic about the effectiveness of the Publicity Manager approach where it had exposed their companies to embarrassment through over-disclosure (CFO, 2) or over-statement (CEO, 6; CEO, 8).

Communications General Managers commonly held a negative view of Public Relations as Publicity because of the disapproval surrounding the term. “PR has a negative image, spin doctoring” (Comms, 7) and its association with propagandistic, persuasive communication.

PR is about reputational management. We are a touch point (conduit) for media on issues. We pride ourselves on being accessible to media. The old 1980s PR spin doctor is soft, fluffy, creative brand launch material. Modern Corporate Affairs is reputational management and strategic advice to the CEO. (Comms, 1)

While the Publicity Manager was involved in managing the reputation of the company by “dealing with the expectations of external audiences” (Comms 6), “it is not about putting happy stories in the newspaper. It’s all about relationships” (Comms, 4). This reflected a strong desire to establish the Communications role as a credible, mature, strategic management function. It emphasised the roles of relationship-building and reputation management over the placement of promotional stories in the media. By dissociating with the Publicity model, Communication General Managers were distancing themselves from negative branding and laying a platform for generating a more acceptable perception of themselves in the perceptions of senior management.

6.2 The Strategic Communication Manager

Managers (except for Marketing) subscribed to the Strategic Communication Management model but with differing levels of commitment. CFOs in particular preferred Strategic Communication Management. One company that had recently restructured its Communication function suggested that this fundamental preference was behind the change. “Our PR used to be about publications and media based communication and events. Now it’s linked to the strategic plan” (CFO, 4). To some extent, the Strategic Communication Manager role was functionally similar to that of the Publicity Manager in that it still involved one-way communication aimed at achieving company goals. The key distinction, however, was that communication of messages should be carefully thought out and timed to maximise benefit to the company. So it involved “integrated campaigns and control of messages” (Comms, 3). This contrasted with the propagation of press releases aimed at securing a high profile in the media. Strategic Communication was spread across the whole organisation. “PR is holistic. It involves all elements of the comms mix – internal, media, external, stakeholders. It’s not in isolation” (Comms, 2). This model reframed Public Relations as part of the overall Communication function of the organisation. “Communication involves investor relations, media relations, stakeholder communication, corporate hospitality, internal communication, community relations, sponsorship, etc. It is integrated into the business plan” (Comms, 2).

The introduction of the term “strategic” argued a wider role for Communication within an organisation. The Strategic Communication Manager was expected to be aware of how both external and internal factors might affect the strategic process by “listening, understanding issues, distilling key points” (Comms, 7). It involved the management of issues by “preparation, planning and implementing communication of key messages on behalf of the shareholders” (Comms, 7). It implied involvement at the senior management table in order to understand the direction of the organisation and to advocate for strategic communication when decisions were being made. “Business drives strategy; MPR delivers the strategy, communicating it to the stakeholders. So it needs to be more proactive to say ‘think about us [Communication] at the beginning of the process’ ” (CEO, 1). It required proactive engagement with senior managers and the direction of the organisation “rather than just letting things tick along” (Comms, 12). This role description placed Public Relations in a leadership role as something that

... takes an organisation to places, creates authentic, meaningful momentum ... It differentiates and produces a compelling platform for the organisation to operate from. It does this by producing partnerships, goodwill and stakeholder management which helps to defend the organisation. It is a navigator through complexity. It builds a compelling picture and brand which has some clear discrete measures such as ‘those who will buy’; and some indiscrete measures such as creating people who are ‘willing to recommend’. (Comms, 9)

This articulation among Communication General Managers served to validate their position and status within their organisations. Although many CEOs agreed with this view of what communication should involve, they did not always consider their Communication staff capable of performing at the strategic level.

A feature of the Strategic Communication Manager role description was the frequent reference to their function as a relationship manager. This suggested the need to “manage two-way communication with a range of stakeholders” (CFO, 2) and “cultivating an array of specialist contacts, for example, in media, government, and interest groups” (CEO, 7). This articulated a role beyond the Publicity Manager to a networking and relationship-building function. “Media coverage is not the Holy Grail. It is more about having a network of contacts and helping us to present at meetings with them” (CEO, 7). The range of relationships extended to staff, customers, management and owners. “PR is

marrying internal and external communication. It is influence through relationships to look after the corporate brand and reputation” (Comms, 7). It combined awareness of emerging issues with two-way communication designed to facilitate issues resolution and thus maintenance of a good reputation among stakeholders. “PR involves reputation management through building relationships and environmental scanning” (Comms, 3).

The Strategic Communication Manager took a longer term view than the Publicity Manager. “Good PR is long term relationships and reputation management. It sees how issues impact on business outcomes. It recognises stakeholder groups before they hit the pressure group phase” (CFO, 4). Instead of anticipating short-term engagement, “PR requires strategic thinking, honesty, integrity, a broad knowledge because it is about building credibility in the context of long term relationships” (Comms, 10). This model elevated Public Relations to a more senior role in the company. “PR is now in the boardroom, building long term relationships, transparency, true partnerships” (CEO, 1). It was also being brought in-house. “We are in transition from relying on a consultancy. We want PR to be clear, consistent messaging to all stakeholders. This requires building relationships over time” (CFO, 5).

Communication General Managers were eager to associate themselves with the Strategic Communication Management function and to dissociate themselves from the Publicity function. In order to do this they separated the functions associated with the two versions of Public Relations.

There are two elements to PR: Brand PR which is fluffy and candy and Public Affairs which is grown up PR. It involves issues management, Government relations, social responsibility reporting and networking to get third party endorsement. It’s about quality relationships based on mutual trust, honest information exchange, respect for boundaries (sometimes you can’t give people what they want), understanding (you can’t please all the people all the time but you can always be polite).
(Comms, 5)

The metaphor of “candy” and its implied association with children formulated Publicity Management as shallow and immature in contrast to “grown up” Strategic Communication Management (Public Affairs). Communication General Managers were not alone in advocating this distinction.

There are two streams of PR – one is about brand and marcoms, for example, conferences, seminars, events, videos, web communication, golf days, dinners. This requires every bit of creativity I do not possess. The other is corporate communications. It involves investor relations, issues and crisis management, government relations. For this, the practitioner must think critically. We need performance, not public profile. We need to bring the espoused position together with the internal reality rather than spinning something that is not real. (CFO, 2)

This “corporate communications” version of Public Relations integrated the Strategic Communication Manager into the senior management team as a key facilitator of the strategic direction of the organisation in areas such as environmental scanning, monitoring of issues, liaising with senior managers, providing insightful advice and support to the CEO. This incorporation was not without its tensions. “Relationships have to be built on integrity. They can be two-way if the senior management team is open to change. This takes a lot of work in some cases” (Comms, 3). The Strategic Communication Manager was an important boundary-spanner, facilitating communication with stakeholders to monitor emerging issues and solve problems. The need to manage reputation carefully was connected to gaining public consent to operate, a notion that some CEOs do not seem to understand.

PR is about managing the reputation of the company. We need a license to operate. So it’s all about relationships. It’s more than publicity – putting happy, positive stories into the newspaper. Pure PR is pitching stories to the media. We don’t do that. The boss thinks we can use the media to advance our cause but we can’t do that if we haven’t built a relationship with them. That takes a lot of hard work.
(Comms, 4)

Practitioners could negotiate a key strategic role for themselves. One company CEO reported that his Corporate Affairs Manager was an essential part of the senior management team. “She is the pilot of the ship; I am the captain.” This image illustrated a working relationship in which the practitioner was able to give advice and direction from the “bridge” to the captain who would then make the decisions about where to steer the ship. This is the expert prescriber role associated with senior practitioners (Dozier & Broom, 2006).

6.3 The Communicator of Authentic Performance

The CEOs in this study showed a preference for Public Relations enacted as Authentic Performance. The Communicator of Authentic Performance proposed that good reputation was produced by strong company performance rather than by claims it made about itself. “Public Relations should be embedded in the business before the fact not after it” (CEO, 8) because “good PR has to have substance. It’s not just hosting people at a rugby game” (CEO, 5). The Communicator of Authentic Performance was cautious about media coverage. “You should only be in the media when you have something to say” (CEO, 6). Authentic performance involved profit-making but it also included elements of social responsibility such as doing good for local or targeted communities, treating the staff well, listening to feedback, looking after the environment, and being honest and transparent. It was essentially an inside-out approach in which the performance of the company spoke for itself. “The best form of public relations is to do your job well. That speaks for itself. Everyone in the company is doing public relations in this sense” (CEO, 2).

These claims reflected a CEO perspective that involved a number of factors associated with expectations placed on CEOs by their stakeholders, especially their Board and shareholders. Firstly, Authentic Performance involved delivering results aligned with the business plan, “delivering what you say you will deliver; having a good plan” (CEO, 7). But added to that, this version of Public Relations entailed consistent messaging, ethical behaviour, regular communication and astute decision-making.

Good PR is about doing your job ... staying on message ... true to strategy ... communicating core values ... business integrity ... ethics ... strategy... regularly meeting needs of stakeholders ... keeping up the flow of information ... understanding concerns ... giving due consideration ... listening, not painting a picture. (CEO, 4)

Authentic Performance also meant unrehearsed behaviours, “walking the talk; not 1980s schmoozing” (CEO, 1). Sometimes authenticity was transparent and could be “a bit raw” (CEO, 6). It also involved a willingness to seek feedback and incorporate that information into the business operation. “Good PR involves

making changes in advance of customer opinion. I find this out by talking to my staff. They represent my customer base. Pure PR doesn't fix things. You have to change" (CEO, 8). Authenticity was based on an understanding that the success of organisations in New Zealand is dependant on public consent.

Good PR is doing the right thing. We are here by permission of the local community so we have to listen, show integrity and provide information. If not, people make it up. PR is all about communication, always thinking about messaging, staying true to strategy and staying on message.
(CEO, 4)

Some CEOs believed that they were better off handling the media themselves rather than handing this responsibility over to someone else who may overstate or fictionalise the company position. "You don't need PR as such if you are running the business right. Good PR should be embedded in the business. The CEO owns it and drives it rather than a spokesperson. PR is used when you hide" (CEO, 8). A Public Relations practitioner may not actually be needed. One of the companies had decided to do their own Public Relations. "We don't have PR as such. We all share in the writing of the Annual Report, releases to the NZX. The CEO writes his own statements" (LC, 1). It should be noted that this latter statement reflected a view of Public Relations closer to the Publicity Manager than the Communicator of Authentic Performance, however. In summary, the CEO preference for Authentic Performance to speak for itself can be seen as a position reflecting the expectations placed on them and the concerns that arise from these expectations.

6.4 The Transparent Communicator

The Transparent Communicator construction was unique to Communication General Managers. It was an extension of the Authentic Performance role in that it valued genuineness but it emphasised transparency rather than company performance. The Transparent Communicator advocated communication that was “open, honest, and accepted by all stakeholders” (Comms, 10).

Transparent communication extended to the media. “Public Affairs is a conduit ... a touch point for media ... we have a proactive media policy involving transparency and openness” (Comms, 1). It also incorporated elements of relationship management. “PR is transparent communication based on trust and credibility built over a long period of time. It is strategic communication rather than media relations with journos – although they need all the support they can get. They are so depleted in their resourcing” (Comms, 3). The Transparent Communicator built trust by being “an honest reliable gateway for two way communication ... a reliable source of information ... supplying info over time ... for the benefit of the public and the company” (Comms, 5). This construction espoused accountability to external stakeholders: “... you are in the public court and will be judged on the quality of your communications” (Comms 5).

The Transparent Communicator advocated disclosure beyond the Publicity and Strategic Communication Management models. Publicity and Strategic Communication Management involved self-interested communication that was either promotional or guarded. The Transparent Communicator was committed to open disclosure. The fact that this view was not enthusiastically shared by the other senior managers suggests that this position may be a unique contribution that Communication Managers bring to an organisation, perhaps from their media experience. It also suggested that Communication Managers who espouse this view will have to advocate for it in the context of other views, some of which are not receptive to it. Failure to win over support could mean ostracism and loss of power in the senior management structure.

6.5 How New Zealand media want Public Relations to operate

Media views of the role of Public Relations were dominated exclusively by the definitional framework of media relations. It accepted that Public Relations needed to secure coverage for a client or organisation so long as it was “straightforward advocacy that’s helpful, has clear reasoning, without self-serving half-truths or guile” (news editor). It also acknowledged that, in some cases, Public Relations needed to shield information in the interests of a client. This represented a tacit, if sometimes reluctant, acceptance of the Publicity Manager role. Role descriptions were however punctuated with suggestions and directives as to how the Publicity Manager role should be conducted (see Table 6.2).

Table 6:2 How New Zealand Media would like Public Relations to function

Act with integrity	No dubious tactics, no lies, keep promises, do not provide misleading information
Respect boundaries	Do not pressure us to publish Act as an informed link (a conduit)
Allow media to investigate	Don’t take it personally if we do The client angle may not be the news angle
Be helpful not obstructive	Facilitate access, provide answers, provide timely information, answer calls Do not block access to spokespeople, do not refuse to comment, do not gate keep
Cultivate a relaxed relationship	An easygoing non-abrasive manner Coffee, cocktails (without pressure)
Show respect	Fair treatment at functions Do not adopt a disdainful attitude Curb your cutting remarks about salary
Advocate professionally	By all means advocate for your client Partnering with media is acceptable but we cannot accept undisclosed enticements

The underlying premise to this list is that media do not want Public Relations practitioners to obstruct the news-gathering process. When this happened, the media were likely to criticise Public Relations by suggesting that it was “working against the public interest” and the public’s (read media’s) right to know about matters of interest. “PR is interference if it gate keeps” (business magazine editor). “PR is not good when it stops people fronting up or teaches people to give a particular answer” (news editor).

At a basic relational level, collaboration in the news gathering process meant helping to gain access to an organisation through simple things such as “getting back to you when they say they will ... answering questions you ask ... connecting you with the person you asked for” (news editor). At a deeper level, there was a “need to develop long term relationships to produce mutual feeling of trust and confidence” (business news editor). This recognised the importance of relationship building referred to in the constructions offered by senior business managers – especially the Communication General Managers. So this element can be seen as a part of the logic of practice.

Collaboration recognised mutual needs – “you offer exclusive stories; we keep confidences” and that “it’s a symbiotic relationship. Media need information and enjoy stories. PR wants stories published” (television news editor). This recognition had important implications for the later discussion on the how perceptions of power influenced the media – Public Relations relationship. Sometimes the power distribution was unbalanced. Business media, were more reliant on Public Relations to provide specialised and technical information. “I am quite dependant on PR/Comms people for technical information to explain things to me as an amateur. Business journalism relationship is more professional – I call for information, it is supplied. They are doing my research for me” (business news editor).

The media were aware of Public Relations’ attempts to use them for third party advocacy. Limited collusion was possible through relationship building and the supply and exchange of information and contacts, a practice sometimes referred to as information subsidising. But the media editors rejected open endorsement and resented tactics by Public Relations practitioners that could

be interpreted as attempts to bribe journalists into collusion. Two different participants recounted the same example of a Public Relations company overstepping the line in offering enticements. The incident involved a Public Relations company offering incentives to media to launch a particular product. The Public Relations company offered a trip to a Pacific Island location for the journalist who most frequently used a neologism in their reporting. The strategy was to introduce the neologism as a teaser for the product launch. Some media saw this as a direct attempt to bribe journalists into subsidised promotion using the credibility of their journalistic position as leverage with audiences. From a media perspective, this was considered unethical practice.

Media were looking for a managed process where Public Relations acted as a source of contacts, story leads and quotes. “Good PR is where all parties benefit from the contact ... Where the PR practitioner acts as an informed link bringing the right people together to get the story out to the right audience” (news editor). Hence they saw successful Public Relations as skilfully pitching stories to the media in order to get client opinion on issues into the public domain. From a media perspective the successful Public Relations practitioner had learned how to “drop stories” and to “dispense information about a client over a cup of coffee” (business magazine editor).

Media editors did mention Strategic Communication Management. “PR has grown up from press relations to a more strategic role. For example, Mercury Energy demonstrated how Public Relations needed to be involved at Board level. Telecom demonstrated how CEO statements can get you in trouble which can spread to the internet” (business magazine editor). This reference to strategic communication entailed the ability to boundary-span from customers to the boardroom and to influence CEO statements. But the roles associated with strategic communication management tended to be lost in the media relations labyrinth. Recognition of Public Relations beyond media relations was rare. Being strategic was more commonly defined as intelligent media relations. “Strategic coverage, for example, in the Sunday Star Times and the Listener is worth ten articles in provincial papers. Public Relations needs to be strategic in identifying angles, selecting contacts, know what a journalist is looking for, developing a succinct pitch” (senior news journalist). Overall editors expected

Public Relations to function in a way that facilitated the news-gathering function. To them, a positive media relationship was one which facilitated the media agenda. Where this happened they were gratified and held a positive view of Public Relations. Where this did not happen, they were critical of Public Relations' role and wanted to see it changed.

Overall the media preferred transparent disclosure. They were sensitive to spin and expected the kind of transparency that would admit mistakes and expose weaknesses. It should "not be one-sided boasting. You must consider the community impact – not just pushing out messages. [You] can't just sell the selling points" (business magazine editor). This approach implied that disclosure was an important ingredient in reputation building and that persuasion was far more effective if claims were accompanied by apologies and admissions when necessary. "The art of persuasion is not heavy-handedness" (news editor). This positioned Media Relations as a field of conflicting agendas in which Public Relations and the media wrestled over acceptable levels of information disclosure. It was likely that Communication General Managers who had come from a media background had carried the transparent disclosure view with them into the business environment.

In the Professional Rivals frame, the Public Relations practitioner "plays a game, trying to get a story across, spin to get the company mentioned or to influence the story." According to this view, the role of Public Relations was to get media to collude in creating perceptions amenable to clients. The struggle here was to influence interpretation; "getting into our information stream".

The interview process in this research gave media participants the opportunity to express how they would like Public Relations practitioners to function. Many participants seemed to relish the opportunity of the interview to unload their frustrations in the hope that the researcher would "relay these things back to the PR people in PRINZ" (news editor). This illustrated the influence of the relationship with the researcher in the co-creation of data. The fact that the researcher was a member of PRINZ and indicated a desire to inform Public Relations practice encouraged this participant to believe that their frustrations with Public Relations practitioners would be heard and acted on.

6.6 New Zealand tertiary educator views of the role of Public Relations

Each academic discipline held its own distinctive view of how Public Relations should function. These views largely matched those held by their counterparts in industry. The Marketing educators saw the role of Public Relations as a minor player in the IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) mix. Media and Broadcasting educators wanted Public Relations to fit the media agenda. Management educators expected managers to display excellent communication skills in leadership, staff management, stakeholder relationship management, and crisis preparedness but they did not advocate an organisational position for Communication Management neither did they spend much time discussing Public Relations, whereas senior managers did. Public Relations and Communication educators held a similar view to their business counterparts. They rejected the Publicity model and espoused both Strategic Communication Management and Transparent Communication. Their constructions entailed two-way communication and a transformational role in the organisation. They suggested that the role of Publicity Manager was not the most desirable way to describe the role of Public Relations.

6.6.1 Marketing educator views of Public Relations functions

Like their counterparts in senior management positions, Marketing educators and textbooks presented the primary role of Public Relations as media relations: "PR must be well connected with journalists" (Mktg educator, A). Kotler, Keller and Burton (2009) linked Marketing Public Relations (MPR) directly with media relations: "the old name for MPR was publicity, securing editorial space" (p. 565). This has come to include visibility online. "One common goal of a public relations firm is to get hits. A hit is the mention of the company's name in a news story" (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 373). Success in this environment was measured by AEV (Advertising Equivalency Value), an estimate of the value of unpaid editorial coverage compared to its equivalent value in paid advertising space (Harris & Whalen, 2006). Thus, "PR is representing the corporate to its publics. If you don't know about us, have never heard of us, if you stumble over us – don't be afraid of us" (Mktg educator C, citing Seitel, 1998, p. 2). This view espoused media exposure as a priority.

According to this construct, Public Relations should manage reputation and impressions of the organisation to achieve a favourable environment for sales, to improve brand recognition and to achieve brand dominance and ongoing commitment from consumers. “I impress on students the importance of PR to branding. It needs to be integrated so the brand is not schizophrenic. The 4 Ps of PR are – positioning, promoting, preserving and protecting” (Mktg educator, B). Its aim was to influence audiences towards a favourable view of the organisation in order to facilitate the achievement of that organisation’s goals. “Public Relations is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour” (Mktg educator, B). The implication was that if audiences understood what an organisation was trying to achieve, and if this understanding was presented in a compelling way, then they would be more likely to accept and support the decisions made by the organisation.

Selective disclosure was seen as a necessary part of Publicity Management. “It’s corporate positioning. Saying enough to show you are concerned but not saying you have it covered. If you can pull that off you are doing good PR” (Mktg educator, D). Thus it supported spin as legitimate communication. “PR is putting the organisation in the best light ... good PR accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative.” [Isn’t that spin?] “Could be (smile)” (Mktg educator, B). The purpose of Marketing Public Relations was “gaining positive coverage and fending off negative news” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 382); “building the corporate image in a way that reflects favorably on its products” (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 566); “sending out favourable news about the company and ‘damage control’ unfavorable news” (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 23). “One of the most important PR functions is damage control” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 381).

Fundamentally, Public Relations was presented as a tool in the Marketing tool box. Textbooks such as Clow & Baack (2007), Kotler et al. (2009), and Yeshin (1998, 2006) described the role of Public Relations as “a specialist in publicizing marketing messages” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 384). Advertisers have also been “realizing the need to build reputation not just sales” (Yeshin, 2006, p. 61). Yeshin (1998) described the role of Public Relations as preparing the way for advertising to make sales.

The responsibility of Public Relations is to create and influence publicity in such a way as to have a positive impact on the company for which the activity is undertaken. The primary goal of advertising is to inform and persuade consumers...the primary goal of Public Relations is to establish goodwill and to develop favourable attitudes and an understanding of the organization and its products and services. (p. 251)

The value that Public Relations could bring to Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) was that it could operate in an inconspicuous manner “through invisible relationship building. Good PR is seamless. No bumps. PR are relationship builders and gatekeepers” (Mktg educator, D). This was particularly relevant to media relations where it was assumed that a good relationship would produce more favourable media treatment for the organisation. Thus Public Relations was seen as an important supplement to advertising, which has suffered from consumer resistance to exaggeration, the wallpaper effect (being lost in the mass production of advertising) and the perception of self-interested bias (Ries & Ries, 2002).

Public Relations was seen as a functional compartment, “a subset of marketing” (Mktg educator, A). “Marketing is the overall umbrella. PR is one of its elements” (Mktg educator, E). According to this view, Public Relations was considered a small contributor to a much larger organisational function. “I don’t tell students a lot about PR. It’s a tool in an integrated tool set ...one of the smaller tools in marketing” (Mktg educator, D). Public Relations did not rate as highly as other aspects in the Marketing discipline and so it did not warrant much attention in the teaching programme. “PR is the most important part of marcoms but I don’t spend much time on it. I mention it a bit under IMC but I spend two or three full sessions on advertising because that’s where the most money is spent” (Mktg educator F). The justification for not spending much time on Public Relations was pragmatic; businesses spent more money on advertising than on Public Relations.

One Marketing educator perceived changes in the marketplace which suggested a wider role for Public Relations. “I have seen PR move from reporting to Personnel to reporting to the Head of the Marcoms Group and to the CEO. It’s moved from crisis to management communications” (Mktg educator, F). Another echoed these sentiments as follows:

It used to be publicity (media relations) but now it's way bigger than marketing. It's corporate positioning. PR is representing the corporate to its publics. PR evaluates public attitudes, identifies issues and executes programmes to gain public understanding and acceptance. Publicity is an effort to capture media attention. (Mktg educator, G)

Marketing texts also discuss a wider role for Public Relations. Clow and Baack (2007), for example, referred to five functions of Public Relations – identifying stakeholders; assessing reputation; auditing CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and producing a report on it; creating a positive image; and reducing/preventing damage” (p. 377). This wider role was referred to as Corporate Public Relations (Pickton & Broderick, 2001; Clow & Baack, 2007; Kotler et al., 2009). Kotler et al. (2009) also articulated a role for Public Relations practitioners as being to “act as an internal customer and public advocate for better company policy and practices” (p. 23). This proposed a role for Public Relations as “the conscience of the organisation counselling the senior management team” (Ibid, p. 565). These references represented the beginnings of a shift in Marketing thinking regarding Public Relations away from a purely Publicity Management role to a wider Communication Management role. According to the educators interviewed in this study, this shift had not yet reached their classroom teaching even though it was discussed in Marketing texts such as Clow and Baack (2007) and Kotler et al. (2009).

The concept of a wider role introduced an inherent conflict over how this wider role should be exercised. On the one hand, “Public Relations has responsibility for consistency of messaging” across the organisation. On the other, “PR is a promotional tool – part of IMC” (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 509). This begged the question of where Public Relations fitted in the organisation. Marketing Public Relations clearly reported to Marketing. Was there another sort of Public Relations reporting to someone else? If so, what was the relationship between these different roles? At what point could the consistency function address marketing strategies that might be unacceptable to key stakeholders? In a situation like this, who has the authority to make the final decisions about messaging? This potential conflict was also reflected in other texts. For example, Clow and Baack (2007) stated that “the public relations (PR) department is a unit in the firm that manages publicity and other communications with every group that is in contact with the company.” But they

also maintained that “the goal of an IMC plan is to make sure that each component part of a firm’s communication plan speaks with one voice” (p. 372). This left the question of who owned the IMC plan – Marketing or Public Relations, or a combination of both – unanswered.

There was evidence to support the notion that Marketing has asserted control over the field of organisational communication (Hutton, 2001, 2010). In some texts this control was evidenced by scant reference to Public Relations. Yeshin (2006) did not include the term Public Relations or Corporate Communication in his Contents or Index, for example. He asserted Public Relations “is incorporated into IMC [Integrated Marketing Communication]” and “IMC embraces everything that a company does and communicates,” (pp. 58, 61).

Others subsumed Public Relations as one item on a long list of organisational communication. “The need to integrate all promotional efforts has expanded beyond the three traditional elements of advertising, sales promotion, and personal selling. Now promotion also includes activities such as database marketing, direct marketing, sponsorship marketing, internet marketing, and public relations” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 9). Kotler et al. (2009) discussed the need to consider contextual elements such as audience and media fragmentation, the increased demand for authenticity, the speed of information exchange, and the complex way in which messages are communicated. These elements “require more sophisticated communication approaches” (p. 509). According to these writers, this responsibility fell to Marketing.

6.6.2 Management educator views of Public Relations functions

The predominant view of the role of Public Relations among Management educators was that it had little or no place. If it existed at all it should engage in transparent communication. This was referred to as “building reputation from the inside out” (Mgt educator, A). According to this view, Public Relations acted as a revealer of internal activity, “something that is balanced – not just spin. It exposes the warts ... presenting accurate rather than misleading information” (Mgt educator, B). This stood in stark contrast to the Marketing view. The Management view corresponded with the CEO view regarding the importance of authentic performance. For example, it suggested that companies and organisations should “act in a socially responsible manner then maximise [their] PR opportunities” (HR Mgt educator, A).

In most cases, however, Management and Human Resources educators in this study said they did not mention Public Relations in their teaching. “I don’t talk about PR. I talk about a company needing to show its social legitimacy by the way they manage people as well as meet the bottom line” (HR educator, A). “I don’t talk about PR except explain how it shapes the way we see things” (Mgt educator, A). “I don’t talk about PR. I prefer to talk about a company communicating with stakeholders” (Mgt educator, B). This is consistent with textbook representation. There is no reference to Public Relations in Human Resources or Management texts such as Macky and Johnson (2008); Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter (2009); Samson and Daft (2009); Schermerhorn (2010). This has significant repercussions for people studying in these fields. Silence on the subject of Public Relations represents a structured absence that leaves the student without a reference point for locating the practice in a business context. It could be concluded that Public Relations was framed in the Management and Human Resources disciplines as being outside the business of business. While stakeholder relations were recognised as being an important part of Management, the practice of Public Relations was not.

6.6.3 Media educator views of Public Relations functions

There was also a great deal of congruence between what media educators and media editors said about the role of Public Relations. For example, Media educators were generally suspicious of Public Relations and framed most of their answers in terms of how Public Relations should be approachable and helpful to media. “The good practitioners are not control freaks. They have an open approach to media. Good PR facilitates access to sources” (Media educator, A). They thought this would be accomplished by media training for managers. “Media training improves interviews” (Media educator, C). This view was focused on Public Relations as media relations and the recommendation that its practitioners should collaborate in the news-gathering process as a matter of democratic obligation. For example, Public Relations practitioners should “listen, help, and add as a conduit/facilitator to find me the best person to discuss things with” (Media educator, B). According to this construct, practitioners should act under the same ethical and professional framework as journalists. “Good Public Relations promotes public understanding. It provides accurate portrayals. It corrects misperceptions” (Media educator, D).

Media educators in this study warned students to be wary of Public Relations. “I tell students to take care. Public Relations practitioners always talk the book so you have to check everything” (Media educator, E). New Zealand media texts also saw Public Relations as a threat to the news-gathering process – some (Tucker, 1992) more so than others (Comrie, 2002; Tully, 2008). In a chapter titled “Handling Public Relations”, Tucker (1992) described the growth of Government Public Relations as “startling” (p. 117). He portrayed Public Relations practitioners as “hidden persuaders” and journalists as the “only impediment between the public relations consultant and his or her successful campaign to sell a line” (Ibid). This portrayal posited the relationship between media and Public Relations as adversarial. “It is war: paid gossips (journalists) versus paid liars” (Tucker, 1992, p.117). Tucker listed several reasons why journalism was threatened by the role of Public Relations. “They are better paid, better trained, more creative and highly motivated. What chance do we have?” (Tucker, 1992, p. 117). The references to pay and training differentials referred to disparities in resourcing, but the qualitative evaluation of the relative

capability and motivation of journalists (who were seen as more creative and highly motivated) in relation to Public Relations practitioners suggested a sense of inadequacy.

The entangled relationship was a theme repeated in other media texts such as Comrie (2002), who pointed out that “journalists, as public watchdogs, often exaggerate the power and activities of public relations people. [When] in reality they rely on each other while fiercely guarding their own patch ... the symbiotic relationship between journalists and PR is fraught with tension” (p. 158). This foreshadowed the findings of Tilley and Hollings (2008) that journalists were “Still stuck in a love–hate relationship [characterised by an] enduring and impassioned duality towards Public Relations.” Comrie (2002) indicated that “public relations people have transformed journalism over the last 15 years” (p. 158) and that “news management is an invasive creeping condition” (p. 160). She pointed out the threat to journalism posed by the reduction in news room capacity (p. 158), the onslaughts of technology and increasing competition (p. 163), the exponential growth in numbers and resourcing allocated to Public Relations practitioners (p. 164), and “the strategic focus of professional communicators” (p. 171). These sentiments were reminiscent of the comments made by editors and senior journalists in this study.

Tully (2008) adopted a more circumspect approach to Public Relations, treating it as one of several sources of information, all of which should be subjected to the same careful scrutiny. Although he did not dedicate a great deal of space to the subject, he did mention Public Relations under the heading “Finding News”, where he recommended caution in handling media releases. He also noted that journalists found news by “developing and nurturing good contacts” (p. 27). Many of these sources could be regarded as Public Relations practitioners since he observed that

... an ever-expanding communications industry has manifestly expanded in the last 20 years and is no longer confined to corporations, government departments and agencies. Voluntary organisations, charities, schools, social service agencies and community groups are increasingly employing people with titles such as information officer, public affairs manager, media liaison and communications director to deal with the media. (Tully, 2008, pp. 25, 26)

So, although Public Relations and Media had different agendas, Media educators saw value in using information from Public Relations practitioners as story leads. “I tell students any information is a good starting point for inquiry. Do not throw press releases in the bin. Pursue the story to satisfy your audience” (Media educator, E). This illustrated the Professional Rivals model of relationship in that it recognised that “there are separate agendas, the clients’ best interests versus discovering what needs to be discovered” (Media educator, E). But “PR is not the dark side” (Media educator, E).

Media educators taught students to be assertive when dealing with Public Relations practitioners in the professional context because “PR is obstructive to journalistic practice. I tell students to persist and break through the resistance. Insist on speaking to someone. Keep asking questions rather than accepting short answers” (Media educator, G). These comments contributed to the structuration of a relationship characterised by watchfulness and caution. It required “extra vigilance and constant attention to the foundations of good journalism” (Comrie, 2002, p. 171). The relationship described the macro environmental requirements of the profession to practice vigilance and called on journalism students to adopt their own micro attitudes that would generate a cautious trajectory in their dealings with Public Relations people.

