

# Whose News? Investigating Power Relations Between Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners

Helen Sissons

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

2014

School of Communication Studies

## Abstract

The interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners directly and indirectly influence the news that citizens consume. In fact, this thesis finds the interdependence between public relations and journalism in New Zealand is extensive enough to call journalists and PRPs *content siblings*, together constructing the news we all rely on to make decisions about our lives. However, the relationship is not one of equals with evidence of media and information management clear in both the products of the relationship and the interactions between the two practices.

Recent research has shown that at least half of all news stories are based wholly or in large part on public relations material and journalists are now reliant on such information to fill the “news hole”. The aim of this study was to examine the day-to-day practices of journalists and public relations practitioners in New Zealand and investigate in detail how interactions between them affected the news product, with a particular emphasis on which practice held the initiative. In order to achieve the research objective, the researcher applied innovative video-ethnographic methods and textual analysis to an examination of the practices and their outputs. The study took the perspective of the practitioners and the processes they employed in their everyday routines, which is an area underexplored by researchers.

The study captured rare footage of journalists and PRPs interacting and through analysis of verbal and non-verbal actions, demonstrated journalists’ increasing difficulties in accessing information, even in publicly funded organizations, without going through public relations spokespeople. While it is known that this reliance is potentially damaging to the quality of the news product, the research provided new evidence that it may also be unhelpful at an individual level for journalists and PRPs, requiring them to be less than open and honest in their dealings.

The findings showed that an over-reliance on public relations’ materials by journalists is weakening journalism’s traditional investigative role. Further, the power relations between journalists and public relations practitioners favour PRPs, allowing them opportunities deliberately to restrict media access to information in order to control the tone and/or the substance of the media coverage. What should be of concern to scholars, particularly scholars of public relations, is that the data presented here contradict what

many in public relations would like to believe, that it is about creating understanding, building relationships and ensuring management is informed about and responsive to public opinion. What this study has demonstrated is that public relations is still about working on behalf of organisations to control what information is released, including the finessing of negative reports, the blocking of legitimate public debate and the influencing of public opinion for the good of the organisation.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
List of Figures .....	vii
List of Tables.....	vii
Attestation of Authorship .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.0. Setting the context – a vexed relationship .....	2
1.1. Aims of the study – understanding the cultures .....	3
1.2. Methodology – considering fieldwork.....	4
1.2.1. Critical discourse analysis .....	6
1.3. Methods of data gathering .....	7
1.3.1. Ethnography.....	8
1.3.2. Obtaining valid video data.....	10
1.3.2.1. Gaining access - the criteria for inclusion.....	12
1.3.3. Interviews and texts .....	13
1.4. Methods of data analysis .....	15
1.4.1. Multimodal interaction analysis .....	16
1.4.2. Textual analysis.....	17
1.5. The significance of the study .....	18
1.6. Structure of the thesis .....	20
1.7. Conclusion .....	23
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.0. Introduction .....	25
2.1. The relationship in context: the media environment.....	25
2.1.1. Journalism shrinking .....	27
2.1.1.1. Reliance on information subsidies .....	28
2.1.2. Public relations growing .....	31
2.1.2.1. Media relations.....	33
2.1.2.1.1. Media relations and the digital age .....	35
2.2. Approaches to journalism and media relations .....	38
2.2.1. The fourth estate.....	39
2.2.2. Systems theory .....	43
2.2.2.1. Critical approach .....	45
2.2.3. Public sphere .....	47
2.3. Relations between journalists and public relations practitioners.....	51
2.3.1. Information subsidies: News release research .....	54
2.3.2. First wave of ethnographic studies.....	57
2.3.3. Second wave of ethnographic studies .....	60
2.4. Conclusion .....	63
<b>Chapter Three: Journalism and public relations: A tale of two discourses.....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.0. Introduction .....	65
3.1. Materials and method.....	67
3.1.1. The analytical procedure.....	68
3.2. News report genre .....	69
3.3. Media release genre .....	72
3.4. Studying the transformations .....	73
3.4.1. The National Piano Competition media release .....	73
3.4.1.1. Generic structure .....	75
3.4.1.2. Topic .....	77
3.4.1.3. Perspective .....	78

3.4.1.4.	Choice of sources .....	79
3.4.1.5.	Lexis.....	79
3.4.1.6.	Promotional phrases that are reproduced in the news story .....	80
3.4.2	The Neutrogena media release .....	81
3.4.2.1.	Generic structure .....	83
3.4.2.2.	Topic.....	85
3.4.2.3.	Perspective .....	85
3.4.2.4.	Choice of sources .....	86
3.4.2.5.	Lexis.....	86
3.5.	Conclusion.....	87
<b>Chapter Four: Journalists versus public relations practitioners: Power and agency at a media conference .....</b>		<b>90</b>
4.0.	Introduction .....	90
4.1.	Methodology .....	91
4.2.	Setting of the interactions.....	93
4.2.1.	Interaction 1 .....	94
4.2.2.	Interaction 2 .....	98
4.2.3.	Interaction 3 .....	100
4.3.	Discussion .....	103
4.4.	Conclusion.....	107
<b>Chapter Five: Lifting the veil on the PRP-client relationship .....</b>		<b>109</b>
5.0.	Introduction .....	109
5.1.	The PRP–client relationship.....	109
5.1.1.	Practitioner power in public relations .....	110
5.2.	Methodology .....	111
5.2.1.	Critical discourse analysis .....	112
5.3.	Data .....	113
5.4.	The interactions: findings.....	113
5.4.1.	Interaction 1 .....	114
5.4.2.	Interaction 2 .....	118
5.4.3.	Interaction 3 .....	121
5.5.	Discussion .....	127
5.6.	Conclusion .....	128
<b>Chapter Six: Negotiating the news: Interactions behind the curtain of the journalism-public relations relationship.....</b>		<b>133</b>
6.0.	Introduction .....	133
6.1.	The journalist-source relationship.....	134
6.2.	Materials and method.....	135
6.2.1.	Critical discourse analysis .....	136
6.3.	The interactions.....	136
6.3.1.	Setting of interaction 1.....	137
6.3.1.1.	Interaction 1 .....	138
6.3.1.2.	Analysis.....	141
6.3.2.	Setting and background of interaction 2 .....	145
6.3.2.1.	Interaction 2 .....	146
6.4.	Conclusion .....	151
<b>Chapter Seven: Conclusions, implications and recommendations.....</b>		<b>157</b>
7.0.	Introduction .....	157
7.1.	The aims of the study .....	157
7.2.	Summary of the methodological approach.....	158
7.3.	Summary of the findings .....	159

7.3.1. RQ1: How in practice do the two sets of professionals interact? .....	160
7.3.2. RQ2: How in practice do the interactions lead to the news outputs? .....	163
7.3.3. RQ3: What pressures or processes influence the production of both practices? .....	166
7.3.4. RQ4: Whose news are consumers ultimately receiving? .....	168
7.4. The significance of the study and some implications of the findings .....	170
7.4.1. Some practical applications .....	171
7.4.2. The study's limitations .....	173
7.5. Recommendations for future research .....	175
References .....	178
List of Appendices .....	205

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1: The inverted triangle .....	69
Figure 4.1: Explaining the vision .....	93
Figure 4.2: Responding to a question .....	97
Figure 4.3: Unable to respond to a question .....	100
Figure 5.1: Checking the media message .....	113-114
Figure 5.2: Constructing the media message .....	118
Figure 5.3: Clarifying the media strategy .....	121-122
Figure 6.2: The game's over .....	145-146

## List of Tables

Table 3.1: National Piano Competition media release and news story.....	71-73
Table 3.2: Promotional words .....	77
Table 3.3: Neutrogena media release and news story .....	79-81
Table 6.1: Email exchange .....	136-138

## **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.

*Helen Sissons*

Helen Sissons



## **Acknowledgements**

In conducting this research I have benefitted from the benevolence and practical help of several organisations and many individuals who generously (and not without risk) opened their professional lives to academic scrutiny. To the journalists and public relations practitioners who took part and who cannot be named for reasons of confidentiality, I am deeply grateful. They not only tolerated the presence of a complete stranger with a camera in their workplace, they also fielded an endless stream of questions and requests for clarification patiently and candidly. To their sources who allowed me to film on-the-record and off-the-record meetings I am particularly thankful. It must be acknowledged that the study could not have been completed without the commitment of all these people to the value of scholarly inquiry and their willingness to give their time and the benefit of their experience.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Dr Petra Theunissen and Dr Elspeth Tilley, who were always available when needed and who offered academic support, encouragement and sage advice every step of the way. They enhanced in traceable and untraceable ways every part of this thesis.

To my colleagues at Auckland University of Technology, thank you for making the thinking and writing of this thesis easier through a rich intellectual environment full of lively debate and a constant willingness to talk through my ideas. Several need particular mention for their contribution to this work: Gudrun Frommherz for her daily inspiration and sound counsel, Professor Allan Bell for his crucial early guidance and Danni Mulrennan for her ongoing encouragement.

Thanks must also go to Dr Martin Hirst and Dr Verica Rupa, the two curriculum leaders of the journalism department during the research and writing of the thesis. To Dr Hirst for suggesting I start on the PhD route and to Dr Rupa for her wholehearted support through those last difficult months, including taking over the marking of postgraduate essays to lighten my load.

Elsewhere, thanks to AUT's library staff, particularly to Annie McKillop and Emma McFadgen, for their quick responses and amazing ability to conjure up articles and books that I could not find. Thanks also to AUT's Academic Staff Doctoral Study

Award, which allowed for one semester free of teaching, and without which this thesis would not have been possible. Ethics approval for the current study was granted by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 9 April 2008, reference number 08/37. The relevant document has been included in the appendices. My thanks go to Charles Grinter for his advice and patience.

To my father, John Sissons, a special thanks for his patient reading of the thesis, in part and as a whole, several times. His corrections and suggestions, as well as his attention to detail, were gratefully received.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my husband Paul and my children Anna and Oliver. This thesis is dedicated to you. To my husband thank you for your constancy, and for the big and little things you have done along the way to allow me the space to study. To my children, I offer my sincerest apologies for the missed performances at school and the holidays we had to forgo as Mum was working on her PhD.

I hope, in reading this, all those involved in the study will conclude that their cooperation and support were worthwhile.

## Chapter One: **Introduction**

### **1.0. Setting the context – a vexed relationship**

The relationship between journalists and their public relations counterparts can be described as a vexed one, with both sides regularly hurling brickbats at the other (Hobsbawm, 2006; Shin & Cameron, 2004; Tilley & Hollings, 2008). Journalists accuse public relations practitioners of being obstacles (sometimes dishonest ones) between them and the information or sources they need for their story (Callard, 2011; Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008; Tilley & Hollings, 2008); public relations practitioners, on the other hand, accuse journalists of being lazy, last minute and interested only in conflict or controversy (Theaker, 2004; Tilley & Hollings, 2008). Both sides accuse the other of being less ethical (Tilley, 2012; Turk, 1985, 1986). As DeLorme and Fedler (2003) have written, this animosity is as old as public relations itself and goes back to its very beginning when journalists resented public relations practitioners' attempts to gain free publicity.

This thesis seeks to explore empirically, and in detail, the current workings of the relationship, accepting it has endured too long and proved too useful to be purely negative. Indeed, we must be careful not to overstate the enmity. While the accusations and complaints are a constant, the relationship is more nuanced than it appears from the outside (Sallot, Steinfatt & Salwen, 1998; Sallot & Johnson, 2006b).

The research suggests that a web of essentially cooperative relationships is at the heart of journalist-public relations practitioner interactions. For a significant number of journalists, collaboration with public relations practitioners has grown since editorial staff cutbacks began to take effect in the early to mid 2000s, with more journalists now admitting that public relations subsidies are valuable to them (Lewis *et al.*, 2008; Sallot & Johnson, 2006b). On average journalists have seen their workload triple thanks to fewer staff and an increase in news organisations' Internet activities (Lewis, Williams, Franklin, Thomas & Mosdell, 2006; Starkman, 2010). However, the resulting increased reliance on public relations' materials has caused resentment among journalists (Jempson, 2005) and alarm among some media researchers who claim journalism is suffering both in the quality of its investigations and in the loss of independence (Lewis *et al.*, 2006).

The BBC's head of news, James Harding, told the 2014 WT Stead lecture at the British Library (Harding, 2014, January 14, paras. 10-12) that money and jobs have been "draining out of newsrooms" for a decade. He added, "And, let's be clear, fewer journalists does not mean less news, it means more PR – more corporate puffery, more canny product placements, more unchecked political spin". While staff cutbacks have decimated many newsrooms, the public relations industry has seen boom times, with corporate budgets increasing despite the recent economic downturn (USC Annenberg, 2012).

In light of these events, an increasing amount of research in the last decade has investigated the influence of public relations subsidies on news, finding it is significant. Some have used content analysis (Golan & Wanta, 2001); others have used content analysis and interviews (Lewis *et al.*, 2008); still others in-depth interviews, (Macnamara, 2012; Oakham & Kirby, 2006; Reich, 2006; Sallot & Johnson, 2006a, 2006b; Sterne, 2010) or focus groups (Tilley, 2012). Several have employed discourse analysis, (Morton & Warren, 1992; Pander Maat, 2008; Sissons, 2012a; Walters & Walters, 1992; Walters, Walters & Starr, 1994). A few have looked ethnographically at the relationship from the newsrooms' point of view (Peterson, 2001; Van Hout, 2011; Van Hout & Jacobs, 2008; Van Hout & Macgilchrist, 2010; Velthius, 2006). The current study employed ethnographic methods (Kawulich, 2005) of data collection in both newsrooms and public relations offices and is thought to be the first study in this field to use video-ethnography. It also employed in-depth interviews with key participants and it looked at the products of both practices, using textual analysis of a collection of the media releases and news stories.

### **1.1. Aims of the study – understanding the cultures**

As has been mentioned, one of the consequences of the developments in newsrooms has been an increased reliance on public relations material by journalists. This thesis examined the working practices of journalists and public relations practitioners in New Zealand with the intention of better understanding how these two sets of practitioners interact and how those interactions affect the news product. While previous research looked at "what" public relations material has found its way into the news, this thesis aimed to understand and explain "how" it happens. How in practice do public relations practitioners interact with journalists and how do the interactions influence the final news products? Particular attention was paid to what the two sets of practitioners hoped

to achieve in their relations with the other and to assess which practice currently holds the upper hand in its dealings with the other.

The following research questions underpinned this study:

RQ1: How in practice do the two sets of professionals interact?

RQ2: How in practice do those interactions lead to the outputs the news audience receives?

RQ3: What pressures or processes influence the products of both practices?

RQ4: Whose news are consumers ultimately receiving?

The research concentrated on media relations, which is one of the specialist areas of public relations. Its role is to secure public recognition for the actions of the organisation (Tilley, 2005) and is, according to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000), an “economical, effective method of communicating with large and widely dispersed publics” (p. 304). In fact, Bentele and Wehmeier (2003) claimed that the bulk of public relations practitioners’ time is spent on media relations. When asked, many media relations specialists see themselves as supporting journalists by saving them time, providing access to information and facilitating opportunities for interviews, but this thesis asked, what is the effect of this “help” on the news product as well as on journalistic independence and the public sphere (Habermas, 1989 [1962]; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; McNair, 2011; Schultz, 1998).

## **1.2. Methodology – considering fieldwork**

The study relied on a qualitative research design for the investigation because it is concerned with people's reasoning, their practices, their interpretations and their descriptions of events (Garfinkel, 1967). Researchers using this approach believe that human beings and the social world cannot be quantified and measured as if it were unchanging.

Qualitative researchers challenge the assumption that human beings can be studied by a social scientist in the same way as a natural scientist would study things. (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008, p. 9)

All data were collected and analysed in the interpretative tradition. It considers discourse as context-dependent and argues that in interactions, all participants have a purpose (Heracleous, 2004). Greatbatch (1998) explained that it was the research of Garfinkel in the 1950s and then Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in the 1970s that

pioneered the study of spoken interaction. Simultaneously, Erving Goffman and John Gumperz were investigating spoken interaction from a sociological and anthropological point of view; and, anthropological interpretivists such as Clifford Geertz were also studying interaction. Their goal was to understand the participants' direct lived experience instead of the construction of abstract generalisations. They used what was called "thick description", a notion described by Geertz (1973a, pp. 3-32) for building an understanding of culture, which he believed was essentially interactive. Such description aids the account of the meaning-making processes of the people being studied, including considering the intentions, situations, practices and context of action.

While, as mentioned above, an interpretivist's main aim is not to make broad generalisations, Williams (2000), argued that interpretivists did in fact generalise. Further, he claimed that generalisation in interpretive research was inevitable and desirable. He distinguished between *total* generalisations, which he defined as deterministic laws or axioms, *statistical* generalisations, where the probability of a situation or feature occurring could be calculated from its instances within a sample representative of the population, and *moderatum* generalisations, where aspects of a situation were seen as illustrative of a broader set of features. He suggested that interpretive research did not aim to make total or statistical generalisations, but could make moderatum generalisations. He concluded that one could generalise from a small number of cases to unknown cases provided there was categorical equivalence. Any generalisations that went beyond the moderate or any generalisations within one category of experience or domain that were applied to other categories were unjustified. However, as already mentioned, making statistical or axiomatic generalisations has never been the ambition of interpretive researchers.

Within this interpretivist tradition, this research (specifically me as the researcher) relied on the practice-based approach of the "journolinguist", that is "linguists with newsroom experience or professional training which informs their analyses" (Cotter, 2001, p. 419). These researchers draw on their experience to consider the "situated practice" of newsroom workers (and in my case also public relations workers) often informed by ethnographic procedures. As Gumperz (2001) argued, participants in interactions always relied on background knowledge to understand the communicative intent of those involved. This could include constructing possible scenarios or intertextually remembering other uses of an expression to make sense of what is being

said. Gumperz said the aim was to find a plausible solution to how the interaction may be interpreted. In this thesis it is argued that the more the analyst appreciates the situated context of the practitioners the more understanding he or she can bring to what has transpired in an encounter.

### **1.2.1. Critical discourse analysis**

The research employed a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b; Van Dijk, 1988, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). CDA sets out to ask questions about the way discourses are harnessed in the production and replication of social dominance. It uses the analysis of talk or texts to illustrate how power is normalised, hiding agency and thus invisibly supporting the interests of dominant groups.

In this framework, language is always used for a purpose and is seen as an instrument of control as well as communication (Tracy, Martinez-Guillem, Robles & Casteline, 2011). Van Dijk (2001, p. 355) wrote, “Thus groups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups”. The more a group has access to information and elements of the public sphere such as the media, the more successful it will be at influencing discourse. In terms of public relations, Motion and Weaver (2005) argued that public relations was a legitimate tactic in the struggle for and negotiation of power. However, they added that it was the task of the critical public relations scholar to investigate how public relations practice used “particular discursive strategies to advance the hegemonic power of particular groups and to examine how these groups attempt to gain public consent to pursue their organisational mission” (p. 50).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) found Bernstein’s (1990) concept of classification useful in explaining how a discourse could be controlled. Bernstein, of course, was talking about who controlled the discourse of education and the persistence of inequality in education, but it could also be applied to the question of control of media discourse.

Bernstein’s classification embodied power relations between discourses, and was concerned with the strength of the boundaries or the degree of insulation between categories or discourses, in our case the discourses of journalism and public relations

(Bernstein, 2000, p. 6). Classification was defined by the degree of insulation or separation and therefore the control each practice had over its own discourse. Strong classification gave rise to clear contextual specialties and identities. The context was clearly spelt out, and the acquirer could thus recognise the context or read the text. If we take the practice of journalism it is easiest to recognise when it is carried out in its purest form involving independent investigation. Weak classification, on the other hand, gave rise to ambiguities in contextual recognition; for example if the practice of journalism involves extensive use of public relations' materials, it is harder to separate it from the practice of public relations.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough argued that the concept of classification gave CDA a device to look at the degree of insulation between subjects (here the discourse groups of public relations and journalism) and therefore judge how powerful they are in relation to each other. For example, if a discourse is weakly insulated then it is a weak discourse and likely to be open to the influence of information coming from a more powerful discourse.

Thus, CDA is used here to consider the way power is reproduced and resisted through text and talk in the professional context of interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners. It is argued that by looking at the micro level of the interactions and the degree of insulation between journalism and public relations, we can better understand how power is distributed between the two practices.