Only one of the Media educators saw anything beyond a media relations role for Public Relations. This educator identified a shift in the function of Public Relations from purely media relations to Strategic Communication Management.

Reputation management as a consultant involves long term strategy versus media relations. PR is a growing, increasingly influential industry. 21st Century organisations understand the importance of message communication in a variety of ways – NGOs, NFPs, not just corporates. Good PR is facilitating people and organisations in effectively communicating their message. Media is a small part of what PR people do. (Media educator, F)

This emerging role identified the need for “long term strategy versus media relations”, implying that media relations was a short-term negotiation between Public Relations practitioners and journalists over what should be published.

This was a significant contrast to the other Media educator views. It represented a wider view of “facilitating people and organisations in effectively communicating their message” that was more reminiscent of the view proposed by Communication educators and practitioners.

6.6.4 Public Relations and Communication educator views of Public Relations functions

The dominant portrayal of Public Relations by the Public Relations and Communication educators in this study was of transparent, two-way communication through either strategic communication or relationship management. “Good PR is stakeholder relationship management – building mutual understanding with key stakeholders, using communication as a tool to achieve this” (PR/Comms educator, A). It emphasised a systematic approach whereby the practitioner proactively engaged stakeholders and measured the efficacy of engagement. “PR is strategic management of communication. It’s a disciplined, systematic process, managing relationships” (PR/Comms educator, B). It also incorporated an ethical dimension “managing relationships through ethical communication” (PR/Comms educator, C). In this context ethics was constructed as “honest, two-way communication” (PR/Comms educator, C).

These constructions represent position-taking in the field of business operation. The references to a distinctive form of two-way, symmetric communication, a strategic, systematic approach to communication and relationship management, and ethical communication can all be seen as fundamentals in the construction of a model of Public Relations that has substance and credibility. Whether these concepts had substantive support in practice was a matter for debate. There was, for example, strong evidence of one-way communication embedded in constructions such as publicity management, media management, and strategic communication. Two-way symmetric communication was not compatible with the publicity management role espoused by Marketers in this study.

Nevertheless, Public Relations and Communication Management educators used terminology derived from the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992; Grunig et al., 2002) to emphasise the contribution Public Relations should make to

generate two-way communication. “We are in an autocratic state. The Government uses asymmetrical dialogue. Good Public Relations is two-way regular dialogue with all stakeholders in an evolving process ... messages designed to communicate effectively ... good lobbying is like growing asparagus. You wish you’d planted two year’s ago” (PR/Comms educator, L). According to this view “... good PR is consultative” (PR/Comms educator, E). Another sentiment associated with the Excellence Theory was that Public Relations should operate at the strategic level. “PR should be strategic, evaluated, part of an integrated approach. PR ought to be at the strategic level” (PR/Comms educator, F). The use of the words “should” and “ought” parallels the language used in Excellence Theory literature when referring to how Public Relations operated. It reflected what the writers considered an ideal situation, not one that necessarily existed in real practice. Whether communication practice in New Zealand was systematic and measured was questioned by some. “Ideally PR should be about two-way communication measurement but in fact I’m not sure we strategically and systematically go about doing that” (PR/Comms educator, B). This comment recognised that what Public Relations educators and practitioners say about the practice does not always reflect the reality of how practice actually operates.

Strongly idiosyncratic educator views also emerged. One suggested that Public Relations should have a role as a proactive advocate for societal change. “It should produce an impact on society to make it more ethical, equitable and sustainable” (PR/Comms educator, H). This articulation was unique among the views expressed by participants in this study. It entailed an aspirational view that the function of Public Relations practice should not only be ethical but that it should also be employed for worthy societal outcomes for people and the environment. “Good PR effects social change. It is done ethically for ethical issues” (PR/Comms educator, H). Under this framework students of Public Relations were invited to choose whether to use their skills as a force for good or for harm. “I tell students that with good PR skills you can be an influence for positive social change – or you can use those skills to contribute to social problems” (PR/Comms educator, H).

Several advocated the importance of stakeholder engagement through research and consultation. “PR should be underpinned by careful research” (PR/Comms educator, E). “Understand your audience ... your stakeholders... how networks connect... political communication is measured communication” (PR/Comms educator, G). Research and measurement of communication outcomes were considered essential elements in two-way communication. “I tell students about research. They need to start with a good knowledge of publics rather than a preconceived set of outcomes. You can be ethical if you use research. It will be inclusive, a consultation” (PR/Comms educator, E).

One educator proposed an eclectic array of functions. “Public Relations is managing relationships through ethical communication. Public Relations is truth well told. A good communicator gets it right with one person or a thousand. A good practitioner should be heard but not seen” (PR/Comms educator, J). This representation offered an intriguing range of possibilities. It began with a statement that articulated an ethical focus for Public Relations and Communication Management. Then it moved to a technician’s view of the practice – clever storytelling and connection with an audience. But transparency was conflicted. The practitioner who was “heard but not seen” could in fact be perceived as an undercover operator whose influence is pervasive but not subject to scrutiny because it is concealed.

Another view was that practitioners expect to be measured by their skilled performance: “Actions speak louder than words. You are known by what you do and how well you do it” (PR/Comms educator, J) and ethical performance:

PR is me, how good I am at media relations and stakeholder relationship management. PR is reputation and relationship management for the client in the context of the environment. The most important thing is honesty, integrity, ethics. All you have is your reputation. (PR/Comms educator, K)

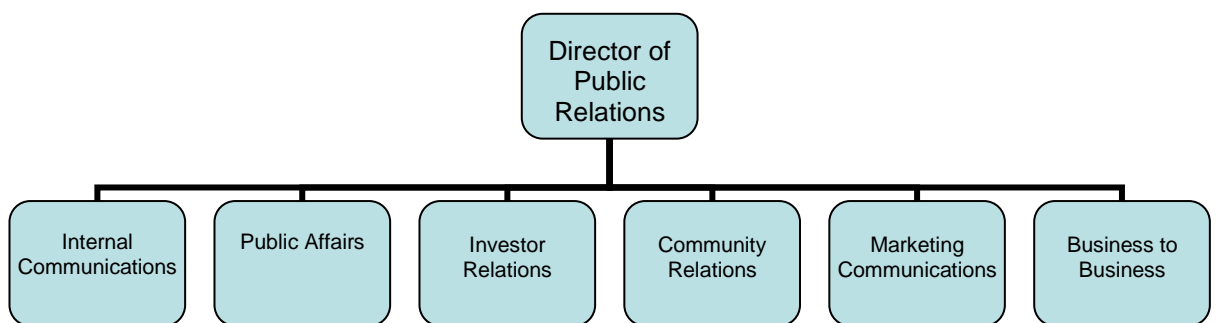
Most Public Relations texts adopted Dozier’s and Broom’s (2006) approach to role definition – the technician, the communication facilitator, the problem solver and the expert prescriber (Johnston & Zawawi, 2004; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008; Tench & Yeomans, 2006; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). Gregory (2009) added two additional roles: “sitting between the manager and technician”

(p. 29), namely, the media relations role, often fulfilled by a senior journalist who has made a crossover to public relations, and the communication liaison role, representing an organisation at events and meetings to create opportunities for management to communicate with internal and external publics. Tench, D'Arthey and Fawkes (2009) suggested that “most PR practitioners are involved in both manager and technician work, but it is generally accepted that one role may dominate” (p. 44). Gregory (2009) adopted the view that the role of Public Relations varies according the developmental stage of the organisation – startup, growth, maturity, and decline.

When the organisation is at startup stage, marketing communications aimed at supporting the sales of goods and services will be very important. When companies reach maturity, it is probable they will undertake the full range of public relations activities – financial public relations, public affairs, Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, community relations. (Gregory, 2009, p. 25)

Public Relations texts privileged Public Relations in the organisational structure as a member of the senior management team (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Public Relations department structured by functions
(Gregory, 2009, p. 29)



This depiction reflected the claim that Public Relations has evolved from media relations to a strategic function in the senior management team (Grunig et al., 2002). Grunig and others have long proposed that Public Relations needed to shed its communications technician cocoon and become a more sophisticated managerial butterfly (Grunig et al., 2002; Dozier & Broom, 2006). This rhetorical construction presented Public Relations as a maturing function with a ever expanding range of responsibilities.

Public Relations is an activity which requires qualified people to undertake the varied functions which fall under the broad category of communication. It is no longer simply a matter of being able to get along with people or being able to churn out large numbers of media releases. (Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006, p.31)

Wilcox and Cameron (2009) described these expanded Public Relations functions as strategic (deliberate, planned) rather than reactive (called on in emergencies); effectual in influencing company policy and practice (responsive to public concerns and not just motivated by the profit motive); driven by the imperative of two-way communication soliciting feedback to arrive at mutually beneficial decisions and outcomes; and that it was a management function integrated into the senior management team.

As a management function Public Relations was positioned as an interpreter – “on the one hand they must interpret the management to the public and the public to the management” (Seitel, 2006, p.8). This was an expression of the reflective role in European Public Relations, which involves analysing changing social values to adjust organisations, standards and values of social responsibility by influencing the dominant coalition (Verčič et al., 2004).

This positioning was further justified by the claim that organisations needed to manufacture consent using two-way communication. The function of Public Relations, or Communication Management, was to facilitate this consent.

In a modern democracy, every organisation survives ultimately only by public consent – establishment of mutual understanding between different parties, the organisation and the community at large. Ideally this forms a sound relationship based upon two-way communication which enables the organisation to explain its policies and procedures, while enabling it to monitor feedback...to enable the organisation to influence public opinion, public judgment, and public behaviour.

(Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001, p. 5)

This placed Public Relations as an indispensable function in an organisation. If an organisation can “survive ultimately only by public consent” then those who are skilled at producing this outcome are essential contributors to organisational success.

Public Relations texts commonly sought to carefully distinguish Public Relations functions from Marketing functions. Some admitted that Public Relations functions overlapped with Marketing and that the distinction from propaganda was not always clear (Mersham et al., 2009). But most followed the exhortation to “keep Marketing and Public Relations separate and to make Public Relations a management function” (Grunig, 1992, p. 20). This was reflected in the lists of what Public Relations people do. While a general Communication text might list technician functions such as writing releases, organising events, arranging meetings and hosting visitors (Eunson, 2008, pp. 643, 644), Public Relations texts preferred to list a range of functions and tasks which cover large areas of responsibility in an organisation, such as Internal Communication; Corporate PR; Media Relations; Business to Business communications; Public Affairs; Community Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility; Investor Relations; Strategic Communication; Issues Management; Crisis Management; Copywriting; Publications Management; and Events Management (Tench, D’Artrey, & Fawkes, 2009, p, 49).

Texts such as Tymson, Lazar and Lazar (2006) also claimed that Public Relations had a diverse range of responsibilities. They claimed that Public Relations practice included media relations, government relations, financial and investor relations, internal communication, community relations, social responsibility and other specialised functions. They claimed its functions included research, counselling, communications, promotion, publicity, human relations, strategy planning and management consulting. These descriptions indicated a role that was much wider than the Marketing version of Public Relations and, significantly, did not specifically describe Marketing communication as a Public Relations function. Johnston and Zawawi (2004) identified three functions of Australian Public Relations practice – to control publics, directing what they think; to respond to publics and to problems; and to achieve mutually beneficial relationships by fostering harmonious relationships. A New Zealand text stated that “Public Relations is aimed at creating informed public opinion, which is the cornerstone of modern society” (Peart & Macnamara, 1996, p. 18). Mersham et al. (2009) adopted the perspective that Public Relations was an ethical practice dedicated to dialogue creation.

Public Relations as it is practiced in New Zealand is about relationship building and establishing meaningful dialogue. This cannot be achieved through manipulation and lying. Therefore, while propaganda and public relations share a history, contemporary public relations in New Zealand is values driven. It is concerned about truth and makes use of a professional code of ethics. (Mersham et al., 2009, pp. 6, 7)

The assertion that New Zealand Public Relations was values driven was not supported by research evidence. The statement that New Zealand Public Relations practice made use of the PRINZ Code of Ethics is aspirational rather than substantiated. PRINZ's own research has indicated that, in practice, results measurement is a weakness (PRINZ Survey, 2004). Furthermore, practitioners make minimal reference to the Code of Ethics (PR Trends, 2010). This gap between aspirational statements and actual practice is a serious impediment to the credibility of Public Relations as a professional practice.

The examination of roles and functions has provided texture to the definitional frames discussed in the previous chapter. They contributed to answering both research questions – “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” and “Where do these perceptions come from?” by exploring the habitus of their proponents. Each construction can be seen as a position taken by the agents in the field of business operation. The Publicity Manager construction was utilised by Marketers to position Marketing as the key communication function in an organisation. This suited Marketing because it served Marketing's need for inconspicuous support for its goals of persuasion, reputation building and brand protection.

The Publicity Manager construction was shared by media participants in this study from the perspective of consumers. They were resistant to its implications of media management and information manipulation. The Strategic Communication Manager construction was advocated by CFOs and Communication General Managers as a mechanism for achieving wider organisational goals. The Communicator of Authentic Performance construction sourced among CEOs reflected the expectations placed on CEOs.

Public Relations and Communication General Managers, educators and textbooks stood aloof from the construction of Public Relations as a Publicity

Manager, preferring rather to describe the functions of Public Relations in more strategic terms or in terms of transparent, two-way communication. The Transparent Communicator construction they proposed reflected a strong predilection towards two-way communication, and advocated a wide role for Communication within an organisation and access to the senior management table. The strongly idiosyncratic views expressed by these educators were not necessarily reflected in practice.

This chapter has examined the designated roles and functions of Public Relations as presented by senior business managers, media editors and tertiary educators. These roles and functions flow out of the definitional frameworks from the previous chapter. The Publicity Manager, Strategic Communication Manager, the Communicator of Authentic Performance and the Transparent Communicator all represented positions taken in the field of business operation as each participant struggled to assert their particular role description. The Marketing, Communication and Public Relations participants presented consistent representations but the Management texts did not reflect the position taken by their counterparts in industry. The next chapter will examine the underlying reasons for these constructions as arguments for and against the legitimacy of Public Relations. This will focus more on the second research question: "Where do these perceptions [of Public Relations] come from?"

Chapter 7

Arguments over the legitimacy of Public Relations

Statements about definitions, roles and functions examined in Chapters 5 and 6 may be seen as attempts to assert power in the fields of business operations, the media, tertiary education and institutions and in the field of Public Relations. By naming the practice and by ascribing characteristics to it, each agent in the field offered versions of themselves, of others and of the relationships they had or would like to have with each other. Naming and ascribing can also be seen as making claims over legitimacy. In this study legitimacy has been defined as the license to operate and the parameters or jurisdiction of that operation.

Legitimacy is reflected in the value and status ascribed to self and to others and is a significant element of symbolic capital. This chapter examines what the various agents in the fields of business, media and tertiary education claimed for themselves in relation to Public Relations and the legitimacy they ascribed to the practice through their ascriptions of value, status, credibility and jurisdiction. These claims coagulate into clusters of symbolic capital cultivated by each player in the field.

7.1 Value ascribed to Public Relations by senior business managers

When asked to rate the relative value of advertising, marketing, public relations, internal communications, government, and community relations in terms of achieving company business objectives, each group of senior managers chose a different element as the most important and almost all chose different elements as the least important (see Table 7.1). The spread of choices reflected a range of value ascriptions that were indicators of value and jurisdiction applied to themselves and to Public Relations.

Table 7.1 Relative importance of Public Relations in terms of achieving company business objectives

1 = Not very important; 7 = very important

Numbers in each cell represent an average of the responses

Red-coloured cells indicate 'most important' selection.

Yellow-coloured cells indicate 'least important' selection.

	CEO n = 8	CFO n = 5	Mktg n = 4	Comms n = 15
Advertising	5	4	6	3.5
Marketing	6	4	7	5
PR	3	5	5.5	5.5
Internal Communications	7	4.5	6	5
Government Relations	5	6	4.5	5.5
Community Relations	5	5	5	5.5

CEOs rated Internal Communications as the most important function in achieving company objectives and Public Relations as the least important. The fact that they chose Internal Communications as their most important element suggested that they were more concerned with getting their own staff to do what they wanted rather than worrying about what people outside the organisation thought of them. Thus CEOs saw themselves as organisational leaders whose main priority was to motivate and lead their staff to excellent performance. This was undergirded by the expressed belief that authentic performance was the best producer of good reputation. The priority Communication focus was therefore internal rather than external

The low rating for Public Relations in terms of achieving business objectives underlined the problem Public Relations practitioners faced in earning support from CEOs. It represented a significant impediment to legitimacy claims by Public Relations practitioners and educators and helped to explain why some Communication General Managers legitimised their own positions by rejecting a

job title containing the term Public Relations. It also suggested a reason why PRINZ has included Communication Management in its byline to stand alongside the term Public Relations and why some tertiary institutions have chosen to offer courses as Communication Management or Public Affairs rather than Public Relations.

CEOs enjoy a privileged position in the field of business operations. As such their views were of vital importance. In senior business circles the functions most valued were determined largely by the CEO. "Where the CEO values communications he will deal with it on a more strategic level. If he values marketing he will view communications as more operational and product driven. It often comes down to personalities" (Comms, 2). As Sele (2006) pointed out, "many CEOs and GMs in organisations in New Zealand do not understand what PR actually can do for their business ... many practitioners still struggle to be included in dialogue with Executive Directors and senior management" (p. 70). This dilemma represents a struggle for legitimacy that was expressed in the business priorities of the CEO or Managing Director (MD):

It comes down to the MD's perception. We had one who thought it [PR] was great. He paid a retainer to a PR consultant. The next MD downscaled and took away the retainer. The Corporate Affairs portfolio was vacant for a while. I've been in it for 18 months but I have no communications plan. I guess we should use more PR. It's cheaper.
(Mktg 1)

The previous Managing Director (MD) of this company saw Public Relations as a priority and employed a consultant to have it as part of his operation. The current MD did not value it in the same way so he had brought the function in-house. For a while he had no one fulfilling the Corporate Affairs portfolio. Eventually, the function was tacked on to the Marketing General Manager's portfolio. The Marketing General Manager placed little importance on strategic communication planning. He saw Public Relations as a cheap form of marketing publicity. After 18 months in the position he still did not have a communications plan. The explicit consideration in these decisions was cost, but the application of budget is an indicator of priority-setting and managerial philosophy so it has a direct correlation to the value placed on Public Relations.

This predicament prompted practitioners to either argue for the value of Public Relations in terms of crisis management, issues containment or reputation building or to transform it into Communication Management in an attempt to generate more value in the estimation of these important opinion holders.

Legal Counsel, CFOs and Strategic General Managers rated Government Relations most important and Advertising and Marketing least important. This reflected the effect of structuration in the macro environment on these agents. Legal Counsellors were acutely aware of the legislative environment in which companies operate so they prioritised relations with Government over other relations. It was perhaps surprising that they rated commercial interests such as advertising and marketing so low, however. These ratings suggested a struggle between their compliance-driven legal concerns and commercially driven market concerns. As their titles suggested, CFOs and Strategic General Managers were influenced by alignment with budgets and objectives. This created a personal trajectory that was strongly influenced by achieving concrete, measureable results. Since the results of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations activities were sometimes more difficult to measure, these senior managers were inclined to rate them lower. Structuration of the field also operates to shape views within an organisation, so it was not surprising that these managers would insist that activities such as Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations should operate within the parameters of company objectives.

Marketing General Managers were the only group to choose Marketing as the most important element, an indispensable part of the organisational machine. "Marketing is the engine room of the organisation" (Mktg 4). For these managers the value of Public Relations was determined in relation to its usefulness to Marketing Managers as a means of achieving their ends.

We should use PR more it costs so little. PR is publicity, samples, promos, merchandising, we get an agency to write for the media. It's reactive at the moment but the parent company is talking PR up versus advertising. PR is communicating company issues in the media – anything that we want to tell the world about our product – unpaid.

(Mktg, 1)

Furthermore, Marketers tended to devalue Public Relations, describing it as the weak member of the Integrated Marketing Communication mix. “PR tends to be overlooked and undervalued from the marketing point of view” (Mktg 4). They suggested that it needed to be better articulated and promoted. “PR is undervalued, underappreciated and understated. It’s not well understood, promoted or embraced” (Mktg 2). Value discrepancies also appeared between Marketing and CFOs. Their highest and lowest rated elements were the inverse of each other. Thus, Marketing General Managers were in a position of direct conflict with other senior managers. This suggested that to a certain extent Marketing was in a different place to the rest of the organisation.

Communication General Managers spread their ratings evenly across the various functions with one significant exception, Advertising. The evenness of the spread illustrated that Communication treated all stakeholders (except Advertising) as important. Negativity around Advertising was linked to its explicit manipulation of audiences and the fact that it was in direct competition with Public Relations for resources. The fact that this group rated the effectiveness of Public Relations on a similar level to Marketing, Internal Communications and Community Relations was evidence that internal Communication Managers regard Public Relations as a subset of Communication Management alongside other functions.

7.2 Can Public Relations advocate for itself?

Public Relations had to argue for its value from a position of weakness. Firstly, Public Relations was considered an overhead rather than contributing to the bottom line. “Every support function struggles because it doesn’t make money – HR, Strategy, Finance, PR. You have to deliver value to justify overhead spending” (CFO 2). The designation of Public Relations as a support function that does not make money for the organisation is a weak position. Some Communication Managers also felt this designation was shared by their colleagues. “Communications is considered a cost centre” (Comms 3). The difficulty in measuring the results of Public Relations activity also weakened its position in the perceptions of some managers. “PR does not have weight in the eyes of senior managers because it is not as easy to recognise and measure as accounting or operations” (CFO 4).

Where Public Relations struggled to demonstrate value it was considered disposable. “If there’s not much money around, it would be cut (along with HR). PR needs to impact on the business outcomes” (CFO, 4). Public Relations and Human Resources were viewed as less substantial areas of business practice.

PR has let perceptions be driven by commercial interests. Since the 1980s marketing has established a platform but PR and HR are still soft areas. They depend on the company’s philosophical approach for survival. The company can opt in and out. They are a byproduct which can be taken care of by management. (Mktg, 2)

According to this view, Public Relations had not been able to advocate strongly enough to impact the financial imperatives that drove business. Secondly, Public Relations had not been able to establish a clear mandate. It was considered optional, a byproduct rather than an essential part of business practice. Thirdly, the function was disposable because it could be performed by management. In contrast, Marketing felt it had been successful in advocating for its own legitimacy.

Self advocacy was considered problematic because of Public Relations’ own reputation. “PR needs to promote itself but it suffers from a problem. There can’t be anything worse than a PR practitioner promoting self – spin on spin” (Mktg

4). Nevertheless, Marketers thought Public Relations could do a better job of advocating its own value by presenting an alternative to the spin narrative. “PR needs to open up its economic value and social value like the ‘Make Poverty History’ campaign. The average Joe Bloggs only sees political spin covering up bad boys. It does PR a massive injustice” (Mktg 4). Marketers also suggested strategies such as “building up some case studies like the promotion of the Wine industry, Navman, 42 Below or Icebreaker to show what role PR played in creating value” (Mktg 4). Marketers felt they were in a strong position to offer these suggestions.

7.3 Practitioner credibility as a measure of value

Legitimacy in the business sector was expressed in terms of two key elements, the value placed on Public Relations activity and the credibility ascribed to Public Relations practitioners. Some managers reported experiences of Public Relations practitioners who promoted very inflated, high-profile views of their company that created a gap between what was being said and the substance. One CEO felt that Public Relations lacked credibility because it was associated with false promotion. One labeled this “the American way”.

The American way feels like basic democratic processes are being hijacked by money and interest groups. People become suspicious. It’s better to be guided by basic principles of business – integrity, trust, critical to reputation. If people perceive PR is bending on these they’re in trouble. You can’t promote a reputation that doesn’t exist. (CEO 4)

This CEO made a distinction between business practice driven by corporate commercialisation, the interests of certain groups and an approach “guided by basic principles”. The appeal to basic principles is a legitimacy claim over business practice. “Basic principles” could be understood as a New Zealand business approach, as a personal predisposition, or as a model that contrasts with the “hijacked” American one. The principles of “integrity” and “trust” are not necessarily or uniquely New Zealand-owned. They represent a claim to define authentic practice. One aspect in this comment that resonated with other CEOs was the resistance to “promoting a reputation that doesn’t exist”. On the whole CEOs in this study were very wary of the type of practitioners who practiced with “a big city mentality” (CEO, 6). This was especially true among those who

operated outside of Auckland. They spoke of a “Southern” approach associated with “being real”, “being low-key”, “communicating values” and “nurturing relationships” (CEO, 2). Some expressed a preference not to use Auckland-based Public Relations consultants because of their pretentiousness. The naming of Auckland in this light can be equated to the use of the term “American way” in that both propose an unattractive, foreign approach associated with being boastful, expensive and pretentious.

The lack of practitioner credibility was exacerbated by the fact that some consultants seemed to have an objectionable personal style. “Consultants are a bit highhanded” (CFO 5). They were regarded as “look-good, candy PR people” (Comms 5). There was a perception that Auckland produced this type of Public Relations. “I cringe at the trendy, fluffy, pretentious Auckland-based consultants. They are fulfilling the bullshit” (Comms 6). This was also captured in the description of some practitioners as “peacocks” (Comms, 4). Such practitioners were considered ostentatious and lacked credibility because of their manner.

In a business setting, value and legitimacy were measured by the ability to deliver results. “Practitioner credibility is based on their ability to deliver value for money. They need to help achieve organisational goals” (CEO 7). Some participants felt that “PR in New Zealand is weak and lacking competence” (CEO 8). “World class practitioners are in short supply in New Zealand” (Comm 1). “Corporate Affairs operative calibre is poor. There’s a lack of long term strategic communication capability, for example, going for publicity but is that what we need? This creates a credibility gap between what we are and what where we say we are” (CFO 2). These comments reflected poorly on the strategic competence of Public Relations practitioners and their ability to operate in a credible way in the senior management environment.

Criticism specifically targeted the quality and precision of service, especially that of consultants. “We are looking for fresh insights. We expect a network of contacts. Not TV coverage” (CEO 7). Some expressed a need for change in the type of service delivered by their consultancy. “We are looking for better service from consultancy – more of a service agency, reduce verbosity, move from publicity to relationship building, listen more, not be so precious about who they

are and having the company voice to themselves” (CFO 5). This required a closer knowledge of the specific business sector. “Practitioner credibility comes from knowing the business before talking about it” (CEO 2). Some were considered incapable of providing strategic or specialist advice, especially on issues facing the company.

A lot of general PR companies (ex-journalists) are offering ordinary service. They charge a lot for what doesn't seem worth it. They don't add a lot of value. We wouldn't use them because we can't see how they would add to the business. We need specialist advice on how to handle issues. PR comes down to the quality of the people. (Mktg 3)

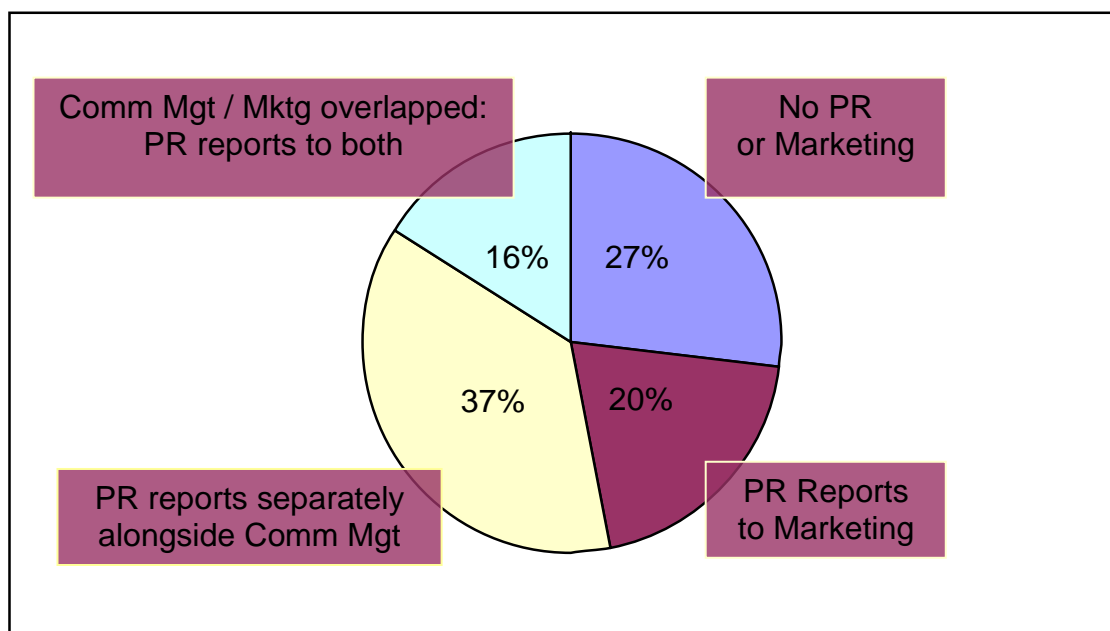
It may be that the performance of external consultants reflected negatively on the view of internal practitioner competence. This would help to explain the internal practitioners' penchant for dissociating themselves from consultants. Internal practitioners were also criticised when they had not demonstrated connection with strategic company objectives. In these cases they could find themselves replaced. “We have just transferred the [communications] responsibility to report to the CFO. We needed to be more strategic in the ways it operated” (CFO, 4).

Criticism also spilled over into the area of charge-out rates. Most regarded rates to be too high for the return they offered to the company's bottom line. “They need to change their cost structure. They are too expensive” (CEO, 1). “Salaries for the industry are about right except for consultants” (CEO, 5). “PR is expensive for what you get. They need to reduce their charging rates” (CEO, 6). “Consultants must respect the client's money” (CEO 7).

7.4 The place of Public Relations in New Zealand companies

The value of Public Relations was reflected in its positioning in a company, especially whether it reported to the CEO or not. A telephone survey of New Zealand's Top 100 companies revealed that despite generally negative views towards Public Relations, 73 per cent of New Zealand companies employ Public Relations practitioners in either an internal capacity or as external consultancies (see Table 7.2). Twenty of the 73 per cent had their Public Relations reporting to Marketing only. Twenty-seven per cent had no Public Relations or Marketing. The sample of 100 was drawn from the 2006 Deloitte's Top 200 list. Eighty-one companies participated in the survey.

Table 7.2 Positions of Public Relations, Communication Management and Marketing in New Zealand's Top 100 companies



This survey demonstrated that the Communication Management function was present in over half of New Zealand's largest companies. Fifty-three per cent employed a Communications Manager who reported to the CEO. A longevity study would establish whether this was a growing phenomenon in New Zealand as Public Relations textbooks claim (Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). This did not mean that Public Relations reported to the Communication Manager, however. This occurred in only 16 per cent of cases. Public Relations was expected to operate in the Publicity Manager role

for the majority (73 per cent) of companies. The wide-spread employment of Public Relations practitioners in a publicity function supports them in their confidence when criticised. “I don’t care what people say. I’m still getting paid. I have plenty of clients” (comment from PRINZ practitioner in response to preliminary sharing of findings, May 24, 2010).

The fact that 37 per cent of the Public Relations function reported separately from Communication Management raised questions about senior management’s confidence in Communication Management. To whom did Public Relations report if not to Marketing or Communication Management? Responses indicated that companies wanted to keep Public Relations separate to preserve a sense of objectivity for their Communication and Marketing functions. They wanted to maintain a distance from the Public Relations consultancy so that they could disengage from them if things turned sour in the media. There have been examples, such as Southern Cross Healthcare in 2002, where Public Relations companies were criticised and replaced. In this survey, where the Public Relations function reported separately, it was to a CEO or other senior manager who had personal connections with a Public Relations consultancy or consultant.

The reporting pattern in the 100 Top companies mirrored the pattern among the interviewed participants in this study. Public Relations consultants tended to report to Marketing but not exclusively. Of the 28 companies represented in this study 14 had their Public Relations function reporting directly to the CEO, mostly (9) through Communication Management. Five reported to the CFO, three to Marketing and six had no Public Relations. In the instances when internal Public Relations staff reported to a CFO the reporting line was frequently linked to a change in company communication strategy. “We are moving it [Public Relations] in-house because the agency was using a scattergun approach, approaching different sections with ideas. We want to streamline things” (CFO, 5).

Value and legitimacy can also be measured by resource allocation. The companies included in the interviews had an average of one to four internal Communications staff members. One of the companies had fifteen Marketing

staff and three Public Relations staff. They also supplemented their resources with the services of a consultancy. The CFO pointed out that to achieve greater value and attract more budget Public Relations practitioners have to somehow demonstrate their usefulness at a management level. To achieve this, a transformation was needed.

PR has more weight in the eyes of senior management if it moves from the 'fluff' of publications, media-based, reactive, responding too late, events, media releases, publications to long term sustainability, relationship and reputation management, issues management. PR needs to be involved up front. PR should show how issues impact on commercial business outcomes and recognise stakeholder groups before we [companies] are hit by pressure groups. It's no good waiting, reacting, relying on being fleet of foot. It's unpredictable. We need strategic planning; communication that's focused planned, proactive, responsive. (CFO, 4)

This study found that there was little support for increasing Public Relations resourcing as a way of increasing business profitability. "It would be nice but the ROI [Return on Investment] would not be good enough to warrant it. We need to be lean, mean and fast so I doubt it would help. We have tight margins. The ROI would have to be worth the investment. Profitability is more important than increasing staff numbers" (Comms 3). Instead, priority was placed on the competence of practitioners. Firstly, practitioners had to advocate for the value of their own role, sometimes over a long period of time (CEO, 5; Comms, 2, 3, 5, 9). Secondly, practitioners had to demonstrate competence at the senior management level (CEO, 5; Comms, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10). Where they failed to do so, they had lost the battle for legitimacy and had been replaced (CEO, 6; CFO, 2, 4, 5; LC, 1).

One matter that directly affected the perceived value of Public Relations among New Zealand business leaders was that it was perceived to lack the status of a profession. "People recognise accounting or medicine as a profession but PR is not recognised as a profession by the business community" (CFO 4). This is a significant obstacle when most senior managers have qualifications such as MBAs or Chartered Accountant status or are registered legal professionals. The discourse of comparison with other professions left Public Relations on the periphery of professional practice.

Anyone can put up their shingle as a PR practitioner. It lacks clear qualifications and endorsement. It means so many things to people. Because of its diverse nature (events, issues management) it needs actual definition. It must try and define itself. It needs regulation. PRINZ is a surrogate PR body. It needs enough weight to dissociate with renegades to bring credibility, acceptable business practice, a level of professionalism and credibility ... the quality of people in PR is unbelievably diverse. They need integrity, genuineness, truthfulness, reliability versus fly-by-nighters (people in it for personal gain). You can't control everybody but you have to develop the reputation of capable PR practitioners by using benchmarking, registration, qualification, accountability for renegade practitioners. Reputation comes from a track record of professionalism. It needs different measures of success.

(Comms 7)

This view suggested that the professional status of Public Relations suffered because it had no entry qualifications. It needed to articulate a clear, unique role for itself. To achieve greater legitimacy Public Relations as a practice needed to "try and define itself". It lacked regulation, consistent professionalism and clear measures of accountability in the form of benchmarking good practice and establishing accredited measures of success. It needed registration of all practitioners and accountability for "renegades". By referring to PRINZ as a "surrogate PR body" this General Manager was suggesting that the Association needed to assert itself more as a genuine quality-controller of the practice.

7.5 Influences on senior management views

The media had a significant influence on senior managers' perception formation regarding Public Relations (see Table 7.3). The most frequently mentioned media were major newspapers, Newstalk ZB, the National Radio's Morning programme, www.stuff.co.nz, all three major TV channels and Sport outlets such as SKY sports and Radio Sport. No single magazine dominated the responses although the *New Zealand Management Magazine*, the *New Zealand Marketing* magazine, and the National Business Review (NBR) were all mentioned as sources of information and influence. The personal influences of family, mentors and political or religious affiliation were also considered key influences by most managers (except CEOs). In so far as ideas about Public Relations are communicated by media to family members, mentors, and friends it is reasonable to conclude that the media is having a significant influence both directly and indirectly on business leaders.

Table 7.3 Key influences on senior business leaders

Main sources of information about Public Relations	CEO n = 5	Mktg n = 4	CFO n = 3	Com n = 8	Total n = 20
Personal influences e.g. family, mentor, political/religious affiliation	-	4	3	8	15
Media	3	2	1	8	14
Senior managers/Board members	2	2	1	5	10
Industry information/magazines	2	-	-	8	10
Academic study/seminars/books	-	-	2	8	10
Experience of PR Practitioners	5	2	2	-	9
Various	1	-	-	1	2
Total	13	10	9	38	70

Other patterns also emerged, however. Senior managers, especially CEOs, were also influenced by the opinions of their colleagues and by the direct contact they had with Public Relations practitioners. The influence of academia, books and seminars was more heavily represented among Communication General Managers than among other senior managers. This might help to explain why Communication specialists more heavily favoured the Transparent Communication Management model expounded in Public Relations literature than other senior managers.

In summary then, the value, status and jurisdiction of Public Relations was determined primarily by the CEO's business philosophy and secondarily by the judgments of senior managers. The efficacy of practitioner advocacy for their own role was compromised by their own competency and by the perception that Public Relations was not a profession. New Zealand practitioners had to advocate for their positions in an atmosphere which was wary of hype and a "big city mentality", where Publicity was both needed and sometimes despised, and where Public Relations was considered a soft, disposable item.

7.6 The legitimacy of Public Relations according to New Zealand media

Media portrayal has a significant influence on the perceptions of legitimacy of Public Relations in the public domain. In this study legitimacy is defined as the licence to operate and the parameters or jurisdiction of that operation. The senior media editors and journalists who participated in this study acknowledged the licence of Public Relations to operate but sought to place strong parameters around how it should operate.

In the relationship described earlier as the Antagonists model, the licence for Public Relations to operate constituted a reluctant concession on the part of the media. Public Relations was considered an unwelcome participant in the information landscape. The media considered that Public Relations drew its license to operate from the economically and politically powerful. In contrast, they saw their own legitimacy as lying in their role as protectors of the public interest. “Journalists are serving the public not someone else. The media are not a facilitator of corporate profit but a monitor” (News Media, 4). This construction did not acknowledge that the media might also be driven by commercial interests, a point made pertinent by the Rupert Murdoch scandal over phone-tapping in which commercial interests drove media to socially unacceptable behaviour (Barnett, NZ Herald, July 24, 2011, A13).

The reluctant concession was aggravated by the imbalance of power created by reductions in media resources, “...our relative poverty” (News Media, 4). “Because of our lack of resources we are incredibly dependant on PR people” (Business News Media, 3). This dependency was disempowering, unwelcome and annoying. “They are massively irritating but I have to use them to fill my quota” (News Media, 9). It led to a struggle between the two in which practitioners claimed that while journalists criticised Public Relations “they still run our releases” (Comms, 8) or ran stories without checking the details. They “don’t let the facts get in the way of a good story” (Comms, 8). Both used denial and stereotyping as mechanisms for intensifying the tension in the relationship. “It’s a symbiotic relationship but I don’t need them that badly” (Business Magazine, 3). “Both like to think they don’t need the other” (Business News Media, 2). Both also used stereotypes to demean the other. “Journalists are

stereotyped [by Public Relations people] as boozy chain smokers; PR as bimbos who are told they are worthless by journalists” (Business News Media, 1). As the nomenclature suggests, Antagonism generates a discourse of bickering and resentment over practices that are real or imagined. In this context legitimacy was granted reluctantly and with challenging caveats.

The Professional Rivals model acknowledged legitimacy in a less emotionally charged, more pragmatic manner. “Public Relations has something to contribute” (News Media, 3). The legitimate place for Public Relations was based on the pragmatic reality that media did not always have the resources to gather information. “PR is an essential industry these days because of the spread of the media. In complicated issues, PR may be the only source of information” (Pacific Media, 5). Legitimacy was grounded in a statement of basic function. “Our job is to tell stories; PR’s job is to put a positive spin on things” (New Media, 8). It also recognised market realities. “The PR industry is filling a gap vacated by news organisations as they have down-sized” (Maori News Media, 3). This was the preferred model among Public Relations practitioners used as sounding boards for the findings.

Those who saw Public Relations as a Professional Rival expressed “legitimate” ways of collaborating without compromising journalistic integrity. For example, a newspaper columnist suggested that Public Relations practitioners could show they understood the journalist’s need for content without compromising their client’s confidentiality. “You may not be able to give an off the record explanation but you can give a quote” (News Media, 1). A similar argument was applied to incentives. “If freebies are attached to the story (such as a free airfare) then at least declare it. The public has a right to know that you have been influenced” (News Media, 1). Scepticism was an accepted part of the relationship. “There needs to be a healthy professional scepticism (especially in politics) where there is a clear understanding and acceptance of the job to be done by both parties – a relationship based on trust” (Radio, 1). This comment suggested a distinction between the practice (which should be treated with scepticism) and the practitioner (who could be trusted on a personal level).

Supporters of the Business Partners model were more enthusiastic about the value of Public Relations and recognised that they themselves used the services of Public Relations consultants. “We use a PR company ourselves” (News Media, 7), “PR is critical to a media organisation” (Maori News Media, 2) and as a source of stories; “We need PR press releases for story leads” (News Media, 2). The enthusiasm was most prevalent among Business media. “PR is not as bad as journalists make it out to be” (Business Magazine, 1). “They are vastly under-utilised due to too much scepticism” (Business Magazine, 4). “They often provide valuable leads. I find PR consultants invariably accessible” (Business Magazine, 2). These comments illustrated the rules of engagement between the two parties. On the one hand, journalists “make [Public Relations] out to be bad” and treat practitioners with “scepticism”. On the other, Public Relations practitioners found ways to provide leads and made themselves accessible to help build news stories. These comments did not pointedly highlight the Public Relations strategy of using relationships with journalists to influence stories. Instead, they implied that both parties were in a business relationship where arrangements for mutual benefit were a rule of engagement.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the media had a clear set of jurisdictional requirements for their relationship with Public Relations practitioners. These acted as media-generated parameters designed to shape the behaviour of Public Relations practitioners and to prescribe their jurisdiction. These parameters ranged from practical requirements such as wanting practitioners to be helpful informants, to relational requirements such as treating journalists with respect, to deeper philosophical requirements such as realising that there were fundamental differences between the two. This created a relationship framed by the media in which both parties could achieve their goals so long as the practitioner observed media requirements. The Public Relations practitioner was “empowered” to adjust the relationship by the way they treated their media colleagues. “PR calls are always unsolicited and therefore an interruption to my day so they need to distinguish between useful information and puffery that is best ignored” (Business Magazine, 6).

The legitimacy of Public Relations from a media perspective was strongly linked to media-prescribed practitioner behaviours. Most editors in this study measured legitimacy at the level of interpersonal relationship and practice. “Good PR is willing to work with you” (Business Magazine, 3). This meant understanding the different agendas operating within the relationship. “PR needs to understand what journalists want, [have] an appreciation of the needs of media as well as the clients” (Business Magazine, 6). All of the editors expected Public Relations practitioners to use media protocols such as working to media deadlines, honouring promises of exclusivity and demonstrating consideration for the media outlet’s audience. They expected Public Relations practitioners to “do their homework” to find out what releases might be relevant to their specific audiences rather than simply spamming them with releases (Business Magazine, 6). “They plague me – haven’t found out who I am, what my station is about, just send me press releases without thinking” (Radio, 2). Practitioners had been “flooding the market with press releases. PR mistakes quantity with quality” (News Media, 4) and not realising that, “it reduces the value of information if others have it too” (New Media, 3). In summary, the media argued that “PR needs to work in a way that doesn’t mess up what we are trying to do” (News Media, 3).

Public Relations was considered a legitimate player in the information field. However, legitimacy was predicated on recognising professional boundaries and differing agendas, and operating within these. In particular, the media reserved the right to investigate all Public Relations-generated information without obstruction, objection or interference. Thus Public Relations was required to be subject to media scrutiny and expected to accept this as a given. “PR is part of the democratic process. It can become an undesirable influence if it is not subjected to scrutiny by legitimate media commentators” (Radio, 1). This placed the power to define legitimate behaviour in the hands of the media. It also left open the question of who scrutinised the media. This created a sense of unfairness on the part of Public Relations practitioners, who felt that while the media could largely say what they wanted about a topic and could criticise Public Relations with relative impunity, the same rules did not apply to Public Relations. Examples of uncorrected misrepresentation included the use of computer-generated images, incorrect details and sensationalised narrative.

The editors also expected that Public Relations practitioners should respect the media's prerogative to decide on publication. They did not take kindly to being asked for a preview of a story before it was published, for example.

Sometimes it is a relief to have a PRO [Public Relations Officer] who understands what you want. Small companies are often angry. When you approach them they claim 'you are trying to ruin our business,' or they ask, 'can I look at the story?' They don't understand how we operate. (News Media, 1)

All types of media were very sensitive to situations where a Public Relations practitioner might try to intercept or alter the publication of a story. This was considered an intolerable situation where the "tail tries to wag the dog" (Business Magazine, 3). "PR is not a body guard. It needs to accept the media's role as guardian of society and put their case but in a way that is honest, fair and act with integrity" (News Media, 4). To the extent they observed these protocols Public Relations practitioners could be legitimated as a part of the democratic process, a welcome addition to the media news-gathering process.

The argument over legitimate practice was couched in the language of ethical behaviour. "Journalists tend to be a moralistic, ethical bunch – very values driven. There is an aura of credibility associated with being a trained journalist" (Maori Media, 1). The legitimacy of Public Relations was especially undermined by what media considered unethical behaviour. "Duplicitous behaviour goes down very badly" (News Media, 4). "There is a loss of respect over PR practitioner actions when they offer misinformation on things in the public interest" (Radio, 1). Although it was recognised that a Public Relations practitioner had to protect client interests this did not extend to lying. "It's wrong to expect transparency. Public Relations is acting for a client and must serve their interest therefore don't expect them to tell the whole truth. But I do get cross when they lie however" (News Media, 2). "There is a place for PR practitioners but they must remember that their job is not to influence by obfuscation, duplicity and spreading misinformation" (News Media, 4).

To reinforce this point, some media participants advocated strongly for a greater commitment to ethical accountability among Public Relations practitioners. This implicated PRINZ as an agent of accountability. Some of the media were unaware that PRINZ had a Code of Ethics. But even those who were aware of it suggested that “PRINZ should be feared by practitioners like the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) and the Press Council. It is comforting if you know you have someone you can complain to” (News Media, 1). PRINZ could also “encourage practitioners to appreciate professional boundaries” (News Media, 9; Radio, 1). “In the past, [Public Relations] people have worked for people in the public eye and have let the public down and then been let back into the industry. New Zealand is small. People know” (Business News Media, 1). This was a reference to a Public Relations practitioner implicated in the unethical filming of notes at a trial in the BNZ “Winebox” case. When confronted, the practitioner resigned from PRINZ but had since returned to practice Public Relations recruitment in Auckland and had become a sponsor of PRINZ.

The discourse of boundary-setting was a persistent theme in the interviews. Examples of over-stepping boundaries included offering incentives to influence media coverage. “This reflected badly on other Public Relations professionals. I was horrified, offended, embarrassed that journalists can be bought. Any journalists who took up the offer should be sacked. It was a bribe – playing a trick on the reader – made me suspicious of PR approaches” (New Media, 1). Another example was framed as professional arrogance, “phoning to arrange an appointment with the expectation that you will want to meet this person” (Business Magazine, 5). Being disrespected at public meetings was also considered unprofessional, “I forgot you were coming” (Business Magazine, 1); as were attempts to shut out media, “You can’t film here” (News Media, 10); or “acting in a pompous and dismissive manner at events” (Business Magazine, 5). A reasonable personal demeanour was also considered an important requirement for a professional. “Some PR people are very aggressive and threatening – never pick a fight with someone who buys by the barrel” (New Media, 4). These incidents of professional misconduct by Public Relations practitioners were quoted as examples of how Public Relations’ professionalism and credibility were thrown into question.

The media made distinctions among different types of practitioners: in-house, some older consultants, political Public Relations practitioners and young practitioners. Political Public Relations practitioners came in for special criticism. “Political are the worst, sending out denial stories, not into personal accountability, supposed to be serving the public but really interested in keeping their jobs, corrupted” (Business Magazine, 6). “There is an expectation among journalists that PR people will be hard to work with. For example, press secretaries act as gatekeepers” (Business Magazine, 1). This is problematic when media need relate to such people to build a story. “There is a huge irritation about relying on official sources. They seem to expect you will regurgitate disinformation and propaganda” (News Media, 4). Political Public Relations practitioners seem to lack sensitivity to audiences. “Government agencies provide the same spokesperson all the time and they may not be the right person for our people” (Radio, 2).

Younger practitioners were also criticised, primarily for their relational style. “Young ones don’t develop relationship” (Business Magazine, 4). The media were looking for a long-term, relational approach rather than a short-term, transactional approach. “PR should be regular non-pressured contact” (Business Magazine, 5; News Media, 11). “There needs to be a continuing and long term relationship. There are plenty more days here” (News Media, 11).

I appreciate a managed process in which PR goes the extra step to talk over issues important to both parties – they introduce you to clients, chat over coffee, engage in non-pressured information giving, act as a conduit, offer win-win partnerships. The older ones are pretty good at this. (Business Magazine, 5)

Some practitioners were more valued than others. “In-house are best to work with usually because they know their business and can answer questions. They get answers and they get contacts for us” (News Media, 2; Business Magazine, 4). “The older ones are better. They seem to know the ropes. They don’t try to pressure me, just offer information over a coffee” (Business Magazine, 5).

Legitimacy claims were underpinned by fundamental differences in philosophy. The philosophical *raison d’être* of the media was to “uncover all things of interest to your audience versus uncover only what is beneficial to your client”

(News Media, 4). This argument legitimised journalism's role as an impartial investigator that should be allowed to probe into any situation or issue.

"Journalists know there are things that need airing. The public has a right to know" (Pacific Magazine, 5). This claim set journalism up as the adjudicator of public information.

PR must understand the role of media as the fourth estate. The core function of the 4th Estate is to "monitor the centres of power"(Amira Hass, an Israeli correspondent for Ha'aretz Gaza Strip). We are not here for promoting people's companies. We are here to keep the government and state accountable. Journalists critically examine everything. We are a bulwark between bullshit and the public not a conveyor belt dishing it out. We are serving the public not someone else. Our first duty is to represent the truth, to inform free and democratic choices. (News Media, 4)

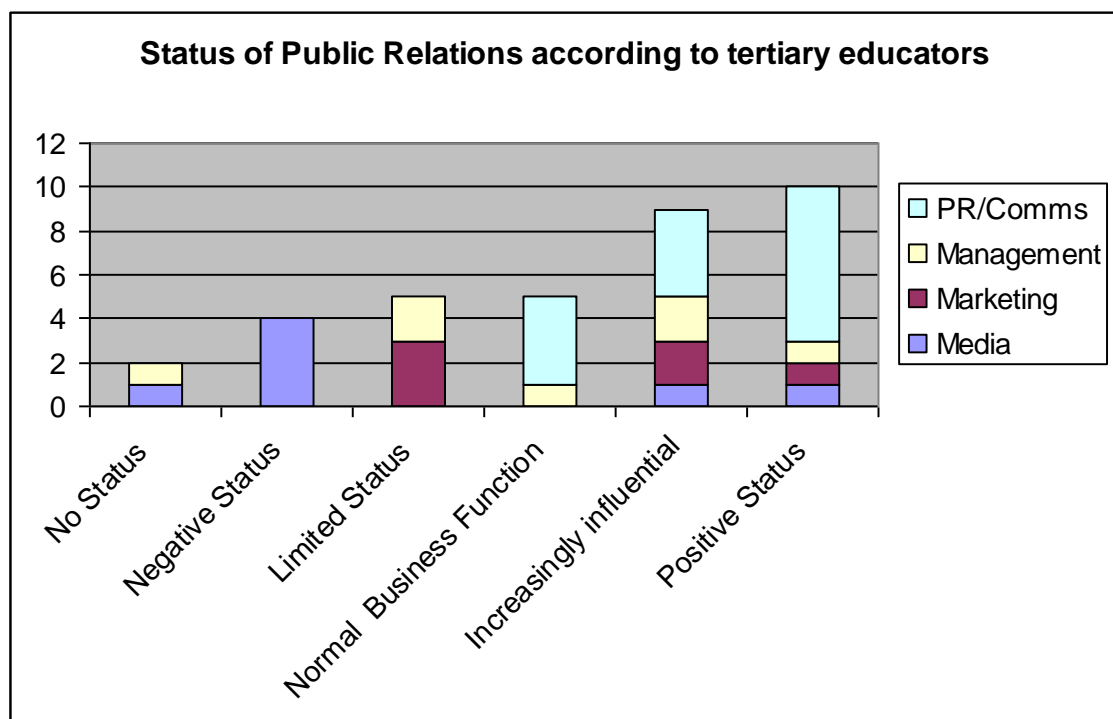
This argument was based on the moral imperative that Public Relations "must understand" the role of the media in society. It also asserted the media's right to probe, uncover and "critically examine" viewpoints in order to hold the powerful to account. The rationale for this position was that the media is "serving the public" by providing information for informed decision-making. This argument legitimised the media as a social commentator and investigator with rights of access and commentary. It did not concede that the media is also subject to commercial or editorial policy constraints, however.

So the legitimacy of Public Relations from the perspective of the media varied. The Antagonists were hostile towards Public Relations and reluctantly acknowledged the legitimacy of Public Relations practice. The Professional Rivals were more accommodating and saw Public Relations as an opposing player in the same field. The Business Partners allowed Public Relations to coexist but with limited parameters. The media employed the rhetoric of the Fourth Estate, the guardian of society, to paint Public Relations as a dark purveyor of half truth and the media as the white crusader, the bastion of integrity and public interest. They also sought to impose a media framework on Public Relations by insisting on cooperation in the news-gathering process.

7.7 The legitimacy of Public Relations according to New Zealand tertiary educators

In this study, legitimacy has been defined as the license to operate and the parameters or jurisdiction of that operation as described by self and others. Some educators attributed “no status” to Public Relations while others ascribed a scope of operation ranging from negative through to positive (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Status of Public Relations according to tertiary educators
(n=24, some offered descriptions that fitted two categories)



Two participants ascribed “no status” to Public Relations. They either “did not mention Public Relations” (Media Educator, 1) in their classes or they “did not need it because it was common sense” (Mgt Educator, 1). The “no-mention” approach was replicated in Management and Human Resources texts. Management texts referred to Communication as an essential function of management but did not associate this with Public Relations. Thus, Public Relations was not legitimised as a function of management. The establishment of a senior management position such as a Communication General Manager was not mentioned in Management or Human Resources texts either.

Three Media educators ascribed negative status to Public Relations. They saw it as “a self-serving, necessary evil” (Media Educator, 2) or “obstructive’ (Media Educator, 4) or as an “insidious influence” (Media Educator, 5). While they did not deny its legitimacy, they granted it reluctantly. Media texts were also reluctant to offer Public Relations a legitimate place. Tucker (1992) included a chapter on “Handling Public Relations” in which he referred to its practitioners as “hidden persuaders”, “with a barrow to push” (p. 117). His illustrations of the media-Public Relations relationship described Public Relations operations such as threats to withhold information, luring journalists with huge salary offers, and “bullshitting inexperienced and naïve reporters” (p. 119). Tucker’s text was extremely disparaging towards Public Relations.

McGregor and Comrie (2002) were more circumspect in their description of the relationship. Comrie’s chapter “Spin in the News” referred to it as a balance of power in which journalists are complicit in receiving information while superficially complaining about Public Relations. “Journalists make a fuss about PR people and issues management because they don’t want to admit how much is fed to them by PR people” (p. 76). Comrie suggested that news management was an invasive, creeping condition which had both an explicit and implicit influence on news production. This was an implicitly negative view of the influence of Public Relations, which suggested that “the numbers over the fence have risen exponentially” (p. 164).

Tully’s (2008) position was an articulation of the Professional Rivals version of the relationship. He proposed in his opening chapter that media possessed its own set of filters and enduring values which served as journalistic biases. This argument suggested that media was not in a strong position to accuse others of bias. “Public relations people I know who are former journalists have told me many stories about seeing their releases run untouched with a reporter’s by line ... they are horrified by the lazy and unethical journalism involved” (p. 26). While he saw media releases, press conferences and pseudo events as forms of manipulation, he suggested that rather than reject them as unwelcome practices journalists should use them as starting points for investigation. Thus, he legitimised Public Relations as another player in the news production field.

The five educators who indicated that Public Relations had a “limited status” framed it as a Marketing tool. Marketing texts such as Clow and Baack (2007) support this view. “Some marketing experts argue that public relations should be part of the marketing department, just as advertising, trade promotions, and sales promotions are under the jurisdiction of the marketing manager” (p. 372). This legitimised Public Relations as a segment of the Marketing team. The five who framed it as a Marketing tool posited Public Relations simply as “a mechanism for communicating company messages” (Management Educator, 4); “truth well told” (PR/Comms Educator 3, 7); a “communication network” (PR/Comms Educator, 8) or “strategic management of communication” (PR/Comms Educator, 6).

At the other end of the scale, two further categories emerged. The first category indicated that the status of Public Relations was rising – “every issue is a communication issue” (Management, Educator, 5), or should rise – “PR needs to change, needs to be bigger. It’s in a corporate niche. It should produce an impact on society” (Management Educator, 2). Within this category a sub-theme emerged, that Public Relations’ status had already risen but was not yet recognised by educators (Marketing Educator, 3, 4). “PR is a growing, increasingly influential industry. 21st century organisations understand the importance of message communication in a variety of ways – NGOs, NFPs, not just corporates. Media is a small part of what PR people do. I don’t think we teach that enough” (Media Educator, 3). The second category, populated mostly by Public Relations and Communication educators, saw Public Relations as having a positive status as “a wonderful, broad, general, diverse profession” (PR/Comms Educator, 7); “a major undertaking, managing relationships through a disciplined, systematic approach” (PR/Comms, 6); “producing a positive outcome for society by managing relationships through ethical communication” (PR/Comms Educator, 3); and having the capacity to “effect positive social change” (PR/Comms, 2).

The parameters around these status positions ranged from a limited scope of operation through to extensive societal impact. Media and Marketing educators saw Public Relations as having either negative or limited status. Media educators thought that Public Relations did not operate acceptably because it

should “aid the flow of information into the media ... to have an open approach to media by facilitating access to sources and not being a control freak” (Media Educator, 2). It should also “listen, help, and act as a conduit / facilitator to find the best person to discuss things with” (Media Educator, 4). Marketing educators wanted Public Relations to “accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative” (Marketing Educator, 1); to be “a seamless, invisible function” (Marketing Educator, 2); and to “evaluate attitudes, identify issues and execute programmes to gain public understanding and acceptance under the IMC paradigm” (Marketing Educator, 4). Legitimacy was defined as fitting the criteria established by Media and Marketing.

Public Relations and Communication educators were at the other end of the spectrum. Their parameters for Public Relations were much broader. They contained many references to relationship management, two-way dialogue and communication management. “It’s deliberate, planned communication between an organisation and its publics” (PR/Comms Educator, 2). “Being an advocate for your client; being an advocate to your employer for stakeholder groups. Good stakeholder relationships are the basis for the smooth operation of an organisation” (PR/Comms, 4). “Good PR is regular dialogue with stakeholders” (PR/Comms, 8). These references strongly reflected influences from Excellence Theory.

7.8 Arguments employed by tertiary educators to locate Public Relations

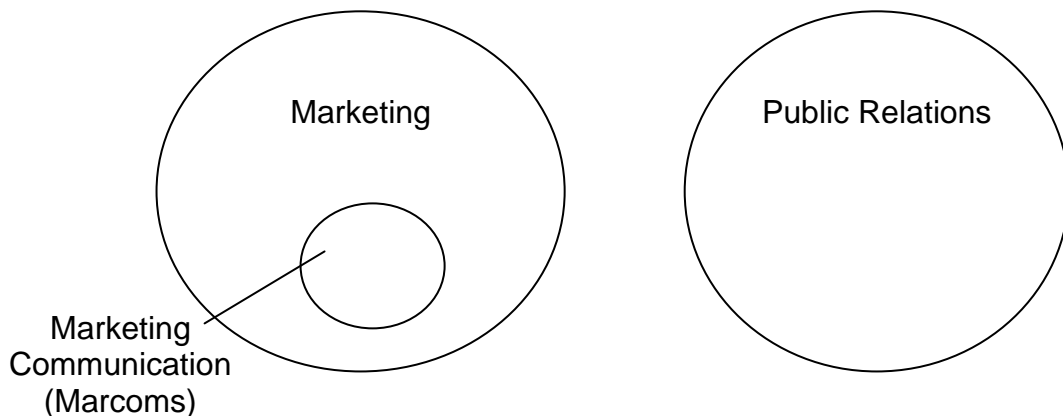
Each of the models espoused by educators – the Publicity model, the SCM (Strategic Communication Management) model, and its embedded transparent communication assumptions, possessed their own underpinning arguments.

The Publicity model predominated among Advertising and Marketing texts. Advertising texts uniformly brushed over Public Relations as a minor contributor to promotional activities. They valued Public Relations for its credibility and inexpensiveness but Public Relations was not seen as two-way communication. Advertising saw Public Relations purely as media publicity. As such, it was less controlled than paid media, slower in terms of impact and less likely to produce

results in terms of measurable actions (sales). Marketing educators and texts adopted a similar position. Their key underpinning assumption was that Marketing was essentially what business was all about. “Drucker says marketing is what companies do” (Marketing Educator, 4). Mackay (2005) suggested that “Marketing is a philosophy of business” (p. 3). According to this view, Public Relations fell naturally under Marketing as a support mechanism. Yeshin (2006) claimed that “IMC embraces everything that a company does and communicates” (p. 61) and that “integration should not just involve the marketing communications activities but all the messages delivered by the company” (p. 62).

Arguments over legitimacy extended to professional jurisdiction. Some Marketing texts proposed that Public Relations might have a wide brief. “Public relations activities are different and cannot operate effectively within a marketing department. Instead a member of the public relations department should serve as a consultant to the marketing department” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 372). This implied that Public Relations should not report directly to Marketing since it had other (unspecified) responsibilities. Public Relations might have a separate existence under the title of “Communications”. This model could conceivably encompass Marketing itself. “Still others contend that a new division, called ‘department of communications’, should be created to oversee both marketing and public relations activities” (Clow & Baack, 2007, p. 372). Although this model was proposed by Public Relations/Communication General Managers and academics it was not considered as a legitimate alternative by Marketing educators. Pickton and Broderick (2001) reported that “some suggest that PR is part of marketing, others that marketing is part of PR. Many question whether it really matters ... in practice, PR and marketing have much in common” (p. 483). This statement came from a Marketing perspective. It was not a view shared by Public Relations textbook writers and educators. The matter of jurisdiction did matter to Public Relations textbook writers, who dedicated sections of their texts to making the distinction clear (Tymson & Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). These jurisdictional implications were illustrated as follows (see figures 7.1–7.4).

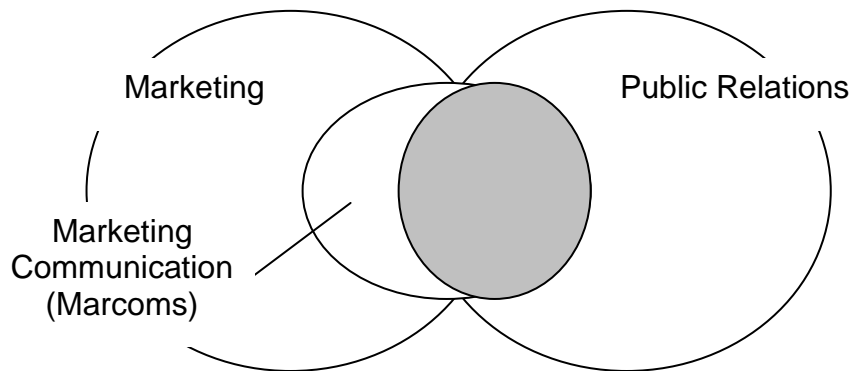
Figure 7.1 Marketing and Public Relations as separate activities
Pickton & Broderick (2001, p. 489)



In this model, Public Relations and Marketing were represented as separate entities within an organisation. The survey results discussed earlier in this chapter (Table 7.2) indicated that 37 per cent of companies had a separate Public Relations function that did not report to Marketing. Although this model established discrete jurisdiction it did not explain how the two entities would interact, thus creating potential confusion and conflict. The separation also afforded companies the strategic option of distancing themselves from Public Relations activities when convenient to do so.

Pickton and Broderick (2001) confused the role of Public Relations in relation to Marketing Communications by asserting that “MPR covers media relations, publicity, publications, corporate communications, public affairs and community relations, lobbying, sponsorships/donations, events management, crisis management, research and analysis” (p. 493). This list merged the functions of Public Relations and Marketing. In fact, Marketing Public Relations was focused on procuring positive coverage for the company and its products, a much narrower focus than this list suggested. Ultimately, the inclusion of all these elements under Marketing Public Relations brought Public Relations functions under Marketing.