### **1.3. Methods of data gathering**

Innovative technologies have provided new tools for data collection, such as digital photography, video and audio recording devices. While researchers have recognised that these technologies can create rich data, no one type of data on its own can give a full picture. Norris (2011a) wrote when explaining her long-term ethnographic study of two German women that "as each form of data has its own weakness, a collection of various forms of data allowed triangulation" (p. 82). She and most other ethnographic researchers continue to use interviews, documentation and field-notes alongside the newer tools, thereby merging the methods to enable a fuller analysis.

The combination of 'new' and more traditional tools for data collection creates a dynamic constellation of resources, where meanings are produced through the inter-relationships between and within the data sets, permitting the researcher literally and metaphorically to 'zoom in'



on fine-grained detail and to pan out to gain a broader, socially and culturally situated perspective. (Flewitt, Hample, Hauck & Lancaster, 2009, p.44)

Therefore, this research also used a combination of data collection and analysis methods. Data were gathered on video-tape during ethnographic-style fieldwork designed to shed light on the “ecology” (Gumperz, 2001, p. 221) of the two practices, and detailed field-notes were kept. The research involved observation over a period of time in two public relations departments and two newsrooms in Auckland, New Zealand. Between June 2009 and July 2010, 100 hours were spent in an in-house media relations department and a public relations agency. These locations were chosen because locally they were prominent organisations and represented the two types of client-practitioner relationship: in-house representative and consultant. In 2011, 70 hours were spent in two newsrooms: a national online news site and a national radio station. These were chosen because they were two nationally important news organisations and covered the main areas of news practice: print/online and broadcast. At each of these sites, in-depth interviews were carried out with key participants and relevant paperwork was assembled including emails, reports and media releases.

Additionally, between 2007 and 2011 participant observation took place in four local newspaper newsrooms across the North Island of New Zealand for a week at each one. These sites were selected for convenience as they were already being visited as part of an annual field trip with students. On arrival at each location, permission was gained to record interviews and/or interactions where appropriate. A further 26 interviews were carried out with journalists and practitioners in other organisations as a way of corroborating some of the findings. In addition, 35 media releases and the news stories that were written using them as the main source were collected and analysed to see how extensively the journalists relied on the releases when writing up the story.

### **1.3.1. Ethnography**

Ethnographic methods (Kawulich, 2005) were used as they were deemed most appropriate for a detailed exploration of public relations practitioners and news journalists at work. This study uses some elements of autoethnography, where these are appropriate based on the researcher’s background in practice (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Peterson, 2001). Ethnography’s strength is that it takes the researcher out of their own environment and into that of the people being studied and focuses on how they

communicate as well as how they conduct themselves in specific situations. Thus researchers using ethnography can map the practices, hierarchies and attitudes of members of that particular group.

For the researcher, this means intensive periods of fieldwork that allows him or her to become familiar with the cultural norms and practices of the group, to build trust with the participants and to observe the phenomenon under investigation repeatedly. Because of the time investment required, ethnographic study necessarily usually involves a small number of cases with the aim of providing a detailed description including an explanatory-interpretive account of each that endeavours to better understand some aspect of the lives (in this study, the working lives) of the participants. As has already been mentioned, this is known by researchers as a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973a, pp. 3-32).

It was noted by Cottle (2000) that the ethnographic study of journalists allows empirical examination of the current reality of news production as, he wrote, too often theory is formed with little recourse to the actual state of affairs in newsrooms.

Although the positions of contemporary social theory grant center stage to the concerns of media, mediated culture and identity, they too often (as in the past) advance their claims about the news media without attending to the changes taking place in news production or the operations and practices of today’s news producers. Social theory continues to provide the necessary theoretical and conceptual frameworks but, as always and wherever possible, these must be tested empirically. (Cottle, 2000, pp. 20-21)

This ethnographic study was carried out using participant observation which, according to Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999), involves immersion in the community to build rapport with the participants. This in turn facilitates understanding of how the group is organised, what is happening in the setting, how the members are interacting and cooperating and what things they believe are important.

The role of “observer as participant” (Kawulich, 2005, p. 7) was considered the most appropriate as it allowed some participation in the community, but the bulk of the time was spent observing, asking questions and taking notes. In this role, the researcher’s activities were known to the group/s, hence they were aware that they were being studied as a means of better understanding their work routines and their power relations with journalists or sources depending on which group was under observation. This

stance was preferred for the main fieldwork to the alternatives of “complete participant” (which was used in four local newsrooms to provide additional material to the main study, as noted above), where the researcher is a member of the group and conceals their role as a researcher (in this case, only initially); the “participant as observer”, where the researcher is a member of the group, but the group is aware he or she is also observing them; or the “complete observer”, where the researcher is hidden from view while observing. None of the alternatives allowed the combination of close interaction along with the time and space to observe that the “observer as participant” afforded. It was also strongly believed that the group should be aware of why they were being studied and then choose if, when and how much they wished to co-operate.

Another reason for choosing participant observation is that, while it began as a method for observing “others’ lives from an outsider viewpoint” (Kawulich, 2005, p. 3), it has increasingly been found to be useful in studying groups in one’s own culture, which as a former journalism and public relations practitioner I considered the groups being studied to be.

In terms of access, it was felt to be crucial that permission be gained to carry out observation in the main newsroom (in the case of the journalists) and the main office area (in the case of the public relations practitioners). From these positions it would be possible to follow Fine’s (2003) advice that participant observation was at its most effective when the researcher observed the group being studied in settings that enabled him or her to “explore the organized routines of behaviour” (Fine, 2003, p. 41).

Field-notes were kept alongside the making of the video recordings. The notes were considered to be crucial as they fleshed out the video data and provided material on which to base interviews in-situ and immediately with key participants about occurrences or interactions if and when needed. Tuchman (1991) argued that it was this ability to gain extra explanation about events that have been observed that made this sort of data so valuable, “such data transform the ‘non-observable’ into the ‘observable’” (p. 87).

### **1.3.2. Obtaining valid video data**

It was decided to gather data on video because of the benefits such information can provide, despite the added difficulties a camera brings to gaining access to participants.

One important advantage of video is the density of data (DuFon, 2002) including an accurate non-verbal as well as verbal record, which can be replayed as often as is needed during the analysis stage.

Regarding the non-verbal record, the video recording in this research was a reminder, in perfect detail, of the setting and the activities the participants engaged in day-to-day. It also enabled the accurate identification of who was speaking and provided non-verbal information crucial to the analysis, including about gaze, posture, proxemics (how close people were positioned in relation to one another) and gesture. These non-verbal actions not only provided information, which helped determine verbal messages (Iino, 1999), they also provided information on the intensity of attention, which indicates levels of comfort and involvement of the participants (Gass & Houck, 1999). In terms of the verbal record, the video data provided excellent linguistic information, as every word could be recorded.

However, there are several limitations to video (DuFon, 2002). Most obviously, video can only capture what is observable through the lens and sometimes its field of view is limited. Something can be happening in another part of the office to the one being filmed and the researcher can only record one of these events. Secondly, on its own, it does not explain if the event recorded is typical or not, or say much about the thoughts or opinions (unless they are voiced) of the participant/s. This is knowledge that can only be gathered over time in the field. However, it does allow for footage to be played back to the participants to remind them of an event and ask them to recall their feelings and thoughts. More broadly, the researcher can replay any part of the raw material and check the interpretation of an event or interaction with those involved. Further, it allows (with the permission of the participants) for the researcher to make visual transcripts of an interaction, which go alongside their published interpretations, allowing other researchers to judge the validity of the findings.

In terms of filming conventions, my background as a BBC television reporter proved useful in gaining good quality footage as well as advice from DuFon (2002), who advocated filming whole events or complete sequences of activities in order to determine the structure or organisation of an event. She also recommended that neither the setting, nor the participants be manipulated for the purposes of the camera. DuFon

(2002) argued that filming whole events is particularly crucial in studies such as this one, which are focused on discourse.

[T]he interpretation of the meaning of any given utterance is influenced by what has come before. Having a recording of only parts of an event could make it difficult to judge the appropriateness of a comment, question or response. (DuFon, 2002, p. 46)

She recognised it could be difficult to determine the boundaries of an event, and therefore advised that recording begin as soon as the researcher realised an event was about to start. So, for example, if the event is a meeting, then filming should start a few minutes prior to the group arriving and not stop until after they have all left the room. In addition, for context, the researcher should always pan the entire room at some point to show the context of the meeting.

#### **1.3.2.1. Gaining Access - the criteria for inclusion**

The process of the negotiations carried out in this study to gain access to newsrooms and public relations offices to carry out such a video-ethnography is worth noting. The difficulties faced by traditional ethnographers wishing to enter newsrooms has been remarked upon by several researchers (Domingo & Paterson, 2011; Reich, 2006, 2009; Stokes, 2003), while so few have been carried out in public relations offices as to indicate either a reluctance on the part of researchers to seek access or public relations departments to grant it.

Stokes (2003) explained that people in the media industries could be wary of academics and had a tendency to believe that their own practices were normal, ordinary and not subject to question. An aggravating factor in this case was that the purpose was to observe at first-hand an event that is sometimes denied and is often underplayed by both sides – the point of exchange of information between journalists and public relations practitioners (Crikey.com, 2010, March 15; Davis, 2000a; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008). And the plan was to record those observations on video.

In the beginning, when looking into the possibility of carrying out observations in public relations departments and newsrooms, it was fully expected that the reactions would be negative. Therefore, all approaches were first made informally through known contacts and then followed up with more formal emails including an explanation of the research and observation protocol, which had been approved by the ethics committee.

At that point, if the organisation was willing, a meeting was set up either with management or the person who was being approached to be the main participant. In the case of the public relations departments, the negotiations were quick and acceptance was received within weeks. In the case of the newsrooms, it took a little longer in one case, with negotiations taking several months. However, it must be stressed that once access had been agreed, all four organisations were open and welcoming, and extensive access was afforded to employees, meetings and relevant documentation. In return, it was agreed that the names of all but one of the organisations be changed and that the names of all the people involved be changed. Further, it was agreed that the results of the research be fed back to the main participants before they were published. The research also received approval from Auckland University of Technology's ethics committee, as can be seen in Appendix 6.

It is clear from the above description that the criteria for selecting the organisations for the study involved a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013). Purposeful sampling is the identification of individuals or organisations that are information rich; that is they contain the necessary knowledge and expertise about the phenomenon of interest (Suri, 2011). The two newsrooms were approached because, as mentioned earlier, they were two nationally important news organisations and covered the main areas of news practice: print/online and broadcast. The two public relations departments were approached because they were prominent organisations locally and represented the two types of client-practitioner relationship: in-house representative and consultant. Both the news organisations and the public relations departments were known by the researcher as having frequent interactions with the other practice. Convenience sampling, which is when the researcher selects participants who are easily accessible, or in this case agreed to give the researcher access, (Palinkas *et al.*, 2013; Suri, 2011) was necessary because of the recognised difficulties already mentioned in gaining access for the purposes of video-ethnography.

### **1.3.3. Interviews and texts**

In addition to video ethnography, the study employed video or audio taped semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews with key informants, namely six journalists and six public relations practitioners. These interviews explored the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners, their working practices and their

professional identities. The interviews were conducted as open-ended sociolinguistic interviews that should be viewed and carried out as a “conversational encounter” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 72) between the researcher and the interviewee. They took place in informal or familiar settings and used broad topics as a guide instead of set questions. Saville-Troike’s (1989) recommendations were followed that interviews should be only loosely structured and questions inserted that have no predetermined answers at natural points in the conversation. This, Saville-Troike argued, is the most appropriate interview method for collecting data about communication within a community. The method was also influenced by Minichiello *et al.*, (2008):

The content of the interview is focused on the issues that are central to the research question, but the type of questioning and discussion allow for greater flexibility than does the survey-style interview. This may reduce the statistical comparability of interviews within the study, but provides a more valid explanation of the informant’s perceptions and constructions of reality. (Minichiello *et al.*, 2008, p. 51)

Twenty-six additional semi-structured interviews were recorded with journalists and public relations practitioners from organisations not directly involved in the study. Specifically the interviews concentrated on the interviewee’s role within the organisation and how their working practices have changed over the past decade, or less if they have not been employed for that long. They were also asked why, in their opinion, these changes have occurred. Finally, they were asked to explain how they perceived their relationship with either public relations practitioners or journalists, depending on which group they belonged to.

Textual data, namely 35 news releases and the news stories that were written using them as the main source, were gathered to illustrate the “outputs” of the practitioners and how they reflected the genres of public relations and journalism. The researcher was interested in releases that became news reports because, as Erjavec wrote, news reports are “perceived as the most factual, disinterested, impersonal and objective genre in the mass media” (2005, p. 166).

Some of the releases and news stories were gathered during the fieldwork, others when taking part in the annual field trips with students. Still others of the media releases were written during two years working as a public relations practitioner in New Zealand, between 2006 and 2008. A few were collected from public relations practitioners and journalists who knew of the research. In order to make it into the collection, it was

expected to have seen or been involved in either the production of the media release or the news story produced from it, or been able to interview the public relations practitioner who had written the release or the journalists who had worked with them. One media release was donated by a journalist, not because they had worked on it, but because they believed it to be of particular interest to the study. In all cases both the media release and the resulting news story or stories were needed.

#### **1.4. Methods of data analysis**

Data analysis is the process of systematically arranging and presenting information in order to search for ideas (Minichiello *et al.*, 2008) and to facilitate the finding of meaning in the information collected. The research followed Gumperz (2001), who stressed the importance of selecting representative samples among the ethnographic data for analysis.

The aim is to discover strips of naturally organized interaction containing empirical evidence to confirm or disconfirm our analyst's interpretations, evidence against which to test assumptions about what is intended elsewhere in the sequence. (2001, p. 223)

It also drew on Gitlin (1980) and a "preliminary interrogation" of the data was carried out to select these "strips" or, as Gitlin (1980) described them, the moments which "matter" or should be analysed (pp. 303-304). These decisions were informed by my knowledge of the broader socio-political context in which the people being studied were operating (Gitlin, 1980).

To understand how to recognise the moments which matter, it was useful to look to the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954; Keatinge, 2002; Tripp, 1993), which provides procedures for collecting "direct observations of human behaviour" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327). The technique originated with Flanagan (1954) who identified an incident as, "any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act" (p. 327). To qualify as critical, an observer must see the event as having both a clear purpose and sufficiently definite consequences that its effects are obvious. In choosing the critical incidents or strips of data to analyse for the research, I was influenced by Keatinge (2002), who suggested changing the name from critical to revelatory or significant in order to work with incidents that are more universal. The incidents analysed in the research had to conform to three criteria: The entire incident had to have been captured,



as explained earlier; it had to be an interesting/extreme/colourful example of a significant aspect of PRP and/or journalistic practice; and this aspect of practice had to have been seen routinely in the data. In other words, the strips of data chosen were interesting examples identified as indicative of PRP or journalistic practice observed during the research.

#### **1.4.1. Multimodal interaction analysis**

The ethnographic data and the interviews were then analysed using multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) (Norris, 2004a, 2011a), which enables the analysis of multifaceted interactions that involve one or more communicative modes. Through the analysis of relevant communicative modes including speech (Jucker, 1986; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977; Schiffrin, 1987) and non-verbal actions, such as posture and proximity (Goffman, 1964; Norris, 2004a), gaze (Goffman, 1964; Kendon, 1967) and manual gesture (Goldin-Meadow, 2003; McNeill, 1992, 2005) the researcher can integrate a social actor's verbal and non-verbal actions as well as his or her interactions with objects and the environment. This is necessary because there are many times when it takes several modes coming together to understand the full meaning of an interaction.

Researchers using MIA believe that all modes should be treated equally when approaching the analysis of an interaction. That means that researchers consciously do not give preference to language over other modes in the interaction and all modes that are relevant to the construction of meaning in an interaction are analysed. MIA recognises that in some interactions, language is the principal meaning-carrying mode, but there are other times when it is not. In this thesis, language is analysed using conversation analysis (Jucker, 1986; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977; Schiffrin, 1987), which considers how those involved organise their talk-in-interaction through, for example, turn taking, or how they solve problems through, for example, repair talk (Schegloff *et al.*, 1977).

Norris argued that the traditional approach to discourse analysis, which focused on language, “at best limits our understanding of multiparty interactions and at worst distorts the complexity involved” (2006, p. 2). In the MIA framework, all actions are mediated, that is they occur through use of cultural tools, including language, body parts and material objects. MIA uses mediated actions as a unit of analysis, for example a hand gesture or a gaze shift. It defines an action as either being of a higher or lower

level. A higher-level action can be a face-to-face meeting or a phone conversation or the reading of an email. A lower-level action is a communicative mode's "smallest meaning-unit" such as an utterance for the mode of language or a single hand beat for the mode of gesture (Norris, 2011a, pp. 53-54).

It is only relatively recently that researchers have recognised the advantages to understanding that analysing interactions from the point of view of more than one communicative mode afford. In the 1990s, Gumperz and Berenz wrote that when people are talking they exchange verbal and non-verbal signals informing them how the conversation is progressing.

Conversing in turn rests on speakers' and listeners' interpretation of verbal and nonverbal signs or contextualization conventions that is, systems of cues that guide conversational management. (Gumperz & Berenz, 1993, pp. 91-92).

In the early 2000s, there began an increased focus on multimodality within research and some began to use visual research methods (Sissons, 2012b). MIA was developed by Norris out of mediated discourse analysis (Norris & Jones, 2005; Scollon, 1998, 2001), which contends that mediated discourse is a form of social interaction.

#### **1.4.2. Textual analysis**

The analysis of the texts utilised Erjavec's (2005) method of comparative analysis for the study of public relations discursive elements incorporated in news reports. This is a macrostructural (generic structure, topic, perspective, choice of sources) to micro-structural textual analysis. The method highlights what "transformations" (Pander Maat, 2008) were made by journalists to the media releases, allowing the intertextuality in each text to be assessed, as well as the suitability of the resulting news text to its purpose.

The design of the research was inspired to an extent by Erjavec (2005), who argued that relying on texts as indicators of change in practice is not enough. In addition, she wrote, textual analysis should be combined with an analysis of discourse processes to reveal how much of public relations discourse is being accepted into the news discourse. Erjavec's (2005) study combined participant observation with in-depth interviewing at four newspapers in Slovenia. During her fieldwork, she also collected and analysed 32 news reports.

### **1.5. The significance of the study**

This study grew out of my experience of arriving in New Zealand from the United Kingdom and moving from journalism into public relations. As a public relations practitioner, it was required to regularly send public relations material to newspapers and broadcast organisations as well as to Internet sites, and to organise occasional news conferences. During those two years, in the mid 2000s, the media releases that were sent out were more often than not published with few or no changes, and follow-up phone calls or emails from journalists asking questions about the releases or material provided were rarely received. This passivity appeared to herald a change in the practice of journalism as I had known it and thus began the present study.

The study contributes to an understanding of the role public relations plays in news journalism through an exploration of the practices of journalists and public relations practitioners as they relate to each other, and a close examination of several interactions involving journalists and public relations practitioners.

While a number of studies have explored this relationship in the past (Davies, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Macnamara, 2010; Moloney, 2006) the focus of this earlier work was on “what” public relations material had found its way into the news. This thesis endeavoured to understand and explain “how” it happens. How in practice do public relations officers interact with their clients to frame media messages and how in practice do they then interact with journalists to make them aware of these messages? Once the journalists are aware of the messages, how do they interact with the public relations material (and perhaps the public relations practitioners who constructed it) to write their news story? Finally, how do all these interactions influence the published news product?

The data allowed the examination of these questions because they provided:

- Case studies of interactions between the two sets of practitioners both face-to-face, by email and over the phone.
- Formal workplace interactions including meetings to discuss ongoing issues, media releases or news stories to be written.
- Informal interactions between colleagues of equal status and between senior and junior colleagues.
- Data on work flow and normative workplace practices.

- Public relations practitioners interacting with clients or sources.
- Interviews that related to specific experiences, situations or interactions that had been witnessed by the researcher. These provided explanations, opinions and/or further information about the situations or interactions.
- Thirty-five news stories that displayed the end result of the interactions and work practices observed, and presented examples of the transformations made by journalists to turn public relations material into news.

The data outlined above are examples of interactions between public relations practitioners, their clients and journalists that have been rarely available to researchers. Therefore, this study differs from the earlier ones to the extent that it offers more comprehensive evidence than has been obtainable before covering back-stage interactions seldom on show to outsiders. The analysis of these interactions provides unique insights into the public relations practitioner (PRP)-client relationship and how decisions about media strategy are made within dominant coalitions. It also provides empirical evidence that in practice public relations practitioners employ asymmetrical communication strategies designed to manage communications on behalf of a client, and in some cases purposefully to shut down debate rather than to facilitate it.