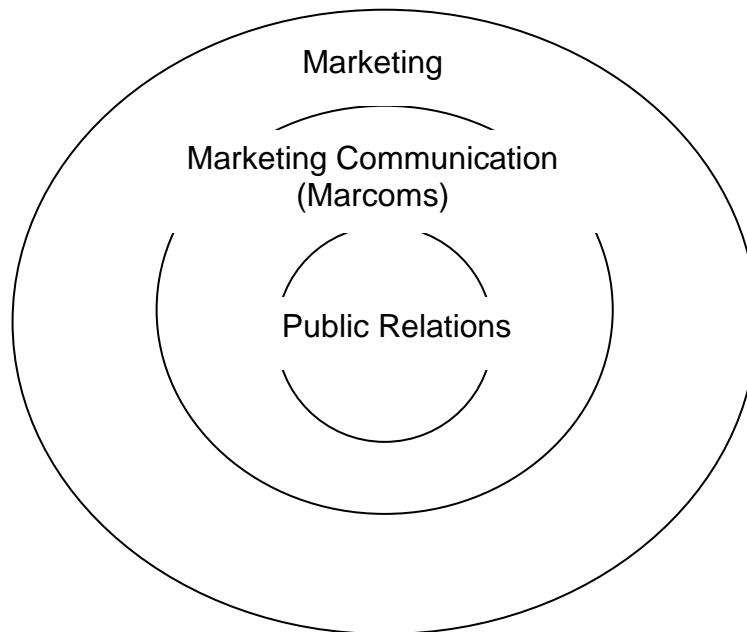
Figure 7.2 Marketing and Public Relations as discrete but overlapping functions (Pickton & Broderick, 2001, p. 489)



This model attempted to bring the two functions together in a more synergistic relationship. Only 16 per cent of New Zealand companies use an overlapped model in which Public Relations reports to both Marketing and Communication Management. A feature that distinguished this model from the New Zealand business environment is that it did not include a Communication Management function. This raised the questions of whether Marketing textbook writers like Pickton and Broderick recognised that such a function exists in contemporary organisations and, given that such functions do exist, why they did not include them in their diagrammatic representations of how organisations operate. The answer lay in the arguments over legitimacy. Absence indicates that legitimacy has not been granted or attained.

This overlapping model also created confusion regarding jurisdiction over such things as message control. Clow and Baack (2007) suggested that “the public relations department is a unit in the firm that manages publicity and other communications with every group that is in contact with the company”, yet they also suggested that “... the goal of an IMC plan is to make sure that each component part of a firm’s communication plan speaks with one voice” (p. 372). Clow and Baack (2007) also claimed that “it is the responsibility of the public relations department to be certain that all forms of communication to each of these publics remain consistent with the firm’s IMC plan and the image the firm seeks to project” (p. 374). Thus, the Public Relations department simultaneously enjoyed jurisdiction and had to work under the jurisdiction of Marketing in the form of Integrated Marketing Communication.

Figure 7.3 Public Relations subsumed under Marketing
Pickton & Broderick (2001, p. 489)



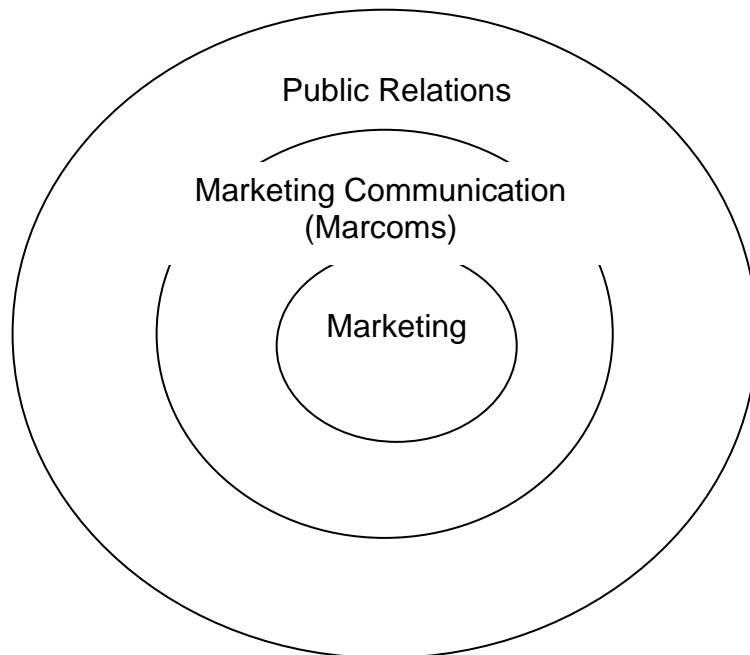
In this model, Marketing was the host and controlling function of the organisation in relation to Public Relations. Twenty per cent of New Zealand's Top 100 companies in this study used this model. This model suited companies with a strong retail focus, such as FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods). It was not so useful for organisations offering services such as financial services, power and infrastructure that impacted on the community, and Government and local Government interests. The legitimacy of Public Relations in this structure was defined by providing publicity management services to Marketing.

All of the Marketing participants and textbooks included in this study subscribed to this model primarily or, in most cases, exclusively. But there is a philosophical difference between Marketing and Public Relations that makes their co-existence problematic – at least for Public Relations practitioners.

For PR practitioners it may be a matter of professional pride. Some do not wish to be too closely associated with marketing, seeing it solely as profit-focused when much PR activity has longer term implications and fewer financial imperatives. (Pickton & Broderick, 2001, p. 483)

Marketing's focus on financial returns makes Public Relations uncomfortable with too close an association. "Our primary interest is in profit" (Mktg, 1).

Figure 7.4 Marketing subsumed under Public Relations
Pickton & Broderick (2001, p. 489)



This model placed Public Relations as having jurisdiction over the other functions. This may exist where the Public Relations function has transformed internally to become a Communication Management function, but it was not reported as current practice in the survey of New Zealand's Top 100 companies. So this configuration represented a theoretical model that was not reported in New Zealand at the time of this study. It offered Public Relations a privileged legitimacy that the practice seldom, if ever, experiences, which raises the question as to why such a model was included in this text. One possible answer might be that Marketing deliberately blurs the lines between the two disciplines (Hutton, 2001, 2010).

Marketing and Advertising texts (Yeshin, 2006) have introduced a relational emphasis which has morphed into areas that might be considered Public Relations. Relationship marketing has multiplied into corporate social marketing, cause marketing, cause-related marketing, corporate philanthropy, corporate community relations, socially responsible business practice, and interactive marketing (Kotler, Keller, & Burton, 2009). The language of relationship-building has become contested terrain between Marketing and Public Relations, both claiming it as an essential element of their legitimacy claims (Ledingham, 2003).

In contrast, Public Relations educators and texts strove to differentiate Public Relations. Firstly, they sought to differentiate it from spin doctoring by labeling spin as a media definition (Coombs & Holladay, 2007) and the Publicity model as “old school PR” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2008). Secondly, they rejected the versions of Public Relations associated with one-way communication. Mersham et al. (2009) joined other Public Relations texts in rejecting the suggestion that Public Relations is about propaganda, preferring the view that its function is to facilitate mutual understanding and mutually beneficial relationships (White & Mazur, 1995; Johnston & Zawawi, 2004; Cutlip et al., 2008). This rhetoric sought to legitimise Public Relations by suggesting that it had a crucial role in creating dialogue.

The true goal of public relations, or strategic communications, or whatever it is called, is to influence the behaviour of groups of people in relation to each other. Influence should be exerted through dialogue – not monologue – with all the different corporate audiences, with public relations becoming a respected function in its own right, acting as a strategic resource and helping implement corporate strategy.

(White & Mazur, 1995, p. 12)

The use of the imperative “should” was a characteristic tone in the language of Public Relations texts. It indicated what the writers believed ought to be the case, not necessarily what was the case in reality. This statement reflected the desire on the part of the writers to establish the legitimacy of Public Relations as distinct from affirming a legitimacy that already existed. This was evidenced in the phrase, “becoming a respected function in its own right, acting as a strategic resource and helping implement corporate strategy”. The use of the present continuous tense in the verbs “becoming”, “acting”, and “helping” indicated a state of ongoing struggle for legitimacy. The legitimacy was in a process of establishment; it was not universally established yet.

A key assumption of this argument was that relationships should be characterised by mutuality. “Public Relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip et al., 2008, p. 5). This suggested that mutually beneficial relationships were desirable, possible and a key to organisational survival. In a parallel approach

to the way Marketing educators positioned Marketing at the centre of business operations, these propositions positioned Public Relations as a central facilitator of mutuality. In this privileged position Public Relations was a legitimate and valued part of the management structure.

Acknowledging an inherent problem with this assumption, Wilcox and Cameron (2009) inserted an important caveat into their positioning statement: “Public Relations is the strategic management of competition and conflict for the benefit of one’s own organization – and when possible – also for the mutual benefit of the organization and its various stakeholders or publics” (p. 7). The “when possible” clause acknowledged that while mutual benefit might be the ideal, it was not always achievable. Some situations call for companies to protect their own interests. In these situations mutuality is not the highest priority and survival does not always depend on it. Cutlip et al.’s (2008) conclusion that both one-way and two-way versions of Public Relations practice exist was a more accurate picture of the current situation in New Zealand.

In summary, the one-way concept of public relations relies almost entirely on propaganda and persuasive communication, typically in the form of publicity. The two-way concept emphasizes communication exchange, reciprocity, and mutual understanding. Additionally, the two-way concept includes counseling management on change needed within the organization. You will find all these concepts reflected in today’s practice. (p. 4)

Another strategy adopted by Public Relations educators and textbook writers to establish legitimacy was to propose that Public Relations was in a state of evolution. This was represented as two models, “past” and “present day” (see figures 7.5 and 7.6). The model from the past (Figure 7.5) depicted Public Relations as reporting to Marketing, as in the Publicity model. The “present day” model (Figure 7.6) repositioned Public Relations as a senior management function alongside Marketing, Finance and other functions reporting to the CEO. These two models do exist in New Zealand companies, but the text presented them as chronologically separated.

Figure 7.5 A typical organisational model of the past
Tymson & Lazar (2006, p. 56)

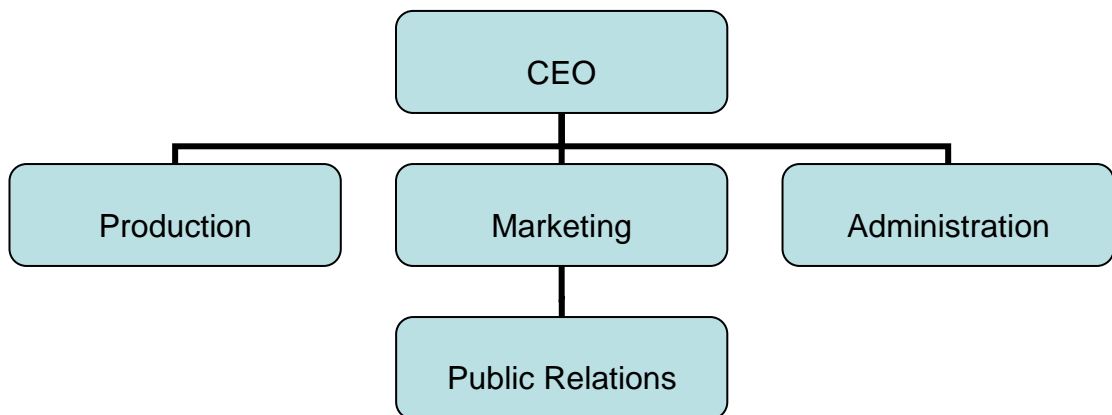
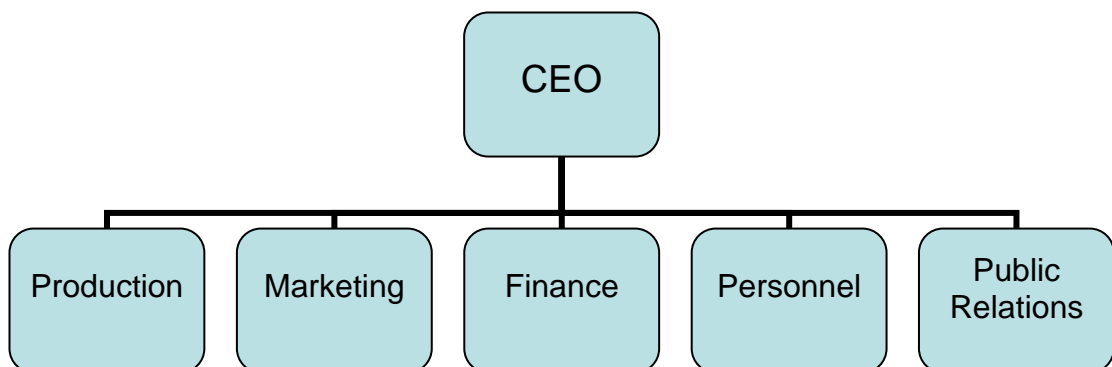


Figure 7.6 Present day organisational chart
Tymson & Lazar (2006, p. 56)



The discourse of an evolution in Public Relations asserted the introduction of two-way communication and relationship-building into current practice (Johnston & Zawawi, 2000, 2004, 2009; Oliver, 2004; Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006; Tench & Yeomans, 2006; Cutlip et al., 2008; Mersham et al., 2009; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Some texts admitted that the “old school” model still existed. “The distinction between public relations and propaganda is not always clear” (Mersham et al., 2009, p.6), and “many still define public relations as merely persuasion” (Cutlip, et al. 2008, p. 2). As Edwards (2009) has pointed out, “the idea of persuasion has been left out of academic definitions, despite recognition of its importance in the profession’s history” (p. 6). The

conceptualising of Public Relations as an evolving profession was a mechanism for distancing the practice from the less than attractive association with spin, propaganda and manipulative communication practices.

A key argument for the legitimacy of Public Relations was to claim that it was a profession even though it was highly debatable whether Public relations could be called one (Seitel, 1998, 2006). The struggle for legitimacy was referred to directly in texts such as Cutlip et al. (2008). However, as noted above, most Public Relations texts privileged Public Relations by including Communication Managers in organisational charts and by framing it as a profession with specifiable roles and functions.

In their text, *Public Relations and Communication Management: An Aotearoa/New Zealand Perspective*, Mersham et al. (2009), did not offer comment on the question of professional status but they did ascribe elements that are considered part of being a profession to the practice of Public Relations in New Zealand. For example, they identified practitioners as an occupational group and insisted that practitioners should operate ethically. They also sought to differentiate the jurisdiction of Public Relations in relation to Marketing. But, like Tymson, Lazar and Lazar (2006), these authors did not provide substantive evidence for the ascription of professional status. For example, they did not demonstrate whether practitioners in fact operate ethically, whether they were held accountable in any way, or what the differentiation between Marketing and Public Relations was in terms of operational reporting. To this extent, the legitimacy of Public Relations was assumed rather than substantiated.

7.9 Underpinning assumptions for the Strategic Communication Management model

One of the underpinning assumptions of the Strategic Communication Management model was that stakeholder relationship management is a fundamental way of operating an organisation (PR/Comms Educator, 4). The argument was that the complexity of markets and communication channels had turned communication management into an organisational priority (Marketing Educator, 3; Management Educator, 1). Thus, Communication was now an essential leadership skill (Management Educator, 1, 2). Additionally, the need to manage issues as insurance for reputation was recognised by many companies and organisations (PR/Comms Educator, 5). The milieu of open communication, particularly since the arrival of the internet, had created a need for ethical business practice and transparent communication (PR/Comms Educator, 4). Therefore, Public Relations in the form of Strategic Communication Management was viewed as a market growth opportunity for Businesses and Public Relations practitioners (PR/Comms Educator, 5).

Public Relations texts sought to establish the credibility of Public Relations from the Strategic Communication standpoint. Public Relations texts framed Strategic Communication as a boundary-spanning mechanism used by organisations to establish a license to operate in society (Skinner, Von Essen, & Mersham, 2001; Cutlip et al., 2008; Mersham et al., 2009). This argument legitimised Public Relations as an agent of negotiation between a range of publics and the organisation. It reached beyond the assertion that organisations wanted this function to imply that an organisation cannot exist without it.

Contemporary public relations is based on the proposition that in a democracy every organisation survives ultimately only by public consent and this consent cannot exist in a communication vacuum. Thus, consent is created through communication and understanding the role and place of the organisation within the community and wider society. (Mersham et al., 2009, p.3)

This implied that organisations could not assume public consent to operate; they needed to win support and earn respect. This assumed that Public Relations was operating in a democratic society in which public opinion was a key playmaker in the transactional playing field.

The foundations for these positions were a mixture of pragmatism, academic authenticity and personal conviction. The pragmatic foundation was based on the argument that there was a market for Public Relations as a subject, journalism training was in decline, Public Relations was an alternative option for students who wanted to work in the field of Communication, and Communication was a growth market among students who wanted an Arts education with a practical application. The academic authenticity arguments were: there was a body of knowledge to teach; there were opportunities for research in this area; and this was an extension of interpersonal communication into an external context. This had particular appeal for educators whose personal convictions argued that this was a worthwhile subject to teach; they had experience in the field; they wanted to teach it; this was a career opportunity for them. In the latter case, many Public Relations educators have a background in either Public Relations practice, Human Resources or English teaching at secondary level. For practitioners, teaching Public Relations was therefore an opportunity to secure income in an area of expertise. For people with a Human Resources or English-teaching background, this was a related discipline in the Communication field that offered a career transition opportunity. Of the 20 Public Relations educator profiles provided, seven had extensive Public Relations experience, seven had minimal experience in Public Relations and had come from teaching or Human Resources backgrounds and six were from an entirely academic background with no direct experience in the business world.

7.10 The legitimacy of Public Relations education

Practitioners do not always confer legitimacy on the Public Relations education offered in New Zealand. The *New Zealand Marketing* magazine quoted a senior Public Relations practitioner as saying, “there’s no academic prescription for effective PR. Communication courses don’t provide anything meaningful. Textbooks can never teach you how to do PR” (Young, 2005, p. 25). This gave the clear message that Public Relations was about practice rather than theory and supported the view that practitioners are resistant to theory-based education (L’Etang, 2005). An in-house Communications General Manager volunteered the opinion that “the quality of training [in New Zealand] is crap. Degrees are not relevant. They spend a significant amount of time on textbook theory and not enough time on reality, painting a real picture of Corporate Affairs or Agency work” (Comms, 1). A disparity was also suggested by the results from the 2008 PRINZ PR Trends Survey. These results indicated a discrepancy between the value practitioners placed on practical, skills-based training and the value academics placed on critical thinking. To address this, one practitioner suggested that trainees should “return to the apprenticeship / intern model to learn their craft” (Comms, 10). A CEO suggested training should “use the case study approach like the New Zealand College of Management did in their course at Solway Park in Masterton in 1994” (CEO, 5).

Legitimacy is not uniformly agreed in the academic field either. The educational tradition in New Zealand allows for subjects of varying kinds to appear on the academic landscape but it takes time to secure acceptance as a mature subject based on the development of a substantive body of knowledge. In the process of this development, disciplines contest through rigorous debate to establish their particular positions. Even within a field, researchers position themselves in schools of thought as they test different theoretical frameworks against one another. Added to this, educational institutions are also in contest for both students and prestige. In the academic milieu, Public Relations has sought to establish itself as a legitimate field of study (Botan & Hazelton, 2006; van Ruler et al., 2008). Its legitimacy determines whether it is taught in a tertiary institution and where it is taught within that institution. The contest to establish and

maintain legitimacy is complicated by inter-institutional rivalry. Institutions compete for students, for academic recognition, and for reputation.

A survey of the 2008–2009 Public Relations courses in all of New Zealand's universities and most of the larger polytechnics revealed a mixed pattern of provision (see Table 7.5). Public Relations was taught as an undergraduate subject in only three of New Zealand's universities (AUT, Waikato and Massey) and four polytechnic institutions (Unitec, Manukau Institute of Technology, Wintec and Open Polytechnic). It was taught as a post-graduate subject in two universities (Waikato and AUT) and in two MBA courses (Henley and AUT University) as a specialisation. In other universities, Public Relations was taught as Communication under a course title such as Management Communication or Leadership. It was not offered in any of the South Island universities or polytechnics. However, other subjects such as Public Affairs and Public Policy were offered at Otago and Victoria universities and these contained elements of public communication.

Overall, Public Relations had not achieved a widespread foothold across New Zealand tertiary institutions. It was available in various Schools ranging from Business to Media to Creative Technologies alongside Journalism, Marketing and Advertising. In some cases Public Relations had its home in a School of Communication. Its placement in a variety of host Schools and Faculties suggested that it had not yet established sufficient credibility or strength to command its own Faculty or School within any of the institutions. Its absence from most MBA courses was particularly significant given that most of the CEOs in this study possessed an MBA qualification.

The placement of Public Relations in New Zealand tertiary institutions can therefore be seen as ranging from well-developed provision at undergraduate to post-graduate levels in a few cases to scarcely visible in others. In some cases, like the South Island universities, it has no place. In others it has found a home by reinventing itself under another name. In the following table, B. stands for Bachelor degree; PGD for Post Graduate Diploma; M. for Masters; and MBA for Masters in Business Administration

Table 7.5 The position of Public Relations in New Zealand academic institutions 2008–09

Academic Institution	The position of Public Relations
University of Auckland Short Courses and at Post-graduate level	Taught as a one-day course under Short Courses No undergraduate courses in Public Relations Included in Post Grad Dip (PGD) in Business/M. Mgt under Marketing Communications (University of Auckland Business Faculty 0800 227 337) Included in MBA under Leadership & Ethics (www.mba.auckland.ac.nz Retrieved 31 October, 2008)
AUT University School of Communication, in Faculty of Creative Technologies	Undergraduate specialisation in B. Communication www.aut.ac.nz/communications/qualifications/undergraduate as at 7 Sep 2009 Papers offered in PGD in Communication www.aut.ac.nz/.../postgraduate as at 7 Sep 2009 One paper in M. Communication One paper in MBA (Communication Mgt) (AUT MBA Handbook, 2009, sent 17 Nov, 2008)
Unitec School of Communication	Undergraduate specialisation in B. Communication PGD and M. International Communication Mgt Major in the Henley MBA Reputation & Relationships (Gen. Mgr, Henley Business School, 30 Oct, 2008)
Manukau Inst of Tech Communication School Faculty of Business	Undergraduate specialisation in BAC (www.manukau.ac.nz/communication 30 Oct, 2008) Not taught in the Southern Cross MBA (www.manukau.ac.nz/southerncrossMBA 30 Oct, 2008)
Waikato University Management School	Taught at undergraduate level in BCS and BMS Taught at post-graduate level in MMS Included conceptually in MBA (no specific papers) (University of Waikato MBA Handbook, 2009)
Wintec School of Media Arts	Taught at pre-degree level in B. Media Arts, Grad Dip Communication alongside Advertising (www.wintec.ac.nz/BMAPA302 7 Sept, 2009)
Massey University School of Communication, Journalism & Marketing	Undergraduate specialisation in B. Communication Post-graduate level e.g. Diploma in Business Can enrol in PhD in Communication & Journalism Not offered in MBA (Massey MBA Handbook, 12 November, 2008)
Victoria University	Not taught as a subject but Public Policy is (Mgr, Victoria Management School, 30 October, 2008)
Canterbury University	Not taught as a subject (University of Canterbury 0800 827748, 30 Oct, 2008)
Lincoln University	Not taught as a subject (University administrator, (03) 479 8046 30 Oct, 2008)
CPIT (Christchurch)	Not taught as a subject (CPIT enquiry desk 0800 242476, 30 Oct, 2008)
Otago University	Not taught as a subject but Public Affairs is (Programme Coordinator, Otago MBA, 12 Nov, 2008)
Open Polytechnic	Taught at pre-degree and degree level www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/programmes/OP7020BA as at 7 Sep, 2009

In this study legitimacy was defined as the licence to operate and the parameters or jurisdiction of that operation. Of course, the licence to operate is also something that is granted by others. Each agent attempted to assert power within their field by naming Public Relations, ascribing value or status to it, and asserting jurisdictional boundaries to the practice. These assertions represented positions taken by each manager based on their conceptualisations of their own position and of how agents in their field should operate.

In the field of senior business management, CEOs used the name Public Relations to describe a practice they used but did not have much faith in. They ascribed less value to it than to other Communication functions, especially Internal Communication. They described their relationship with Public Relations practice as “wary” and suggested that practitioners lacked substance. CFOs suggested that Public Relations as it was being practiced lacked value to senior management and that it needed to transform itself from media relations to strategic communication management. Marketing General Managers placed themselves at the centre of business operations and Public Relations at the periphery. They blamed Public Relations for its lack of status. Their contention was that Public Relations needed to be more proactive in articulating its own value. Communication General Managers renamed themselves to avoid association with the name Public Relations. They associated Public Relations with lower level operations in the company and with consultants. These General Managers saw their value as derived from the value placed on them by senior management. Therefore they saw their personal competency and their relationship-building skills as central contributors to their value and status. This view matched the views of CEOs, who were the key determiners of value in the field of senior management.

Senior managers offered limited jurisdiction to Public Relations. It was only called on when specialised counsel or promotion was required. They offered wider jurisdiction to Strategic Communication Management. This reinforced attempts by Communication General Managers to dissociate themselves from Public Relations. CEOs who thought authentic performance was a superior form of Public Relations were less inclined to employ Public Relations practitioners.

Marketing General Managers did not offer jurisdiction to Communication. Their elevated self-estimation translated into a low estimation of other functions – particularly those close to their own field. Their rules of engagement were that all other functions should comply with their schema. In particular, Marketing saw Public Relations only as a subset of its own operation. This established a competitive rule of engagement in which other agents in the field, such as Communication, either advocated successfully for themselves or they would be assigned a minor role in the organisation. This placed Marketing in a situation where they stood on their own, since they were the only ones who thought so highly of their function. Communication General Managers claimed wide jurisdiction but tempered this claim with the proviso that their jurisdiction was only as extensive as their ability to prove themselves to senior management.

In the media field, Public Relations was labeled as spin doctoring. This label could be applied with acrimony, as in the Antagonist relationship, or with more tempered sarcasm, as in the Professional Rivals relationship. The ascribed status varied according to the positions taken by various media. Antagonists took the view that Public Relations belonged to the “dark side”. They regarded it as a blight on the information dissemination landscape because it functioned as a gatekeeper. Professional Rivals adopted the position that Public Relations was just another actor on the stage alongside themselves. This made for an easier relationship sometimes called information subsidising. The Partners perspective saw elements of congruity between the two, such as commitment to local communities or common audiences. The rules of engagement were similar across all relationships, however. Media insisted on Public Relations behaving in a way that assisted the news-gathering process in a way that was as untainted as possible. The Antagonists opposed bias. The Professional Rivals and Partners accepted bias as a normal part of the relationship.

Jurisdictional boundaries were very clearly laid out by the media participants. Public Relations was expected to abide by media rules of engagement at a practical, relational and philosophical level. Media advocated its requirements as a strict code of ethics, particularly in relating to Public Relations practitioners. The assumption was that they themselves kept to this code and therefore

expected Public Relations to do so as well. This created an imbalance of power between the two parties, which Public Relations practitioners were keenly aware of. In one sense, Public Relations require the media to maintain this “integrity” in order to use it for their purposes. Third party endorsement requires the endorser to be seen as objective and therefore trustworthy.

The status of Public Relations was also conflicted in the field of tertiary education. Among Management educators and textbooks Public Relations was seldom mentioned. In these cases it had no status or jurisdiction within the field of business education. In some institutions Public Relations had transformed to become Communication Management or Public Affairs. Marketing educators ascribed a minor role for Public Relations within Integrated Marketing Communication as a subset under the jurisdiction of Marketing. This version matched the positioning of Marketing in the business field for both Marketing as the engine room of the organisation and Public Relations as meeting the needs of Marketing by generating positive publicity. Public Relations and Communication Management educators and textbooks had adopted a transformational model that allowed them to distance themselves from the unattractive ascriptions of Public Relations as spin doctoring and associate with the more acceptable strategic communication model. This claim was bolstered by referring to Public Relations as a growing profession. This construction claimed that practitioners are finding that they wider jurisdiction within their organisations. The assertion that Public Relations has evolved was not an accurate reflection in practice, however. In practice, both models existed. Public Relations did not meet several of the requirements for being a profession. So, claims that Public Relations is a profession are just that – claims that need to be substantiated by those with power to endorse them. Overall, the practical jurisdiction of Public Relations was highly contested.

This thesis has now examined the definitional frames of Public Relations used in New Zealand by business managers, media and tertiary educators as positions taken in the general fields of business operations, the media and tertiary education. These definitions were then fleshed out in assigned role descriptions to demonstrate how frames sought to articulate roles and functions for Public Relations. Chapter 7 examined the legitimacy claims of each of the agents as they sought to prescribe the legitimacy and jurisdiction of Public Relations from their perspective. Perceptions of Public Relations were viewed as legitimacy statements designed to empower various players and to shape their rules of engagement. During the course of this research, distinctive themes began to emerge in relation to one of the groups within the sample – indigenous Māori participants. This group redefined Public Relations and provided a distinctive set of characteristics that offered intriguing insights into its jurisdiction. Chapter 8 will elaborate on Māori Public Relations principles.

Chapter 8

Māori (indigenous) Public Relations Principles

The key research question for this thesis was “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” The secondary question was “Where do these perceptions come from?” The research design deliberately included Māori participants on the basis that they are the indigenous people of New Zealand and that any study of New Zealand Public Relations should include a Māori perspective. During the course of the interviews with Māori and Pacific Island media distinctive themes began to emerge.

Firstly, it became evident that there was a significant disconnection between Public Relations as it was practiced generally in New Zealand and how it operated in a Māori and Pacific Island context. Although some Māori and Pacific Island media used Public Relations to promote their organisations and saw the practice of Public Relations as an opportunity to engage with audiences on the same playing field. Others reported that Public Relations was “in another place” or “didn’t seem to relate to our people”. This disconnection presented an opportunity to explore the default meanings behind names and words offered by these participants in an effort to develop a picture of what they thought Public Relations meant in their context. It also invited a comparison with Western Public Relations practice.

Secondly, there seemed to be a strong desire on the part of some of the Māori and Pacific participants to interpret their cultural setting to the researcher and to the practice of Public Relations generally. As members of Māori and Pacific Island media, each had a vested interest in communicating with their own audiences and offered several suggestions as to how to bridge the gap between Public Relations and their audiences. They suggested that the Polynesian cultures of the South Pacific were similar and that there were many identifiable features that could be articulated. Symbolic Interactionism holds that people create shared meanings through their interactions and those meanings become their reality. The cogeneration of ideas in the interview process offered an opportunity to explore the different types of symbolic and cultural capital that might be present in these cultures.

8.1 Perspectives from Māori and Pacific Island media

Although Māori and Pacific Island media reported a similar ratio of negative stories about Public Relations (65 per cent), their stories contained quite different reasons for the negativity (see Table 8.1). One of the primary reasons was that Public Relations practitioners did not seem to know the Māori and Pacific Island audiences and media. Public Relations “does not know our audience” (Pacific Radio, 1) and “they don’t seem to understand us very well” (Pacific Radio, 3); “we are not who they think we are” (Pacific Radio, 1). Consequently, Public Relations practitioners did not seem to be aware of the nuances that existed in Māori and Pacific Island cultures. “They miss things that are obvious to us such as family considerations” (Pacific Television, 1); “tribal conflicts of interest” (Māori Radio, 2); “respect for titles” (Pacific Radio, 2); and “the games some of our people play” (Pacific Television, 1). The use of the words “they” and “us” and “our” indicated a distinction being made between an outsider group and an insider group. The fact that these participants quoted several examples of cultural misinterpretation or ignorance suggested a fundamental lack of awareness among Public Relations practitioners. Culturally significant elements such as family considerations, tribal interests and titles accumulated cultural capital in one world but did not seem to be as valued in the world of the other.

Table 8.1 Māori and Pacific Island Media Responses
(n = 10, but multiple responses were offered)

Negative	Neutral or Mixed	Positive
Mainstream does not represent our perspectives; in another place; we are not who they think we are (7)	Relating to the public at a professional level (1)	Cultivates brand (2)
Used as a tool against us (1)	Anything to do with public contact (1)	We use PR successfully (2)
Can't be trusted because of political bias/spin doctoring (2)	We use PR (matter of fact tone) (1)	PR is where there are well-paid jobs (1)
'Heaps' of press releases. Not many appropriate to us (4)		
Tried to keep me out of an event (1)		
Total: 15	3	5

The argument was that “PR people don’t handle Māori very well. They are in another place” (Maori Radio, 1). They were “not representing our perspectives” (Māori Magazine, 1). This view was supported by one of the Public Relations educators, who suggested “PR doesn’t cover Māori perspectives. It should because of the *Treaty of Waitangi*” (PR/Comms, 5). These statements need to be tested in a wider context but, as they stood, they represented a perception of Public Relations held by key representatives from cultural communities. The fact that these were Māori and Pacific Island people offering Māori and Pacific Island perspectives was a significant starting place.

One view was that Public Relations had represented Māori in a bad light, especially in incidents connected with the police.

Māori are a bit wary of PR because often they have ended up on the wrong end of things. They can’t be trusted because of political bias and spin doctoring. Sometimes PR uses tactics that stigmatise our people. PR is used by the NZ Police and media as an instrument for reinforcing prejudice. (Māori Magazine, 1)

This comment contained an accusation that Public Relations was biased against Māori, stigmatised them, and acted as an instrument for racial discrimination. This was a very audacious statement that invited investigation beyond the scope of this study. It presented the proposition that deep feelings of resentment existed in some hearts and these feelings produced a significant level of frustration. As this person pointed out, historically, this frustration “led to the establishment of Māori Television because of the persistent failure of Government sources and mainstream media to portray Māori from a Māori perspective” (Māori Magazine 1).

There seemed to be distinctive understandings of how respect should be exercised. “PR people must recognise titles” (Pacific Radio, 3). The elaboration on this comment suggested that Public Relations practitioners either did not know when they were talking to someone of titular status or, if they did, they did not give due respect to the titled person. The expression of respect had deeper cultural roots. “Pacific Islanders must be approached with respect. Europeans earn respect but we give it” (Pacific Television, 1). This represented a cultural difference. In contrast to the Western approach, the Pacific Island way was to

offer respect without attaching it to performance. Respect was demonstrated in the manner in which dialogue was conducted. “Interviewing must be less aggressive” (Pacific Television, 1). It was also demonstrated nonverbally. “Women wear dresses not trousers. When your woman Prime Minister wore trousers to meet our Prime Minister it was very uncomfortable for us” (Pacific Television, 1). Respect was reflected in the way family matters were handled. “PR people must recognise the priority of family over publicity” (Pacific Radio, 3). This comment was illustrated by the insensitivity of Mercury Energy in their handling of a bereavement that resulted from disconnecting power from a family home. The media coverage focused on the dignitaries present at the funeral service at a time when the family was grieving. There seemed to be a need for respect for the Māori and Pacific Island media industry itself. Public Relations practitioners “do not know who we are and what we are trying to do as a news agency” (Pacific Radio, 1).

It seemed that Public Relations practitioners were not using cultural resources available to them either. “PR people must learn to ask for advice if dealing with Māori, consult with key people, find out how to proceed” (Māori Radio, 2). A fundamental Public Relations practice suggested by one participant was to “ask about tikanga [Māori culture and ways] ...99% of people will explain. They are just glad someone asked” (Māori Radio, 1). Another suggested that practitioners should “be hungry to learn to speak and write Māori or at least learn to greet in Māori” (Pacific Radio, 1). These steps were regarded as ways of respecting culture. Without these steps, Public Relations practitioners “lack real access to stories among our people” (Pacific Radio, 1).

This study found that Public Relations practitioners did not seem to appreciate that there were differences between European, Māori and Pacific Island cultural practices. The Public Relations logic of practice did not seem to recognise that “we have our own ways of doing things and these do not map onto the mainstream exactly” (Pacific Radio, 2). The gulf was related to the way practitioners chose to operate. “Public Relations is often determined by people who offer you pinot noir and sauvignon blanc and dine with you in Ponsonby. What do these people know about how it looks from the Mahia tavern?” (Māori Magazine, 1). This was a metaphor stereotyping Public Relations as immersed

in European, urban culture. Mahia is a small rural town on the East coast of the North Island of New Zealand. It would be normal to consume less sophisticated drinks in such a setting. So this metaphor illustrated the existence of an entirely different habitus, a contrast between sophistication and down-to-earth ways of operating. Public Relations practitioners needed to adjust if they wanted to have “the ability to understand our vision, values, context, and convey these to our target audience” (Māori Television, 1). One suggestion for improvement in the relationship was to “recognise the importance of *tikanga*, Māori values and ways of doing things, such as pride in ancestors and understanding that we need buy-in from our family” (Māori Radio, 1).

Familiarity with the nuances in culture also meant understanding recent developments among Māori that have seen a movement away from traditional *marae* (family home) based ways of communicating to an urban-based culture.

PR to Maori is fragmented now. It's hard work getting hold of Māori. Only some are marae based. The media they listen to is fragmented. Now it's malls, radio, internet. Now they go home to the marae to get their Māori content. There's also a growing Māori middle class associated with the Māori renaissance. *Kanohi ki te kanohi* doesn't work any more (except maybe for *Ngati Porou*) you're more likely to connect at malls, events and sports events. (Māori Radio, 3)

The marae, a physical set of buildings where Māori meet for a variety of significant events, is a place where cultural values are nurtured. Many young Māori are less connected with their cultural roots and only occasionally return to their *marae*. The Māori renaissance, a resurgence in interest in Māori language and culture, has produced new types of Māori. For these new groups, *kanohi ki te kanohi*, meeting face to face, is not such a high priority as it was in the past – except for *Ngati Porou*, one of the major tribal groups, well known among Māori for its commitment to language and culture. The new connections are at the shopping malls and sports events.

Clearly, one size did not fit all. Some Māori have become more urbanised. Their *marae* (customary Māori home base in the rural areas) are places they visit infrequently and for specific purposes such as funerals. This means Māori traditions and language were no longer being sustained from the marae unless

urban Māori made the effort to return to the marae and spend extended time there. The assertion that “*kanohi ki te kanohi* [face to face contact] doesn’t work any more”, except in the case of one tribal group, suggested that the old ways were fading for some but held dear by others. The new generations were at new events. This required Public Relations practitioners to know how to reach the subgroups among Māori audiences. Communication strategies needed to be multifaceted. Some approaches needed to be traditional while others needed to reflect the changes brought about by wider societal processes such as urbanisation and the Māori renaissance.

Overall, Public Relations in New Zealand was portrayed as having much ground to make up in terms of relating to Māori and Pacific Island media. Public Relations was considered a stranger, unfamiliar with many Māori and Pacific Island media and audiences. This suggested a fruitful area of future research that has also been noted by others (Motion, Leitch, & Cliffe, 2009).

A nuanced analysis of Māori Public Relations has been largely absent from New Zealand research and textbooks. Apart from a paper by Comrie and Kupa (1998) asking whether Public Relations can become bicultural in New Zealand, little has been written about the subject of indigenous (Māori) Public Relations. The conflation of Australian and New Zealand Public Relations has tended to either ignore cultural nuances and audiences (Tymson, Lazar, & Lazar, 2006) or cover them superficially (Motion et al. 2009). Even though Tymson et al. (2006) title their texts as Australian and New Zealand Public Relations Manuals, these texts contain no reference to Australian Aboriginal, Māori or Pacific Island audiences. To date there is no literature addressing Pacific Island Public Relations. Motion and Leitch (2001) referred to multiculturalism as an emerging trend in New Zealand Public Relations, with biculturalism (referring to Māori and English) as one of its strands. They suggested that practitioners in New Zealand were “generally ... becoming increasingly aware of the need to adapt their communication strategies to speak meaningfully to Maori (Motion & Leitch, 2001, p. 663). They also noted the growing number of immigrants in New Zealand, particularly from Asia and acknowledged the presence of Pacific Island residents from Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands and Fiji in New Zealand. As a consequence, they suggested that “expertise in intercultural

communication will therefore become an essential area of expertise for public relations practitioners” (p. 663). Motion (2002) made reference to the strong influence of Māori on New Zealand culture and suggested that “Pacific Island cultures and Asian cultures are also a focus of communication practice” (p. 102), without elaboration. Motion, Leitch and Cliffe commented briefly on Māori and Aboriginal culture in their chapter on “Public Relations in Australasia” in the *Global Handbook of Public Relations* (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). As an overview chapter it was necessarily brief but this repeated the lack of articulation of distinctive cultural communication practices among Māori, Pacific Island and Australian Aboriginal communities in Public Relations literature. Until recently, the only text purely representing Public Relations in New Zealand contained no reference to Māori perspectives or Māori Public Relations (Peart & Macnamara, 1996). More recently, one chapter in *Public Relations and Communication Management: An Aotearoa/New Zealand Perspective* (Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009) appeared on Public Relations in a Māori context.

8.2 The need for change

Several Māori and Pacific Island participants voiced the need for change. Firstly, they advocated for more Māori and Pacific Island Public Relations practitioners. “We need more brown faces. It’s a struggle to find a Pacific voice to speak on subjects affecting Pacific Islanders” (Pacific Radio, 1). “I can see its [Public Relations] benefits but I can’t see Māori in it” (Māori Radio, 3); “there are no Māori in PR” (Māori Magazine, 1). The same message was echoed regarding Pacific Island representation. “We [Pacific] are not active in the mainstream” (Pacific Magazine, 1). In reality there are Māori and Pacific Island Public Relations practitioners. Examples include Sharleen Pihema and Italia Toelie’u (Auckland City Council); Iulia Leilua and Sandra Kailahi (ex-SILK associates); and Stella Tanoi (Pacific Cooperation Foundation). A Wellington-based group called Kawea te Rongo, an informal network of most of the Māori Public Relations practitioners working in the public and private sectors, has been in existence since the early 1990s. Additionally, there are communications experts such as Susan Huria (Huria-Anders) and Fiona Cassidy (PRINZ ex-president) and Jason Ake working with tribal authorities, regional councils, trust

boards and sub-tribal collectives. So the perception that there are no Māori in Public Relations is not accurate. However, these practitioners were clearly not making an impact on Māori and Pacific Island media in Auckland where large numbers of Māori and the majority of Pacific Islanders reside in New Zealand.

Furthermore, participants indicated that Public Relations practitioners needed to develop culturally competent practice, beginning with the correct pronunciation of names of people and places. “PR gets so much wrong regarding Maori things that we do not care any more. They still get pronunciation wrong. If it was a corporate you’d get the sack for such cock-ups but it’s only Māori so...” (Māori Radio, 3). Mispronunciation was seen as disrespectful to the language (Māori is an official language of New Zealand) as well as the person. The comment “we don’t care anymore” suggests that this is not a new phenomenon. It suggests a lack of intent on the part of Public Relations (and mainstream media) to sensitively and accurately engage with Māori.

Culturally competent practice in a traditional Māori setting requires conformity to cultural protocols (*tikanga*). “In general, PR is not very knowledgeable about *tikanga*” (Māori Television, 3). Basic errors such as “not checking tribal groups, getting it wrong (we have become used to that, cynical about it), not connecting at all” (Māori Radio, 3). Failure to check on tribal affiliations overlooked the importance of identifying a Māori person’s tribal lineage. In contrast, the European tendency to introduce oneself by name and occupation with minimal reference to family connections did not match with the construction of Māori identity which was strongly linked to their physical and spiritual lineage.

Greater cultural competence would also produce a better appreciation for Māori and Pacific Island audience needs as reflected in decisions made by practitioners regarding communication channels, messages and spokespeople.

Government agencies and private PR companies are ill-informed about our audiences and us. They don’t know our media consumption patterns. They keep on using contacts they are familiar with. These people may not have much influence among our people but they still keep on using them as spokespeople. (Pacific Radio, 1)

Culturally competent practitioners would improve the confidence Māori and Pacific Island media had in Public Relations. “Some of the people PR companies send to deal with us are out of their depth. They lack confidence and knowledge of our culture and who the key people are” (Pacific Radio, 1). It was suggested that practitioners also needed to improve the way they related to Māori and Pacific Island media. Public Relations consultancies had a habit of sending young practitioners to visit Māori and Pacific Island media. These were considered “young *palagi* (European) females who can’t work with us. They are wobbly on their feet and have no knowledge of Pacific Island or Māori things” (Pacific Radio, 1). Public Relations practitioners “need substance” (Māori Television, 2). This extended to being confident enough to offer more directive consultation. “Too many of them do not offer opinions on changes needed” (Māori Radio, 2). These comments highlighted differences in perceptions regarding gender, age, experience and relational style. There was clearly a need for a new approach to the relationship between Public Relations in New Zealand and Māori and Pacific Island people.

8.3 New Zealand (Māori) Public Relations Principles

Although there is a recognisable similarity among the Pacific Island nations and Māori tribal groups, it is not the intention of this study to simply conflate them all into one representation. However, since this study is based on New Zealand perceptions of Public Relations it is pertinent to focus attention on indigenous Māori principles. The assertion that Public Relations was “in another place” from Māori suggested there was a significant need for New Zealand Public Relations practitioners to learn about Māori *tikanga* and to reflect on how it might inform their practice. Participant responses suggested significant value in identifying cultural protocols as they related to Public Relations practice. The growing awareness in Public Relations literature of how cultural expressions affect the practice of Public Relations and the need for insights into cross-cultural communication further suggested a need to explore sustainable practices that might add to the international body of knowledge.

Current international concern regarding the impacts of environmental degradation and the depletion and exploitation of the natural resources of our planet suggest we need to look for practices and insights into a new relationship with the physical environment we inhabit. Early indications were that Māori cultural protocols might contain such insights. Sustainability of relationships and our relationship to the environment has become a pressing need. It has been argued that our dominant value systems are at the very heart of unsustainable practices. Making progress towards better ways of living therefore needs to be a deeply social, cultural, philosophical and political process (PCE, 2004). This process needs to reflect the interconnectivity of people as “members of a shared woven universe” (Marsden, 2003) and to facilitate understanding in the context of partnership (Wickliffe, 2002).

It has also been suggested that our New Zealand institutions “could learn with advantage from Maori cultural values” (NZLC 9, p. vii). As one researcher in the field of Maori values has pointed out, “analysis of distinctively Maori concepts has diverse applications to matters of considerable ethical importance: for example, business ethics and environmental ethics” (Patterson, 1992, p.7). Patterson has argued that Māori values are best understood by non-Māori on the basis of a virtue ethic, the ethics of being rather than doing. Western ethical theories are generally built on rules of conduct that distinguish acceptable and unacceptable actions. Virtue ethics focuses on the sort of person we should be by cultivating desirable character traits and eliminating others.

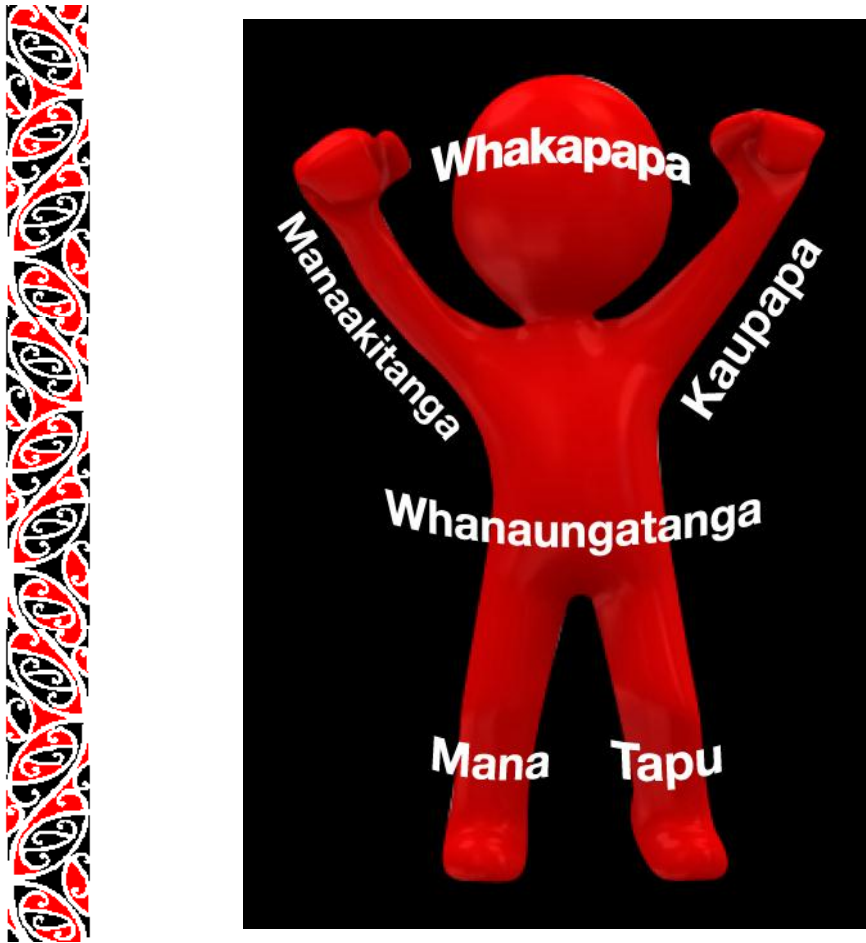
Māori Public Relations principles are aspects of Māori *tikanga*. *Tikanga* is that which is right or just, “the sum total of norms and values underpinned by philosophical and religious principles, goals and values” (Wickliffe, 2002, p. 4). *Tikanga* derives from the word *tika*, which means natural, fitting or appropriate. “Natural” in this sense includes appropriate conduct, appearance and habits as suits historical and current practice. In this context, conduct flows out of the person. It is something inside a person that makes them behave the way they do in accord with custom and common practice as laid down by the tribal ancestors. This is similar to the Aristotelian concept of agent-centred rather than act-centred ethics in which a person who lives well by imitating virtuous people actually brings about human flourishing. The dimensions of *tikanga* vary among

tribal and sub-tribal groups because their ancestral stories and current interpretations vary. Thus “*tikanga* Māori should not be seen as fixed from time immemorial but as based on a continuing review of fundamental principles in a dialogue between the past and the present” (NZLC 9, p. 3).

The principles emerged initially in discussions with Kotuku Tibble (*Ngati Porou*) but were tested with local Maori leaders, Sonny Rauwhero and Helen Rawiri (both *Tainui*), Wikitaringi Ratana (*Te Aupouri*) and Papa Kukupa Tirikatene (*Ngai Tahu*) as well as Māori scholars, Dr Ranginui Walker (*Ngati Whakatohea*), Sir Mason Durie (*Rangitane, Ngati Kauwhata, Ngati Raukawa*), and Dr Pita Sharples (*Ngati Kahungunu*). The tribal affiliations (noted in parentheses) are important for reasons already discussed, but it should also be noted that a selection from Eastern, Northern, Southern and Central tribes has been included in this study (see Glossary of Māori terms). The principles can be framed in terms of several sociological value contrasts. For example, they espouse social structure based on kinship in contrast to individualism. They emphasise sustainability rather than market-based competition and community rather than purely commercial advancement. These principles expand the conceptualisation of Public Relations beyond that of a commercial practice to an all encompassing framework that serves to sustain relationships, cultural life and the physical environment.

The principles can be represented in the metaphor of a human body (see Figure 8.1). The narrative begins with the head as the source from which all else flows. The arms represent two elements that enfold and draw in people with whom we relate. The trunk represents the relational core of the model. The legs represent two basic foundations for the body to use for movement and interaction. Although we will now examine the parts in sequence, it is important to see the body as a whole, with each part organically interlinked with the other parts.

Figure 8.1 New Zealand (Māori) Public Relations Principles



Whakapapa is the introduction of oneself to another or others. It represents a statement of spiritual and physical connectedness. Māori perceive *Papatuanuku* (the earth mother) and *Ranginui* (the sky father) as their ancestral parents. Their son, *Tane*, is the father of plants. Various other deities and mythical figures produced islands, crafts, the afterlife, and warrior skills. A person's *whakapapa* traces their lineage back to these deities as the source of their identity. It also identifies key physical elements such as waterways and mountains in their local birthplace as identity-markers. It locates the person within an extended family, sub-tribe and greater tribe and with a local meeting place (*marae*) which has a name and a personal identity itself. So the distinction between spiritual and physical is blurred.

Whakapapa establishes a strong identification with the physical environment, the collective history of the extended relational network, links to the spiritual world as the ultimate source of life, and establishes where a person stands in relation to others. It represents the connectivity of a person with land and water, with people (the living and the dead) and with spiritual powers in the universe.

Introductions begin with a declaration of one's genealogy. Historical roots are important to declare because they provide context to the interaction. Such an introduction also provides stakeholders with information that enables them to locate themselves in relation to one another. Identification with the land and sea reinforce the value placed on sustainable guardianship and on the spiritual connection between nature and human beings. Acknowledgement of a spiritual heritage is an acknowledgement of our dependence on the Creator, who gave us life, sustains us and has ultimate jurisdiction over our destinies.

These statements are extremely important value statements. They represent "a paradigm which recognises inter-subjectivity, interdependence, inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness" (Ritchie, 2010, p.2). This is a significant contrast to an individualistic paradigm that typically introduces an individual according to current information such as name, occupation and achievements. The *whakapapa* introduction emphasises being rather than doing, historical connectedness rather than achievements. It interweaves the spiritual and the physical rather than separating them out. It also invites a response in kind so that relationships can be established and interpersonal positions located. An implicit element of this concept is that history matters. It informs present actions and relationships. It teaches us how to move forward. It reminds us of our frailty and the need to respect the relational, physical and spiritual environment in which we operate. Reference to tribal affiliations also recognises the importance of history, heritage, spiritual and natural descent.

Manaakitanga represents hospitality and caring for others. Hospitality is considered a virtue around which other elements revolve. Hospitality involves acceptance, graciousness and generosity which provide a platform for relationship-building and for task accomplishment. This involves "nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being careful about how others are

treated” (Mead, 2003, p. 29). Without *manaakitanga*, suspicion, resistance and reluctance undermine relationships and compromise task accomplishment. This ideal is coupled with the concept of a world that has interwoven elements.

The same principles that are at work in weaving are at work with regard to the people around us: each person is to be treated with respect, to be understood and cared for, as part of a harmonious interlocking whole, like the interdependent parts of the natural environment.

(Patterson, 1992, p. 27)

Manaakitanga involves the reciprocity (*koha*) of giving and receiving. This can be illustrated in the research process itself. Instead of just taking information from people we should give back by way of information sharing, or supporting projects which build community capacity, or contributing some other gift to the community from which information has been drawn. This research project has created opportunities for investing knowledge back into Māori Health providers and government agencies that deal with Māori initiatives. The knowledge gathered here has been shared with these groups and used in training processes. As this process reciprocity continues it will suggest nuances that can be included to refine the principles further. *Manaakitanga* is exercised in anticipation that everyone benefits. As the proverb states, *Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi* (with your basket of knowledge and my basket of knowledge, every one will benefit). Cooperation will help us all to progress. Goodwill towards others ensures that the needs of all people involved in the interaction are being considered. This ethos engenders a spirit of community advancement in contrast to the individualistic, promotional and competitive culture of Western commerce. It suggests an ethic of care.

An ethic of care is founded in an understanding of people as relational beings, and can be seen as comprising three central components: conceptual and emotive understanding, deep respect for and recognition of the intrinsic worth of others, and a willingness to act for the other.

(Martin, 2007, p. 57)

The “other” includes the natural world. This concept of care and guardianship emphasises the harmonious interdependence between people and the environment in which they live rather than continuing to dominate and exploit it (Patterson, 2000).

Kaupapa represents purpose or objectives, the task element of collaboration. This recognises the need for operational direction and clear declarations of intent. Significantly, *kaupapa* is arrived at in the context of collective discussion rather than by individual initiation. This consultative process emphasises collaboration and shared power rather than domination by strong individuals although persuasive orators, manipulation of protocols (such as coughing or shuffling during speeches) and behind-the-scenes discussions (especially involving influential women who may not be able to speak in the public arena due to gender restrictions) serve as more subtle influences in the process of shaping *kaupapa*.

Kaupapa may be subject to adjustment during ongoing engagement with one another as new considerations are brought to the table. In New Zealand, corporate entities and government organisations are obliged to consult with local Māori under the Environmental Management Act (2004). This requires non-Māori agencies to engage in transparent ongoing discussion, negotiation and consultation. Understanding the significance of such discussions and being patient with the process and time involved is fundamental to successful Māori Public Relations. Undue haste in this process can be perceived as disrespect for the *kaupapa* and the people involved in the engagement. This brings community interests into conflict with the interests of the state or the commercial interests of corporate bodies wishing to promote their agendas, especially if this is propelled by urgency. An example of this fundamental conflict was the attempted hurried resolution of land claims in 1995 by means of a Fiscal Envelope, a single compensatory payment of \$1 billion. The Crown held a series of “consultation” meetings around the country, at which Māori vehemently rejected the proposal. The concept of the Fiscal Envelope was subsequently dropped after the 1996 election.

Whanaungatanga presents the central importance of operating in a relational way. It emphasises the value placed on community and kinship rather than purely commercial advancement. It is the core of the metaphor because every transaction, every interaction, every form of engagement is conducted in the context of a network of relationships. This recognises that we are in a community locally, regionally, nationally and globally. It is underpinned by the

notion that results are achieved more effectively when the importance of relationships is recognised and respected. Operating in a relational way evokes warmth and familial acceptance as distinct from purely operational, commercial, or transactional relations.

The importance of *whanaungatanga* can be illustrated in the serious breakdown in relationship between the Crown and Māori over the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840. From a Māori perspective, the Treaty of Waitangi was regarded as a partnership. It promised protection of sacred and culturally important elements, especially the protection of land, which means far more than a physical resource to Māori. Māori attachment to the land is spiritual and personal. The land is your mother, your nurturer and your source of sustenance, someone you want to respect and care for as she ages. It is a person to whom you owe your life. It is unthinkable in this framework to sell the land, exploit it, devastate it or hand it over to strangers. Little wonder the period after 1840 was littered with conflict over the colonial acquisition of land and resources by legislation, confiscation and commercial transaction. This is not just seen as betrayal but as a serious breach of *whanaungatanga* and *tikanga* Māori. There is a clear contrast here between the individualistic ethic of Western colonial exploitation and market dominance and the collectivism of the Māori ethical construct that emphasises guardianship and sustainability.

Mana represents the concepts of pride and dignity. *Mana* has to do with spiritual authority and power. It encapsulates respect for oneself and for others. In the Māori world every person is descended from the gods and possesses a life force (*mauri*) and both animate and inanimate objects possess this life force. This is the inner power and strength that is fundamental to operating in a *tikanga* Māori way. It is a foundational expression of virtue ethics in that it emphasises the importance of being (a person's essence) rather than doing (a person's accomplishments). It begins with pride in one's own essence, knowing what we bring to the relationship and confidence in our capacity to contribute meaningfully to the *kaupapa*. It calls on us to exercise humility and to accept that we will have to work together and learn together if we are to accomplish great tasks. This aspect is similar to the Samoan concept of *va fealoaloa'i* (mutual respect). When someone rises to speak in a Māori context, they must

be doing the right things (*tika*), in the right way (*pono*) and with the right motivation (*aroha* or love). This is respectful and appropriate. It conveys dignity and inspires it in the interactions between people. Respect entails due regard for the *mana* of the task, the complexity of relational linkages and the historical context of the interaction.

Tapu represents the element of the sacred or protected. Since each person is considered to be descended from the gods, each one of us inherits some of their *tapu* (sacred protection). If we step outside of that protection we expose ourselves to danger, illness and even death. Thus we need that protection to be maintained and, if disturbed, to be restored before we suffer negative consequences. This overlapping of the spiritual and the secular is in contrast to the separation of spiritual and secular in Western culture but it is a vital and natural component in Maori and Pacific Island cultures. This can be evidenced in everyday occurrences such as the blessing of food, the prayers that are said on formal occasions, the rituals of hand washing when leaving a cemetery, the unveiling and grieving processes surrounding funerals, and in the care taken to respect the spiritual world. A recent example of this in New Zealand was the rerouting of a highway to circumvent a sacred waterhole that was said to be the home of a well-known mythical animal (*taniwha*) after local Māori objected to the road being constructed over its home.

The concept of *tapu* suggests that care needs to be taken in everyday interactions with one another and with the environment. Respect for the spiritual forces involved in human interaction is a key aspect of this model. One should know or make oneself acquainted with the spiritual and *tikanga* elements attached to a people and to their land. It requires a due sense of accountability on a human, interpersonal, community, environmental and spiritual level. It also acknowledges that there are places where we should not tread. No interaction or enterprise is conducted without the covering of prayer, for example. If mistakes have been made and tragedies have occurred, then the “ground” on which these occurred is *tapu* and needs to be cleansed before proceeding. *Tapu* can be lifted but it must be taken seriously for the relationship to flourish.

8.4 Key concepts underpinning Māori and Pacific Island Public Relations principles

The first concept for Public Relations practitioners to appreciate is that different values exist among Māori and Pacific Island audiences. Māori and Pacific Island media exist because of these differences and their agenda is to voice Māori and Pacific Island concerns and matters of interest, “representing [our] perspective because the mainstream media does not” (Māori Radio, 1). “Everyone’s got their perspective – ours is an independent Māori voice” (Māori Magazine, 1). One illustration of this appreciation was to realise that the angles of Public Relations press releases might not appeal to Māori and Pacific Island audiences. Māori and Pacific Island media would almost certainly have a different view of things. Māori news is far more family and iwi (tribe) related. Each participant told stories related to their particular iwi. One repeatedly referred to stories his father had told him. It was as if his father was actually present with us during the interview. During the interview, another drifted in and out of references to urban Māori identity and his own tribal roots. Family obligations are a matter of duty. For some things “there is no choice for the family”. This family and tribal orientation is a distinctive reference point for Māori Public Relations.

Another underpinning concept is to understand that Māori and Pacific Islanders have distinctive ways of communicating. One of those ways is storytelling. “PR is telling Pacific stories, getting things aired in the media” (Pacific Magazine, 1). Public Relations practitioners need to supply “speakers who can talk and sell” (Pacific Radio, 1). It requires a narrative approach to communication rather than a conventional press release format of prose punctuated with comment and statistics. This kind of storytelling has to be authentic, “effective communication of key messages in simple language that reaches its target audiences and achieves our aims. PR doesn’t have to be about being smart or clever but about using values to enhance our position in the eyes of others” (Māori Television, 1). Given that much information is shared orally, Public Relations has to be careful about sources and especially aware of untrustworthy information. “Because we are working with our own community it must involve balanced stories and credible news. We are so strong on word of mouth that any fly can

spoil the ointment” (Pacific Television, 1). It is vital to choose appropriate people as quotable sources. The golden rule among Māori and Pacific Island groups is: “It’s who you know not what you know that counts” (Pacific Radio 3). These sources are frequently different from people who are recognisable to the mainstream media.

The process of storytelling is different from mainstream convention. Māori and Pacific Island storytelling is circular rather than linear. It incorporates a holistic approach to communication. Stories around this “circle” may contain open references to God and spiritual beings. The discussion will show respect for the dead and for figures from the past such as Maui, a mythological figure, “the ultimate entrepreneur”. Stories illustrate facts, interpretations and admirable qualities within the culture. These may “highlight the plight of our people”. The stories frequently place a high priority on community benefit. The stories entail “listening and speaking from the heart”. In this context, “PR is a moving story. If you speak to me from the mind versus speaking to me from the heart, the heart will win every time” (Māori Television, 2). They will require the participant to be wary of shades of meaning because “the substance lies behind the speech” (Māori Television, 2).

The heart is an important element of communication in these cultures. “Story telling is an important part of Māori and Pacific Island cultures. You have to be aware of context. You must know how to use the heart in your stories” (Māori Television, 2). Communication using the “heart” is also characterised by goodwill and a desire to benefit the hearers. Public Relations is “building and encouraging others through relationships” (Pacific Radio, 2).

Successful communication needs a Māori heart. Māori eyes and ears are more likely to respond positively when cultural icons, images, idiom, and representations are incorporated. Cultural drivers may be classical or contemporary but share an ability to be recognised by Māori as normal. The ideal is to be able to communicate in a way that gives expression to both a Maori rhythm and a Māori worldview.

(Sharples, personal communication, June 22, 2010)

This suggested the power of reference to iconic people and phrases. These contribute communication in a “Māori rhythm” and reflect a “Māori worldview.” It also emphasised the importance of turns of phrase, “idiom and representations”. These references increase source credibility and recognisability to Māori audiences.

The credibility of the messenger is also important in Pacific communities. It comes “from the integrity of the speaker as known by the people”; it is “broadcast by word of mouth; legitimacy comes from the people. We are so collective” (Pacific Television, 1). It comes from building a relationship and a record of performance over time. Communicators need to be known to the Pacific communities in order to gain a hearing. “If you are not known they don’t acknowledge you” (Pacific Radio, 2). The “knowing” involves a personal acquaintance where personal integrity is backed up by informal grapevine conversations among the community. Communicators who do not recognise these contextual elements will find it difficult to communicate effectively with Pacific communities who are looking for the substance behind the speech.