In terms of news media scholarship, the study contributes up-to-date data on the working practices in two modern newsrooms. Enormous changes have been seen in the industry as thousands of full-time journalists worldwide in traditional roles have lost their jobs over the past five years (Guskin, 2013; Ponsford, 2014). Many of those remaining are expected to write for their organisations' websites and monitor social media feeds (Sissons, 2014) as well as service their newspaper or broadcast outlets. The data reveal some of the effects of these changes and illustrate the challenges facing journalists today whose workload, on average, has tripled from that of a decade ago (Starkman, 2010; Waldman, 2011).

Overall, therefore, the results of this study may be of benefit to public relations theorists attempting to assess the meaning of current working practices and to news media theorists who claim journalism is in crisis. This claim is, to an extent, challenged by some in the industry (Harding, 2014; McAthy, 2012; Qu, 2013) who believe that the new environment of so-called citizen journalists and bloggers is an opportunity for trained journalists to show the importance of traditional skills and become the trusted

sources of news. This role was spelled out by the BBC's James Harding, who in the 2014 WT Stead lecture, wrote that, "news is in the throes of a revolution" (Harding, 2014, para. 6). Nevertheless, he added, journalists could earn back some of the influence they had lost by being clever, innovative and trustworthy.

While social media can make anyone into a journalist, citizen journalism has, to my mind, reinforced the value of the professional journalist. When there are so many voices out there, so many with hidden patrons and private axes to grind, so many confusing opinions for news, then there is something simply priceless about a voice you can trust. (Harding, 2014, para. 40)

The present study will be of interest to those who would like to judge whether this is a realistic proposition – do modern newsrooms allow journalists the resources, especially in time, to carry out the one role that differentiates them from citizen journalists and that may ensure the survival of so-called professional journalism?

#### **1.6. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. It follows the guidelines of a thesis by publication as laid out in Auckland University of Technology's Postgraduate Handbook, which states, "Thesis presentation includes adapting thesis chapters into papers". Therefore, the thesis does not include a stand-alone Methods chapter. Hence, this introductory chapter has included a comprehensive discussion of the methodology applied in the study, and will be augmented by further discussion in the body of the thesis.

Following the Introduction, Chapter Two presents an overview of the literature studied that provided the basis for the theoretical framework of the study and helped generate the research questions addressed by the thesis. It covers a range of theories prevalent in both the public relations and the journalism studies fields, considers the empirical literature relevant to the study, including both linguistic and ethnographic research, and examines each field's approach to the other.

What would be the data and discussion chapters in a traditional thesis have been replaced by four studies taken from the data and written into journal articles. Together these address the research questions and, when read in sequence, create a picture of how the practices of public relations and journalism operate and engage with one another to create much of what appears as news in newspapers and magazines, over the airwaves

and on the screen. The narrative begins by investigating the two most visible products of public relations, the media release and the news conference, described by Jacobs (2011, p. 1901) as “the oral counterpart of press releases”.

These chapters (Three and Four) examine the techniques used by public relations practitioners to attract journalists to construct favourable reports and then assess how the journalists responded to the techniques. The following two chapters (Five and Six) go behind the scenes into the offices of the two practices. Chapter Five analyses examples of a public relations practitioner’s interactions with a client and appraises how these interactions influenced the construction of media relations’ materials. Chapter Six studies instances of interactions between public relations practitioners and journalists and examines how they affected news stories. It also considers an interaction between a junior and senior journalist and how that resulted in the news story altering dramatically. Broadly, each chapter is organised as laid out in the Postgraduate Handbook (2013, p. 109) and includes the following sections: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion/Conclusion. This necessarily means there is some repetition between the chapters, but it has been minimised as much as possible. The next part of the thesis discusses the chapters in more detail.

Chapter Three asks to what extent do media releases retain the main proposition when transformed into news stories. In other words whose news is the public receiving? The chapter examines examples of media releases (the most visible product of media relations) and the news stories that were written using them as main source. Through the textual analysis of two releases that are representative of the 35 releases in the collection, the chapter demonstrates that in many cases media releases (the majority in the collection) are being published with few or no changes. It concludes that journalists are very often failing to corroborate information they are receiving from public relations sources and thereby relinquishing their traditional watchdog function.

Chapter Four examines data gathered at a media conference and asks to what degree the public relations team was able to manage access to the conference and the interviewee, and did this result in them influencing the news agenda? Media conferences are an efficient way for public relations practitioners to gather many journalists together to hear the same message, but how useful was it in this instance as a means of influencing what appeared in the media? The chapter employs Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical

framework to consider how journalists interacted with media relations staff and a council officer during the media conference. It examines both the verbal and non-verbal actions of the participants to consider the performance of the public relations team and whether the journalists were receptive to the performance. Did they accept the proposition or angle put forward by the spokesperson, or were there points on which they challenged the information? It also considers what external factors may be influencing the behaviour of the journalists. Finally, it discusses some of the news stories that resulted from the conference in order to assess whether the public relations team was able to influence the news agenda. It concludes that the media conference was able to achieve its objective of influencing the angle of the news story, and therefore the news agenda, despite the spokesperson giving a less-than-perfect performance and the journalists wanting more detail than was provided. The findings support the evidence presented in Chapter Three that “information subsidies” are being used unchallenged by journalists as they struggle to fill the news hole.

Chapter Five looks behind the scenes at the practice of public relations in what is possibly the first-ever video ethnography in a public relations agency. Media releases and media conferences are the products of media relations, but in this thesis it is argued that most interactions involving public relations practitioners, their clients and journalists go on behind closed doors.

Through analysis of phone and face-to-face interactions between a public relations consultant and his client, the chapter examines how the public relations practitioner constructs media messaging in consultation with the client. It looks in detail at the consultant-client relationship and draws on J. Grunig’s (1992), Berger’s (2005) and Edwards’ (2009) discussions of the dominant coalition along with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1995a; Richardson, 2007) to seek to answer the questions, how much influence do PRPs have over their clients and how receptive are clients to the advice of public relations practitioners? It concludes that in practice it appears PRPs have limited success in influencing clients, and are often instructed by their clients as to what the key messages should be and who should receive them. In sum, PRPs make the job of communicating with stakeholders and the media easier for an organisation, but do not always influence the content of the communication or the direction of the organisation’s policy. Therefore, when a journalist accepts public relations material whose agenda is really being served and how transparent is it?

Chapter Six visits journalists in two newsrooms and considers instances of their interactions with public relations practitioners and the materials and information they provide. Through the analysis of face-to-face and email interactions it investigates the complicated “dance” (Gans, 1979, p. 116) between journalists and their public relations sources. It examines examples of when journalists actively seek out public relations practitioners and how they respond to attempts by those practitioners to influence, delay or hinder media coverage to protect or promote their clients. It highlights the different interactional goals of journalists and public relations practitioners in these cases. While the journalists wished the disclosure of information relating to the activities of publicly-funded bodies represented by the public relations practitioners, it appears the public relations practitioners wish to manage and/or restrict the release of that information for the benefit of their organisation. The analysis draws on the political communication literature (Davis, 2013; Louw, 2010; McNair, 2011) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, 1995a; Richardson, 2007) to consider where the power is located between the two practices. Overall, the chapter reveals journalists’ increasing difficulties in accessing information without going through a public relations representative. It concludes that even when journalists do not take public relations’ materials at face value, they can find it impossible to find an alternative source and hence public relations messages are influencing the news agenda even in cases where journalists are attempting to carry out their traditional role of investigating and corroborating information they receive.

Chapter Seven summarises the study’s findings based on the analysis of the research data. These include findings from the textual analysis presented in Chapter Three as well as those from the interactions in Chapters Four to Six. It outlines the implications of the study, and indicates its limitations. Finally the researcher makes suggestions for possible future research.

## **1.7. Conclusion**

The introduction to this research into the relationship between journalism and public relations has summarised the study and explained my interest in it, which originated from having the media releases written while working as a public relations practitioner accepted unchallenged and published almost unchanged. It has situated the study amid a continuing struggle for control of the news agenda between the practices of journalism



and public relations, outlining the issues to be explored in the thesis and introducing a number of explanations why the current situation may be occurring.

The thesis as a whole presents a close examination of the products of public relations and how they are used by journalists, as well as analysing the verbal and non-verbal actions of journalists and public relations practitioners as they go about their everyday routines. The purpose of the examination was to assess how these actions and interactions affect the selection and construction of news stories. In other words, whose news do New Zealanders consume? Is it news that results from genuine journalistic investigations, or that which lands pre-packaged into the hands of overworked, undertrained journalists from public relations practitioners on behalf of their clients? And if it is the latter, who has decided on the angle of those messages, a public relations practitioner trained in ethical public relations, or their client who arguably has no such concerns?

This study titled “Whose news? Investigating power relations between journalists and public relations practitioners” is intended to raise awareness and stimulate discussion about the two sets of practices that are crucial to the health of our news media. It argues that their interactions, which for the most part go on in the shadows, need to be opened up to the light of public debate. If this does not happen then what Moloney (2006, p. 1) described as the “Niagara of spin” from public relations practitioners and their clients may well be allowed, by overworked journalists, to drown out any legitimate news.

## Chapter Two: **Literature Review**

### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter situates the study in the wider body of literature about journalism, public relations and the journalist-source relationship. It is organised into five parts. Following this introduction, the second part examines the context in which public relations practitioners and journalists establish and enact their relationships and the effects that changes in the media environment have had on the power balances in those relationships. The third section of the chapter discusses the most influential theories in public relations and journalism studies that are relevant to the study and then a fourth section considers the literature relating to journalists' relations with public relations practitioners. Finally, the conclusion draws on the literature discussed to demonstrate the contribution to the field/s that the study is making.

Overall, this thesis concentrates on the working relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists. While all journalists at some point in their working life (usually on a regular basis) will interact with public relations practitioners, not all public relations practitioners deal with journalists routinely.

The specialist area of public relations that deals with journalists is media relations. It is one of the core functions of public relations (Doorley & Garcia, 2011), and one of the most familiar to outsiders, because its "outcomes are tangible and visible" (Johnston, 2013, p. 1). In fact, owing to changes in the news environment brought about by digital technologies, the "overlap" between news and public relations is becoming more marked (Mitchell, 2014, para. 8). The thesis will explore this overlap, asking what has led to the increased interaction between journalists and public relations practitioners, and what has been the effect on the news that the public consumes? Hence, the literature review will particularly survey the literature concerning journalists' relationships with public relations sources relating to New Zealand and internationally.

### **2.1. The relationship in context: the media environment**

The media are facing massive changes as organisations confront the demands of anytime, anywhere news on web-enabled devices. So fast and far-reaching are the changes that they have been described as "extra-ordinary and dizzying" (Peston, 2014,

para 14). The once-separate news media technologies of the newspaper, radio and television have converged on the Internet with the website of a newspaper looking very much like that of a radio or television station. Thanks to this change, journalists' roles across the platforms are "broadly similar" (Hannis, 2014, p. 95) with many now working across two or three platforms in so-called digital or converged newsrooms.

Models of the converged newsroom differ, but most have decided to implement a cross-platform operation across two or more media (Deuze, 2008), in some instances bringing the online operation into the main newsroom. Journalists working in these newsrooms are expected to adapt to the new technologies and the constant deadlines in what one reporter during the research explained as a situation akin to employing "a lot of marathon runners who they now expect to turn into middle-distance runners and sprinters". This reporter [LJ1] explained how the changes have worked:

Ten years ago the feeling was you filed one story in a day, and the reporter felt 'I'm going to do it right and that's the only version I'm doing', and by the old standard that was right. That standard has now changed. The reporter has to write the news story first for the web – shorter – and then they have to write a longer, more thoughtful piece for print.

In New Zealand more than a third of journalists say their roles are now "digital first", where they are expected to break news online, as it happens, instead of holding it for the print edition (Ahmed, 2013, July 10). In addition, nearly as many say they develop multiple versions of the same story to make use of tools available on the Internet that are not available in print, including video, audio and interactive elements (Ahmed, 2013, July 10). For example, after the Wellington earthquake in July 2013, the *New Zealand Herald's* website team used Scribblelive.com to deliver rolling live updates (Sissons & Mulrennan, 2014). They included information from scientists, transport authorities, the city council, and short reports and photos from *Herald* reporters and users. The updates also incorporated pictures and reports from Twitter.

Hence, not only are many newspaper and broadcast journalists routinely expected to file to the news organisation's Internet news site in addition to the paper or broadcast news programme they work for, some are also expected to post on Twitter and others are required to blog. A survey of 200, mostly print, journalists in the United States by PWR New Media (PWR, 2011) discovered 77% contributed content to an Internet site or blog belonging to their news organisation. This figure is higher than the third of journalists

found in New Zealand to be working in a “digital first” organisation, but ongoing research in this study indicates newsrooms here are heading in that direction.

### **2.1.1. Journalism shrinking**

The move towards a converged journalism model where journalists are expected to be multi-skilled has coincided with a time of cuts to the number of journalists in newsrooms available for traditional journalistic investigation. In the United Kingdom the number of full-time journalists has fallen from 39,000 to 30,000 since 2008, and the number overall has dropped from 67,000 to 60,000 (Office for National Statistics, 2014 August). In the United States, the latest figures showed full-time professional employment in newspapers falling 17% since 2004, dropping from 52,550 to 43,630 (Williams, 2014). Local newspapers alone have lost around 30% of their staff in about a decade, or 18,000 people, many of these being the more expensive and experienced senior reporters (Doctor, 2014). While around 5,000 full-time jobs had been created in 500 digital news outlets, these outlets were found not to be investing in original journalism (Mitchell, 2014).

In New Zealand it has been a similar story. Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment occupation outlook figures for 2014 recorded those working as “journalists and other writers”, as numbering 6,220 in 2013, up slightly from 5,980 in 2012. However, the report made clear that while employment for copywriters and technical writers was growing, journalism employment itself was “flat or declining” (Occupation Outlook 2014, p. 100). This means that there are probably fewer than the 4,000 people estimated to be working as journalists in New Zealand in 2008 (Tilley & Hollings, 2008). According to Auckland University of Technology Media Studies lecturer, associate professor Wayne Hope, this situation represented a worrying trend: “The sphere for public debate is shrinking with fewer voices, fewer journalists and fewer outlets” (Hope quoted in Williams, 2011, September 15, para 12).

In all three of these countries the cuts to the number of journalists have corresponded to a rise in the number of public relations practitioners being employed. This phenomenon will be explored later in the chapter. However, the figures alone may not tell the whole story. As has been mentioned, many new jobs in journalism over the past five years have been in small digital news outlets or trade publications, which do not invest in journalistic investigations and often publish promotional pieces (Mitchell, 2014; Peston,

2014). Further, some of those identifying as journalists in the employment figures may in fact be working as brand journalists creating news-like content for companies (Martin, 2011), bloggers involved in promotional work or in public relations (Salter, 2005; Serini, 1993). As the divisions between the practices of journalism and public relations become less obvious, these brand journalists (Martin, 2011), bloggers or public relations practitioners may identify themselves as journalists, having originally worked in the field or been trained alongside journalists (Salter, 2005; Serini, 1993) or for more cynical reasons that they wish to have the authority and legal protections afforded by identifying as a journalist (Fisher, 2014, August 22).

Overall, the evidence suggests the news industry is one in which a shrinking number of journalists is expected to create more content more quickly (Cottle, 2003a; Franklin, 2011; Matthews, 2013; O'Neill & O'Connor, 2008; Sissons, 2012a). Even journalists who do not work across platforms are expected to file up to three times as many stories as those who worked in the same newsrooms a decade ago (Starkman, 2010; Waldman, 2011). This is what Starkman (2010, p. 3), talking about newsrooms in the United States, dubbed “Hamster Wheel” journalism or “volume without thought” and what Waldman, also referring to the United States, (2011, p. 32) called “the illusion of bounty”, which comes at the cost of more expensive, time-consuming, public interest, investigative journalism.

The situation has been described as a “crisis” in journalism (Hall, 2005, p. 6; McChesney & Nichols, 2010) where journalists have experienced ongoing cutbacks in their newsrooms and “bottom line pressures” have affected the quality of news (Hall, 2005, p. 6).

#### **2.1.1.1. Reliance on information subsidies**

The pressures on journalists to produce more news copy in less time have been identified as important drivers in many becoming more reliant on public relations material and failing to corroborate and/or challenge much of that material (Cottle, 2003a; Davies, 2008; Davis, 2000a, 2003; Franklin, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2006; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Moloney, Jackson & McQueen, 2013; Motion, Leitch & Cliffe, 2009; O'Neill & O'Connor, 2008; White & Hobsbawm, 2007; Williams, 2014).

The term “information subsidy” was first used by Oscar Gandy (1982) to describe materials provided at little cost or effort to the person receiving those materials. He argued the cheaper and more accessible the information was, the more likely it was to be used. For media relations practitioners this meant that providing timely and inexpensive (for the news organisation) pre-packaged materials increased the probability that the materials would be used in media content, as it was very tempting for news organisations to accept them because it reduces the cost of information collection. (See later in this chapter for an in-depth look at research into information subsidies and the next chapter for a discussion of why journalists accept them).

The level of information subsidies accepted for use by journalists has long been a concern to researchers and newswriters (Macnamara, 2010; Schudson, 2001; Tilley & Hollings, 2008). The concerns centre on the perceived influence such subsidies have on the news stories which are compiled using them as a source, and hence ultimately their impact on the news agenda. This unease with journalists ceding control (however partial) of the news agenda lies in the fact that these subsidies are materials provided on behalf of a client with the express aim of influencing media coverage and potentially shaping public opinion (Curtin, 1999; Moloney, 2006; Turk, 1985).

Since Gandy’s (1982) book, researchers have noted that economic constraints on the news media coupled with the pressure to increase profits have contributed to the increasing acceptance by journalists of information subsidies (Curtin, 1999; Davis, 2000a; Motion *et al.*, 2009). While Turk (1985) found there was a reluctance to use media releases on the part of journalists, more recent studies have revealed, certainly in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, that between 40 and 80% of what appears in the news media was influenced by public relations, either by whole or parts of media releases being published verbatim or by the provision of sources within stories (Beder, 1997; ; Crikey.com, 2010, March 15; Davies, 2008; Gregory, 2003; Lewis *et al.*, 2008; McChesney, 2003; Sissons, 2012a; Zawai, 1994).

In 2003, Anne Gregory, sounded a warning that journalists were too dependent on public relations material and it was damaging their critical faculties and their role as watchdogs. She later claimed that public relations practitioners were the major suppliers of information to the media, and as much as 80% of what appears in our newspapers is public relations-generated (Gregory, 2004).

This claim was substantiated in a study by academics at the University of Cardiff in which they joined forces with *Guardian* journalist Nick Davies for a research project that resulted in the book *Flat Earth News* (2008). In it, Davies described how reporters were over-reliant on pre-packaged material such as the media releases provided by public relations practitioners and news agencies. The researchers at Cardiff analysed more than 2,000 news stories, focusing on two elements: the number of stories that were derived directly from media releases, and the number that were taken straight from the main British news agency, The Press Association. They found 80% of newspaper content was at least partially made up of recycled news wire or public relations copy. Of this, 60% consisted wholly or mainly of wire copy and/or public relations material, and a further 20% contained clear elements of wire copy and/or public relations to which more or less other material had been added (Lewis *et al.*, 2008). The researchers (Lewis *et al.*, 2008) also stated that in the United Kingdom this situation showed little prospect of changing anytime soon, “the factors which have created this editorial reliance on ‘information subsidies’ seems (sic) set to continue if not increase, in the near future” (p. 1).

The findings were similar to those of studies in the United States and Australia. In her book, *Global Spin*, Sharon Beder wrote that various studies revealed media releases as the basis for 40 to 50% of the news content of newspapers in the United States (Beder, 1997). The figure uncovered a few years later by Robert McChesney (2003) was higher. He found that surveys showed that media releases accounted for 40 to 70% of what appears as news in the United States. A study by Australian online news site, *Crikey.com*, and University of Technology (UTS), Sydney’s Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (*Crikey. com*, 2010, March 15) analysed more than 2,000 news stories over six months, establishing nearly 55% of news articles “across ten hard-copy papers were driven by some form of public relations” (2010, March 15, para. 3). The research concluded:

Given the grim state of some of these papers, and the deep cuts to their workforces of late, in some ways it’s surprising that 55% isn’t higher. (2010, para. 7)

In New Zealand, this literature review discovered only one substantial study to date, by Bronwen Bartley (1997, cited in Comrie, 2002), which revealed that 47% of stories in

the business sections of New Zealand's five metropolitan daily newspapers were based entirely on media releases.