It could be argued that public relations practices began in New Zealand at the time the first sea travellers arrived from Polynesia, given that Māori brought with them “protocols for relating to one another and to visitors, persuasive speech making skills, stakeholder relationship management (*manaakitanga*), [and] event management” (<http://www.globalalliancepr.org/prlandscapes>). The arrival of British and European settlers necessitated the development of government relations, intercultural communication practices, and new forms of issues management and crisis communication. Key practitioners included speech-makers (chiefs and specially trained or gifted orators), advisors (*tohunga* and missionaries), women (*kuia*) who knew the protocols for organising events, government agents, teachers, and leaders (*kaumatua*) who engaged in discussions, signed agreements, and gave guidance on how personal, organisational, political, inter-tribal and inter-racial affairs should be conducted (Durie, 2003; Walker, 2004).

Culturally competent practice must recognise cultural signifiers. For example, Pacific cultures have hierarchical social structures embedded in them. “You have to use the right level of language” (Pacific Radio, 2). Hierarchy is also expressed through respect for titles, “having a title gives you the right to speak” (Pacific Radio, 2); “we respect elders” (Pacific Radio, 1); “Europeans earn respect Tongans give it” (Pacific Television, 1). Titles are emblems signifying the authority both to govern and to speak or represent. Speakers can be considered the equivalent of Public Relations practitioners appointed to speak on behalf of the Samoan chief.

A matai may be either an “Ali’i” (chief) or a “Tulafale” (orator). The Ali’i are the blue bloods of the country and the Tulafale are the speakers who serve the chiefs. In former times the term Matai applied only to Tulafale but as times changed the term became applicable to Chiefs or Ali’i generally and has continued down to the present time. Chiefs sometimes appoint Tulafale within their own families for the purpose of strengthening their following and influence. (Tuvale, 2008)

Similarly, Tongans have chiefs (*eiki*) and high chiefs (*eiki lahi*) and orator groups who control the conferment of titles (*pule*).

Some Pacific leaders will not meet with someone they consider to be of lower social rank. These titles and the prestige they carry need to be recognised by New Zealand Public Relations practitioners attempting to communicate with Pacific Island audiences. Approaching Māori elders (*kaumatua*) also needs to be implemented with due respect for their positions. *Kaumatua* are not generally paid employees so their time availability has to fit around work or family commitments (Māori Radio, 2).

Honouring cultural tradition is an effective door-opener as the following story illustrated. A film crew wanted access to two coffins to cover a story involving road deaths. The local people were very strict about the customs surrounding how the dead should be treated. The bodies were lying in the coffins on the marae and their privacy was to be respected. The film crew took a colleague who was fluent in Maori language to make the approach to the custodians of the bodies. This required a speech on the marae. The chosen spokesperson was from that particular tribal group and was a recipient of an educational grant from

the tribe. In his opening remarks he reminded them of his connection with them through his grandfather, reminded them of the funding he had received as a token of support from his tribe, how this had equipped him for this situation and how the tribe could now facilitate his job. Thus he was able to emphasise that the tribe was his support. “You are my *kaitiaki* [teachers]” (Māori Television, 2). By asking in this way he was granted access to the coffins and information about the deaths.

It is also important to understand that in traditional Māori and Pacific Island settings decisions are frequently made by consensus. “To go forward ... it is the rights of the collective that count, not the individual ... [it is] buy-in from the whanau (whole family) that counts ... so, it is a marathon not a sprint” (Māori Television, 2). This means that *kaupapa* (purpose and direction) is developed through a process of ongoing consultation, debate until consensus is reached. This pattern is both complex and time-consuming. Decisions and meaning in this context are not generated by an individual but by the collective wisdom of the group. Consequently, one individual will be unwilling to represent the group without consultation. “I don’t know all the answers; I need to dialogue” (Māori Television, 2). Public Relations in traditional Māori and Pacific Island style is a long process of relationship development in which the history of engagement, reciprocity and contribution to the community is fundamental to facilitating progress.

Although Māori cultural patterns are changing, the distinctive communication channel is still face to face (*kanohi ki te kanohi*).

Although Māori have embraced modern communication technologies, communication and information technologies, CIT is not always regarded as an adequate substitute for *kanohi ki te kanohi*. It is important to be seen on marae, at hui [meetings], and at community functions. This is especially important when a relationship with a group is contemplated; a request of a Māori community is being made; and when Maori issues are under discussion.

(Sharples, personal communication, June 22, 2010)

This principle underpins the significance of personal representation at events. A face seen is a face counted. *He kanohi i ki tea, he ringa tu* (literally, a face is

seen, a hand is raised). “If you want your commitment to be noted you have to physically attend. Sending an email or a letter is no substitute for your physical presence” (Māori Television, 2). As time passes, this develops into *he kanohi kitea*, the ongoing presence. Māori are more comfortable engaging when a familiar personal link can be demonstrated. Authenticity is demonstrated by commitment over time. A recognisable face is a known quantity and provides a baseline so that discussions can continue with greater confidence. It is important that, once initiated, continuity is maintained providing visible evidence of a link between parties. In other words, effective communication is about relationships over time (Durie, 2003).

It is important for the messenger to not be seen as promoting self. This principle is called *he ngakau humarie*.

Māori have a decided preference for communication styles that do not inflate the ego of the messenger. “E kore to kumara e ki ake ki tona reka” (the kumara does not boast of its own sweetness). Maori are not unimpressed by achievement but successes are savoured much more openly when they are pointed out by others.

(Sharples, personal communication, June 22, 2010)

According to these views, Public Relations is best understood as people-centric communication. “I define it as anything to do with public contact, interacting with the public” (Pacific Radio, 3). “It is any form of public contact” (Pacific Television, 1). Public Relations was defined as cultural practice.

Communications has been part of Māori culture forever – it’s just that now we are using new technology. PR has traditionally always been part of our culture; the conch shell to announce a chief or make an important announcement; performing arts, songs, speeches on the *paepae*, *koha* (giving and receiving of gifts). (Māori Television, 2)

Perhaps the Māori Public Relations principles are best summed up by the proverb which asks “*He aha te mea nui o te ao?*” (What is the most important thing in the world?) The answer is “*He tangata. He tangata. He tangata.*” (It is people. It is people. It is people).

An exploration of the Māori and Pacific Island media responses to the core research questions: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New

Zealand?” and “What are those perceptions based on?” provides an opportunity to apply Māori Public Relations principles to the practice of Public Relations in a way that has not previously been articulated. Given that Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand this is an important statement. Māori principles contain some elements that are recognisable from other approaches, particularly the framing of Public Relations as a network of relationships proposed by Relationship Theory (Ledingham, 2003; Bruning, Castle, & Schrepper, 2004). They also respond to the call for the descriptions of cultural expressions of Public Relations (Moss & DeSanto, 2004; L’Etang, 2004; van Ruler, Verčič, & Bütschi, 2004; Sriramesh, 2004; L’Etang, 2008; Sriramesh and Verčič, 2009; Sievert & Porter, 2009). These principles stand in contrast to Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) which tends to be strongly managerial, Western and materialistic in its conceptualisation (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Toledano, McKie, & Roper, 2003; McKie, Motion, & Munshi, 2004; McKie & Munshi, 2007). Rather than seeing Public Relations as an evolving practice and a growing profession they reframe it as embedded cultural practice (Gregory, 2004; Brown, 2006). This reframing aligns with arguments against the rhetorical construction of Public Relations as an evolving profession (Laskin, 2009). Māori principles illustrate the value of employing authentic, long-established, localised cultural concepts, values, language and frameworks to describe Public Relations. They also illustrate why fresh approaches to the way Public Relations is conceptualised and researched are needed (McKie & Munshi, 2007; van Ruler, Verčič, & Verčič, 2008) and what these approaches might look like (Gregory, 2004).

Chapter 8 concludes the reporting of findings related to the two research questions: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” and “What are those perceptions based on?” The major emphasis so far has been on answering the primary research question: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” Chapter 9 uses Pierre Bourdieu’s analytical framework to draw together the key threads of definitions, roles and functions, and to consider the legitimacy claims surrounding Public Relations as a field of practice. The particular focus will be on the second question: “What are those perceptions based on?”

Chapter 9

Public Relations as a Field of Practice

This study was initiated by curiosity concerning the persistently negative reaction to the name “Public Relations” that I encountered as a Public Relations practitioner and educator and, in particular, why the media portrayal of Public Relations seemed to be so predominantly negative. A Pragmatist approach using the theoretical framework of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) was deliberately chosen because of its emphasis on obtaining insights for practical change. One of the key tenets of Symbolic Interactionism is that human beings act towards things on the basis of their perceived meanings. A key procedural principle of Symbolic Interactionism is that behaviours can be changed by changing perceptions. It anticipates the ability to influence the views of others. Thus, the exploration of perceptions was at the heart of this study, firstly to discover what these were and secondly to analyse the bases of those perceptions. The two research questions therefore were: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” and “What are those perceptions based on?”

Chapter 8 concluded the reporting of definitions, roles and functions, and legitimacy claims with the exposition of Māori Public Relations principles. Chapters 5 to 8 primarily addressed the first research question: “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” This current chapter uses Bourdieu’s analytical framework to draw together the key threads of definitions, roles and functions, and legitimacy claims from this thesis in a discussion of Public Relations as a field of practice with particular focus on the second question: “What are those perceptions based on?” In particular it uses the concepts of field, agency, habitus, doxa, structuration and types of capital.

The participants in this study were all located in the field of Public Relations, within the more general fields of business and tertiary education and the even wider field of New Zealand society (see Figure 3.1). Each player possessed a degree of agency in formulating their own and others identity. This interactive process set the terms of the emerging social practice and managed the process of development and change. As each player articulated their definition of Public

Relations, described its function in organisations and society and sought to prescribe its jurisdictional parameters, they offered a view of themselves and others and a view of how they thought they and others should function. In the process, they made legitimacy claims regarding their own roles and the jurisdiction of Public Relations. These positions were negotiable, sometimes self-contradictory and unpredictable because they were in a constant process of formulation in a particular logic of practice. These formulations represented attempts to cultivate symbolic capital within the field (Bourdieu, 1990).

These positions structured and were structured by the agents' micro and macro environments. At the macro level, the "players" were influenced by international factors such as media representations, overseas experiences (both personal experience and through contact with colleagues), government policies, and values embedded in society and in their organisations. Various forms of capital, both symbolic (such as reference to cultural icons) and material (such as organisational seniority), combined with skills in playing the game, were embedded into the habitus of each player. The coalescence of habitus and individual agency formed a trajectory that established the players' own identities, roles and functions; the identity, roles and functions of others; the rules of engagement; jurisdiction; and arguments about legitimacy as they sought to establish and maintain social capital. In the process, participants engaged in a power struggle to establish legitimacy or deny it to others.

The discourse (doxa) employed by players in the "game" also reflected forces shaping wider society. The structuration or overarching shaping of social order of professions and professional players helps to explain why discourses were generated in certain ways and why some sectors were either deliberately or inadvertently excluded from the discourse (Bourdieu, 1990). These overarching forces played a significant role in empowering arguments for legitimacy and legitimised the creation of certain sorts of knowledge and practice.

The habitus of each player consisted of the internalised framework they built and drew on to articulate how they were supposed to play in their assigned team position. For example, CFOs saw themselves as guardians of the strategic functions of management. They valued strategic communication over

flamboyant publicity, even though some acknowledged that both were necessary parts of doing business. The habitus shaped how players thought they should play. For example, some media saw themselves as guardians of the public interest. They positioned themselves as adversaries to corporate interests, and as investigators and judges of corporate behaviour. The habitus provided a fertile backdrop for creating player projections of how they were supposed to perform, even in the interview process. For example, participants expected me as researcher to conduct myself as an accurate recorder and ethical processor of the information they offered.

Rules for engagement were partly self-imposed constructions and partly imposed by others. They were formed through a combination of social engagement and self-reflection. Unthinking commitment to the game formed a *logic of practice* that exhibited values, ways of defining, and relations between various players in the fields linked to Public Relations (Bourdieu, 1990). These factors coalesced to form a bank of symbolic capital within given fields. It also involved an intangible agreement that the games, Public Relations, Marketing, Journalism, and the research project itself, were worth playing.

9.1 Senior Management Team perspectives

The data on Senior Management responses revealed two dominant models of Public Relations – the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management model. Bourdieu's concept of trajectory helps to explain why these two models existed and were perpetuated among senior managers. Each category of manager – CEO, Marketing, CFO, and Communication, had developed its own distinctive and sometimes overlapping way of perceiving the Public Relations field. The micro environmental influences on this process were media, informal opinions shared by family members and social acquaintances, discussions with other senior managers, interactions with Public Relations practitioners and, to a lesser extent, seminars, courses and books. Macro environmental influences included the expectation of material success, capitalist commercial rules of operation, global events such as public shaming of unacceptable corporate behaviour, and global economics. The trajectory of each group had been developed and was still developing through a process of self-formulation, other-formulation, role definitions, setting and negotiating

jurisdictional parameters, legitimacy, and rules of engagement. These processes accumulated to produce social and cultural capital.

Table 9.1 Senior Management Team (SMT) self-formulation

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Communication GM
Self-formulation	Responsible for overall success The buck stops here	Responsible for generating income The engine room	Responsible for strategic control The strategic controller	Responsible for coordinated communication The facilitator of communication

The CEO self-formulation illustrated why CEOs felt justified in dispensing their own form of Public Relations. The CEOs' focus was on communicating authentic practice and producing results before talking about them. If they felt that business was about performance and that good performance spoke for itself, media exposure clearly did not have the same priority as a Public Relations practitioner might place on it. It was certainly not an end in itself. When Public Relations practitioners promoted companies to the threshold of their level of actual performance (and occasionally beyond), they were threatening the CEO's credibility. Generally CEOs were less supportive of the Publicity model because it represented a contradiction of their basic self-formulation. It represented promotion of an image rather than performance, talking rather than walking the talk. Some concluded that business did not need this form of Public Relations at all.

Marketing defined itself as the engine room, the power driving the company. Thus, it positioned itself as indispensable in the business process. This positioning did not exclude other functions but certainly placed Marketing at the heart of the profit-making process. In this construction, everything else would have to work to support Marketing. CFOs positioned themselves as strategic controllers, the guardians of organisational direction and careful, budget-conscious expenditure. The budget and its discourse of return on investment,

strategic alignment, cost cutting and cost effectiveness was a key mechanism of control for the CFO. It was used to rationalise why certain types of Public Relations staff had been replaced. Legal Counsellors also acted as controllers, employing a discourse of due diligence, liability and compliance. In both cases their trajectory was aimed at either taking reasonable risk or reducing risk altogether. They were therefore not supportive of the type of Public Relations that might expose the company to the risk of criticism or worse – financial or legal liability. They insisted that Public Relations should be “strategic” and should “contribute to corporate objectives.” In summary, it should comply with their agenda for the organisation.

Communication General Managers’ self-formulation as communication facilitators was problematic. Firstly, it proposed a distributed contribution in that everyone had to communicate in some form or other. The communication facilitation function was difficult to isolate and quantify. This was one reason why there were so many different titles associated with the Communication General Manager position. Secondly, the Communication General Managers tended to propose a view that relationship building was a valuable exercise in its own right. It offered protection in times of trouble, it created goodwill, it was a source of industry information, it improved the chances of successful business transactions and served to enhance social consent. But these justifications were largely intangible. Because they were difficult to quantify it was difficult to demonstrate their value in terms that the other senior managers appreciated. Thirdly, expectations placed on the communication function created conflict. CEOs wanted Communication to contribute to the overall success of the organisation by communicating authentic performance. Marketing wanted Communication to produce income through positive media exposure. CFOs wanted Communication to meet strategic objectives at a reasonable cost. These competing expectations brought the Communication General Manager into jurisdictional conflict over territory and resources with areas such as Marketing and Advertising. Communication General Managers frequently found they had to advocate for their own role. Added to this, their need to distinguish themselves from the Publicity model also brought the in-house practitioner into conflict with Public Relations consultants.

For Public Relations consultants, the difficulty in defining Public Relations created economic opportunity. If Public Relations could be portrayed as a mysterious profession then it required astute, proficient practitioners to execute it. They could negotiate a position for themselves as generalists who could tackle any project for their client. But the inability to succinctly describe the role created confusion. The diversity of job titles and practitioner definitions “underline the difficulties of defining clearly the boundaries of what Public Relations is and what the industry covers” (Murphy, 2003, p. 5). Practitioners struggled to succinctly articulate what they did, which gave the impression that they were not really sure what they should be doing and were not confident about their mandate to practice.

The two models of Public Relations that emerged from the senior managers – the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management (SCM) model, drew differing formulations, depending on the managers’ own position (see Table 9.2).

Table 9.2 Senior Management Formulation of Public Relations and SCM

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Communication GM
“Other” formulation	PR is publicity / has mixed benefits	PR is publicity / a poor cousin	PR is publicity / weak but necessary	PR is publicity / fluffy and insubstantial. I am not PR
	SCM is preferable We should perform well first, then publicise good performance	What is SCM? It should be integrated with Marketing under IMC	SCM is necessary SCM should communicate selectively to achieve company goals	SCM oversees all aspects of corporate communication It should be transparent SCM is not the same as PR

All the managers questioned the robustness of “PR”, the Publicity model. This helped to explain the motivation behind in-house practitioners’ desire to dissociate themselves from the term “PR”. Marketing’s formulation of Public

Relations as a strategic business tool useful for reaching its own promotional goals located Public Relations as a poor cousin whose role and status was tenuous. It should also be noted, however, that even where Public Relations was denigrated as insubstantial, companies still used it in specialist roles such as advising, advocating, for procuring third party endorsement, facilitating information flow, relationship-building, managing activists and managing issues. Thus Public Relations experienced an ambiguous logic of practice. On the one hand it was considered risky; on the other practitioners were still being employed to garner media coverage and for support in times of crisis or special need. The Strategic Communication Management model (SCM) was the preferred model. However, the use of the term “strategic” was interpreted in different ways by each manager. Marketing interpreted it as Integrated Marketing. CEOs interpreted it as communicating authentic performance and CFOs as removing obstacles to the fulfillment of company objectives.

Communication General Managers interpreted “strategic” as coordinated communication and also advocated that companies should communicate in a transparent way. CEOs and CFOs agreed with the notion of coordinated company communication. However, they disagreed over the issue of transparency. CEOs espoused transparency to publicise genuine performance but left open the question of how transparent a company should be if performance was not good. CFOs did not agree that transparency was helpful or suited to the competitive business environment, for example. To them, members of the senior management team should demonstrate business acumen and add value to the strategic imperatives of the company.

Communication General Managers had to negotiate their own legitimacy. While they viewed their role as SCM, other senior managers did not always think they were strategic in the way they operated. To secure legitimacy, they had to walk through the minefield of senior manager expectations. If they were not successful at convincing the senior managers of their worth, they could find themselves reporting to an unsympathetic CFO who did not view SCM in the same way as they did.

While Public Relations (understood as Publicity) struggled for acceptance and respect, all the senior management team members, with the notable exception of Marketing, espoused SCM as desirable. Corporate reputation management and investor confidence were considered critical success factors. Marketing General Managers did not reject this view; they simply did not articulate it. Nevertheless, while SCM was considered important, this did not necessarily translate into a senior management role for the Communications Manager. All managers in the senior management team were charged with the responsibility of communicating strategically.

Table 9.3 SMT views of jurisdiction for Public Relations and SCM

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Communication GM
Jurisdiction	PR has limited efficacy SCM scope depends on capability of practitioner	PR is under marketing -	PR needs to be controlled SCM practitioners need strategic supervision	PR is lower down the organisation SCM jurisdiction is negotiated

The Communication General Manager’s jurisdiction was negotiated rather than secure. If a CFO was acting as a caretaker of the communication function, then Communication’s jurisdiction was constrained by that manager’s perception of “fulfilling strategic imperatives”. The discourse invoking concepts such as “business acumen”, “competency”, and “strategic orientation” can be seen as mechanisms of symbolic violence used to screen out staff with characteristics that did not match the culture of senior management. Symbolic violence was exercised through the use of terminology such as “lack senior management capabilities” or “do not operate in a strategic way”. Similarly, Communication General Managers used derogatory terms such as “fluffy” and “candy” to distinguish Public Relations from their “mature” role.

Where the Marketing General Managers had Public Relations included in their portfolio, jurisdiction was restricted and sometimes shared with consultants who had been called in to help out with specialist areas such as Government Relations or Crisis Management. Marketing tended to overlook communication with internal audiences, relationships with local government, suppliers and local communities except in terms of their potential buying power. As in the Marketing textbooks, Marketing General Managers were aware of the emergence of the wider Communications role in corporate communication, government and community relations but they were unclear as to where it sat in relation to Marketing. Since Marketing General Managers typically treated Public Relations as a subordinate function, Public Relations practitioners were justified in their fear that they would have limited jurisdiction if they were cast purely in the role of MPR.

Table 9.4 SMT views of value of Public Relations and Strategic Communication Management (SCM)

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Communication GM
Value	PR has limited value SCM value depends on capability of practitioner	Legitimacy based on ROI PR should build credibility	Value of both PR & SCM depends on strategic alignment They must conform to strategy	Value and position is negotiated SCM should be coordinated and transparent

Public Relations consultants and Communication General Managers found themselves in a position where they had to advocate their own value as measured against the agenda of each senior management team member. The CEOs measured legitimacy according to the competence of the practitioner. In part, this was influenced by what others told them about Public Relations. Marketing measured value against the achievement of sales and market share. Under these circumstances Public Relations practitioners felt compelled to adopt marketing parlance to report measures of success, such as the AEV

(Advertising Equivalent Value) of press coverage. For CFOs both Publicity and SCM were valued if they could demonstrate strategic alignment and ROI (Return on Investment). Practitioners reporting to a CFO were obliged to emphasise the strategic nature of communication, and evaluate and report on how goals had been met in order to secure validation. Many Public Relations/ Communication Managers sought to negotiate their legitimacy using their own professional arguments for coordinated, transparent communication. These arguments only found resonance when they matched the values of their intended audience. This posed a daunting challenge for Public Relations/ Communication Managers when their own view of their contribution did not match the embedded views of their senior colleagues. This generated a struggle for legitimacy that had serious consequences if Public Relations/ Communication Managers failed to secure sufficient power to retain their position.

Table 9.5 SMT rules of engagement for Public Relations and Strategic Communication Management (SCM)

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Comms GM
Rules of engagement	I do my own PR or PR is under marketing or Use an SCM model	Under Marketing SCM can exist alongside Marketing	PR & SCM have to fit strategic imperatives as determined by me	Everything is negotiated

For some CEOs, the rules of engagement were that there was no engagement. These CEOs did their own Public Relations. In 27 per cent of the Top 100 companies the CEO believed they themselves were the only person who should speak for the organisation and they did not see the need for communication staff except for specialised support in times of crisis or when they needed specialist advice (Sterne, 2008a). CEOs were unequivocal in advocating for good reputation. But they were not convinced that Public Relations practice was the best way to achieve it.

The rules of engagement for the Publicity model were to operate undetected in the process of presenting a positive view of the company and protecting it from attack. It primarily involved selective media relations and targeted persuasion. Strategic Communication Management operated, at least at an espoused level, under quite different rules. SCM was supposed to operate as transparent communication to build trust and to support long-term relationships. These elements were seen by CEOs as a necessary part of achieving business objectives in the New Zealand context. Practitioners have been quick to claim this modus operandum. Brunton and Jeffrey (2008) found that 710 New Zealand PR/CM practitioners considered that their work involved managing dialogue with stakeholders and building relationships. Persuasion, on the other hand, was considered a low priority attribute for practitioners.

According to Bourdieu, social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248). Public Relations can operate to produce social capital, but Public Relations itself requires social capital in order to operate effectively. This is the underlying proposition explored by Callison and Zillman (2002), Sallot (2002) and Callison (2004). Senior management team member views of social capital were significant factors in this effectiveness (see Table 9.6).

Table 9.6 SMT Member views of social capital

SMT member habitus	CEO	Marketing GM	CFO	Comms GM
Social capital	The accountable agent Success is measured by performance	Above the line contributor to success Success is measured by numbers, wealth, image	Essential contributor to organisational success Success is measured by substance	Position depends on SMT acceptance Success is negotiated

CEOs have an established repository of capital by virtue of their title and position in the company. Of course, it has to be substantiated by successful performance or by political alliances which enable the CEO to maintain their position of privilege. Some CEOs place high value on their own personalities. In these cases they might be tempted to use Publicity to promote themselves as their companies. The social capital invested in the CEO position empowers them with some latitude to decide on the levels and nature of exposure. This places them in a key position in terms of legitimising all the other roles in a company, including Public Relations. Public Relations is legitimated by CEOs to the extent it can contribute to company success. This is a vulnerable position in that it depends on how the CEO defines success. The role and jurisdiction of Public Relations is very dependant on the views of the CEO.

Marketing has established a position where its capital is aligned with the financial success of the company. It holds greater power in some industry sectors (for example Fast Moving Consumer Goods) than others and its position is secured in 73 per cent of New Zealand's Top 100 companies. It does not need Public Relations to validate its functions, so Public Relations' legitimacy is peripheral to Marketing.

The CFO/Legal Counsel positions have established social capital in that they are considered essential company functions. Their *raison d'être* drives their insistence that Public Relations should be either strategically aligned or assist with legal compliance. Public Relations/Communication Managers have less social and cultural capital than the other management functions. Even in the 53 per cent of New Zealand companies that employ SCM, practitioners had to argue to establish their value.

9.2 Media perspectives

The media saw Public Relations through the lens of media relations. The three relationships: Antagonists, Professional Rivals and Business Partners, can be examined using Bourdieu's framework to reveal how the players saw themselves and each other within the field (see Table 9.7).

Table 9.7 Media construction of Public Relations as Antagonists

Media construction: Antagonists	
Self-formulation	Lily Whites, Fourth Estate, defenders of democracy We write in a balanced, objective, fair way We operate ethically and in the public interest We resist the influences of commercialisation
Formulation of Public Relations	Gatekeepers in the employment of commercial interests Sworn enemies, spin doctors, stonewalling Tainted by commercialisation and self interest PR operates unethically more often than not
Role definition	We investigate to bring information to light We are social adjudicators and guardians
Jurisdiction	We should have access to all areas of public interest PR should concur with our agenda (but often does not)
Rules of engagement	We use media vocabulary, news values, ethics, construction/presentation of information We can criticise but control criticism of self We expect PR to abide by media rules We reserve the right to investigate anything/anyone
Structuration	Competitive socio-political environment Everyone fighting to establish/maintain legitimacy Own legitimacy sometimes established by negative portrayal of "others"
Social capital	Argument for legitimacy based on freedom of expression Commercial legitimacy based on audience appeal Seniority in the field based on longevity, coverage of major news stories, and/or scoops Knowledge is reconstructed daily (or more often in radio and in web environments)

The Antagonists metaphor represented a dialectic tension over the legitimacy of Public Relations, depicting a struggle between the two parties. The goal of this battle was to dominate the discourse by describing what constituted ethical behaviour, by imposing notions of accountability, and by sustaining versions of the truth. News media editors formulated themselves as “Lily Whites”, pure, honest; defenders of the truth against the forces of darkness, capitalism, greed, self interest and power. For the media, capitalism and power were synonymous and were assumed to be negative. The rhetoric of this struggle included axioms such as “the public’s right to know”, which effectively meant the media’s right to access information, and “the need for objectivity, balance and fairness”, which created an opportunity for the media to tell their version of truth. The media questioned the legitimacy of Public Relations by characterising it as a negative force in society, “the dark side” or as “a threat to democracy”.

Of course, the media is not free from bias (Lacey, 2002; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Some of the participants in this study articulated this point of view. “They [media] see themselves as balanced but we are all subjective” (Business Magazine, 6). “It’s all about the perception: bias is a foregone conclusion” (Misa, 2006). Some recognised other sources of bias. “No industry is ethically pure. There are dodgy operators in each profession” (News Media, 1). “The media is competitive too” (News Media, 4) and is influenced by commercial considerations. “The media is here to make money rather than stories” (Business Magazine, 5). These pressures affect the journalistic commitment to thorough investigation.

There is a trend towards commercialisation – superficial trivia – at the expense of detailed quality journalism. It’s already hard because of reduced numbers, the difficulty in getting information especially from official sources, getting people to go on record, the popular demand for gossip stories, the pressure to get stories out quickly because of the internet, less time to investigate and check accuracy. (News Media, 4)

The Antagonists metaphor identified two philosopher protagonists, John Locke and Milton Friedman. The media associated themselves with Locke as a symbolic cultural icon who represented anti-corporatism, distrust of people in power, professional skepticism, and an argument for political and social checks and balances. Public Relations was associated with its own icon, Friedman,

who approved of greed, uncontrolled power, unprincipled struggles in the name of capitalism and a free market. The media positioned itself as a watchdog, acting as a necessary restraint on the economically and politically powerful.

To a certain extent, traditional media have power over Public Relations. Apart from legal liability, media can make insinuations (referring to Public Relations as the dark side), inferences (persistent references to “PR disasters”), and can label people (as spin doctors) and organisations (as heartless). Public Relations responses are muted because they are subject to editorial prerogative. While the media insists on public accountability for Public Relations practitioners its own practices enable it to make predictions, suggest motives, and select reporting content and angles to suit their own values and perspective. Portrayals, stereotypes and positional claims, including the definition of Public Relations itself, can be published with minimal accountability. Some of this power has diminished in recent times because of the emergence of social media. The new dynamic of informal networks of communication through the social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have somewhat eroded the stranglehold on information dissemination once held by traditional media. The speed and the reach of social media have created significant alternative information dissemination options.

9.3 The construction of Public Relations as a Professional Rival

The media construction of Public Relations as a Professional Rival acknowledged the similarities between the two, especially the fact that they were both subject to the influence of commercialisation (see Table 9.8).

Table 9.8 Media construction of Public Relations as a Professional Rival

Media construction: Professional Rivals

Self-formulation	We are media professionals doing a job At the end of the day media have to make a profit so we are chasing stories that will satisfy audiences/markets and make sales for our media owners We value objectivity and balance but need PR support
Formulation of Public Relations	PR practitioners are professionals doing a job as competitors in the same information-shaping space
Role definition	We are in the business of generating readership / audience / market share We will use PR source material but reserve the right to act as social commentators and guardians PR advocacy for a client is an acceptable practice so long as it is kept within professional parameters
Jurisdiction	We expect access to most areas of audience interest PR can expect some degree of respect from media if they cooperate by providing needed information
Rules of engagement	Use audience-driven vocabulary, construction and presentation of information Media need to be seen as autonomous Expect PR to treat media as a competitive partner – should be amicable (but is not always) Information exchange/subsidy recognised and used
Structuration	Politically and commercially competitive environment Legitimacy is established by audience (market) Markets (audiences) require information
Social capital	Alignment with audience/market demand Seniority in the field is based on technical knowledge Knowledge is constructed according to audience values

The Professional Rivals metaphor positioned media and Public Relations as competitors in the same field, the business of shaping public opinion. The media are subject to the same structuration effects as Public Relations practitioners: profit orientation, attracting advertisers, reliance on sources, flak from negative feedback, and ideological frameworks (Tully, 2008). Both journalists and Public Relations practitioners adapt their storytelling through processes of self censorship. Both are subject to the pressure of commercial profit-making. They adjust to the climate of their host organisations and to public opinion, especially criticism. Both are subject to occasional unethical behaviour on the part of their colleagues. Both struggle to maintain respect, trust and credibility – all key elements of social legitimacy. Both use explicit and implicit messaging to influence audiences. In fact, many Public Relations practitioners, 27 per cent in New Zealand, come from the ranks of journalism and another 7 per cent from broadcasting (PRINZ Trends Survey, 2008).

A significant difference from the Antagonists metaphor, however, is that the media saw Public Relations practitioners as contemporaries with similar goals. So long as the players recognised the parameters each was working within, they were able to coexist and even collaborate as partners occasionally. Closer collaboration was required to submit to ritual requirements, however – disclosure of Public Relations involvement at the end of a news item, for example. This game-playing was designed to avoid any hint of collusion and to maintain transparency about any form of partnership. The media were eager to maintain their role as social commentators free of compromise, bias or collusion. Nevertheless, both parties drew their social capital from audience acceptance of their messages. So the media were conflicted. They preferred not to use Public Relations sources, but since their own resources had been reduced to such an extent it was difficult to ignore them.

The media view varied according to the habitus of each news sector. The business news habitus was much more comfortable with the Professional Rivals model of operation and may even collaborate closely under certain circumstances. This was because the agenda of information dissemination was much more closely aligned to it than in the case of the general news media. The general news media were more likely to adopt the Antagonists position. As a

rule of engagement, Public Relations practitioners found that they had a greater chance of getting published if their stories were more aligned with commercial interests (Motion, 2005; Craig, 2007; Kunelius, 2006).