In light of his findings, Davies (2008) contended that journalists have become "churnalists" (as described by Harcup, 2004, pp. 3-4). They no longer decided what was news. Using his experience as a journalist along with in-depth interviews with reporters, Davies concluded that changes in journalism practice, which have seen pressure on staffing combined with a demand for more news content, were at the root of this over-reliance on public relations material. New Zealand media academic Judy McGregor put the blame for the media's dependence on public relations squarely on the journalism industry.

Journalism blames the imbalance of resources between the spin industry and the news media for the current state of affairs. But does the media industry adequately invest in senior journalists so they don't go over to the dark side to pay the mortgage? Are newsroom cultures such that senior journalists feel valued? (McGregor, August 2007)

### **2.1.2. Public relations growing**

At the same time as the number of journalists engaged in traditional newsgathering has been shrinking, the number of public relations practitioners has grown exponentially, to a point where it is suggested there are more public relations practitioners than journalists working in the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Davies, 2008; Edgecliffe-Johnson, 2012; McChesney & Nichols, 2010).

In the United States, figures for 2014 claim there are now five public relations practitioners for every journalist (Williams, 2014). In New Zealand, former executive director of the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ), the late Paul Dryden, said in 2007 that 4,000 people worked in "communications management", which included corporate and internal communications and event management (personal communication, 2007). More recent Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment figures show this number has swelled to more than 6,000, with 2,770 people in public relations and 3,270 in event organising in 2013, and growth of about 3% a year expected until 2016 (Occupation Outlook, 2014). Around one in three PRPs claimed to be former journalists (PRINZ, 2010, cited in Callard, 2011)

This growth in public relations has in turn resulted in a rise in the information supplied by PRPs to the media (Johnston, 2013; Motion *et al.*, 2009). Paul Dryden claimed that



in New Zealand the growth of public relations had increased its influence on the news media.

The consequence is that public relations are having a far more influential role just because there are fewer human resources in newsrooms now. That is a fact. Therefore, there is a natural flow in that public relations provides a greater share of material that appears in the media.  
(Paul Dryden, personal communication, 2007)

The attraction for media relations practitioners to information subsidies is the access afforded to the media, and hence to public opinion. According to Turk (1985), the world constructed by the media in the stories published in print, online and broadcast was not created by the media alone and unfettered. It was also influenced by the media's sources: "news is not necessarily what happens, but what a news source *says* [original emphasis] has happened" (Turk, 1985, p. 12). This point will be discussed later in the chapter.

More generally, the field's growth has resulted in increasing numbers of companies and organisations establishing in-house public relations operations and/or soliciting agency advice (Comrie, 2002; Cottle, 2003a; Cripps, 2012; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008), and corporate budgets for public relations activity have on average been growing even during the economic downturn (USC Annenberg, 2012).

This growth has unsurprisingly led to public relations as a career choice growing in popularity, to the third most popular in the United Kingdom behind journalism and teaching (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008). However, unlike teaching and journalism, which are enacted to a large extent in public, public relations for the most part goes on behind closed doors and its practitioners are rarely seen by the public (with the exception of a few high profile individuals). In fact, as Holladay and Coombs (2013) wrote, the very nature of public relations is that it is "unseen" (p. 125), meaning that people do not notice when they are reading or observing it and fail to realise when they are being influenced by it. So unrecognised is it by the public that Holladay and Coombs (2013) called for secondary schools and universities to teach public relations literacy alongside media literacy.

### **2.1.2.1. Media relations**

The most recognisable public relations' role is that of media relations (Smith, 2014). As has been said, it is one of the specialist areas of public relations. Its role is to secure public recognition for the actions of the organisation (Tilley, 2005) and garner support for the organisation through the news media (Smith, 2014). It is also the case that most journalists understand public relations and judge those working in the field wholly on their direct experience of media relations practitioners (Tilley & Hollings, 2008). This has an important influence on their relations with each other, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Despite being the most recognisable public relations' role, it is not one that garners the most respect within the profession. Australian academic Johnston (2013) noted two reasons for this. First, media relations was considered "soft", being "not as complex as issues management, or as urgent as crisis management, as personal as community relations or as specialised as financial relations" (p. 5). However, she added, those holding such views failed to understand the role media relations played in all the areas of public relations mentioned. Johnston suggested it was better to regard media relations as providing important communications options for public relations as a whole, for a strong working relationship with journalists, bloggers and other media translated into smoother practices right across the spectrum of public relations activities and functions.

The second reason Johnston mentioned for media relations' lowly reputation is because it is usually seen as a technical role. In this view, the practitioner spends their time writing and distributing media releases, putting together media kits, staging media conferences as well as maintaining media distribution lists, compiling visual and audio materials and updating information about the organisation online (Johnston, 2013).

However, Johnston (2013) argued that media relations involved much more, requiring skills such as researching, planning, evaluation and implementation. She defined media relations as "the ongoing facilitation and coordination of communication and relationships between an individual, group or organisation and the media" (Johnston, 2013, p. 14). This suggested, she continued, that the media relations practitioner held a dual role with the media as both a communicator and a relationship manager. It also suggested it can be undertaken at many levels: within an organisation or group of people or individually.

Several years before Johnston wrote her book, Motion *et al.* (2009) wrote that the traditional view of media relations was changing in Australia. They argued that it was now increasingly being seen as more of a strategic than a tactical function and was being taken seriously by senior managers. Of course, with this change came a demand for the range of skills and knowledge mentioned by Johnston (2013).

According to British academics Gregory and Willis (2013), the role of the media relations practitioner developed as they progressed from novice to expert technician. While the novice tended to focus on understanding news values and developing good writing skills (the technician role mentioned by Johnston), the expert applied both an intuitive and analytical approach to situations, which were based on their knowledge. For example, these experts could take account of the current issues of interest in the fast-moving media environment, allowing them to judge the best angle for a media release as well as the optimum time for it to be passed to journalists.

In fact, as American academics Doorley and Garcia (2011, p. 80) stated, in large companies the role could be so specialised that it may be divided into specialist areas of media relations such as “marketing public relations”, focusing on publicising a company and its products, “corporate media relations”, responsible for coverage of the corporation as a whole, or “financial media relations”, dealing with news of interest to investors.

Further, when asked, many media relations specialists saw themselves as not only promoting their clients but supporting journalists by saving them time, providing access to information and facilitating opportunities for interviews. In New Zealand, the Director-General of Health Debbie Chin defended the New Zealand government’s expenditure of NZ\$13m on public relations saying it reflected the public’s right to know what officials and politicians were doing. Their approach, she said, was to be “open and helpful to the media and to recognise they are an important conduit to the general public” (cited in Motion *et al.*, 2009, p. 126).

However, as Doorley and Garcia (2011) stressed, this is managed communication, carefully prepared and strategically released. They suggested all organisations should have a strict policy covering who can and cannot speak to the media. This, they acknowledged, can lead some young PRPs as well as journalists to “sense a conflict

between forthright communication and managed communication” (2011, p. 78). They countered that if an organisation does not control who can speak to the media and when, the result can be “confusion, inaccurate communication and reputational harm” (p. 78).

Good organisational practice dictates that only people who have been trained to speak effectively with reporters be authorized to do so. The argument goes that reporters should have only limited access as their tendency to ‘oversimplify’ issues can lead to confusion. (Doorley & Garcia, p. 79)

This thesis concentrates on the work of public relations practitioners working in media relations in New Zealand and their interactions with journalists. It asks how much influence public relations practitioners have over the media relations strategies in their client organisations; are they part of the dominant coalition/s? It also considers how their desire to manage communication affects how the PRPs interact with journalists, as well as how these management strategies affect journalists’ attitude towards them. Finally how much influence do public relations practitioners and their information subsidies have over the final news product in New Zealand?

#### **2.1.2.1.1. Media relations and the digital age**

One important development behind the growth in public relations generally, and media relations in particular, has been digital technology (Williams, 2014, August 11). Public relations practitioners can now communicate with their publics directly through Internet sites and social media, and this has resulted in hiring specialists proficient in this area. Johnston (2013) noted that practitioners could, thanks to digital technologies, target niche audiences with specific information through channels such as Facebook and Twitter, thus avoiding the need to work directly with the news media, but knowing they will likely spot newsworthy information on social media and republish it. Hence, social media have not only changed the ways individuals, government and organisations communicate, but also the way public relations practitioners interact with the media.

Gregory and Willis (2013, p. 130) suggested viewing the modern media environment as a “single complex system” made up of many interacting organisations and media outlets, each of which was active on a range of digital and non-digital platforms. They argued it was increasingly difficult to distinguish between the so-called “traditional media” and “digital media” as many print and broadcast organisations were migrating online. Some of these maintained their existing channels, but some (such as smaller newspapers and magazines) were abandoning their print products in favour of digital

only. Gregory and Willis (2013), quoting the global public relations firm Edelman's model, suggested the contemporary media landscape had four components, each of which overlapped and interacted with the other three. They were traditional media, comprising radio, television and newspapers; social media, including Facebook and Twitter; hybrid media, which were media companies such as blogs like the *Huffington Post*, that have arrived in the digital age; and owned media referring to media companies that the organisation owned, including blogs, podcasts and apps.

This new environment was characterised by volatility in the interactions between media and therefore posed challenges as well as creating opportunities for the media relations specialist. As Johnston (2013) noted, a newsworthy story that appeared in one medium (whether positive or negative for the organisation), would be shared by users and was therefore likely to be picked up by news media on other platforms: "News is still news, whether it's distributed in a 140-word tweet, a radio or newspaper story or TV panel show" (p. 3).

Further, despite the changes in the way news was gathered and distributed, media were still important in influencing what events and issues people think about as well as how they think about them (Johnston, 2013). Johnston (2013) suggested that public relations practitioners still recognised the importance of the news media as shapers of public opinion and as continuing to provide the arena where politics and public life were enacted. In fact, an issue/event/idea that started life on social media was still considered more significant if it migrated from these niche sites to the mainstream news media.

In terms of the practice of media relations, the advent of social media has triggered many changes including to the way stories are pitched. At the same time some skills have been acknowledged as still being very much relevant. According to Napoli, Taylor and Powers (1999), public relations practitioners in general valued writing as one of the job's most important skills and one that distinguished it from other practices and professions. Their research found that no matter what their role or years of experience, PRPs engaged in writing activities for more than a third of their time, and sent around seven pitch letters a month and more than six media releases. So important were the pitch and media release to the practice that, as Waters, Tindall and Morton (2010) wrote, those that were badly written or in poor taste were routinely ridiculed on the BadPitchBlog (n.d).

Having said that, the way pitches and media releases were distributed had changed. Most pitches were now likely to be sent to journalists via email media release (Doorley & Garcia, 2011; Sallot & Johnson, 2006a), bearing in mind that reporters still preferred the emailed information to follow a standard media release format, which allowed them to quickly evaluate it for news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) such as significance and timeliness (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). For their part, PRPs also preferred electronic pitching as they could include links to website information about the company, photos and other pertinent information, although some journalists did not like receiving attachments because of the danger of viruses (Doorley & Garcia, 2011; Duke, 2002). In addition, the immediacy of email helped them to meet the demands of modern media's constant deadlines.

Another innovation has been not to pitch at all. Waters *et al.*, (2010, p. 242) noticed a new movement in media relations known as "media catching" which exploits the news environment of social media. Expert request services such as ProfNet and HARO have developed in the United States and the United Kingdom, and SourceBottle in Australia<sup>1</sup> that aimed to connect journalists with sources. This involved public relations practitioners providing material specifically requested by journalists for news or feature stories or blog posts. It meant journalists using this service were not passively receiving news releases and media kits from public relations practitioners, but asking PRPs for specific help on stories and projects they were currently working on (Waters *et al.*, 2010).

While this sees journalists not just passively receiving media releases, it does mean they hand over some gatekeeper rights to public relations practitioners. Traditionally, a journalist would be expected to hunt out a source using existing contacts, or cold-calling either on the phone or face-to-face; in other words talk to a variety of people. Now a journalist can put out a call and the source will find them. These sources are self-selecting and overwhelmingly the pitches come from public relations people, thus potentially narrowing the range of voices heard in news stories. It could also lead to

---

<sup>1</sup> HARO, short for "Help a Reporter Out", ProfNet and Sourcebottle are three examples of expert service providers. That is, they connect journalists with expert or relevant sources for their stories. Part of their success is their aim to protect journalists from public relations spam and they carry strict rules for pitching to journalists. Businesses signing up get regular emails containing lists of queries from reporters looking for sources to stories. This makes it a relatively easy way to find media opportunities and coverage for clients. HARO was first set up in 2007 on Facebook by a former public relations practitioner. SourceBottle was also started by a former public relations practitioner in 2009 in Australia. ProfNet is the oldest of the three examples, being started in 1992. It is now a subsidiary of PR Newswire.

examples like these from McMillen (2012, April, 4, para 4): “Magazine seeks details on the Titanic for article”, which shows a worrying lack of research skills or laziness on the part of the journalist; and “Mag seeks women who have rejected a 6-figure salary, gone blonde, adopted a rescue dog or converted to Islam”, which appeared to suggest the magazine was planning an article and wished to find sources to fit their paradigm. McMillen (2012, April, 4, para 5) wrote this was the “journalistic equivalent of putting the cart before the horse”.

## **2.2. Approaches to journalism and media relations**

The previous section brings up two debates that form a backdrop to this thesis: that of the current state of the journalism and public relations industries and that involving journalists’ relationships with their sources, public relations in particular. A persistent theme in the literature is that new technologies have affected both the employment of journalists and the practice of journalism, and that these in turn have made journalists more vulnerable to public relations’ materials. Hence, a number of scholars have characterised journalism as in crisis, perhaps in decline (Ornebring, 2009) and have argued that news is now dominated by public relations. From the public relations perspective, the last two decades have seen enormous growth (Franklin *et al.*, 2009), and for media relations practitioners, the literature noted, this environment offers increased opportunities to connect with journalists and tender story ideas and information subsidies.

Bearing these themes in mind, and noting that they are not uncontested, this literature review will turn to the two normative theories that are influential in journalism and public relations. In journalism the concept of the fourth estate underpins its legitimacy, positioning it as a public service and defender of democracy, holding power to account (Keeble, 2005; Rusbridger, 2011; Schultz, 1998). In the Western-oriented model of the media explained in the classic *The Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Paterson & Schramm, 1956), the notion of the fourth estate is associated with the libertarian theory (see below). Apart from brief mentions, this thesis will not dwell on the theories of how political systems affect media systems (Altschull, 1995; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Ostini & Fung, 2002; Siebert *et al.*, 1956; Yin, 2008) as this approach “ignores dynamic microlevel interaction among organizations, journalists, and the state” (Ostini & Fung, 2002, p. 40), which this research is concerned with. Ostini and Fung wrote that *The Four Theories of the Press* focuses on structural factors to the exclusion of the

individual journalists' autonomy and proposed a model that combined the structural constraints imposed on journalists with the professional context in which they work, "A primary focus on the economy and the state ignores the semiautonomous nature of the press that operates also on the basis of journalistic professionalism" (2002, p. 40).

In public relations, systems theory is the dominant paradigm governing the way scholars and students of public relations understand the relationships between organisations and their publics (Broom, 2009; Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005).

### **2.2.1. The fourth estate**

The term, the fourth estate, is used to refer to the news media in its idealised form (Schultz, 1998), although this has never been accepted unequivocally. Among its earliest uses was that described by Thomas Carlyle (1840, May 19, p. 392), and attributed to Edmund Burke (1787) and was intended as a criticism of the self-importance of reporters covering the United Kingdom Parliament (Schultz, 1998). Burke was reported by Carlyle as saying there were three estates in Parliament (the Lords, the church and the commons): "But, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* [emphasis in the original] more important far than they all" (Carlyle, 1840, May 19, p. 392).

Other journalism scholars credit Thomas Babington Macaulay as first using the term in its idealised form (Keeble, 2005). In an essay published in 1828 reviewing *Hallam's Constitutional History*, he wrote:

The gallery in which the reporters sit has become a fourth estate of the realm. The publication of the debates, a practice which seemed to the most liberal statesman of the old school full of danger to the great safeguards of public liberty, is now regarded by many persons as a safeguard tantamount, and more than tantamount, to all the rest together. (Macaulay, 1828, p. 34)

Macaulay was highlighting the watchdog function of the news media in providing checks on abuses of power. In this framework, and as it has developed in the 200 years since, journalists are public guardians giving voice to and reporting on the powerful as well as analysing their actions on behalf of the citizenry. They are also said to provide a crucial function with regard to government, acting as conduits for the information, ideas and opinions that voters require at election time (Keeble, 2005; Schultz, 1998).



Keeble (2005) wrote that this role is best illustrated by the campaigns run by local and national media bringing authorities to account. Recent examples include *The Times*' exposé of child abuse in Rotherham, United Kingdom, which led to the 2014 Jay report (Norfolk, 2014, August 27); The *Guardian*'s phone hacking investigation, which resulted in the closure of the *News of the World* and the Leveson Inquiry in the United Kingdom (Leveson, 2012, November 29); and the book *Dirty Politics* by investigative journalist Nicky Hager, (Hager, 2014) which exposed links between a New Zealand government communications advisor and right-wing bloggers, and led to the resignation of the Justice Minister, Judith Collins.

In the watchdog framework, the concept of objectivity can be reasoned to play an important role. This is the belief that by investigating and uncovering the facts the reporter may arrive at some form of truth. Sceptics from outside the field have argued that journalism legitimises itself by the positivist view that there is an objective truth that can, through diligent investigation, be discovered and reported. The argument from this side is summed up by Roeh (1989):

English speaking journalists, whose daily jargon is soaked with the notion of stories, 'news stories', will reject out of hand any suggestion that what they do is tell stories. The strategy by which journalists present their professional selves insists on 'the facts, all the facts, nothing but the facts'. (Roeh, 1989, p. 162)

Within journalism, there is, and has been, a debate among practitioners and journalism scholars for at least a decade about whether the "professional requirement to try to be impartial or objective is possible or even desirable" (Sissons, 2006, p. 12) and journalists' awareness that they are afflicted by personal bias goes back at least as far as the respected CBS anchor Edward Murrow (CBS, 1955, December 31) who said, "Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences. No one can eliminate prejudices – just recognise them". The terms "objectivity" and "impartiality" are often used interchangeably, both referring to the attempt to perceive and represent diverse ideas, opinions, interests, or people in a disinterested manner.

Many journalists believe they should strive for objectivity or impartiality in their news reporting, arguing that if the audience does not believe they are getting a fair and accurate representation of events, then they will not trust the news media. This, the argument goes, would undermine journalism's very reason for being (Sissons, 2006).

For Reuters' Kabul Correspondent, Sayed Salahuddin, it is one of the most treasured tenets of journalism:

I have this belief in Reuters' accuracy and impartiality – I am very proud of that. We should continue to follow that line and not be bullied by lies and propaganda of people in the world. If we can follow that pattern, we will be able to remain impartial and people will trust in what we do.  
(Salahuddin cited in Sissons, 2006, p.12)

Countering this argument are those who believe it is neither possible nor required to be objective. What stories are covered is a subjective choice (although governed to some extent by accepted news values), how those stories are covered is determined by the time and resources allocated, as well as the sources that are drawn on and the time or space set aside for the telling. Beside these influences are numerous others including the audience the news outlet is aiming at and the platform/s being used to distribute the stories (Sissons, 2006; Wilson, 1996).

A middle way was espoused by Tom Rosenstiel, (cited in Burkeman, 2002, November 25), the director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism affiliated to Columbia University, New York. He argued that an objective approach to news does not preclude a person having opinions or bias, it just means that the journalist's working method is objective. That is, that it is independent and disinterested.

Remaining independent is one of the most important planks of the fourth estate model, and has been recognised by scholars to be increasingly a challenge. Schultz (1998) argued that in Australia closures and takeovers of media organisations had concentrated control of Australia's news media in a few hands, something Alan Rusbridger, editor of the *Guardian* had also pointed to in the United Kingdom (Rusbridger, 2010, November 14), and media academic Wayne Hope had highlighted in New Zealand, as mentioned earlier (Hope quoted in Williams, 2011, September 15, para 12).