Any discussion of legitimacy in the media–Public Relations relationship needs to consider the issue of power. Using a matrix of Source (Public Relations) and Reporter (Media) power we can explore the power differentials in the relationship (see Table 9.9).

Table 9.9 Matrix of Media and Public Relations power

From Cameron, Sallot & Curtin (1997)

		Public Relations	
		High	Low
Media	High	National television 1 st tier business media National newspaper / radio Govt & Corporate PR sources	National television 1 st tier business media National newspaper / radio Small advocacy groups Community Groups
	Low	2 nd tier business media Local media Ethnic media Govt & Corporate PR sources	2 nd tier business media Local media Ethnic media Small advocacy groups Community groups

Media power is determined by external factors such as size of circulation and internal capacity, such as numbers of experienced investigative journalists and the financial support base. Thus, national television and daily newspapers have higher power than smaller local newspapers and ethnic media because of the differences in circulation and reach. Recent reductions in media staffing numbers, notably in newspapers and television, have had a detrimental effect on journalism. New Zealand media, especially in the private sector, is under-

resourced. Conversely, some media, for example national radio, perceive themselves to have a stronger position based on the level of resourcing they possess. Low power media are constrained by a lack of resources.

Public Relations is stronger when it represents government or corporate clients, where its power is in having access to specialised technical, political or financial information, financial resources, connections in the industry, and expertise in handling the media. Low-power Public Relations has less valued information, is not as well resourced, is not so well known to the media, lacks experience in media relations, and lacks seniority. Advocacy groups, for example, find they have to use attention-grabbing tactics to attract media attention, especially from national media, and have to work hard at relationship-building (Craig, 2007). There is a greater chance of local community groups gaining media coverage from local media because they share the same power space.

The power differentials in this matrix help to explain variations in the relational mix. Where media and Public Relations are both powerful there is more likelihood of strong competition. This explains why there is greater antagonism between national television and government sources, for example. They are both powerful and can counterbalance each other by acting as combatants for dominance in the public sphere (Curran, 2002; Motion & Weaver, 2005). Local media and ethnic media, who do not possess the same power base, would find it difficult to obtain information from powerful sources. If they had an audience that required specific information beyond the journalist's knowledge range they would have to work very hard to get that information. When information comes from powerful sources it is likely to be couched in the language and terms of the provider who sees little need to tailor the information to specific audiences. Low-powered media are more likely to be disregarded by more powerful Public Relations sources. They may find that agreements about exclusivity are less likely to be honoured, for example. Local media are more likely to attend to the needs of their audience, have a greater empathy with their power deficiencies, and therefore connect more effectively.

Most Māori and Pacific media saw themselves in the low-power category and located Public Relations as being in another place (see Table 9.10).

Table 9.10 Māori / Pacific Island media construction of Public Relations

Māori and Pacific Island media construction of Public Relations	
Self-formulation	'We' defined as those who know our cultural practices
Formulation of Public Relations	'You' defined as those who do not know the protocols Hence: In another place
Role definition	'We' seek to tell stories of interest to our audience 'You' are seeking to advance your agenda
Jurisdiction	'We' have access to our communities 'You' can gain access if you follow cultural protocols 'You' assume access but this is not a given
Rules of engagement	'You' must use our protocols if you want influence We anticipate that PR will treat us insensitively Information subsidy heavily weighted on our side (you may not recognise this)
Structuration	Reproduces societal ethnocentrism Maori and Pacific Island communities lack social capital in mainstream but possess it in their own communities Legitimacy is established by audience (market) Market segmentation influenced by ethnicity & language
Social capital	Based in cultural alignment Seniority in the field based on knowing what are relevant stories and how to connect with audience/readers Knowledge is constructed according to audience values

The application of Bourdieu's framework in Table 9.10 illustrates why Public Relations found itself in another place from indigenous media. The formulation of self and others using culturally defined criteria created a "them" and "us" construction in which those who did not possess the cultural equipment to engage with the "other" culture were not able to connect meaningfully with those inside the culture. The terms and differing rules of engagement promoted an embedded cynicism about Public Relations' genuineness in communicating with Māori and Pacific Island audiences.

This cynicism was partly based on the wider societal disenfranchisement experienced by these groups. The dominant model of Public Relations in practice in New Zealand follows a Western model largely based on American practice (Motion, Leitch, & Cliffe, 2009). This model of Public Relations emphasises two-way communication, relationship-building, Public Relations as a management function, separation from Marketing, Public Relations as a profession, gender equity, and measurement. The Western model is based on values such as democratic power-sharing, secularism, capitalism, and predominantly Western ethical frameworks. Although the model has an embedded openness to a wide variety of audiences, it is ethnocentric in that it does not anticipate alternative cultural views of Public Relations. This represents a mismatch of cultural capital. The Western approach to Public Relations is permeated by strong philosophical adherence to democracy; the compartmentalisation of intellectual, spiritual, practical and relational elements; a bias towards secularisation; and a bias towards capitalism. These tendencies alienate Public Relations as practiced in Māori and Pacific Island cultures.

9.4 Public Relations among the tertiary faculties

Academic definitions can also be seen as attempts to exercise control over the Public Relations field (see Table 9.11).

Table 9.11 Academic representation of Public Relations among New Zealand tertiary educators and in textbooks

	Media	Marketing	Management	PR/CM
Publicity model	Dominant view	Dominant view	Not mentioned	Reluctant admission
SCM model	Seldom mentioned	Limited mention	Dispersed throughout company	Dominant view CM portfolio

Media educators and texts referred to Public Relations primarily as media relations. This limited discussion of Public Relations to the functions media were most familiar with and produced a view of the practice that was restricted to this single approach. This view is consistent with media practitioner views. Although Marketing textbook writers such as Kotler, Keller and Burton (2009) mentioned a wider Corporate Public Relations role, and some Marketing educators are aware of such a role, Marketing educators and texts promoted a predominantly Marketing PR or IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) role for Public Relations. This view is consistent with Marketing practice. The absence of Public Relations in Management or Human Resources faculties and from most MBA courses placed Public Relations outside the frame of discussion in Management circles. This view is consistent with non-Communication senior managers. For their part, Public Relations and Communication Management (PR/CM) educators and texts rejected the portrayal of Public Relations as Publicity in deference to its portrayal as a form of Strategic Communication Management. Additionally, they proposed that Public Relations should entail transparent communication. These views were in stark contrast to the Marketing and Management faculties who portrayed it as Publicity or did not mention it at all. The view of Public Relations as transparent communication was consistent with the views of Communication practitioners in industry.

The habitus of PR/CM academics and educators has been strongly influenced by Grunig's Excellence Model, which contends that Public Relations is a management function reporting to the CEO engaging all of an organisation's stakeholders, both internal and external. In seeking to establish a scholastic point of difference, they have promoted two-way symmetric communication, building relationships, and stakeholder relationship management. They have resisted portraying Public Relations as media relations or simply as a technical function producing one-way publicity-based communication and have insisted on its separation from Marketing. In an effort to gain credibility, PR/CM academics have taken a strategic step away from the Publicity model. They reject it as an inferior and outdated model because of its embarrassing history, its negative depiction by the media, and its unpopularity in the general public view. They reject Advertising's portrayal of Public Relations as a one-way communication tactic (Yeshin, 2006) and the emphasis that Media and Marketing place on Public Relations as Publicity. Some faculties have even taken the symbolic step of renaming themselves Communication Management. Public Relations and Communication Management are fighting for a place in the academic landscape.

The SCM version did not reflect a complete picture of how Public Relations operated in New Zealand where both the Publicity and SCM models operate. Although the SCM model of open, transparent, two-way communication is well entrenched in PR/CM texts and faculties, it has not gained much traction in the related faculties of Management, Marketing, Media, or Human Resources. Some of the reasons for such a fundamental disconnect between faculties lies in the academic logic of practice (see Table 9.12).

Table 9.12 Academic logic of practice

Academic construction: Logic of Practice	
Self-formulation	Each faculty is an authority in its own subject area Each subject is supported by a knowledge base generated by research in its own area
'Other' formulation	Academic colleagues/competitors Industry is a graduate destination but needs critique Media is a discourse creator also subject to critique
Role definition	We conduct research to add to the body of knowledge We are qualified trainers for industry We produce critical thinkers We are social commentators and critics
Jurisdiction	PR is an academic subject with its own parameters & theoretical frameworks Authority comes from academic recognition, not necessarily from practice in a business field Academics claim to influence practice through their graduates, through their research, and through training
Rules of engagement	Use academic vocabulary, concepts, frameworks, assumptions, construction & presentation of information Everything is subject to critique – media, self, other researchers, PR, industry, critique itself Critique must be supported with evidence or argument
Structuration	Competing for social legitimacy Subject to internal and inter-institutional political struggle Silo operation (like many business departments) Reproduces societal ethnocentrism
Social capital	Alignment with a distinctive field of research Association with a recognised framework within that field Seniority in the field based on being published in a range of (well-regarded) journals Being quoted (favourably) by others Attracting numbers of students to enrol, complete courses and gain prestigious jobs Knowledge about PR is based largely in Western theoretical frameworks

The academic logic of practice embeds each faculty in its own subfield. Each adheres to the belief that their subfield is authoritative, based on its body of knowledge and research underpinnings. Subfields are not compelled to interact so, apart from the occasional critical discussion in journals and at conferences, they tend to develop their own justifications and views of one another. The educators' habitus contains an inherent belief that they are qualified to teach their subject area based on the fact that they have academic qualifications or sometimes on the basis of their industry experience. Although they use texts (and other research publications) for reference material they also blend their own interpretations and experiences into teaching practice. This blend produces a trajectory, a previous framework for describing Public Relations to students. This trajectory does not necessarily have to connect with other faculties or with practice. It is strongly influenced by ideological constructs generated from each faculty's own theoretical underpinning.

Structuration was also reflected in the logic of practice in that it reproduced societal ethnocentrism. Indigenous capital was depowered through symbolic violence, structured absence and cultural imperialism. This was reflected in the non-recognition of Māori and Pacific Island Public Relations practices, the subsuming of Australian and New Zealand Public Relations practice under the rubric of Australasia, the absence of research into indigenous expressions of Public Relations, and assumptions about research and knowledge that are built into the academic process. For example, the discussion about Public Relations as a profession acts as a mechanism for symbolic violence against indigenous cultures because it has several Western assumptions built into it.

9.5 The value of examining indigenous Public Relations principles

The Māori Public Relations principles are sociologically and culturally defined. They are best understood in terms of virtue ethics. They propose a much wider context for Public Relations than Publicity or SCM. They posit Public Relations as a holistic cultural, spiritual, emotional, environmental and political network of sustainable relationships. They emphasise the importance of merging historical, cultural, interpersonal and contextual aspects of communication. They take Public Relations out of the confined space of media relations and publicity garnering, expand it beyond the realm of corporate Strategic Communication Management, and position it as a people-centric, cultural practice.

Indigenous Public Relations principles offer the opportunity to researchers across the globe to examine how people and organisations relate in their local contexts. The public relations practices of some indigenous populations, such as the American Indians, Australian Aborigines and New Zealand Māori, have been overlooked, mainly due to ethnocentric research approaches which have privileged Western intellectual traditions (Jelen, 2008). Countries throughout the world have a range of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups within them. Countries like New Zealand have increasing numbers of new arrivals. The 2006 census showed that 23 per cent of New Zealand's population was born overseas (www.statisticsnz.govt.nz). Of these new arrivals, Pacific Islanders such as Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, Cook Islanders and Niueans all have their own languages and traditions. Their assimilation into New Zealand society has produced a cross-pollination of communication styles. The role of Public Relations research is to understand these nuances and develop culturally appropriate communication strategies using research methodologies appropriate to these various cultures.

This examination of Māori Public Relations principles is important because it provides a window for those who are not familiar with Māori values to “stand back from their own ethical tradition with sufficient intellectual and critical detachment to consider seriously some alternatives” (Patterson, 1992, p. 8). It is purely an attempt by a non-Māori to explore the application of Māori values to a field; to try to see Public Relations from a Māori perspective. Further research is

needed to test, and alter or validate what has been described. This study has provided a map of the field suggesting new configurations and introducing new applications of Māori cultural principles. But “a map needs to be treated with caution. Different explorers notice different aspects of the territory and will produce different maps ... we must dismiss the idea of a single true and complete map of a territory” (Patterson, 1992, p. 9). As Patterson points out, non-Māori researchers, like me,

... explore because they are in a position of relative ignorance, approaching unfamiliar territory. Realising that one has little or no understanding is an important step. Another important step is to realise that understanding is a matter of degree – that however well a non-Māori may come to understanding Māori values, there will always be room for improvement, for further fruitful exploration. (Patterson, 1992, p. 9)

Furthermore, the ontological position of this study is that reality is constructed in co-created meaning. So, rather than try to produce a single, authentic, reliable map the aim of this study is “to work towards sympathetic and authentic perceptions of Maori values and to be constantly on the alert for ways to improve [these] perceptions” (Patterson, 1992, p. 11). This study has gathered and begun to apply cultural principles in a Public Relations context to a point where they can now be tested and discussed by a wider range of voices.

During the course of this study an incident was reported that illustrates the importance of connecting with local cultures. The incident occurred at the opening of the National Geographic Museum in Washington D.C. in 2008. The New Zealand Māori leader who had been invited to the opening suggested that the local Indian tribes should be involved in the prayers and ceremonies. This came as a surprise to the organisers who had not thought to include the indigenous Indians in the ceremonies, despite the fact that some were museum staff. The leader insisted that they be included out of courtesy for their place in Washington D.C. and the fact that this was a place where the past was honoured and remembered. This involvement had an uplifting impact on the indigenous museum staff, who would otherwise have been largely anonymous at the opening ceremony.

This incident illustrated the importance of several constituent elements of people-centric, culturally aware Public Relations. The first is the importance of acknowledging indigenous cultures. It took the initiative of someone who understood the importance of this acknowledgement to make it happen. Secondly, it illustrates the strong vested interest in history that is embedded in indigenous cultures. The Public Relations approach of a dominant culture can overlook this connection so much that it fails to even acknowledge the existence of indigenous people in their own nation. The third element is the importance of showing respect for things people value. In this case, relationships were established by respecting the *mana* (pride) and *whakapapa* (lineage, descent) of the indigenous people in a spiritual way through prayers, incantations and in the speechmaking that surrounded the event. These prayers and incantations were not part of the dominant culture's ceremonial practice but were a common part of the indigenous people's ceremonial practice. In them they found practical and natural connection with the natural elements of land, sea and winds and were able to maintain the connection with their ancestors who had gone before them. Fourthly, operating in a *whanaungatanga* way meant acknowledging the relational links between the participants. This included the connections between local Indian peoples and Māori but it also invited other groups to make the same connection.

This incident illustrated how cultural competence can apply in a global context. Māori Public Relations principles are applicable in other cultural settings because they provide operational guidelines that can be adapted to local contexts and populations. These elements redefine excellent Public Relations. They are not tied to a particular Western theoretical framework but they are based in a world view from which values and ways of thinking flow. Each cultural or sub-cultural setting deserves study to discover their world views, values and ways of thinking so that Public Relations practice can be applied appropriately, respectfully and effectively in that particular setting and so that we can learn from other sets of cultural principles. These principles can then be used as a basis for developing appropriate, localised, targeted communication strategies. Table 9.13 illustrates how Public Relations practitioners could function based on Māori Public Relations principles.

Table 9:13 Roles / Functions in Māori Public Relations principles

Element	Expected Practitioner Role/Function
<p>Whakapapa - identity</p>	<p>Declare who you are at the outset; listen to introductions Use introductions for making relational connections Demonstrate respect for those who have passed on Show respect for the creator God and local deities Expect/offer public prayers</p>
<p>Whanaungatanga - relationships</p>	<p>Bring people with you, introduce your leaders Spend time getting to know people before attempting to do business with them Have people known to the hosts introduce you till you are known in your own right Demonstrate commitment to the welfare of the community. Then you will be warmly embraced</p>
<p>Manaakitanga - hospitality, reciprocation</p>	<p>Expect/offer hospitality and reciprocal payment Adopt a warm inviting manner Be generous in food provision Describe your commitment to the whole community Accept gifts graciously</p>
<p>Kaupapa - purpose, reason</p>	<p>Declare your purpose (after prayers and introductions) Expect to discuss and co-develop purpose rather than come with a final definitive statement Do not show disrespect for the kaupapa by trying to impose your agenda at pace</p>
<p>Mana - respect, for iwi / hapu / family</p>	<p>Cultivate respect by working according to tikanga Māori Each tribe (iwi) and sub-tribe (hapu) has its own way – find out what it is based on and respect it If you do not know what to do, ask an informed person such as a leader or cultural interpreter Know who the key players are before you meet them</p>
<p>Tapu - accountability, protection</p>	<p>Some things are sacred; you need to know what they are to avoid offence Tapu can be lifted by proper procedures being observed Accountability is appropriate, expect to measure results</p>

A people-centric approach, as distinct from a professional or a SCM model, places people and their interests at the centre of communication. It means the communicator (and researcher) thinks about audiences and their context from the audience's point of view. It means openly carrying one's own identity into every communication encounter and inviting others to participate in the creation of meaning. It acknowledges difference, recognises history and relationships, and operates within a framework of shared agendas. According to this approach, legitimacy comes from the authenticity of the connections made between participants in the communication process. This view frames Public Relations as an expression of culture rather than as a profession. It proposes a view of Public Relations that precedes the formation of associations, a "profession", and education courses for practitioners. It invites diversity and encourages exploration using culturally appropriate approaches.

This chapter has used Bourdieu's analytical framework to draw together the key threads in this thesis in a discussion of the positions taken by various players in the field of Public Relations practice. It has used the answers to the primary research question "What are the Perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?" and employed the concepts of field, agency, habitus, doxa, structuration and capital to reflect on the second question: "What are those perceptions based on?" In the process this chapter has exposed deeper, underlying dynamics that coalesce to formulate the positions taken by each player in relation to the others. These positions are sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping and frequently in a process of reformulation. The discussion of Māori Public Relations principles towards the end of the chapter highlighted the opportunities created by alternative ontological and epistemological approaches to symbolic capital creation. The final chapter will provide concluding remarks and reflect on possible action points and ways forward from this study.

Chapter 10

Conclusions

This final chapter reflects on the key themes that have emerged from this study. By inviting key influencers in the field to respond to the primary research question “What are the perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand?” this study has revealed how Public Relations functions in New Zealand’s Top 100 companies as two predominant models – the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management model. It has found differentiated perceptions among senior managers. It then distinguished three models of operation among New Zealand’s media editors – Antagonists, Professional Rivals and Partners. It found that Public Relations had an inconsistent presence among the various disciplines in tertiary education in New Zealand. It found that Public Relations in New Zealand was not addressing Māori and Pacific Island stakeholders whose traditional principles of cultural practice formed a rival rationality to Western forms of Public Relations.

In terms of the secondary research question, “What are these perceptions based on?” this study has explained how legitimacy claims can be seen as positions taken by agents in their respective fields and in the general field of business. These attempts to establish, assert, and defend these positions can be seen as attempts to cultivate and utilise symbolic capital. The analytical approach illustrated the value of the hermeneutical examination of contextual elements in the construction of meaning. Strategies such as naming, ascribing value, attempts to prescribe relationships and jurisdictional parameters and references to cultural icons all create a rich tapestry for understanding positions and position-taking in the construction of symbolic capital.

This study has illustrated how Māori Public Relations principles possess their own values, cultural and symbolic capital and arguments for legitimacy. The initial exposition of Māori Public Relations principles includes ways of developing culturally competent practice that illustrate the importance of recognising indigenous approaches to the practice of Public Relations globally.

10.1 Two models of Public Relations in New Zealand business

The discovery of two predominant models of Public Relations in New Zealand business – the Publicity model and the Strategic Communication Management model – represent a contrasting view to the both the media portrayal and the portrayal of the practice by tertiary educators. The New Zealand media portrayal of Public Relations as media relations is a narrow view of the practice. It is narrow because 53 per cent of New Zealand's Top 100 companies possess a wider Communication Management function. It is a position taken on the basis of experience of the practice in that 73 per cent of New Zealand's Top 100 companies use Public Relations in the form of media relations. It represents a philosophical and socio-cultural position taken in the context of structuring and structuration. As such, this portrayal of Public Relations has less to do with the realities of business practice than with the habitus of the media who generate it. Public Relations practitioners should not be surprised by the media portrayal.

Similarly, tertiary educators also articulated discipline-based views of the practice that did not reflect practice. Those educators who ignored Public Relations exercised symbolic violence on the practice by offering it limited or no legitimacy. Marketing educators relegated it to a minor role under Marketing and denied its legitimacy as Strategic Communication Management. PR/CM educators deemphasised the Publicity model in favour of the Strategic Communication Management, largely as understood in the Excellence Theory. This emphasis was also did not reflect the expression of Public Relations in business practice. These views are incomplete because two business models of Public Relations exist in practice and there are other models embedded in various cultural groups. These views can be understood as position-taking to establish jurisdiction in relation to others but academic logic of practice relies on theoretical and idiosyncratic constructs to support these positions and these constructs are sometimes disconnected from the reality they seek to describe. Such views are understandable in terms of position-taking in the field but they do not reflect the reality of business practice or of cultural principles and protocols.

The distinction between the Publicity model and the SCM model has important implications for Public Relations practice. Firstly, it must be recognised that

changing the title does not necessarily change the perceptions of what it involves. That perception has deeper roots. SCM is still regarded as publicity by another name by some senior managers and by the media. Secondly, the characteristics ascribed to the term Public Relations locate that form of the practice as a “necessary evil”, both unwanted and yet needed. So practitioners can anticipate an ongoing need to advocate the value of their services. They also need to be aware that they exist on a knife edge and the value of their services is based on their ability to meet dynamic organisational requirements in a constantly changing environment. Thirdly, the gap between Public Relations and SCM is significant in the minds of senior managers. This has sobering implications for practitioners operating in Public Relations when it is used as a justification for restructuring and for the procurement of consultancy services.

The existence of two clear models contradicts the claim that Public Relations is diverse and therefore difficult to explain as a practice (Oliver, 2004; Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). While the two models are expressed in a wide range of job titles they fundamentally originate from either the Publicity model or the SCM model. Both models can operate as one-way communication, especially if SCM is seen as meeting the strategic needs of the organisation. Although senior managers expressed a need for Public Relations practice to migrate from the Publicity model to the SCM model, the Publicity model is still deeply entrenched in New Zealand business. It is premature to claim it is a practice evolving from a technician role to Communication Management (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). The penchant of textbook writers to emphasise SCM at the expense of the Publicity model does not reflect the reality of current New Zealand business practice. It would be prudent for educators to incorporate this understanding into their curricula.

10.2 Differentiated perceptions among senior management

To date, studies of perceptions of Public Relations have sampled a limited range of senior managers (Communication Managers and CEOs) and have not differentiated views among senior management portfolios. This study has demonstrated the advantage of sampling a wider range of senior managers. Even the small sample chosen illustrated a range of positions and position-taking among senior managers as they struggled to assert their own versions on the field. The differentiation of perceptions is vital for a nuanced understanding of the place and role of Public Relations in the business landscape. A Bourdieuan analysis greatly assists this nuanced understanding because it helps to reveal elements involved in the construction of arguments over jurisdiction and legitimacy. Arguments used to promote Public Relations as a practice or as a profession need to take these elements into account if they are to find resonance with senior managers.

Most senior managers saw Public Relations as a mechanism for generating or controlling publicity. It represented a fundamentally one-way, semi-transparent form of communication aimed at promoting the best view of the company as possible. The widespread presence of this form of Public Relations supported the media claim that Public Relations had a strong foothold in New Zealand companies and that it operated in the interests of the company to promote and protect its reputation (Tucker, 1992; Tully, 2008). This study did not establish whether this form of Public Relations was being phased out or replaced by Strategic Communication Management as Public Relations literature claims. A longitudinal study would be needed to measure any such a trend.

Many of the senior managers expressed a preference for a strategic approach to communication (SCM). The definition of SCM was however, structured by how each senior manager thought business should operate. It was also strongly influenced by their view of the Communication General Manager's capacity to operate in the business environment and to explain the role in a compelling way. SCM could be found reporting directly to one of several Managers depending on management's view of the value and place of Communication. Practitioner credibility was contested. When Communication General Managers and Public Relations practitioners advocated transparent communication,

relationship-building and communication management they ran the risk of alienating senior managers who thought that this version is out of sync with the realities of business practice that sometimes require an organisation to conceal information. So, practitioners who emphasise two-way communication are at risk of being seen as lacking business acumen, failing to understand the intricacies of legal liability and not appreciating market realities. The accumulation of these criticisms undermines practitioner credibility in the business field. Insistence on two-way, transparent communication needs to be tempered with the nuanced appreciation of the position and position-taking of different senior managers in the field.

Unlike the findings of Murray and White (2005) and Murphy (2003), senior managers in this study generally considered Public Relations and Communication Management to be a flimsy practice. While they respected some of the elements Public Relations practitioners brought to the organisation, such as creativity, skilled media management and specialist advice, they generally considered that practitioners lacked the capacity to operate in a senior business environment. Like Murray and White (2005), Murphy (2003) and Gregory (2008), this study concludes that practitioner credibility is built on performance. This study found that CEOs considered good performance to be a mixture of integrity, relationship-building, and communicating in a low-key manner. Most senior managers concur that Public Relations practitioners who aspire to a senior role in an organisation, either as a consultant or as an in-house practitioner, need to demonstrate the ability to participate in strategic planning processes, contribute ideas for solving organisational problems, provide insights into issues, foresee problems, provide viable directions for the future, and demonstrate a good grasp of business processes. To build Public Relations credibility in the minds of senior managers, one of the most important things PRINZ needs to provide is training and education for intermediate Communication and Public Relations managers to prepare them for a role in senior management.

10.3 Differentiated media relationships

Editors saw both Publicity and SCM as forms of media relations. This concurs with international research (Spicer, 1993; Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993; DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Shaw & White, 2004). Media relationships with Public Relations in New Zealand ranged from antagonistic to professional rivalry, and (occasionally) to partnership. Media antagonism was heavily entrenched in a commitment to objective reporting in the face of Public Relations' attempts to pitch its own versions. The media are not misrepresenting Public Relations when they call it spin-doctoring or gate-keeping (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). They are reflecting a significant aspect of the practice.

Those media participants who viewed Public Relations as either a Professional Rival or as a Partner accepted that both parties were in the same field, the field of information dissemination; that they were driven by a similar imperative, the need to meet their organisation's goals and financial requirements; and that the antagonism between the two was largely a rhetorical construction (Tully, 2008). Thus, not all name-calling was malicious. Nevertheless, media practitioners still required certain professional boundaries to be observed. They wanted to preserve a clear distinction between the two as information sources, to preserve the right to publish what they thought regardless of the relationship, and to insist on open declaration of collaboration when it did occur.

As noted by Cameron, Sallot and Curtin (1997), media relationships with Public Relations are shaped by power relations. For example, this study found that business editors are more likely to be warm towards the media than news editors. Business editors understood and to some extent accepted gate-keeping, but this practice frustrated news media. News editors preferred Public Relations practitioners to be low-key in the way they related and to tone down their client advocacy. Many New Zealand media saw themselves as resource-poor compared to Public Relations. Environmental forces such as the growing strength of Public Relations, the reduction in journalistic resources and the growth of new media are tipping the balance of power towards Public Relations. Power differentials were evident between tiers within media and among Public Relations' client organisations. Higher powered Public Relations representing

larger corporate organisations sometimes treated media in a high-handed way. Put-downs of second-tier media in front of first-tier media, refusing admission to events, and direct intimidation, especially of young media personnel, were provocative. Higher powered media, such as national television, manipulated stories and images and were more inclined to take an abrasive approach to Public Relations. Variations in the relationship suggest the need for a nuanced understanding of media relations to interpret the stereotyping and the bristly nature of the relationship based not only on history and personalities but also on power differentials operating in the field.

10.4 The place of Public Relations among academic disciplines

This study has provided a unique examination of the place of Public Relations among the academic disciplines in New Zealand. It found that Public Relations has a highly contested positioning. Management educators and texts gave the subject very little attention, preferring to discuss Communication as a management function. Their relative silence on the subject could be read as a dismissal of its legitimacy as a business function. Media educators and texts were generally wary of, or antagonistic towards, Public Relations. Few acknowledged its role as SCM. Marketing made limited mention of Public Relations but only in the context of Integrated Marketing Communication. Although Marketing texts mentioned SCM the educators in this study reported that they did not give it much attention in their classes. In contrast, Public Relations and Communication Management (PR/CM) educators and texts tended to present SCM as a core management function, well accepted and well integrated into today's business operations.

Significantly, these views are out of step with the views of senior managers, especially CEOs (see Table 10.1). Media and Marketing educators aligned with their counterparts in industry but the Management and PR/CM educators and texts did not align with their counterparts in industry.

Table 10.1 Alignment of academic perceptions of Public Relations with business

	Media editors	Media academics	Marketing managers	Marketing academics	Senior Managers	Management academics	PR/CM practitioners	PR/CM Academics
Sample size	30	6	4	5	13	4	15	9
Publicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
SCM	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The strong preference for the SCM model among New Zealand Public Relations educators and in texts, and the rejection of the Publicity model was consistent with the literature (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2008; Mersham et al., 2009). But this portrayal did not give due weight to the existence of the Publicity model in the New Zealand marketplace. This helps to explain the gap that exists between academics and practitioners in the field of Public Relations (Stacks, Botan, & Turk, 1999; van Ruler, Verčič, Butschi & Flodin, 2004; Wright & Turk, 2007; Toth, 2007). Their rendition of the practice of Public Relations does not reflect the marketplace. The Excellence Theory that has such a strong influence on PR/CM educators and texts is not familiar to key influencers in the media and senior business. Neither has it penetrated other academic faculties. Its aversion to the Publicity model is out of step with senior management, who see it (sometimes reluctantly) as one of the tools they need to use. It is also out of step with Marketing and Media who see it as the only model. Whether Public Relations is an evolving practice has yet to be substantiated.

The Publicity model should be studied and taught explicitly by New Zealand PR/CM educators as part of the business landscape. The roles of both Public Relations practitioners and Communication Management managers should be studied and taught in Management faculties. Similarly, if the intention is to reflect the actual reality of business, the portrayal of Public Relations by Media and Marketing academics purely as a publicity mechanism also needs to be supplemented by attention to the role of SCM in New Zealand business.

In the interests of robust academic debate, there is a need for greater engagement between academic faculties. Public Relations educators need to actively engage with Marketing, for example, to integrate with IMC practice and to investigate tensions and jurisdictional issues. SCM and Public Relations need to be introduced into more MBA programmes that prepare CEOs for their leadership roles. Public Relations scholars need to develop plausible and compelling models that will catch the attention of Marketing, Management and Media educators. The Excellence model, so prevalent among PR/Communications educators, has not penetrated other faculties.

10.5 What are the perceptions of Public Relations based on?

The literature to date has suggested that perceptions of Public Relations are largely based on media portrayals (Sallot, 2002; Callison, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2007). In contrast, business participants in this study reported that the key sources of perception-building were, in fact, a combination of practitioner behaviour and the opinions of colleagues and acquaintances. Editors were also primarily influenced by their contact with practitioners and their conversations about Public Relations with colleagues. So, the conduct of Public Relations practitioners is the most important determinant of opinions about their value and credibility. No doubt some of these opinions are also influenced by portrayals in the media, particularly the popular media. This study found that the media had both direct and indirect influence on all groups but the single most important influence on perceptions was the behaviour of practitioners themselves.

But perceptions have complex roots. A significant contribution of this study is the examination of the processes that contribute to the development of symbolic capital in the field of Public Relations in New Zealand. Public Relations' struggle for legitimacy was overlaid with internal and external competition for jurisdiction. Perceptions were formed in the furnace of interdepartmental and inter-organisational struggles to establish and maintain territory, resources, esteem and influence. The struggles were contested on many fronts, between senior management philosophies, tertiary institutions, research frameworks, different types of media, cultures, and personalities.

To some extent these struggles reflect attempts to mesh positivist and interpretive paradigmatic approaches. The use of an interpretive paradigm, such as in this study, clashes with the worldview of practitioners and managers. On the one hand, practitioners and managers (and Marketing, Advertising and many Management educators) embrace an essentially positivist paradigm. This worldview values pragmatic solutions to business problems, profit making, cost effectiveness and measurable results. In this paradigm communication needs to persuade, to remove obstacles to organisational goals, to produce positive results for the organisation. This construction is embedded in the assumption that reputations can be built and defended by strategic media tactics.