This issue has taken on a new look in the digital age, where a plethora of news outlets has started up at the same time as the concentration of legacy media has occurred. A recent report for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism by Australian Broadcasting Corporation reporter Kellie Riordan (Riordan, 2014, September) considered which editorial standards are still relevant in the new environment. She specifically considered accuracy, independence and impartiality.

Her findings showed a third form of journalism was emerging that combined important legacy standards with new approaches of what she termed “digital natives” (2014, p. 3) – those news companies that have set up in the digital age. For example, new publishers such as *Quartz* and *ProPublica* were demonstrating how news outlets could be open about where they get their information by linking back to original reports, data or news releases allowing the interested reader to investigate the background to the story. There was also a move to use more bylines (attaching a reporter’s name to a story) online in order to be clear about who is writing the articles.

In addition, Riordan (2014) argued for the unambiguous labelling of sponsored content or advertorial, which is advertising material written in the style of a news story or feature. Such transparency, she argued, helped to overcome the increasing use of media releases, advertorial and native advertising<sup>2</sup>, which was causing a blurring of the lines between independent editorial, editorial based on public relations and advertorial. It was, she claimed, potentially a threat to the independence of journalism. Yet Riordan found there were no clear rules in either legacy or online media. At *Quartz*, readers appreciated the clarity of clearly labelled content, and the clearer the demarcation the more popular the content. On the other hand, at *Buzzfeed* the strategy was to “help brands tell their stories” (Riordan, 2014, p. 27) and the organisation claimed that readers were used to the blending of editorial and advertising.

Riordan concluded, that while being transparent was important for building trust with readers it did not necessarily replace objectivity and independence. To be a trusted and credible news source in the digital age, journalists still needed to perform the basics of reporting, including uncovering new information, checking facts and making the correct attributions. She wrote, “The challenge is for media outlets to use these [digital] tools to adhere to editorial strengths of verification, accuracy, independence, and a plurality of perspectives” (Riordan, 2014, p. 56). It was this plurality of voices on the Internet, Riordan argued, that brought a new type of impartiality.

---

<sup>2</sup> Native advertising has been described by the BBC’s Robert Peston (2014, June 6) as “ads that look like impartial editorial. They could be articles written by a commercial company, or features written about a commercial company by the journalists of a news organisation but sponsored by that company.” These articles should be labelled as sponsored content but Peston and others believe this signpost is easy to miss when the article is placed in the middle of a run of news stories on a website.

*Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger (2010, November 19) wrote that, on a macro scale, a plurality of voices in the form of many media outlets with different owners and having diverse editorial viewpoints was a cornerstone of democracy. He doubted the Internet could deliver plurality as quickly as legacy media were consolidating. In Rusbridger's opinion, the consolidation and convergence of legacy media were narrowing the range of voices, while the digital space was not yet carrying the same weight as the powerful legacy media (Rusbridger, 2010, November 19).

Writing a decade earlier, Schultz (1998) had noticed the trend towards consolidation along with the blurring of lines or what she called the "symbiotic relationship" between the media and government and other sources of power (p. 55) that had the potential to make the media the agents of power supporting and maintaining the status quo. She recognised the danger of what she called "information management", writing that "never before has so much time, effort and money been spent to shape and distort public discussion" (p. 56). This will bring us to the discussion of the public sphere in the next section after a brief look at systems theory.

### **2.2.2. Systems theory**

In public relations, practitioners are consciously subjective, communicating on behalf of their client organisation. However, like journalists, public relations practitioners believe that they work in an environment of interconnecting relationships. In public relations theory, systems theory is arguably a metatheory (Holtzhausen, 2012), being the key framework governing the way scholars and students of public relations have understood the relationships between organisations and their publics (Treadwell & Treadwell, 2005). The theory, which according to Broom (2009) was first applied to public relations by Cutlip and Center in 1952, identified organisations as being made up of interrelated and interdependent parts, which must adapt and adjust to changes in their environments, whether these are political, economic or social (Broom, 2009).

The theory posited that the organisation and its environment have a symbiotic relationship. Organisations depended on resources from their environment including materials, employees, clients and customers, and the environment needed the organisations' jobs, products and services (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). How successful an organisation was depended on how good its relationships were, both external and internal. These relationships in turn depended to an extent on the public relations

practitioner's ability to develop and maintain those relationships both within and between the organisation and its relevant publics (Broom, 2009).

Successful PRPs, the theory argued, monitored and anticipated changes in the environment and interpreted and communicated these to management. Such actions gave an organisation time to plan its response, meaning it could be proactive rather than purely reactive to developments or events. Drawing on Trujillo and Toth (1987), Weaver, Motion and Roper (2006) wrote that this theory takes a functionalist approach that public relations is a means by which organisations can manage, plan for and successfully address uncertainties within their environments.

In systems theory a change in one set of relationships could affect other relationships, creating problems and opportunities for one another (Smith, 2014). Therefore, it was important to monitor the environment and the effects of the public relations messages coming from the organisation. This means the relationships with publics should be two-way rather than one-way, known as an open system, with the organisation listening to its publics and able to use the information coming into it to adapt to or manage the environment. Broom (2009) stated that an organisation operating a relatively open system is more able to adapt to external change and is therefore more likely to survive, fulfil its goals and grow.

Grunig's Excellence Theory follows systems theory while also aiming to build one general theory. In Grunig's framework, an "excellent" public relations approach required an open systems model and two-way symmetrical communication to build relationships between organisations and their publics to achieve organisational goals (J. Grunig, 2006). It argued that in order to provide the greatest value to organisations, publics, and society, public relations should be seen as a "strategic management function rather than as a messaging, publicity and media relations function" (J. Grunig, 2006, p. 151).

In this paradigm, the role of the practitioner is, among other things, about managing relationships, scenario building and cultivating strategies for relationship building. While J. Grunig and White (1992) have admitted that many in the field believe that the most common form of public relations practised was the asymmetrical kind (for example Leitch & Nielson, 1997), which advocated in favour of an organisation, they have continued to argue that symmetrical communications was the most effective.

One important area of criticism has come from postmodernists such as Holtzhausen (2012, p. 181) who has argued that the systems and excellence theories erroneously believe change in volatile and complex organisational environments can be planned for using strategic public relations. This presupposes, she contends, that with planning even in environments of complexity and chaos “predictable patterns of behavior emerge”. Holtzhausen also takes issue with the use of the metaphor “Systems”, which she points out Lyotard (1984, cited in Holzhausen, 2012) argued compared society to a machine implying society is a unified whole that can be studied.

Along with current trends internationally, public relations theory development in New Zealand and Australia has been moving from a predominantly systems approach to other approaches including the critical and poststructuralist approaches (Motion *et al.*, 2009). Of particular interest to this thesis is the critical approach.

#### **2.2.2.1. Critical approach**

Critical scholars (Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Ewen, 1996; Holtzhausen, 2000; Leitch & Neilson, 1997, 2001; L'Étang, 2005; Motion & Leitch, 1996; Roper, 2005; Stauber & Rampton, 2004) routinely object to the symmetrical model of public relations as not acknowledging important realities. Roper (2005), for example, argued that companies may wish to elicit understanding on the part of their publics, but only in order to further the interests of those companies. Other critics claim the two-way symmetrical model is delusional. Among these, McKie and Munshi (2007) have attacked the symmetry model as “flawed, largely normative at best (and at worst, misleading in its promise of quality of exchange amid realities of uneven power), very restricted in practice, and to date, structured in support of exclusionary practices” (p. 36).

While J. Grunig and his supporters see public relations’ development as a continuing progression from its beginnings in manipulation through to open two-way communication, critics argue that it originated with propaganda and has not progressed in any meaningful manner. At the extreme are Stauber and Rampton (1995) who compared public relations to prostitution, “When practiced voluntarily for love, both can exemplify human communication at its best. When they are bought and sold, however, they are transformed into something hidden and sordid” (p. 14).

Several well-known studies have considered public relations' use and concluded it is often employed against the public interest. Among them are Ewen (1996), Moloney (2006) and Burton (2007). Burton is the editor of *SourceWatch*, a global database and web news site that monitors the public relations industry and his 2007 book used case studies from Australia and New Zealand to give an account of how the public relations industry was undermining the public interest. He contended that if a public relations practitioner was in the business of manufacturing news for use by journalists, it was not for the public good. The PRP's work, he wrote, in the vast majority of cases is on behalf of business elites and special interests. The book ends with a plea that news producers and news consumers be more critical in their appraisal of public relations. This call for more public relations literacy has been reiterated by Holladay and Coombs (2013), as mentioned above.

Critical theorists aim to debate and challenge the dominant paradigms (L'Étang, 2005) specifically in relation to how power is distributed in society. In terms of power within public relations theory, critical theorists have concluded that PRPs have the potential to obtain power, but they rely on senior management both to gain it and to employ it.

Edwards (2009), drawing on Bourdieu's understanding of capital and symbolic power wrote that public relations practitioners and teams have the potential to acquire power within an organisation and wider society because of their ability to present a normalised version of reality through the texts they create. This can bolster their own position in an organisation and/or reinforce their organisation's position. However, as several researchers note (Berger & Meng, 2014; Edwards, 2009; Gregory & Willis, 2013), in order to be successful, initiatives by the PRP must have senior management's backing. This can be achieved either as part of the dominant coalition or through having a champion in the dominant coalition (Berger & Meng, 2014; Edwards, 2009; Gregory & Willis, 2013).

The dominant coalition is a core concept in public relations theory (Berger, 2005). Within an organisation, the dominant coalition is the decision-making body that both influences the organisation's values and allocates resources (J. Grunig, 1992). It is the "group of individuals in an organisation with the power to affect the structure of the organisation, define its mission, and set its course through strategic choices the coalition makes" (Dozier, L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1995, p. 15). Edwards (2009) added that the

strategic importance placed on a PRP or team of practitioners was closely related to the value attached to it by senior managers. By being part of the dominant coalition, it is argued that public relations practitioners can represent the interests of others and shape an organisation's ideology and decision making to benefit the profession, the organisation and society in general (Dozier *et al.*, 1995).

Berger (2005) challenged this assumption as too simplistic, arguing there were multiple overlapping coalitions within large organisations. The complexity of the processes inside dominant coalitions, Berger claimed, made it difficult for practitioners to influence positively an organisation's decision-making, even if they wanted to. The claim is supported by Holtzhausen (2000) who found that despite PRP efforts to implement participatory and ethical practices into their organisations, they could be overruled or manipulated by management.

### **2.2.3. Public sphere**

When power is gained by public relations practitioners, for the most part, critical theorists claim, it is used to maintain or transform an environment for the benefit of an organisation (Burton, 2007; Moloney, 2006; Motion & Leitch, 1996). Motion and Leitch (1996) found that PRPs "strategically deploy texts in discursive struggles over socio-cultural practices" (p. 298). What they meant by this is that the production of texts by public relations practitioners was to ensure that their organisations maintained influence over spaces where discourse occurred and that the texts encouraged certain ideas, beliefs and practices and not others.

Recent work examining journalists' relations with political sources (Davis 2013; Davies 2008; Louw 2010; McNair 2011) supported this conclusion, with the researchers writing that there was more promotional activity aimed at journalists than ever. The research is relevant to this thesis as the three case studies outlined here involve journalists interacting with local authority sources. McNair (2011) noted that as journalists' role in mediating between politicians and the public had grown, so had the role of the public relations intermediaries, meaning these days it would be unthinkable to venture into the political arena without professional public relations back-up. Consequently, according to Davis (2013), public relations increasingly attempted to control access to newsworthy information, public figures and some public meetings.



If we acknowledge the existence of this information management and by extension the possible manipulation of public opinion then, McNair (2011) argued, we have to recognise that the information on which voters are making their decisions is “managed” and hence journalists are failing in their fourth estate role and the integrity of the public sphere is weakened.

To the extent that citizens are subject to manipulation, rather than exposed to information, democracy loses its authenticity and becomes something rather more sinister. (McNair, 2011, p. 24)

For political communication scholars (Davis, 2013; Louw, 2010; McNair, 2011), the media’s fourth estate role was crucial in checking the power of government and, thus, their public relations intermediaries. It is the media’s responsibility to ensure issues of public concern are aired and debated, and therefore communicated to politicians as well as passing politicians’ concerns and views back to the people. Davis drew on Habermas (1989 [1962]) in observing that an ideal model of democracy includes a public sphere where elite decision-making is linked to the citizens.

Habermas (1989 [1962]) in his historically grounded theory of the public sphere defined it as a discursive place where individuals came together, either face to face or through the mass media, as equals to discuss current events and issues of common interest. The outcome of these debates in turn would become public opinion, which could inform and influence political debate and decisions. In its ideal, the public sphere was open to all, regardless of position, and the outcome of debates was influenced by the quality of the arguments rather than the positions of the participants.

His study examined the origins of the public sphere, and in it he called the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in Britain the period when the bourgeois public sphere was the closest to the ideal. At this time, first in coffee houses and literary salons and later in newspapers and journals, individuals engaged in “critical-rational public debate” (Habermas, 1989 [1962]) and thus formed public opinion. Central to the development of the public sphere was an independent press, relatively free of censorship, which could “assert itself against the government and that made critical commentary and public opposition against the government part of the normal state of affairs” (Kluxen, cited in Habermas, 1989 [1962], p. 60). This ideal, Habermas wrote, has been weakened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the public sphere has become dominated by interest groups. Now rather than involving individuals debating issues of common interest, the public sphere saw

institutions exerting their influence and distorting debate in order to shape the opinion of their relevant publics to favour the organisation's private interests.

Critical public relations scholars Leitch and Neilson (2001) also contended that public relations has weakened the public sphere. They suggested that the dominant belief in public relations theory that there are many distinct publics and no "general public" favoured organisations and misunderstood the public sphere's role as the "ensemble of public spaces available for debate between citizens" without interference from either the state or economic forces (2001, p. 130). They stated that the space was crucial for a functioning democracy. Fellow critical scholar, Moloney (2006), added his voice to this point of view arguing that public relations gave advantages to special interests over the public interest; and this asymmetry of communication expresses and reinforces unequal power relationships and produces messages that normalise such power.

Further, Moloney argued, the so-called pseudo-event "clutters already-choked channels of communications" (2006, p. 86). A pseudo-event was identified by Boorstin (1962) as those events, such as media conferences or photo opportunities, which have no real meaning other than for the journalists for which they were organised. They are usually called when an organisation has something to announce and there is a need to allow the media access to a news source (Broom, 2009; Jacobs, 2011; Newsom & Wollert, 1988; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2004).

While critical scholars have written about the dangers of public relations to the public sphere, other public relations practitioners and scholars have argued that the involvement of institutions and interest groups in the public sphere need not be negative (Davis, 2013). In fact, they have suggested that communication between politicians and the public could be improved by the involvement of public relations (J. Grunig, 1992). Newman (n/d) described politicians as service providers working in a competitive market place and to do their job properly they must communicate their intentions and drive public opinion. Burkart and Probst (1991) also believed (as cited in translation in Puchan, 2006; Nessmann, 1995) that honest communication between organisations and publics was necessary to building understanding. They based their concept of consensus-oriented public relations on Habermas and on the two-way symmetrical communication as advocated by J. Grunig (1992). They argued that in a world where public awareness of issues such as environmental degradation was growing,

organisations have to be prepared for resistance. The purpose of their approach, Puchan (2006) stated, was to “create a mutual understanding of the involved parties with regard to the conflict situation in hand on the basis of mutual trust and also mutual understanding of legitimate interests” (p.121). However this can only be achieved if all participants are open and honest with each other.

Later, Burkart (2009) accepted that sometimes participants are not going to be able to come to an agreement and the best they can achieve was to agree to disagree. Burkart (2009) was responding to critics who declared that applying the Habermasian principles of understanding directly to the reality of public relations could appear naive. His consensus oriented public relations aimed, he wrote, to “gain suggestions for the analysis of public relations from the perspective of Habermas’s concept of understanding” (p. 144). Thus he suggests “agreement” should not be confused with approval or consent of something in dispute. In his framework, agreement only means agreement about what is being talked about and by whom, as well as acceptance of the truthfulness of the organisation and its spokespeople and the organisation’s right to hold the viewpoint.

Many journalists and journalism scholars argue that promotion and political promotion in particular is not conducive to two-way communication or to improving the public sphere (Franklin, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Lloyd, 2004; Louw, 2010). Instead, as has previously been mentioned, they claim it is about managing public opinion and shutting down genuine debate (Franklin, 2004; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Lloyd, 2004; Louw, 2010).

In a conference paper to the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand in 2008, investigative journalist Nicky Hager said such public relations was crowding out the public spaces with spokespeople, spin and trickery. He also worried that democracy was being rendered non-functional as more public relations practitioners dominated public discussions and drowned out authentic community voices. This argument is similar to that advanced by Moloney (2006) that the public sphere was becoming redundant thanks to the number of vested interests overrunning the market place. In an interview attached to the *Hollow Men* documentary (Barry, 2008), Hager called for journalists to start challenging their sources more and to begin asking the right questions. He claimed public relations practitioners refer to media relations as “feeding

the chooks” (perhaps a reference to Australian academics Oakham and Kirby’s 2006 research by the same name) and that power had shifted from journalists to public relations practitioners as the people who make the news.

### **2.3. Relations between journalists and public relations practitioners**

The reliance of journalists on public relations has led some public relations scholars (and some journalists) to believe that a constructive relationship between PRPs and journalists can be mutually beneficial, involving media coverage for the organisation and providing resources or information subsidies to journalists (Bridges & Neilson, 2001; Broom, 2009; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth, 2009; Macnamara, 2010; White & Hobsbawm, 2007).

To this end, Broom (2009) advised that public relations practitioners in the United States should help journalists do their job by acting honestly and ethically when dealing with them. They should never pressure a journalist to cover a particular story in a specific way, or ask a journalist not to cover a story that may be embarrassing to the organisation. Similarly in the United States, Bridges and Neilson (2001) counselled public relations practitioners to gain the trust of journalists by developing a reputation for providing accurate and timely information. They should avoid, “flooding the media with time-wasting, self-serving material that has no news value” (p. 108). Langett (2013) went further arguing for public relations practitioners to work towards relationships with journalists that were based on civility and continued interaction even if differences of opinion existed. This way trust could be built and dialogue widened, eventually personalising the relationship and so, Langett contended, lead to “productive news story ideas that are mutually beneficial” (2013, p. 9).

Countering this view, the journalist-source literature along with several studies in the United States has maintained there was a natural conflict of interest between the two practices (Cameron, Sallot & Curtin, 1997; Cutlip *et al.*, 2000; Delorme & Fedler, 2003; Jeffers, 1977; Sallot & Johnson, 2006b; Shin & Cameron, 2004), which is why the public relations practitioner-journalist relationship has been described as “adversarial... at its core” (Cutlip *et al.*, 2000, p. 323) .

Waymer (2013), drawing on Hess (2000), has called such relationships “non voluntary”, claiming it was a mistake to assume that all relationships must be about building greater

intimacy. Some publics, he argued, may have little or no desire to associate with the organisation, and yet have to remain in a non-voluntary relationship. These relationships are the ones people have with those that they dislike, but with whom they must interact (Waymer, 2013), for example with step-parents, in-laws and colleagues. In these relationships, rather than closeness, distance can be used to maintain and/or salvage a relationship. Thus, Waymer (2013) argued, understanding distancing behaviours of non-voluntary publics, “might be one of the most democratic things that we could do, especially if these publics have a history of being manipulated, lied to, and/or taken advantage of, by the organisation that is trying to foster a mutually beneficial relationship with them” (pp. 329-330).

In the United Kingdom, researchers have traditionally found a similar ill-feeling among journalists towards PRPs. Journalists have been described as being “wary – if not contemptuous – of the motives of PR professionals” (Lewis *et al.*, 2008, p. 2). A study of global press-public relations relationship, including the United Kingdom, carried out in 2004 by Rainier PR, a London-based public relations agency, found that public relations professionals are commonly regarded with disdain, with more than a third of journalists in the United Kingdom being of the opinion that public relations practitioners know little of either their clients’ or journalists’ needs (Adesara, 2004; Holdthefrontpage, 2007). Jempson (2005) observed that journalists take their responsibility to be accurate in their reporting seriously and seek to resist efforts from public relations professionals to influence the coverage of a story. He wrote (p. 268) that “They [journalists] dislike being regarded as mere pawns, prostitutes and purveyors of second-hand goods”. However, he (2005) added that such criticisms sound like “jibes” (p. 268) and were often born of a resentment that PRPs enjoy better pay and working conditions than journalists do.

More recently, British researchers have found the “conflict model” is being replaced with a more symbiotic “trading model” (Lewis *et al.*, 2008, p. 2), as under-resourced journalists accept they must turn to public relations practitioners for help filling the news hole (Davis, 2003; White & Hobsbawm, 2007).

In New Zealand, it appears that journalists have also moved, albeit reluctantly, to the “trading model”. Comrie (2002) advised public relations practitioners that the key to ensuring an information subsidy is used (that a trade is made) is to provide one that is

genuinely newsworthy, “successful PR people wanting publicity operate from a clear understanding of what it is that journalists are looking for” (pp. 165-166).

Tilley and Hollings (2008) found journalists were “conflicted in their stance towards public relations”. On the one hand, the journalists realised they were dependent on their public relations sources, but on the other they felt the PRPs were not necessarily to be trusted and their reliance on public relations threatened their independence as journalists. Tilley later noticed a similarly confused antipathy in the way public relations practitioners viewed journalists (Tilley, 2012), describing the relationship between the two as “perceived mutual loathing”. In both cases, she suggested the anger may in fact be a form of “venting” which relieves frustration at structural issues in their own practices. In other words each practice is blaming the other for its internal problems. Among journalists it is the reduction in resources, and in public relations, Tilley believes, it may be an inability to live up to their own ethical ideals.

Sterne (2010) found that, while New Zealand journalists did harbour largely negative feelings towards public relations, these ranged from “deep-seated antagonism to guarded reciprocity through to deliberate collaboration” (p. 4). This was echoed by Callard (2011) and Ashwell (2012). Callard (2011) noted journalists’ attitude to public relations practitioners was generally but not exclusively negative. A source of the negative feelings was the use of “obstruction and stalling” tactics by public relations practitioners. However, she registered a “warming in attitudes” (2011, p. 165) of newspaper journalists towards public relations practitioners that she believed was pragmatic. That is, journalists were increasingly recognising their inability to do their job without help from public relations. In his study of science public relations in New Zealand, Ashwell (2012) reported that while the journalists interviewed felt the public relations practitioners were helpful, some complained of communication management techniques used to control, delay or block reports. These included the unavailability of people listed as contacts on a media release, and the practice of asking for emailed questions. One respondent observed about the requirement to email questions,

I find it very restricting because they tend to think this is it, that’s all you want when you put it in an email. Some organisations go to such lengths that they apply written answers to our email saying you can quote this person. Which is highly unsatisfactory as I feel I can’t interview someone directly. (cited in Ashwell, 2012, p. 6)

It is clear from this section that journalists are resentful of the strategies and tactics used by public relations practitioners to take advantage of their increasing ability to manage

communication with journalists, which journalists believe is weakening their independence. As has been noted, there is reason to be concerned as journalists' reliance on information subsidies has grown, enough to draw the attention of researchers. This next section examines some of that research.

### **2.3.1. Information subsidies: News release research**

Most studies into information subsidies for journalists have focused on the most visible product of public relations, the media release, and how it is a “pre-formulating” (Jacobs, 1999a) device for news (Catenaccio, 2008; Jansen, 2008; Lenaerts, 2002; Morton, 1988; Pander Maat, 2007, 2008; Walters *et al.*, 1994)

When Jacobs (1999a, 1999b) wrote that media releases are pre-formulated, he was referring to the special language features public relations practitioners used to make media releases look like news reports. These included third-person self-reference, self-quotation and explicit semi-performatives, such as announcements. He suggested that the language of news reports was anticipated in the media releases that were sent to journalists to firstly encourage their use and secondly so that they required little editing and therefore could be rapidly reproduced into news stories. The skill shown by the public relations practitioner to ensure a media release was “continued” with few changes was a crucial one, as Jacobs (1999a) argued “press releases just do not exist unless they are also, in some way or another, ‘picked up’ by journalists” (p. xi). He later added, “They [media releases] are meant to be retold by them [journalists] as accurately as possible, preferably even verbatim, in their own news reporting” (p. 304).

In other studies, Morton (1988, p. 45) discovered that “camera-ready”, meaning page-ready or ready to go-to-press, materials were more likely to be used by journalists. She also discovered that the topic covered was important, and newspapers were more likely to use releases that were of immediate interest to readers. For example, those that covered consumer information, coming events, research and other material of immediate concern to readers were likely to be picked up, whereas features, institutional stories and past events generally got little response. The topics chosen are indirectly related to the newsworthiness of the release which Turk (1985) found was crucial in determining whether a release would be used.

Morton and Warren's (1992) study of 196 hometown or community media releases from a university considered, among other things, whether those including a photo were used more often than those without. They found that 71 of the releases were used, and smaller circulation papers were more likely to use them than larger papers. However, the inclusion of a photograph did not influence whether or not a media release was used. While Morton and Warren (1992) found smaller circulation papers were more likely to pick up a media release, Walters and Walters (1992) noted that large circulation newspapers were also dependent on news releases as they have large spaces to fill. They may rely on their reporters to fill the news hole, but those reporters in turn rely on public relations practitioners for help. They also found that newspapers were more likely to use a release that had been first published by a wire service, as it added legitimacy to that release.

All of the above addressed whether a media release was used, but none answered the question of *how* media releases are used and what changes to form and style are made by the journalists using the release. Walters *et al.*'s (1994), study of 60 media releases tried to answer some of those questions, beginning with the premise that public relations practitioners attempted to produce media releases that could be turned into news stories with minimum effort and few changes on the part of the journalist.

In public relations' ideal world, the journalist would make no changes in the release sent to the newspaper. After all, the release has been written exactly to express the thoughts, needs and issues of the institution on whose behalf it was produced. (Walters *et al.*, 1994, p. 347)

They considered the grammatical structure of the original media release and compared it with the resulting news stories. In addition, they looked at the length of paragraphs and sentences, frequency of the passive voice, number of syllables in the words. The documents were also analysed for key words and phrases. The study demonstrated that journalists edited and re-wrote media release materials to fit with their house style. This usually involved reducing the length of the release on average by as much as half, shortening the individual sentence length and turning many passive sentences into the active voice. They noted that there was more to be learned with a closer (perhaps qualitative) linguistic analysis, as has been used in this thesis.

Lenaerts (2002) compared six political media releases with the corresponding newspaper reports to study which parts, if any, of the release made it to the paper.



Similarly, Pander Maat (2007) examined 43 media releases to discover how much of the promotional language remained in the newspapers and magazines that utilised the release. His study found that most of the media releases in his corpus turned out to be inadequately pre-formulated, which raised questions as to whether media release writers are as much preoccupied with pre-formulation as had been assumed. He used this finding to argue that although corporate media releases were pre-formulated (as claimed by Jacobs, 1999a) to fit some of the conventions of journalistic reports, their style at times seems quite different from the one favoured by journalists. That is, there appeared to exist stylistic conflicts between the media release genre and the news report genre, which he suggested arose out of the different functions of media releases and news reports.

The functions of the media release and how it was identified in the text were considered further by Catenaccio, (2008). She built on McLaren and Gurău's (2005) work on corporate media releases that found the releases carried various features that were an indication of the professional practice of PRPs. Catennacio argued media releases declared themselves in several ways, for example they were printed on company paper with a logo and address, and they provided a brief company description. She noted that all these public relations practice-specific features were peripheral to the part of the content of the media release being presented for reproduction in news reports. According to Catennacio, it was these peripheral features that gave generic integrity to media releases as being a combination of news reporting and self promotion, with the explicit evaluative component included in their body.

Recently, several studies have used ethnography to examine the process of public relations writing. Sleurs, Jacobs and Van Waes (2003) and Sleurs and Jacobs (2005) carried out fieldwork in a Belgium bank and examined public relations routines as well as analysing the processes involved in writing media releases. Lindholm (2008) combined text analysis with ethnography to investigate media releases at the European Commission (EC) "from a product as well as a process perspective" (p. 39). The study discovered that media releases from the EC showed textual features special to the Commission, which could be related to its communicative situation. For example, she found that the introduction needed to be able to stand alone as a summary in the daily information bulletin published by the Commission.

Unlike public relations, where only a few ethnographic studies have been attempted, news production has been the subject of many studies. Recently, Cottle (2000, p. 21) has called for a “second wave” of ethnographic studies to explore empirically the field of news production in the same way the “first wave” did in the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s. Collectively these older studies demonstrated how the in-depth examination of news producers could assess the veracity of “the generalizing and largely speculative theories of that time” (p. 19). Among those, theories of media bias were prevalent. Cottle concluded that although they were relatively few in number, these studies were significant. For the purposes of this research, especially important were those looking at journalistic process and journalist-source relations

### **2.3.2. First wave of ethnographic studies**

The early studies examined the working environment of journalists and how they were socialised into conforming to a news organisation’s editorial policy concluding journalists’ wish to fit in and avoid sanction, along with the time and cost constraints of news gathering, allowed for few disagreements with management (Breed, 1955; Sigelman, 1973; Warner, 1971).

How journalists employ the concept of objectivity was addressed by Tuchman’s (1972) study. Her two-year project as a participant observer at a daily newspaper discovered objectivity allowed journalists to distance themselves from responsibility for the veracity of the facts presented. By using quotes from sources and a story structure, featuring the facts perceived to be the most important first, journalists are able to protect themselves from criticism from colleagues and the public. A year later, Tuchman (1973) again used data gathered by participant observation, this time to examine how newsroom routines were organised to help journalists cope with reporting unexpected events. She discovered they used typification, or categories, of soft news, hard news, spot, developing and continuing news to distinguish between events according to the way they happen and the resources that are needed to cover them.

At the same time as Tuchman was looking at newsroom routines, Epstein (1973) also noticed that up to then most studies into newsgathering had examined the effects of social structures on individuals in newsrooms. He, like Tuchman (1973), wished “to explore the processes by which news is gathered, synthesized and presented to the public” (pp. xi-xii) and he did so through participant observation at three national

television newsrooms. His main finding was that news was, to a large extent, gathered and shaped by organisational considerations. For example, to maintain themselves in a competitive world, executives put procedures, systems and policies in place that attempted to reduce the uncertainties of news to manageable proportions. These restraints included the timing, length, content and cost of programmes and resulted in news which was, in many ways, predictable as journalists' coverage of events and presentation of stories was necessarily constrained. Epstein argued that as all the television network news organisations were essentially in the same position, the consequence was a similarity of content. He concluded the quality of journalism is more or less fixed by the time, money and human resources that are allocated to it.

Tuchman and Epstein's observations about routine led to more studies (Bantz, McCorkle & Baade, 1980; Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1987, 1989; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1978; Soloski, 1989; Tuchman, 1978) all suggesting that the bureaucratic routines and organisational requirements and constraints affected what journalists did and thus moulded the news product. It was not that journalists were consciously biased, but the social and organisational context in which they worked shaped how news was made and how it was presented. Tuchman (1978) admitted that she did not consider journalists as individuals with personal concerns and biases, but as professionals working in institutions. This is a point re-iterated by Gans (1979) in his study a year later as, he said, sociologists were interested in the roles people performed and the positions they occupied within organisations, and not the individuals themselves.

Many of these next studies reiterated, as Tuchman (1978) had, that "making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality... Newswork transforms occurrences into news events. It draws on aspects of everyday life to tell stories, and it presents us to ourselves" (Tuchman, 1978, p.12). Gans' (1979) research with journalists in four national news organisations concluded that an objective construction of external reality is impossible. Journalists claimed to be about informing the audience, but they cannot inform them about everything, and so what they decided to include or omit was important. However, what they decided, Gans added, including limiting the number of questions they asked, was often a decision made on the grounds of efficiency, rather than of ideology.

Fishman (1980) also found that an objective reality was not possible, claiming that rather than dealing with the selection of news, journalists dealt with its creation. News, he said, was the result of the methods newswriters employ. These methods can result in manipulated journalism where news is treated solely for its value in the service of particular interests. These interests used their position as routine sources to ensure newswriters treated their accounts of what happened not as versions of reality but as “the facts” (p.15). He also referred to the need for efficiency on the part of journalists, noticing that as story quotas increased, journalists relied more on pre-formulated and prescheduled events.

Without the time or resources to do any investigative work, reporters have less latitude than ever to follow up on their doubts of any given version of what happened and are more likely than ever to rely on factually safe, easily accessible bureaucratic accounts. Thus without recourse to news policy (Breed, 1955) or direct editorial intervention, news content can be manipulated indirectly through the pacing of the production process. (Fishman, 1980, p. 148)

The discovery that the routine practices of journalists resulted in their dependence on sources, particularly official sources from recognised institutions, was also made by other researchers (Berkowitz, 1992; Ericson *et al.*, 1989; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Schlesinger, 1978; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). Sources from established bureaucracies such as government were useful because they were in powerful enough positions to access (or refuse access to) a regular supply of newsworthy material. Once a source had been used and found to be reliable, they were likely to be used again as returning to tried-and-tested sources was more efficient and less risky than seeking new ones. The practice’s disadvantage, the studies found, was that journalists were likely to present a version of the news that was favourable to those select sources and their organisations. In fact, to become a routine source was to have the power to define what the people were informed about outside their immediate experience (Fishman, 1980; Ericson *et al.*, 1989). Further, despite evidence that journalists were not totally without power, in that they decided whose voices were heard and how source material was constructed, the researchers discovered that the more limited the time a journalist had to devote to a story, the more the source had control (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973).

While the sources referred to in those studies were not necessarily public relations practitioners, it was noted that the larger organisations were likely to employ

communication specialists (Ericson *et al.*, 1989). More recent, non-ethnographic, studies have expressed concern, as mentioned earlier, about the rapid increase in the numbers of public relations practitioners and their influence on the news production process in the face of changes to journalists' working practices (Cottle, 2003a; Davies, 2008; Davis, 2000a, 2000b, 2003; Franklin, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2006; Moloney *et al.*, 2013; O'Neill & O'Connor; White & Hobsbawm, 2007).

### **2.3.3. Second wave of ethnographic studies**

Since Cottle's (2000) call for more ethnographic studies into newsroom practice, Tuchman (2002) has added her voice suggesting researchers explore the "push" and "pull" factors between journalists and their sources. She believed the way source material such as media releases and telephone interviews become news is under-researched. Reich (2006; 2009) suggested ethnographic observations were one of the best ways to gather this data, but claimed gaining entry to mainstream news organisations was becoming increasingly difficult, especially if a researcher was interested to observe "at first hand the sensitive transaction point at which information is exchanged between sources and reporters" (p. 501).

Despite the difficulties, the call for more ethnographic studies into newsroom practice has begun to be answered (Boczkowski, 2004; Cotter, 2010; Cottle & Ashton, 1999; Hannerz, 2004; Paterson & Domingo, 2008a, 2008b; Perrin, 2003; Perrin & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2006; Singer, 1997, 2004a, 2004b). However, these studies have focused, for the most part, on journalism practice and/or the challenges of the new technologies. Paterson and Domingo's two edited volumes (2008a; 2008b), for example, include ethnographic studies from inside online newsrooms looking at journalistic processes and using various theoretical approaches. Surprisingly, few ethnographic studies have examined journalists and their sources (Erjavec, 2005; Peterson, 2001; Van Hout, 2011; Van Hout & Jacobs, 2008; Van Hout & Macgilchrist, 2010; Velthuis, 2006).

Among those who have examined source relationships, Peterson (2001) recognised that much of the research journalists did on stories occurred behind the scenes, in phone calls and off-the-record conversations with sources. Thus, he argued, un-writeable or off-the-record discourse is a key site for looking at interpretive agency in newswriting. While Peterson's study is worth mentioning, it was not strictly ethnographic as he relied

on his memory of researching a story to examine conversations between him and his sources, as they moved on- and off-the-record and he attempted to shift from un-writeable speech to a writeable story.

One of the few researchers to use ethnography in the modern newsroom is Van Hout. He carried out ethnographic fieldwork at the business desk of a Belgian newspaper between October 2006 and March 2007. During the research, he used an innovative method of computer-assisted writing process analysis, which logged each key the reporter pressed and so tracked the writing process.

In a co-written article, Van Hout and Jacobs (2008) concentrated on the source media used by a reporter and analysed his social and textual practices from receiving a call about a story from a public relations source right through to filing it with the editors. The researchers were able to highlight the interpretive decisions the reporter made while writing from the source materials, which were the initial phone call and a subsequent media release. The research confirmed previous research that has shown that in business news journalism, story ideas are frequently drawn from media releases.

The same example was used by Van Hout for a chapter in Franklin and Carlson (2011). This time, the data were analysed to consider the actions the reporter performed to turn the telephone call from the source into a published news story. The information from the call became notes on a pad, which were used to pitch the story in a news meeting. After getting acceptance for it in the meeting, the journalist went to his computer and opened a reporter's editing window. There, he augmented the notes with an emailed media release. A few minutes later the final news article was completed.

Van Hout (2011) used this study to illustrate that journalism is a socially situated practice involving at least three episodes in the textual mediation: story inception, negotiation and inscription. Referring to this example, he said the journalist-source relationship could be compared to a market transaction in which the reporter was provided with information from a knowledgeable source, which saves him time. The public relations practitioner in return would receive public attention for their organisation. Van Hout concluded the case demonstrates how source power was in play and how Internet technologies allowed the reporter to source news quickly from their workstation.

A second example from the same data set allowed Van Hout and Macgilchrist (2010) to consider not the practices carried out by the reporter, but their role in the construction of a story using two media releases about Russian gas exports. First, they asked what was the reporter's role in the selection of the story, then how did he accomplish the writing process and what were the decisions he made in relation to the frame of the story's headline and lead. The authors found that the pre-formulation in the media releases made the writing process much quicker as it required less effort on the part of the reporter, as was expected in modern digital newsrooms.

Van Hout's work has similarities to the ethnographic/linguistic research carried out in this study. However, Van Hout's research was restricted to business journalism. It is well documented that business news is highly dependent on pre-packaged material (Gregory, 2003). The use of computer-assisted reporting in Van Hout's study and the software chosen were innovative and illuminating as they showed how quickly a story could be written when using pre-formulated material. Interestingly, it was used in this study at a regional newspaper in 2007. Being able to record every keystroke adds much to our understanding of how news is written, but in the present study, it was decided that it was not practicable to seek permission to install the software in the four organisations intended for the main fieldwork.

Erjavec's (2005) study was particularly useful when developing the research design for this study. Erjavec combined textual analysis with participant observation and in-depth interviewing at four newspapers in Slovenia. During her fieldwork, she also collected 32 news reports that she identified, through a method of comparative analysis, as being heavily influenced by public relations. Specifically, for the textual analysis, Erjavec (2005) integrated an analysis of discourse processes into textually orientated critical discourse analysis. Her framework was used by this present study in the analysis of media releases as highlighted in Chapter Three.

This literature review discovered no evidence of ethnographic-style research focusing on public relations practitioners and journalists' face-to-face interactions and no evidence could be found, despite an exhaustive search, of the use of video-ethnography in these environments. Understanding and having empirical evidence of how journalists and their public relations sources interact was required, as Tuchman (2002) noted, in

order to explain how social infrastructures, elite institutions and, most particularly, their interests, were translated into news texts.

Ethnographic-style research, specifically participant observation, offers the opportunity to observe journalists and public relations practitioners at work providing detailed, often intimate, insights into the professional routines and mediating interactions of the two practices. This information can explain, flesh out or perhaps even contradict assumptions made by broader studies of journalism and public relations.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

This chapter offered a review of some of the literature in public relations and journalism studies pertinent to this study. The review clearly situated the study within two areas: first the journalist-source area of journalism studies and second within the media relations area of public relations research. It also highlighted the proposed methodology of ethnographic-style observation as offering new data that could provide fresh insights into how the newsgathering process affected the news product.

Past studies have shown what intertextuality there is in news, or how much public relations is carried in the news we consume. Ethnographic studies have also examined the news meeting and the process of news writing using news releases. Van Hout's study included analysis of a phone call from a public relations source and analysed the process the journalist then used to construct the story. This current study builds on Van Hout's newsroom-centric work to include face-to-face and email interactions with sources, and adds the perspective of the public relations practitioner.

The data helped the researcher address the question at the core of the study. These were:

RQ1: How in practice do the two sets of professionals interact?

RQ2: How in practice do those interactions lead to the outputs the news audience receives?

RQ3: What pressures or processes influence the products of both practices?

RQ4: Whose news are consumers ultimately receiving?