On the other hand, the media utilise an interpretive paradigm that operationalises the construction of power through storytelling and framing of versions that are frequently contested. Editors who hold an antagonistic position oppose the versions constructed by shrill business voices. They resent the implication that these powerful voices should dominate and are quick to identify Public Relations practitioners who operate from this assumption. Professional Rivals understand the rules of the interpretive struggle and expect practitioners to understand them as well and to play the game. The New Zealand media portrayal of Public Relations as media relations is an interpretation of how journalists and editors experience the practice. In their view, there is no distinction between Publicity and Strategic Communication Management because their experience of the practice is usually at the level of media relations. This battle of paradigms represents philosophical and socio-cultural position taken in the context of structuring and structuration.

Public Relations and Communication Management (PR/CM) practitioners struggle to create a convincing articulation of their role in terms of the positivist framework of their senior managers. Much of the PR/CM practitioner role involves intangible, less positivistic activities such as constructing impressions, building reputation, negotiating and managing relationships, interpreting environmental trends and creating internal and external communication cultures. Some of their managers see these as 'soft activities'.

PR/CM educators and researchers who use interpretive frameworks may also encounter a mixed reception of their views. For example, at one presentation of findings from this study I was advised to limit my presentation to the statistical information since PR/CM practitioners "want hard facts". On another occasion a senior practitioner at a PRINZ Executive meeting mentioned in a phone conference with a senior Government practitioner that we had been discussing Public Relations' professional status. He asked for the caller's views on whether the profession was held in high esteem to which the caller hesitantly responded that he thought his colleagues valued Communication. The answer was used as compelling evidence of the healthy status of Public Relations without any examination of the relational context, the epistemological world of the caller, or the context of the conversation. It illustrates the positivist, pragmatic, fast-paced

world of practitioners. The irony is that practitioners are seeking to assert their interpretations onto the marketplace of interpretations yet they and their managers are operating within a fundamentally positivist framework of tangible, knowable, objectively measureable realities.

These struggles matter. "In many ways, the struggle to define the role of the communicator has an edge to it: this is not just an academic debate. PR practitioners need to demonstrate their value to their employing organisations" (Tench, D'Artrey, & Fawkes, 2009, p. 45). Practitioners seek to be employed by senior management either as consultants or in-house. The level of engagement determines economic return for the practitioner. Public Relations practitioners have to work with senior management to implement their communication plans. The scope of these plans is directly dependant on the view senior management had of the role Public Relations should play. Within senior management the CEO often dictates organisational philosophy. Public Relations practitioners in New Zealand need to advocate the value of their organisational contribution because it is not clearly defined among senior managers.

Those within the PR/Comms profession understand its value, but this is not being communicated as well to the general public, and to business owners / senior executives who may see it as a money pit (and being paid to 'do lunch'). PRINZ needs a higher profile in the business media to drive this home to the people that are signing the cheques. (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2008, p. 24)

Public Relations practitioners and academics tend to argue for the legitimacy of the practice by referring to its status as a profession (PRINZ, 2006, 2008; Global Alliance, 2010; Heyman, 2005; Grunig, 2006); to acting in a professional manner (Ehling, 1992; McElreath, 1996; van Ruler et al., 2004); or professionalisation through registration (Sha, 2011). Others seek to establish the value of Public Relations by emphasising such things as measurement (Macnamara, 1999; Watson, 2005) or offering valuable insights to management (Jaques, 2002, 2010; Murphy, 2003; Murray & White, 2005). This study has demonstrated that some of these emphases may achieve their desired effect but assertions of legitimacy based on being a profession are problematic.

Practitioners looked to PRINZ to advocate to decision-makers about the value of Public Relations within their organisations but changing perceptions is more

complex than mere advocacy. This study agrees with Ehling (1992), L'Etang & Pieczka (2006) and L'Etang (2008) that, according to Trait Theory, Public Relations is not a profession. This study has provided evidence to support Murray's & White's (2005) findings that it would be better to refer to Public Relations as a practice. According to power and discourse theories such as Bourdieu's, Public Relations engages in a discursive struggle for recognition. It claims to be a profession but has to support that claim against those who contest it. This requires the sort of understandings examined in this thesis to recognise the elements at work in the engagement between the parties involved in the struggle. As Symbolic Interactionism suggests, this means acknowledging and using the power of naming. In this regard PRINZ is justified in using the by-line "Public Relations and Communication Management" to reflect reality in the marketplace but it should be judicious about claiming Public Relations is a profession. That designation carries overtones that are more difficult to justify.

10.6 Possible action steps for Public Relations practitioners

One of the compelling reasons for conducting this study was to produce a set of recommendations for action for the betterment of Public Relations practice in New Zealand.

It is a reality that many organisations' decision-makers don't understand comms, and don't know quite what to do with it. That is why it is often not represented at the top management table and gets tucked away under something else. It is frustrating to know what comms can offer, but have it under-valued because key decision-makers just don't get it. (PRINZ PR Trends Survey, 2008, p. 25)

These sentiments supported my decision to utilise the Pragmatist approach of Symbolic Interactionist methodology. This study has highlighted the crucial importance of Public Relations practitioner behaviour in the cultivation of a more robust perception of Public Relations in the marketplace. For example, entry regulation is a fundamental requirement for professional status. This would give greater credibility to the practice and help to control the quality of practitioners entering Public Relations. Secondly, practitioners need to voluntarily submit to robust professional quality control. The danger of continuing without control or with minimal control is that unethical practitioners are allowed to operate with relative impunity. This discredits the practice. Quality control has to be voluntary because legislation is not under the control of the practice. It needs to incorporate realistic sanctions on discredited practitioners. Thirdly, practitioners need to review their charge-out rates. Senior managers are not convinced that practitioners are delivering value for money. While it could be argued that the market decides a realistic rate, damage to the profession is being perpetrated in the meantime. Fourthly, practitioners need to come to terms with the dual requirements of their role. Positive media coverage is the Holy Grail for the Publicity model but not for all Public Relations. Practitioner behaviours such as these are a vital part of articulating Public Relations in a more credible way.

Furthermore, since media relations is a major facet of the Publicity model, Public Relations practitioners need to focus on improving that relationship. This study found strong evidence to suggest that many Public Relations practitioners

were doing a poor job of their media relations. The mass circulation of press releases, especially without prior communication and without thinking through their relevance to particular media, was a widespread source of irritation. The media editors wanted Public Relations practitioners to make stronger efforts to understand their needs and audiences. There were also ethical considerations to be respected – to behave with integrity, to not obfuscate, and to respect exclusivity. It was understood that Public Relations practitioners need to protect client interests but unacceptable gate-keeping practices such as not replying to calls, promising to get back to the caller but not doing so, referring enquiries on (to a recorded message), promising access to someone and not delivering, and providing false information are not constructive.

This study also found that there is a need for training to equip mid-level PR/CM practitioners for senior positions in business. This would involve training in management concepts, business and governance processes, and how to contribute to managerial decision making. There was skepticism about whether Public Relations educators were able to provide this kind of training since practitioners and business people tended to value knowledge derived from practice. Educators tended to value knowledge that was research based. Training would need to be delivered through other managers with senior business experience. Credibility in this level of training is hard to come by and may not be possible except when an educator has personally experienced Boardroom operations or has some extremely insightful comment to offer. This would require a closer connection between Public Relations research and industry in New Zealand.

10.7 The significance of indigenous Public Relations principles

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study to the international body of knowledge is that it has introduced Māori Public Relations principles as a rival rationality to Western conceptualisations of Public Relations. Public Relations is looking for ways forward in the global communication environment (Global Alliance, 2008). To be truly global, these ways need to accommodate a wide variety of political and social conditions. Indigenous Public Relations principles and protocols provide contextualised insights into communication processes as expressed in various cultures and subcultures.

The exploration of Māori Public Relations principles in this study demonstrated several substantial contradictions with regard to Western Public Relations. Māori Public Relations principles begin from a different starting place. Their ontological and epistemological assumptions represent a rival rationality in that they espouse different forms of knowledge that are accessed using distinctive methodologies. For example, the Māori approach includes cosmological knowing, community generated knowledge, co-created in an appropriate relational setting using story telling, cultural interpretation, prayer and dialogue. These “ways of knowing, doing and understanding the world are considered valid in their own right. This allows spiritual and cultural awareness and other considerations to be taken into account” Smith, G. H. (1990) <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/research-idea/27>.

Internally generated authenticity is a challenge to the rationality that requires external validation. Based on the right to self determination (*tino rangatiratanga*) there is a shift in power from the visitor to the host culture. When this is applied to Public Relations research and practice it requires the visiting researcher or practitioner to acknowledge, respect and operate in the culture of the host, to see things from their perspective and to respect local autonomy over global colonisation of ideas and practices. It means entering into the spiritual engagement implicit in the host culture. It means respecting local forms of communication rather than insisting that communication must be two-way or based on egalitarianism. It means treating the community as a central part of the interaction, not expecting individuals to represent their entire community without consultation, and recognising the need for research and Public

Relations engagement to be of explicit mutual benefit to the community. It means recognising the authenticity of cultural forms of Public Relations rather than concentrating on the recently formed profession as the normative practice.

Cultural insights need to be explicated in their own terms so that international research and practice can learn from local expressions. The international Public Relations stage is set for learning from indigenous models. Māori Public Relations principles sit alongside other cultural expressions on that stage. Indigenous Public Relations principles offer insights into communication that are authentic to the cultures they represent. Much can be learned from Māori Public Relations principles. For example, it can teach us about the importance of identity and community connectedness, about holism, and reciprocity. It offers insights to a people-centric approach to Public Relations rather than a systems-orientated or corporate-centred approach. It offers an emphasis on human qualities such as humility, authenticity, integrity, pride, respect and dignity. Public Relations research could explore and describe cultural protocols to provide a richer base of knowledge of how to communicate effectively with a wide range of populations internationally.

This study found that Public Relations practice and was not engaging indigenous cultures in New Zealand. Most Public Relations practitioners did not understand the drivers in these cultures. They did not know the credible spokespeople for consultation about cultural practice. They did not know how to honour cultural priorities. Public Relations in New Zealand lacked sensitivity in communicating across these cultures because it did not recognise the cultural nuances or context of communication. The two simply do not match at the level of values or practice. Public Relations in New Zealand needs more culturally sensitive practitioners. This study found that the industry is uninformed about how to communicate with minority groups. It needs to generate a greater appreciation for the place, contribution and requirements for effectively communicating with Māori and people of Pacific Island descent, for example. This may be true for other ethnic groups in New Zealand as well. It is an important prerequisite for understanding cultural differences here and in other areas of global communication. PR/CM education needs to provide training in intercultural communication. The industry's ethnocentrism is fundamentally

middle class, European (British), and corporate. This needs to change. PR/CM in New Zealand needs to develop an appreciation for cultural practices, ways of communicating, and ways of knowing in cultures from the Pacific region and other parts of the world. There is an opportunity to start by learning from indigenous Māori culture. There are insiders in each cultural group who are willing to provide insights and approaches that are likely to provide valuable insights. PRINZ could assist by training Public Relations practitioners in cultural competency.

The literature on views of Public Relations revealed that this phenomenon was not limited to New Zealand. The Western model represented in Public Relations literature tends to ignore indigenous expressions of Public Relations or evaluate them against its own paradigm. One of the most powerful mechanisms for excluding other cultures was the discourse of Public Relations as a profession, because it espoused a model of Public Relations wedded to mass media, to the recent history of industrial society, to democratic political premises, and to equality between stakeholders. This has led to symbolic violence being enacted on indigenous cultures and practitioners in Public Relations literature. New Zealand and Australian (and most Western) Public Relations researchers simply do not recognise indigenous forms of Public Relations. In fact, “very little research has been conducted on the position of minority groups within the PR profession, an omission that seems incomprehensible given the increasing diversity among both audiences and practitioners” (Edwards, 2009, p. 164). This study suggests that it will be difficult for Public Relations practitioners and researchers internationally to understand communication across cultures unless this limitation is addressed.

10.8 The significance of the approach taken

The Symbolic Interactionist approach adopted for this study offered the flexibility to explore imagery and metaphors through interviews and face to face interviews, triangulated by online and phone surveys, media content analysis, and analysis of textbook material and business literature. This combination of methods provided a rich tapestry of information for capturing perceptions. Most previous studies sampled practitioners, academics, student populations and random phone respondents. While these are all players in the Public Relations field, this study went directly to some of those who shape and use Public Relations.

Bourdieu's concepts of field, agency, habitus, structuration, doxa and different forms of capital provided a useful framework for exploring and explaining the different trajectories, underpinning assumptions and formulations of each player and each group of players, positioning them in the field of Public Relations. Bourdieu's concepts also highlighted the role of structuration and the logic of practice contributing to the construction of perceptions by demonstrating how agents constructed their perceptions through the complex employment of rules, values, and cultural, relational and contextual elements. This was particularly helpful for providing insights into the secondary question of what the perceptions of Public Relations were based on, and underscores the need to examine cultural models using frameworks that suit local culture rather than imposing external frameworks.

The value of studying Public Relations in New Zealand lay in the fact that researchers in the field of Public Relations have been looking for local descriptions of Public Relations practice (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009). This has created an impetus to describe practices that fit particular countries (van Ruler et al, 2004; Rensburg, 2008) and to teach Public Relations in a way that is relevant to multicultural student cohorts (Sriramesh, 2003; Chia, 2009). Although overviews of Public Relations in New Zealand existed, they provided only superficial coverage of Māori perspectives. This study created the opportunity to explore principles of Public Relations that were indigenous to New Zealand. It is the first study to feature Māori Public Relations and the first to reference Public Relations among people of Pacific Island descent.

This study responded to the call for Public Relations research to incorporate more diversity and new conceptualisations (McKie & Munshi, 2007; L. Grunig, 2008; van Ruler et al, 2008). It suggested some distinctive considerations for Public Relations research such as reciprocity with participant communities, the importance of the emotional and spiritual, and the utilisation of hermeneutic communities comprised of cultural knowledge-holders. These approaches can be extended to other cultural groups in New Zealand and beyond.

10.9 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Although the sample range and unique selection is a strength of this study, there would be definite value in expanding the sample in future examinations of Public Relations in New Zealand. For example, this study focused on the private business sector in New Zealand but future studies could incorporate the public sector, not-for-profit organisations and SMEs (Small to Medium Enterprises). A wider range of sources would ensure a more comprehensive picture of New Zealand Public Relations practice. Additional sampling could also include Public Relations consultants, who make up 34 per cent of the practice in New Zealand (PRINZ Trends Survey, 2008).

It is also important to acknowledge that although the samples chosen for this study are representative of each of their fields – senior business, media, and educators – the sample size in some subgroups is too small to draw conclusions about their entire cohort. For example, only eight of the senior management participants were CEOs. Their views are insightful but cannot and are not intended to represent all CEOs from the Top 200 companies in New Zealand. The methodology used in this study could also be applied to a wider range of perception-holders and shapers in specific ethnic communities beyond Māori and Pacific Island communities. Future studies of tertiary education could examine course outlines and student responses to test the level of influence that textbook ideas have on education in various subject areas.

An essential strength of this study, which ought to be retained in future studies, is to use samples from the direct users of Public Relations. Studies of perceptions of Public Relations using student samples or samples from Public Relations academics and practitioners run the risk of locating responses within the logic of practice in academia. This can promote a kind of “talking among ourselves” about issues that interest us from perspectives that we are familiar with but do not connect with the people who use Public Relations or who need to engage its services.

Public Relations academics need to be more effectual in disseminating key paradigms into related fields of research such as management (McKie & Munshi, 2007). This study found that Public Relations academics have not been

successful in influencing colleagues in Marketing, Management and Media to accept the SCM model and integrate it into their teaching. In fact, Public Relations academics have also been largely unsuccessful in establishing the benefit of Public Relations for society generally (Weaver, Motion, & Roper, 2006). The disconnect places Public Relations academics at the fringe of the industry and thus find it difficult to influence practice through the research they produce (Abdullah & Threadgold, 2008). This suggests that Public Relations researchers may be selecting topics that have little resonance with practitioners or perhaps that research language is not palatable for practitioner consumption.

Future research in Public Relations in New Zealand should openly embrace the Publicity model and could encompass research topics such as the ethical parameters of persuasion and tensions in the relationship with Marketing. A longevity study investigating whether the Publicity model is receding in practice or transforming to SCM would also be useful. Research on the ethics of persuasion might be helpful for advocacy groups seeking to influence large corporations or governments where power differentials are considerable and two-way communication is problematic.

There is a need for new approaches to Public Relations research that is not so wedded to Western academic thinking in order to access the insights offered by other cultures around the world. Jelen (2008) expressed these sentiments when she made a plea for two things: to resist the agenda-setting effect of North American scholarship on the field of Public Relations research and to access new insights by making more use of surveys and interviews, ethnography, participant observation and social network research. Research needs to accommodate elements from the heart and from the soul rather than primarily from the head. This will require the intellectual flexibility to allow subjective and non-quantifiable content into research. Perspectives presented in story form, for example, contain important insights. Such stories may contain mystery, contradiction and inaccuracy but they present elements worthy of investigation. They are a product of relationship, experience, personality, cultural or sub-cultural settings and they illustrate values. There is a need for research that uses approaches and concepts appropriate to the culture or subculture under investigation instead of imposing frameworks onto it.

A key recommendation of this study is that Public Relations research needs to open the doors on indigenous models of Public Relations by examining them in the context of their own rules of legitimacy. The widespread exclusion of indigenous models from current discussion is a serious gap in Public Relations research. This study agrees with McKie and Munshi (2007) and L'Etang (2008), who suggest that researchers should move away from the compulsion to universalise principles of Public Relations in favour of understanding local nuances. In this regard, Sriramesh's and Verčič's (2009) approach is hugely commendable but it needs to press on to remove the constraints of the Excellence Theory to allow the fresh breezes of local authenticity to blow through its descriptions. Instead of looking for elements of growing professionalisation or compliance with aspects of Excellent Public Relations, there should be a focus on the cultural underpinnings, history, power relations and traditional practices which characterise particular cultures. In the case of Pacific Island communities in New Zealand this would mean researching the significance of titles, social strata, co-creation of meaning and the importance of spiritual elements in communication.

This will require an ontological and epistemological shift in thinking to privilege new voices in the research landscape, the voices of oral tradition, faith, God, myth, legend, and community and to embrace other ways of knowing (L. Grunig, 2008; Rensburg, 2008). This could lead to the construction of a more holistic, people-centric approach. A holistic view includes emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual elements, where truth is contested and negotiated, validity is generated in the context of relationship and dialogue, and where researchers do not so much "manage" relationships, reputation, stakeholders, crises and media as negotiate their way through them. This proposes a rethinking of the process of knowledge creation in Public Relations research to incorporate holism, the place of myth and storytelling, and the determination to establish more truly authentic versions of the practice. This also applies to the Western practice of Public Relations, which could benefit from being more people-centric. This underlines the importance of resisting external overlays when examining local cultural protocols and resisting the imposition of Western methods and approaches onto local expressions of Public Relations.

Letting cultures speak for themselves will enrich the understanding of the field of Public Relations. Interest in the relationship between culture and Public Relations has grown since Sriramesh (1992) advocated that greater attention should be paid to this relationship. Botan (1992) shared this view and suggested that, “Westerners often impose the assumptions of their culture on public relations practices in international settings ... [we] need to expand our research into how cultural and historic factors shape different roles of public relations” (p. 157). He suggested that “studies should explore latent contingency variables that may influence different cultures” (p. 187). There is a clear need for research into local cultures to achieve this.

Public relations practitioners should develop their programs based on a clear understanding of local cultures in order to practice effective and excellent communication. It seems valuable for public relations researchers to further explore indigenous cultural dimensions influencing public relations practices in international settings, which will help us rethink and redefine concepts of effectiveness and excellence.

(Choi & Cameron, 2005, pp. 186, 187)

In *Public Relations Metrics: Research and Evaluation* several writers, including J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Rensburg and Jelen called for new conceptualisations and greater diversity in public relations research (van Ruler, Verčič, & Verčič, 2008). New conceptualisations need their own epistemological and theoretical underpinning. They challenge established sources of knowledge creation and require new research methodologies suited to local circumstances. “Public relations scholars need to expand their relatively insular topical and methodological horizons” (Jelen, 2008, p. 40). This expansion will challenge our current mindset and set the stage for the field of Public Relations research to expand and grow. To meet this challenge, we will need to openly embrace models and approaches which do not rely on the models developed in Western contexts or use these models to judge the reliability and validity of local models. In this regard, “the dominance of North American scholarship [in the field of public relations research] obstructs global inclusiveness” (Jelen, 2008, p. 42). Ahmad (2007) argues that “by merely adopting the US curriculum, non-American countries are endangering the future of the public relations profession in their societies” (p. 1). Placing a high value on people (as distinct from systems or models or frameworks) means starting from a humble, listening position in order to discern the other’s philosophical position with its own

theoretical underpinnings and assumptions. As L'Etang (2008) has pointed out, "theoretical frameworks derived from historical evolution in one country cannot be sensibly applied as interpretative models in other cultures" (p. 32).

In conclusion, this study illustrates the value of viewing Public Relations from its local cultural context using local definitions and ways of seeing. This approach allows a richness of texture in describing human relations that resonates with the local cultures and speaks to human relations internationally. Constructions imposed from outside tend to ignore the quality of what is available from local expressions, some of which have universal applications for global Public Relations scholarship and practice. Cultural and sub-cultural permutations and models of relationship deserve examination in their own right. Local cultural dimensions should be explored to discover the range of practices and theoretical underpinnings because of their intrinsic value. In this way, the Public Relations body of knowledge will be enriched immensely.

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Glossary of Māori Terms

Aroha	-	love and goodwill toward people
He kanohi kitea	-	ongoing relationship
He kanohi i ki tea, ... he ringa tu	-	if you want your commitment noted, ... you need to be physically present
He ngakau humarie	-	not to promote oneself
Iwi	-	major tribal group derived from the canoes that brought early Māori to New Zealand
Kaitaiki	-	teacher, nurturer, guide
Kanohi ki te kanohi	-	face to face communication
Kaumātua	-	elder, leader of a community
Kaupapa	-	purpose, direction, intention, agenda
Kawa	-	protocols applicable to a particular marae
Koha	-	reciprocal gift
Mana	-	pride, dignity
Māori	-	generic term for indigenous New Zealanders
Marae	-	sub-tribal house, buildings, meeting place
Mauri	-	life force
Ngai Tahu	-	South Island tribe
Ngati Kahungungu	-	South Eastern North Island tribe
Ngati Porou	-	East Coast, North Island tribe
Ngati Raukawa	-	Southern North Island tribe
Ngati Whakatohea	-	Bay of Plenty tribe
Paepae	-	speechmaking area on the marae
Papatuanuku	-	Earth Mother
Pono	-	the right way of doing things
Ranginui	-	Sky Father
Rangitane	-	Southern North Island tribe
Tane	-	god of man and forest plants
Taniwha	-	mythical monster
Tapu	-	sacred, protected
Tainui	-	Upper North Island tribe from whom the Māori king is appointed.
Te Aupouri	-	Northern North Island tribe

- Tika - doing the right things
- Tikanga - cultural protocols
- Tino rangatiranga - sovereignty, self determination
- Tohunga - speech maker and medicine man
- Treaty of Waitangi - the founding agreement between the indigenous Māori and the British government in 1840. The Treaty sought to establish clear sovereignty of the British government. It promised protection of things that were important to Maori such as their land, food sources, and sacred possessions. As time has passed there have been disagreements over the interpretation of the Treaty and its application. One of the key points of discussion is over the status of New Zealand as a bicultural nation.
- Whakapapa - lineage, both spiritual and physical
- Whanaungatanga - operating in a relational way

Appendix A: Industry Survey Questions



Perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand (Questionnaire)

The data collected in this questionnaire will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose than the research project. No information that could identify an individual or company will be released.

This questionnaire is part of a PhD research project being undertaken by Graeme Sterne through AUT University. Data is being gathered from New Zealand's leading companies, to establish a clear picture of public relations perceptions in New Zealand.

Completion of the questionnaire will indicate consent to participate.

An Executive Summary will be made available to participants after 30 November 2006.

Please fill out the attached questionnaire and return it to

Graeme Sterne
Manukau Institute of Technology
Private Bag 94006
Manukau City 2240,
Auckland

Or: hand it to him when he comes to interview you.

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire Responses:

Please complete the following using your first reactions to the statements and questions. This research is looking for perceptions rather than considered responses. These are your opinions and data. You do not need to feel that you are representing the company in your responses. Remember, this data is confidential and every attempt will be made to not identify you or your company in the Report.

1. The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Public Relations is:

2. I get most of my ideas about Public Relations from: (tick the main ones)

<input type="checkbox"/> Media	<input type="checkbox"/> PR practitioners themselves
<input type="checkbox"/> Board members	<input type="checkbox"/> Other senior management
<input type="checkbox"/> Past experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines e.g. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Associations	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing personnel
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminars	<input type="checkbox"/> Family member(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic study	<input type="checkbox"/> Other e.g. _____

3. The PR person I know the best is:

Name: _____ Connection: _____

4. To be a good PR practitioner you need the following qualities

5. In terms of achieving our company's goals I would rate the following:

	(1 = Not Important 7 = Vital)						
Advertising	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marketing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Public Relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Internal communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Government relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Community relations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. I estimate that PR practitioners are paid:

- a. Consultants Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- b. In house Directors Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- c. In House Managers Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- d. Starting level Between \$ _____ and \$ _____

I consider these ranges to be:

About right Over-rated Under-rated Highly under-rated Highly over-rated

Comment: _____

7. Where is PR placed in your company?

a. We use external consultants for the following _____

b. We have internal PR personnel Number
 They report to (position) _____
 Their job titles are: _____

c. We do not have a specific PR person

8. In your company, who is primarily responsible for the following?
- a. Reputation management (position) _____
 - b. Crisis management (position) _____
 - c. Issues surveillance (position) _____
 - d. Tracking changes in stakeholders (position) _____
 - e. Quality of public presentations (position) _____
 - f. Sponsorships (position) _____
 - g. Cause relationships (position) _____
 - h. External Web content (position) _____
 - i. Corporate Social Responsibility (position) _____
 - j. Media relations (position) _____
 - k. Government relations (position) _____
 - l. Relating to activists (position) _____
 - m. Internal communication (position) _____
 - n. Event management (position) _____
 - o. Measuring communication effectiveness (position) _____

Demographic Information:

9. Gender: Male Female
10. Age bracket: <31 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

11. Career path
- i. _____
- ii. _____
- iii. _____
- Current: _____

12. Educational background _____
- _____

13. I would consider the most significant current influences on my views to be:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Political affiliation | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious affiliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our governing Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other senior managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> Books I read |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: e.g. | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic courses |

14. Media preferences (please indicate channel, station, site, publication **and** content)

Television: I mainly watch (Channels) _____

(Content) _____

Radio: I mainly listen to (Stations) _____

(Content) _____

Web: I mainly visit (Sites) _____

(Content) _____

Magazines: I mainly read (Titles) _____

(Content) _____

Newspapers: I mainly read (Titles) _____

(Content) _____

Books: I mainly read (Types) _____

15. Any other comments you would like to make on PR in New Zealand

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Graeme Sterne when he comes to interview you.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B: Industry Interview Questions



Perceptions of PR in New Zealand

(Interview Questions for Industry)

1. Please offer a one line response to the following:
 - a. Social responsibility
 - b. Advertising
 - c. Triple bottom line
 - d. Marketing
 - e. Iwi consultation
 - f. Public relations
 - g. Cultural capital
 - h. Media
2. How would you define good PR?
3. Do you consider that PR as a profession needs to make any changes? If yes, what should PR practitioners do differently?
4. What is the relationship between marketing and PR?
5. To what extent would additional resourcing of PR in your organization have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals?
6. How well equipped is your Board to handle a PR crisis? E.g. Do they have an Issues Management policy?
7. What advice would you give to students currently studying PR at University?



Perceptions of Public Relations in New Zealand

(Questionnaire)

The data collected in this questionnaire will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be used for any other purpose than the research project. No information that could identify an individual or company will be released.

This questionnaire is part of a PhD research project being undertaken by Graeme Sterne through AUT University. Data is being gathered from New Zealand's leading companies, to establish a clear picture of public relations perceptions in New Zealand.

Completion of the questionnaire will indicate consent to participate.

An Executive Summary will be made available to participants after 30 November 2006.

Please fill out the attached questionnaire and return it to

Graeme Sterne
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Private Bag 94006
Manukau City 2240,
Auckland

Or: hand it to him when he comes to interview you.

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire Responses:

Please complete the following using your first reactions to the statements and questions. This research is looking for perceptions rather than considered responses. These are your opinions and data. You do not need to feel that you are representing the company in your responses. Remember, this data is confidential and every attempt will be made to not identify you or your company in the Report.

Perceptions of PR in New Zealand

1. The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Public Relations is:

2. I get most of my ideas about Public Relations from: (tick the main ones)

<input type="checkbox"/> Media Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> PR practitioners themselves
<input type="checkbox"/> Past experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines e.g. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Associations	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic study
<input type="checkbox"/> Seminars	<input type="checkbox"/> Other e.g. _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Websites e.g. _____	

3. The most recent story I can remember involving a PR practitioner was:

4. The PR person I know the best is:

Name: _____ Connection: _____

5. The ideal PR practitioner is one who...

6. I estimate that PR practitioners are paid:

- a. Consultants Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- b. In house Directors Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- c. In House Managers Between \$ _____ and \$ _____
- d. Starting level Between \$ _____ and \$ _____

I consider these ranges to be:

About right Over-rated Under-rated Highly under-rated Highly over-rated

Comment:

7. According to the 2006 PRINZ Trends survey, 42% of PR practitioners come from a background in journalism or broadcasting? Why is this percentage so high?

8. Some PR practitioners have adopted the name Communications Managers. What do you think of this trend?

Demographic Information:

9. Gender: Male Female
10. Age bracket: <31 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+
11. Career path
- i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____
- Current: _____
12. Educational background _____
- _____
13. Media preferences (indicate channel, station, site, publication **and** content)
- Television: I mainly watch (Channels) _____
- (Content) _____
- Radio: I mainly listen to (Stations) _____
- (Content) _____
- Web: I mainly visit (Sites) _____
- (Content) _____
- Magazines: I mainly read (Titles) _____
- (Content) _____
- Newspapers: I mainly read (Titles) _____
- (Content) _____
- Books: I mainly read (Types) _____
- _____

14. I would consider the most significant current influences on my views to be:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Political affiliation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Religious affiliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Our governing Board | <input type="checkbox"/> | Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> | Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other senior managers | <input type="checkbox"/> | Industry information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> | Books I read |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: e.g. | <input type="checkbox"/> | Academic courses |

15. Any other comments you would like to make on PR in New Zealand



Perceptions of PR in New Zealand

1. Tell me a story which, in your mind, illustrates what PR is all about
2. What is the relationship between media and PR?
3. What percentage of your news items contain PR press releases?
4. How would you define good PR?
5. What are characteristics of the best PR people to work with?
6. What changes, if any, do you consider that PR as a profession needs to make?
7. What advice would you give to students currently studying PR at University?

Appendix E: Tertiary Survey Questions



1. What is the definition of public relations you use with your students?
2. I get most of my information about public relations from (delete inappropriate options)
Media Past experiences Industry experiences
Academic study Colleagues Short courses and seminars
Family members PR Practitioners Other (specify)
3. In which faculty or school is Public Relations taught in your institution?
4. In which faculty or school should PR be taught?
5. Journalism and PR should be taught in the same faculty or school Yes No
6. Marketing and Public Relations should be taught in the same faculty or school Yes No
7. The main sources we use to teach about PR are
8. What level of experience in the PR industry do you have? (delete inappropriate options)
None <1 year 1-5 6-10 >10years
9. How long have you been teaching at tertiary level? (delete inappropriate options)
<1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 15+ Years

Demographic Information:

(Please edit to suit your response)

10. Male Female

11. Age: <30 30-39years 40-49 years 50-59 years 60+ years

12. Educational level: No Undergraduate degree
 Undergraduate degree (please specify) e.g. Arts,
Commerce
 Post graduate (please specify) e.g. M.Sc, PhD, MBA

13. Faculty or School: e.g. Communication
 Business/Commerce
 Journalism
 Media
 Other (specify)

Any other comments you wish to make regarding perceptions of PR in New Zealand

Appendix F: Tertiary Interview Questions



Perceptions of PR in New Zealand

(Interview Questions)

1. The first thing that comes to mind when you think of Public Relations is
2. The most recent event I can remember involving a PR practitioner is ...
3. How would you define good PR?
4. What are the most important things to tell your students about PR?
5. What is the relationship between marketing, PR and journalism?
6. What changes, if any, do you consider that PR as a profession needs to make?
7. Many in-house PR practitioners are calling themselves Communication Managers or similar. What do you think of this?
8. What advice would you give to students currently studying PR at University?