The following chapters contain numerous references to the overview of the literature presented here. The next four (Chapters Three to Six) present the data and findings of the study written up as four journal articles to satisfy the requirements of a thesis by



publication. Each of the articles has been submitted for publication to a journal. They are, “Journalism and public relations: A tale of two discourses”, which has been submitted, accepted and published in *Discourse and Communication* 6(3), pp. 273-294; “Journalists versus public relations practitioners: Power and agency at a media conference”, which is under review with the *Journal of Communication*; “Lifting the veil on the PRP-client relationship”, which has been accepted with minor revisions by *Public Relations Inquiry*, those revisions have now been made and the article resubmitted, see Appendix 5; and “Negotiating the news: Interactions behind the curtain of the journalism-public relations relationship”, which has been accepted for publication in *Journalism Studies*, see Appendix 4. They are reproduced here in full minus their abstracts and reference lists and with minor stylistic changes in order that they fit in with the thesis as a whole.

The chapters begin with the first of two that examine the visible outputs of public relations activity. While Chapter Four examines the media conference, this next chapter considers the media release. It analyses examples of media releases to examine what is left of the original text when a journalist has turned it into a news story. Through the textual analysis of two releases that are representative of the 35 releases collected for the study, the chapter demonstrates that in many cases media releases (the majority in the collection) are being published with few or no changes. It concludes that journalists are very often failing to corroborate information they are receiving from public relations sources and thereby relinquishing their traditional agenda-setting function.

### **3.0. Introduction**

The rise of the global public relations industry has come as newsrooms experience deep cuts to the numbers of reporters available for traditional journalistic investigation and move towards multi-skilling and convergence (Burton, 2007; Davies, 2008; Moloney, 2006). With more to do, more deadlines to meet and fewer hands, journalists are less capable of rigorously testing the information they are receiving (Davies, 2008; Erjevec, 2005; Moloney, 2006).

Van Dijk (1988) has argued that source texts affected the production processes, but the resulting news text was dependent on the journalist's motives. Therefore, it could be reasoned that the extent of the reworking or the transformations (Pander Maat, 2008) journalists make to the source texts when writing their news stories exemplified how they saw their role. Van Dijk (1988) further claimed that the cognitive and socio-cultural context of news production has had a profound effect on the textual form and content that appeared in our news. As the last few years have seen huge changes to news production processes with many newsrooms becoming more convergent, this study believes it is time to re-examine the news product.

In this chapter, two media releases and the news stories that resulted from them are considered. Their form, genre and context, are discussed and any intertextuality reviewed. If we consider the texts as a product of a specific set of practitioners with common practices and beliefs, it is possible to more fully understand those texts' structure and content (Van Dijk, 1988, 2010). The findings suggest that the journalists are in many instances not carrying out the traditional practice of checking information. Instead, journalists appear to be replicating the material given to them by public relations practitioners, thus elevating the promotional genre above others and reducing the intertextuality of news.

These findings build on research (Burton, 2007; Davies, 2008; Moloney, 2006) that suggested journalists were increasingly turning to public relations practitioners as a source of information, which they are then failing to corroborate or enhance with further research. However, exactly what influence PRPs have on news production is difficult to

ascertain, with researchers estimating that anywhere between 40 and 80% of news shows some public relations influence.

Scholars looking at information subsidies (Gandy, 1982) for journalists have stressed that media releases are a pre-formulating (Jacobs, 1999a, 1999b) device for news (Catennacio, 2008; Jacobs, 1999a, 1999b; Lenaerts, 2002; Morton, 1988; Pander Maat, 2008; Walters *et al.*, 1994). Morton (1988) discovered that camera-ready materials were more likely to be used by journalists, especially if they concerned a topic that readers would consider noteworthy, for example consumer information, coming events and research. Morton and Warren (1992) found that smaller circulation papers accepted more media releases. However, according to Walters and Walters (1992), large circulation newspapers had more space to fill and therefore were reliant on public relations.

All of the above addressed whether a media release was used, but did not consider how. For example, what changes do journalists make to the form and style of the media release when turning it into a news article? In a study of 60 media releases, Walters *et al.* (1994) tried to answer some of those questions. They examined the grammatical structure of the original media releases and compared them with the resulting news stories, and discovered that journalists re-wrote media release materials to fit with their house style and make them as much as half the length.

Jacobs' (1999a) study of the generic features of more than 500 media releases and his (1999b) article on self-reference in media releases also examined media release materials linguistically and pragmatically. He noted that PRPs carried out pre-formulation, including many elements similar to news stories such as a newsworthy headline and lead paragraph, in the hope that journalists would copy the contents. Pander Maat's (2008) study of 50 corporate media releases and how they were used by journalists discovered that while writers of media releases did employ some of the journalistic conventions, their style was often quite different from a journalist's. He called this "genre conflict" (p. 87), which he suggested arose out of the different functions of media releases and news stories. The function of the media release and how it was identified in the text were considered further by Catenaccio (2008). Building on McLaren and Gurău's (2005) work on corporate media releases, she said media releases identified themselves and their promotional function by being printed on company

paper with a logo and by providing a brief company description. Recently, several studies have used ethnography to study the process of public relations writing (Lindholm, 2008; Sleurs & Jacobs, 2005; Sleurs *et al.*, 2003).

All of the above, if they at all considered the resulting news stories, accepted that journalists usually make significant changes to media releases either by altering the style, structure and length of a media release or by adding to the content. The current study shows that this is happening less and less. From the data, it appears news outlets are increasingly publishing public relations material almost or completely unchanged. The research is part of a larger ethnographic-style study of the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists.

### **3.1. Materials and method**

Thirty-five media releases were collected, along with the news stories that were written using the releases as the main source. The research was interested in releases that became news reports because, as Erjavec wrote, news reports are “perceived as the most factual, disinterested, impersonal and objective genre in the mass media” (2005, p. 166). Some of the releases were gathered during fieldwork at two public relations departments and two newsrooms in Auckland, New Zealand. Between June 2009 and July 2010, 100 hours were spent in an in-house media relations department and a public relations agency. In 2011, 70 hours were spent in two newsrooms: a national online news site and a national radio station. Other releases were collected between 2007 and 2011 during time as a participant observer in four local newspaper newsrooms across the North Island of New Zealand, a week at each one. Still others of the media releases were written during two years, between 2006 and 2008, when working as a part-time public relations practitioner, also in New Zealand. A few were collected from public relations practitioners and journalists who know of the research; some of them are former students. The criteria set for the collection were that they should be:

1. Media releases I had witnessed being produced.
2. Media releases I had produced.
3. Media releases I had witnessed a journalist working with.
4. Media releases I had not witnessed being written or being worked with, but was able to interview the public relations practitioner who had written them or the journalist/s who had worked with them.
5. Media releases and the news stories written from them that have been donated by a

journalist or public relations practitioner, not because they have worked on them, but because they believed them to be of particular interest to this study. Only one of these has been accepted into the collection. It is the second media release analysed in this article.

In all cases, both the media releases and the resulting news story or stories were needed. The releases selected for analysis in this article were chosen using elements of The Critical Incident Technique (see Chapter One). The releases and the news story written from them had to be interesting/extreme/colourful examples of their genre and highlight a significant aspect of PRP and/or journalistic practice. Further, this aspect of practice had to have been seen routinely in the data. Therefore, the examples chosen were interesting examples identified as indicative of PRP or journalistic practice observed during the research.

The technique originated with Flanagan (1954) who identified an incident as, “any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act” (p. 327). To qualify as critical, an observer must see the event as having both a clear purpose and sufficiently definite consequences that its effects are obvious. In choosing the critical incidents or strips of data to analyse for the research, I was influenced by Keatinge (2002), who suggested changing the name from critical to revelatory or significant in order to work with incidents that are more universal. The incidents analysed in the research had to conform to three criteria: The entire incident had to have been captured, as explained earlier; it had to be an interesting

One is a news release from a charity about an upcoming event, the other from a pharmaceutical company releasing the results of a lifestyle survey. According to Morton (1988), both of these are potentially of interest to the readers. The media release from the charity was written by me when working as a part-time public relations practitioner for the organisation represented in the release.

### **3.1.1. The analytical procedure**

Fairclough (2001) argues that texts cannot be understood or analysed in isolation, but must be looked at in the ways in which they transform and embed other texts which are in chain relationships with them. Texts in journalism are often reports of events which

the journalist has not witnessed and are therefore expected to draw on and embed other texts (Bell, 1991).

In Fairclough's (1995a) Critical Discourse Analysis framework, intertextual analysis is a bridge between the "text" and "discourse practice"; hence texts can be indicators of both social change and changes in professional practice. Therefore, if journalists' news articles are showing little reworking of their main source texts or evidence of corroboration through the embedding of other texts, then this is indicative of a change in journalistic practice and in journalists' relations with their sources.

The analysis in this paper utilises Erjavec's (2005) method of comparative analysis for the study of public relations discursive elements incorporated in news reports. This is a macro-structural (generic structure, topic, perspective, choice of sources) to micro-structural textual analysis. However, Erjavec (2005) believed that relying on texts as indicators of change in practice is not enough. She argued that textual analysis should be combined with an analysis of discourse processes to reveal how much of the public relations discourse was being accepted into the news discourse. To this end, Erjavec gathered data for her study using a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviewing at four newspapers in Slovenia. She also collected a corpus of 32 news reports that she identified as being written "by the domination of PR practice within journalistic practice" (2005, p. 166).

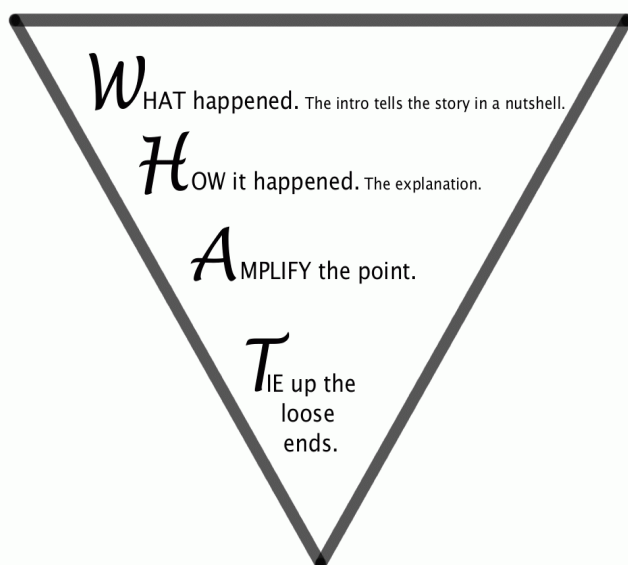
The study presented in this article combines observation both in newsrooms and public relations departments, in-depth interviewing, and a collection of 35 media releases and the news stories written using them as the main source. By using Erjavec's method to analyse what transformations were made by the journalists to the media releases, I can discover how much intertextuality there is and whether the resulting news text is appropriate to its purpose (Van Dijk, 2010). In other words, have transformations been made which ensure the news text obeys the rules of the discourse community of journalists and the news genre rather than those of the discourse community of PRPs and the news release or promotional genre?

### **3.2. News report genre**

News stories are articles compiled by journalists that include fresh information about events, people or ideas. Whether or not a story is selected for publication depends on

how “newsworthy” it is deemed. Media researchers have tried to explain news selection and “newsworthiness” by identifying news values. These are discussed in detail elsewhere (Bell, 1991; Harcup and O’Neill, 2001; Sissons, 2006; Van Dijk, 1988). However, according to the best known study by Galtung and Ruge (1965), 12 news values influence the media’s selection of news including its amplitude (how big the event is, the bigger the more newsworthy); its relevance to the audience; is it unexpected or rare? Are elite people or elite nations involved? Is it negative (if it bleeds it leads)? These news values are cumulative; the more a story has, the more likely it is to be published. If a story exhibiting only one or two of these values is published, then questions can be asked about why it was published.

News values influence the structure of news stories, which traditionally are tightly organised, many using the inverted pyramid structure (see figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1:** *The Inverted Triangle* (from Sissons, 2006)

This structure allows the reporter to address the “news questions” in as short a space as possible. These are the journalistic five Ws and the H: What happened? Where it happened? Who it happened to? When it happened? Why it happened? How it happened? The headline and the first paragraph (lead, lede or intro) should contain the most important or dramatic information, including the “what happened” or main event of the story and the “who it happened to” or the news actor or actors. It may also contain a time and a place. The level of newsworthiness will be centred on the perspective and lexical choices of the headline and lead sentence.

Van Dijk (1988) has described this organisation as the typical “instalment” or “top-down” structure; with each topic addressed in the story delivered in chunks. News discourse, he said, is organised to give new or important information prominence both in the text and in the sentences. So for each topic the most important information is presented first. Once this is done, earlier topics are reintroduced with less important details.

Using this structure stories can be written relatively quickly, and also read quickly: the reader being able to assimilate the important information in a few paragraphs (Sissons, 2006). Therefore, it can be seen that the functional goal of a news report is to publish “newsworthy”, which will attract the target audience.



### **3.3. Media release genre**

Media releases are publicity handouts or stories that are sent to journalists in the hope that they will be published. They resemble news stories, also containing what the writer considers newsworthy information and usually in an inverted pyramid structure.

However, typically, a media release displays a mix of information (that should display news values) and promotion, which must be carefully balanced to catch the attention of two very different audiences. Too much promotion in the release will put off the first audience – the journalist; too little will defeat the purpose of the media release as a promotional tool to attract the second audience – the public.

Van Dijk (2010) argued that genres should first be defined in terms of their contextual features. These include the setting; who is involved and their roles; relationships and identities; the kind of activity they are engaged in; and what their aims and group ideologies are. Thus, despite displaying many similarities textually to a news story, a media release's purpose is very different. Media releases have the communicative purpose of announcing “newsworthy” information about a company or organisation in such a way as to positively promote that institution (Catenaccio, 2008; McLaren & Gurău, 2005). They are intended to attract the journalist to publish this information and therefore can be said to imitate news reports. However, there are peripheral features in media releases that exemplify their origin. Typically, these include a company logo, a heading that announces it is a media release and contact details where further information can be obtained (Catenaccio, 2008). Then again, if these peripheral details are stripped away, a media release could appear to be drawn from the genre of the news report and its promotional or evaluative content could be taken as independent judgement.

Pander Maat (2008), however, argued that media releases and news reports have such different purposes that one should never be mistaken for the other. In his study of the transformations made by journalists to media releases, he found that the media release was in fact in genre conflict with the news report genre. He wrote:

This additional goal of image maintenance [in media releases] is lacking in press reports. These different sets of purposes impose partly contradictory stylistic constraints on the genres, so that one and the same text cannot felicitously be used in both contexts. (Pander Maat, 2008, p. 109)

### 3.4. Studying the transformations

Two media releases that became news stories were analysed. Through them it was demonstrated that in these examples the journalists behaved not as reporters, interpreters or critics, but “churnalists”, or replicators of the words of others.

These examples are typical of those in the collection in which 23 of 35 media releases were reproduced word-for-word, or almost word-for-word, in the media. The remaining media releases did show some reworking by journalists, usually by shortening the article or altering the language to match the “house style”, for example to spoken English for radio news. Only two articles changed the macro proposition of the media release, one reversing it altogether, the other localising it to make it relevant for a local newspaper audience. In only eight of the 35 media releases was new material added by the journalists, such as additional quotes or statistics.

#### 3.4.1. The National Piano Competition media release

The first release comes from the Kerikeri National Piano Competition in New Zealand and publicises the biennial competition. In the event, the entire media release of 13 paragraphs, including details of where to buy tickets, was replicated in one major regional newspaper and one local newspaper. I have reproduced one of those in table 3.1.

MEDIA RELEASE	NEWS STORY
<b>Musical Coup for National Competition for Pianists</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Two of the Southern Hemisphere's finest pianists have agreed to help make this year's Kerikeri National Competition for Pianists the best one yet.</li><li>2. Ian Munro, the competition's adjudicator and one of Australia's most distinguished and awarded musicians, will play at a special recital to celebrate the opening of the 3-day competition on July 7<sup>th</sup>.</li><li>3. Mr Munro has also agreed to teach a number of extra master classes to interested local pianists, both adults and children, as well as take the master class involving contestants.</li><li>4. This is not only a first for the competition but,</li></ol>	<b>Musical Coup for Kerikeri</b>  <b>National competition set to be the best yet</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Two of the Southern Hemisphere's finest pianists have agreed to help make this year's Kerikeri National Competition for Pianists the best one yet.</li><li>2. Ian Munro, the competition's adjudicator and one of Australia's most distinguished and awarded musicians, will play at a special recital to celebrate the opening of the 3-day competition on July 7<sup>th</sup>.</li><li>3. Mr Munro has also agreed to teach a number of extra master classes to interested local pianists, both adults and children, as well as take the master class involving contestants.</li><li>4. This is not only a first for the competition but, organisers believe, the first time that</li></ol>

<p>organisers believe, the first time that such master classes have been run at any piano contest. Usually master classes by the adjudicator are open only to those who have entered the competition.</p>	<p>such master classes have been run at any piano contest.</p>
<p>5. In another development for the competition Michael Houstoun, its patron and eminent New Zealand pianist, will be speaking at a gala dinner on the opening night. It is the first time in the competition's 18 year history that such a dinner has been held.</p>	<p>5. Usually master classes by the adjudicator are open only to those who have entered the competition.</p>
<p>6. Competition Coordinator Winsome Fisher said: "These are exciting times for us. We are delighted Michael has agreed to speak at the dinner and it's marvellous Ian is to play and to teach the master classes. They are a wonderful opportunity for keen young pianists to for keen young pianists to get some guidance from one of the best teachers and performers in the world."</p>	<p>6. In another development for the competition Michael Houstoun, its patron and eminent New Zealand pianist, will be speaking at a gala dinner on the opening night. It is the first time in the competition's 18 year history that such a dinner has been held.</p>
<p>7. This year truly marks a new era for the event. It is also the first time that this will be held in the acclaimed "The Centre", Kerikeri's multi-million dollar performing arts and conference centre. The Centre replaces the Memorial Hall, the ancient packing shed which housed the competition for many years.</p>	<p>7. Competition Coordinator Winsome Fisher said: "These are exciting times for us. We are delighted Michael has agreed to speak at the dinner and it's marvellous Ian is to play and to teach the master classes. They are a wonderful opportunity for keen young pianists to get some guidance from one of the best teachers and performers in the world."</p>
<p>8. Organisers also hope to replace the old Yamaha piano with a full size concert grand, although as yet they have had no luck sourcing either a piano or a sponsor who could help fund its purchase.</p>	<p>8. This year truly marks a new era for the event. It is also the first time that this will be held in the acclaimed "The Centre", Kerikeri's multi-million dollar performing arts and conference centre. The Centre replaces the Memorial Hall, the ancient packing shed which housed the competition for many years.</p>
<p>9. "It does seem ironic that the country that brought the film 'The Piano' to the world has so far been unable to find a suitable concert grand for its premier piano competition," said Winsome Fisher. "We have approached several organisations for help and we're very hopeful of a positive outcome."</p>	<p>9. Organisers also hope to replace the old Yamaha piano with a full size concert grand, although as yet they have had no luck sourcing either a piano or a sponsor who could help fund its purchase.</p>
<p>10. The Kerikeri National Competition for Pianists is New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious competition and, by virtue of the demands made on contestants, is a formidable test for young pianists.</p>	<p>10. Winsome Fisher said, "It does seem ironic that the country that brought the film 'The Piano' to the world has so far been unable to find a suitable concert grand for its premier piano competition."</p>
<p>11. Michael Houstoun has said: "It is by far the best test for young pianists in the solo repertoire in this country. This is chiefly because of its demands. The contestants have to prepare what amounts to a full recital programme and be able to present it three days in a row under stressful conditions. Such demands most approximate the reality for a professional performing musician.</p>	<p>11. She said several organisations had been approached for help and organisers are hopeful of a positive outcome.</p>

<p>12. This is proved by the fact that past winners and runners-up have gone on to international acclaim. They include John Chen, Stephen de Pledge, Dan Poynton, Emma Sayers and Henry Wong Doe.</p> <p>13. Tickets for the competition, gala dinner, recital and master classes will go on sale in the near future. Anyone wishing to become a sponsor or make a donation should contact Winsome Fisher on 09 407 5244.</p>	<p>12. The Kerikeri National Competition for Pianists is New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious competition and, by virtue of the demands made on contestants, is a formidable test for young pianists.</p> <p>13. Michael Houstoun has described it as “by far the best test for young pianists in the solo repertoire in this country.”</p> <p>14. The competition is demanding of contestants prepare (sic) what amounts to a full recital programme to be presented three days in a row.</p> <p>15. Past winners and runners-up have gone on to international acclaim. They include John Chen, Stephen de Pledge, Dan Poynton, Emma Sayers and Henry Wong Doe.</p> <p>16. Tickets for the competition, gala dinner, recital and master classes will go on sale in the near future.</p> <p>17. Anyone wishing to become a sponsor or make a donation should contact Winsome Fisher on 09 407 5244.</p>
---	--

**Table 3.1:** National Piano Competition media release and news story

As explained earlier, the news report and the original media release were examined following Erjavec’s (2005) method of comparative analysis for the study of public relations discursive elements incorporated in news reports. This method is a macro-structural (generic structure, topic, perspective, choice of sources) to micro-structural textual analysis.

#### **3.4.1.1. Generic structure**

In structure the media release is organised like a news story with an inverted pyramid organisation. The first paragraph summarises the event and further paragraphs add information and quotes until the least important information is given of the sales of tickets. The macro proposition of the media release is that two well-respected pianists are supporting the piano competition. According to Erjavec’s method, and bearing in mind Catenaccio’s (2008) model, what initially reveals the media release to be a promotional story (if you take away the peripheral information) is the positive evaluation of the organisation in the headline.

## Musical Coup for National Competition for Pianists

The choice of the word “coup” suggests an unusual achievement which is then developed in the lead paragraph. This paragraph answers four of the news questions: What? Where? Who? When? We learn that the “coup” of the headline is that two well-known pianists will be involved with the piano competition.

Two of the Southern Hemisphere's finest pianists have agreed to help make this year's Kerikeri National Competition for Pianists the best one yet.

This paragraph also conforms to the “announcement” move expounded by McLaren and Gurău (2005, p.16). They found it was the norm for companies to begin a media release with the news they wished to announce and then elaborate in subsequent paragraphs.

The following four paragraphs of the media release deliver more information about the two pianists and also begin to answer a fifth news question of “How” they will be involved with the competition. We are told that one will play “at a special recital” and the other “will be speaking at a gala dinner on the opening night”.

Paragraph 6 is a quote from the competition co-ordinator, which again conforms to McLaren and Gurău's (2005) move sequence. After the announcement and elaboration moves, the third move is to insert quotes from important people associated with the organisation. The inclusion of a quote, however, also increases the media release's generic similarity to a news story. In news writing, quotes or “inputs” (Bell, 1991) are used to bring colour to the narrative (Van Dijk, 1988). They are also included to add authority (Sissons, 2006). Quotes will be discussed further in the section on Lexis.

In McLaren and Gurău's, (2005) move sequence, the media release would end after the quotes with contact details of people journalists can contact, followed by the editor's note, which may include details of the company. However, in this media release, paragraph 7 continues elaborating on the main proposition and describes a new venue for the competition, “the acclaimed "The Centre", Kerikeri's multi-million dollar performing arts and conference centre”. Then in paragraph 8, a new topic is introduced: that the competition's organisers hope to find a sponsor to replace the old Yamaha piano with a full-sized concert grand. The final three paragraphs give details about the

demands of the competition on contestants, including a quote from Michael Houstoun, and provide information about where to buy tickets.

If we turn to the news story, which was written from this release, we can see that the macro proposition of the media release – that two well-respected pianists are supporting the piano competition – is taken on by the news story. The structure too is very similar to the media release. Further, a key characteristic of news reports written primarily from media releases is a headline with a positive meaning for the organisation. Here the headline from the media release is reproduced minus the name of the competition in a heading above an equally positive headline. In fact, the words of the headline are taken from the lead paragraph of the media release.

Musical Coup for Kerikeri

National competition set to be the best yet

The lead sentence of the article, the most important in a news story as it sets out the “promise” or thesis, is copied exactly from the media release. It continues the promotional tone by including the evaluative terms “finest” and “best”. The following two paragraphs of the news story are also “cut and pasted” from the media release. In fact, the only difference between the media release and the news story up to this point is that the journalist split paragraph 4. The change follows the rules of news writing that paragraphs are usually kept short, often to one sentence (Sissons, 2006).

Then, as in the media release, the next paragraph is a quote from the competition co-ordinator followed, as in the media release, by a description of the “The Centre”. Paragraph 9, brings up the need to replace the old Yamaha piano and this is followed by a quote from the competition co-ordinator. The final four paragraphs give details about the demands of the competition, including a quote from Michael Houstoun, and information about where to buy tickets.

#### **3.4.1.2. Topic**

Topics within the news discourse should correspond to accepted norms of what is considered “newsworthy” by news producers. Public relations, on the other hand, deals with “success reports, award achievement, new or improved products or services, major contracts, competitions, sponsorships, VIP visitors, new equipment orders, purchase of new premises, milestones and other measure of success” (Erjavec, 2005, p. 168). In the

media release being examined here, most of the topics are among those mentioned by Erjavec: a competition, VIP visitors, new premises and new services. Further, the topics or themes of the media release (Van Dijk, 1988) are matched by the news report. They are listed as follows:

1. The main action and its participants are that the Kerikeri National Piano Competition is being supported by two important pianists.
2. Details of the participants and the date come next.
3. The location details are explained – it is the first time the competition is being held at the new events centre.
4. Another topic is introduced, the replacement of the old Yamaha, and is supported by a quote from the event organiser.
5. Some background details of previous competitions are included here.

#### **3.4.1.3. Perspective**

Perspective is the point of view taken when describing events or considering topics. Publicity material is invariably written from the point of view of the organisation producing it. Therefore, the perspective or angle put forward in this media release is expected to represent the view of the competition organisers, which is that the competition will be “the best one yet”.

In fact this media release is unusual as it does put forward a potentially negative angle in paragraph 8: they do not have a suitable piano six months before the competition. As the person who wrote the media release, I needed to publicise the lack of a piano in the hope of attracting a sponsor. However, it would not have been helpful to feature this angle too high in the story as it could have undermined the event. Despite this, it was fully expected that the journalists would re-angle the media release for their news stories and those involved in the piano competition were warned that this could happen. If the release had been re-angled it would have made the news article more newsworthy.

However, as can be seen, the perspective taken in the news report was the same as the media release. The story, as written, fulfils six of the 12 news values: frequency, relevance, clarity, unambiguosity, expectedness and involves minor celebrities (elite people). Re-angled to highlight the lack of a piano, the story would have three more news values – of negativity, threshold and unexpectedness – which, according to

Galtung and Ruge (1965), are the more powerful news values. Negative news is preferred by news organisations over positive because it is typically more dramatic.

#### 3.4.1.4. Choice of sources

The two sources included in the media release directly or indirectly represent the piano competition. The quotes by the competition coordinator were actually formulated by me when writing the release and then passed to her for approval. I used “pseudo quotes” (Sleurs *et al.*, 2003) because they were a quick way of including comment, and I could guarantee that they would address the issue I wanted them to. However, I was (as a former journalist) very aware that in journalism making up quotes is not acceptable, and by inserting such quotes into a media release it was likely they would be used and therefore the practice was ethically questionable.

Nonetheless, PRPs writing quotes is not uncommon (Bell, 1991; Sleurs *et al.*, 2003). It is more efficient for the writer of the media release than requesting a quote from a busy manager or CEO and then waiting for it to come through. In such cases, the “real” quote may be bland, not reader-friendly and may not address the relevant issue. The function of quotes is to humanise a story and liven up the prose. They also add authority, as they associate a named individual with the information in the media release and can provide an assessment of the events. Further, as Sleurs and Jacobs (2005) pointed out, quotes make media releases more neutral and therefore more attractive to journalists.

In this case, the journalist sought no extra sources or fresh quotes. Thus the first quote from the competition co-ordinator in the media release is unchanged in the news report. There are slight alterations to the two remaining quotes, which will be discussed below.

#### 3.4.1.5. Lexis

The text of the media release is full of promotional phrases – 14 in the original media release without counting those in the direct quotes (see table 3.2). The words used in the body of the news story are almost identical to the media release with all of those 14 promotional phrases being retained.

Finest	extra master classes	multi-million dollar
best one yet.	eminent	oldest and most prestigious
most distinguished	gala dinner	formidable test
and awarded	a new era	international acclaim
special recital	acclaimed "The Centre"	

**Table 3.2:** Promotional words



#### **3.4.1.6. Promotional phrases that are reproduced in the news story**

Further, as has already been mentioned, a positive bias towards the organisation producing the release is one of the features of the promotional genre. Frequent reference to the brand is one method of achieving this. In the media release the full name of the competition is used in the headline and twice in the body of the story. A shortened version of the name, “the competition”, “national competition” or “event” is used 12 times.

Referring to the company or organisation by its name, in full or in part, is also a feature of pre-formulation in media releases (Jacobs, 1999b). This third-person self-reference makes the media release look more objective, distancing the writer from the content and encourages journalists to use it. However, often the name comes with a description such as “international company” or “largest supplier of milk”. In the example here, the piano competition describes itself as New Zealand’s oldest and most prestigious such competition, a description that is repeated in the news story. As Jacobs wrote, “Clearly self reference through indefinite description is a powerful mechanism” (1999b, p. 239).

In the news story, the full name of the organisation is not used in the headline, but it is used twice in the body of the story. A shortened version of the name, “the competition”, “national competition” or “event” is used in the headline and 13 times in the body of the story. According to Pander Matt (2008) journalists favour using nominal anaphora rather than using the full name of an organisation as it increases neutrality as well as readability.

The transformations made by the journalist to the media release are minimal. In the fourth paragraph the second sentence has been made into a separate paragraph, as mentioned earlier, possibly to shorten the paragraphs. This may be the reason behind the three further transformations made by the journalist. In paragraph 8, the journalist turns the sentence around to avoid repetition of the phrase “The Centre” and at the same time shortens it. In paragraph 9 the direct quote is shortened to make the second half of it indirect. There is also a change to the layout of the quote to put the attribution first; this again is common in news writing as it lets the reader know straightaway who is speaking.

A similar technique is used to shorten the quote by Michael Houstoun in paragraph 11.

However this time the statement is not attributed. The media release reads:

Michael Houstoun has said: ‘It is by far the best test for young pianists in the solo repertoire in this country. This is chiefly because of its demands. The contestants have to prepare what amounts to a full recital programme and be able to present it three days in a row under stressful conditions. Such demands most approximate the reality for a professional performing musician.’

The news story reads:

Michael Houstoun has described it as ‘by far the best test for young pianists in the solo repertoire in this country.’

The competition is demanding of (sic) contestants prepare what amounts to a full recital programme to be presented three days in a row.

Typically in media releases, it is the quotes that display the most openly promotional language. As Pander Maat (2007) and Jacobs (1999a, 1999b) suggested, quotes are attributed to others, and thus allow the journalist to place the responsibility for the truth or otherwise of the statement with the speaker. Hence it is surprising that Houstoun’s quote here is broken up to give the impression that the second indirect part is the journalist’s own conclusion.

### 3.4.2 The Neutrogena media release

The second release to be analysed was produced by Neutrogena, the cosmetics manufacturer, and highlights “new research”, which claims New Zealanders are more miserable in winter. The story was placed on the front page of the Yahoo!Xtra site and was almost unaltered from the media release (see table 3.3).

MEDIA RELEASE	NEWS STORY
<p>Neutrogena <b>Independent Study Finds July The Most Miserable Month for Kiwis</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Its official – we’re more miserable in winter and July is the worst month for suffering the winter blues.</li> <li>2. According to the latest independent research commissioned by Johnson &amp; Johnson brand Neutrogena, July is the month in which 20 per cent of Kiwis are struck by the winter blues, followed by August on 13 per cent.</li> <li>3. The nationwide research was conducted by Consumer Lind (a division of Colmar Brunton) for Neutrogena and studies</li> </ol>	<p><b>YAHOO!xtra</b> <b>It’s official – we’re more miserable in winter</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It’s official – we’re more miserable in winter and July is the worst month for suffering the winter blues.</li> <li>2. July is the month in which 20 per cent of Kiwis are struck by the winter blues, followed by August on 13 per cent.</li> <li>3. The research also found also found Monday-itis also affects the nation, with 41 per cent of Kiwis saying that the first</li> </ol>

<p>women's skincare habits during the winter months.</p> <p>4. The research also found Monday-itis also affects the nation, with 41 per cent of Kiwis saying that the first day of the working week is also the day they are most likely to feel blue.</p> <p>5. "If you leave and return home from work in the dark, don't get enough light while working, have high stress, rarely socialise and eat stodgy food, the blues are likely to creep up on you," says respected mental health therapist Leanne French.</p> <p>6. Creature comforts reign supreme during the cold season, so it comes as no surprise then that 30 per cent of Kiwi women say their favourite way to alleviate the winter blues is to spend time with friends, followed by 29 per cent who prefer a night in on the couch with a hot chocolate and their favourite movie! A further 20 per cent relieve the winter blues with a warm bath, facial or massage.</p> <p>7. The shortening of daylight hours and lack of sunlight in winter triggers symptoms such as sleep problems, lethargy, overeating and mood swings, says French.</p> <p>8. While we feel down in the dumps we're also less likely to give our skin the attention and care it deserves. The majority of Kiwi women interviewed in the Neutrogena survey confirmed that during winter they break two of skincare's cardinal rules – not using a sunscreen and failing to remove their makeup before bed.</p> <p>9. Seventy two percent of woman surveyed said they used sunscreen less than once a week or never between June and August. Only 1 in every 4 women surveyed said they apply sunscreen on a daily basis during the winter months.</p> <p>10. It is this result that has Dr Kelvin McKettow, President of the New Zealand Dermatologist Society worried.</p> <p>11. "People just seem to forget that during</p>	<p>day of the working week is also the day they are most likely to feel blue.</p> <p>4. "If you leave and return home from work in the dark, don't get enough light while working, have high stress, rarely socialise and eat stodgy food, the blues are likely to creep up on you," says respected mental health therapist Leanne French.</p> <p>5. Creature comforts reign supreme during the cold season, so it comes as no surprise then that 30 per cent of Kiwi women say their favourite way to alleviate the winter blues is to spend time with friends, followed by 29 per cent who prefer a night in on the couch with a hot chocolate and their favourite movie. A further 20 per cent relieve the winter blues with a warm bath, facial or massage.</p> <p>6. The shortening of daylight hours and lack of sunlight in winter triggers symptoms such as sleep problems, lethargy, overeating and mood swings, says French.</p> <p>7. While we feel down in the dumps we're also less likely to give our skin the attention and care it deserves. The majority of Kiwi women interviewed in the survey confirmed that during winter they break two of skincare's cardinal rules – not using a sunscreen and failing to remove their makeup before bed.</p> <p>8. Source: Nationwide study conducted by Johnson &amp; Johnson's Neutrogena which studied women's skincare habits during the winter months.</p>
---	--

<p>winter the sun doesn't go away and neither does skin cancer."</p> <p>12. The research also found that nearly a third of Kiwi women said they never take their makeup off before bed, with 48% of women confirming they did.</p> <p>13. -Ends-</p>	
--	--

**Table 3.3:** Neutrogena media release and news story

### 3.4.2.1. Generic structure

In structure the media release appears, as the first example, to be organised like an “inverted pyramid” news story. The headline sets out the macro proposition of the media release:

Independent study finds July the most miserable month for Kiwis

The first paragraph summarises the event, which again states the claim that people are more miserable in winter.

Its (sic) official – we’re more miserable in winter and July is the worst month for suffering the winter blues.

This paragraph answers three news questions: the “What”, which is that “we’re more miserable”; the “When” being “in winter”; and the “Who”, being “we”. The second paragraph immediately attributes the claim made in the first paragraph to the research commissioned by Johnson & Johnson. It then states that “July is the month in which 20 per cent of Kiwis are struck by the winter blues, followed by August on 13 per cent.” By locating the story with “Kiwis”, the “Where” news question is answered.

The use of the first-person self-reference “we” is unusual. Jacobs (1999b, p. 220) claimed he found “hardly any first-person pronouns” in his corpus of more than 500 media releases as it does not conform to the usual pre-formulating device of using third-person self-reference. Perhaps it is used here (and later on in paragraph 8) to personalise the story, or it could be being used to generalise.

Paragraph three elaborated on the “Who” and the “What”. Paragraph four presents another finding that New Zealanders are more likely to feel down on Monday. There

follows a quote from a mental health therapist that adds authority. It may also be there to cause alarm and prompt readers to buy Johnson & Johnson products.

‘If you leave and return home from work in the dark, don’t get enough light while working, have high stress, rarely socialise and eat stodgy food, the blues are likely to creep up on you,’ says respected mental health therapist Leanne French.

Paragraph six continues to present the research findings and paragraphs 7 and 8 highlight the negative effects on mood triggered by the lack of sunlight. In paragraph 8, the nominative pronoun “we” is again used to explain how “we” neglect our skin in winter. The next three paragraphs claim women in winter are “not using a sunscreen and failing to remove their makeup before bed.” Finally, there is a quote by the President of the New Zealand Dermatologist Society stating that skin cancer is still a danger in winter.

The macro proposition of the media release, that people feel more miserable in winter, is taken on dramatically in the headline of the news story.

It’s official – we’re more miserable in winter

The inference that it is now a fact that New Zealanders – “we” – are more miserable in winter is repeated in the lead sentence, which is word-for-word the same as the media release, except the apostrophe is correctly inserted in “It’s”. The news story also faithfully repeats the statistics of when Kiwis are struck by the winter blues. However, it does not attribute the figures to a Neutrogena study (see below). Paragraphs 3 to 7 are “copied and pasted” from the media release, including the use of “we”, which reduces the journalistic distance of the story (Scollon, 2004).

The final four paragraphs are cut from the story. Perhaps the subeditor decided the story was long enough. The potentially more “newsworthy” information that 71% of women do not regularly use sunscreen in winter is unused. The news story finishes with a final paragraph laid out like an addendum.

Source: Nationwide study conducted by Johnson & Johnson’s Neutrogena which studied women’s skincare habits during the winter months.

#### **3.4.2.2. Topic**

The topics or themes of the media release (Van Dijk, 1988) are almost matched by the news report. These are listed as follows:

1. The main claim is that research has shown that New Zealanders are more
2. miserable in winter.
3. Details of who commissioned the report (placed in the final paragraph of the news report) and who carried out the research (omitted from the news report).
4. The claim that 41% of New Zealanders suffer from Monday-itis.
5. A description of how women alleviate the winter blues.
6. A short explanation that the blues are triggered by a lack of sunlight.
7. A claim that women give their skin enough attention during winter.
8. A claim that women use sunscreen less than once a week in winter.
9. A claim that nearly a third say they do not remove their make up before bed.
10. In the news story, the source of the research is mentioned in the final paragraph.

The naming of the organisations behind the research in the second and third paragraphs of the media release suggests that the PRPs believed these were important facts.

However, the journalist demotes this material, writing it up as a footnote. It is not clear what the motivation was for this change, but it may be that the journalist did not believe the research to be independent or robust enough to justify a description so high in the story of who had commissioned it and carried it out. Note Colmar Brunton has been omitted from the news story altogether. However, if this was the reason, it is surprising the release was used as the basis for a news story at all.

#### **3.4.2.3. Perspective**

The perspective of the media release is that research proves that New Zealanders are more miserable in winter. However, the rules of news writing advise that when reporting surveys it is paramount to check how many people were questioned and what questions they were asked. In this way the reliability of the survey can be judged. This is especially important when special interest groups are involved who may wish to push an agenda (Itule & Anderson, 2007; Sissons, 2006). Because the sample size and questions are omitted from the media release, the claims made in the news story are unsubstantiated. In journalism, numbers are valuable. According to Bell “at the core of facticity are numbers – the most verifiable, quantifiable, undeniable of facts” (1991, p.

202). The lack of a basis for the claims that we are more miserable in winter means the story contains no news values.

#### **3.4.2.4. Choice of sources**

The journalist writing this news story sought no new sources and in fact reduced the number by omitting the President of the New Zealand Dermatologist Society. The direct and indirect quotes that were published were copied in full from the media release.

#### **3.4.2.5. Lexis**

As with the previous example, the media release names the company high in the story, in the second and third paragraphs and in paragraph eight. The media release also refers to the research in the headline and in six of the 12 paragraphs. In the headline it is an “independent study”; in the body of the story it is referred to as the “research” four times, including once as “independent” and once as “nationwide”. Twice in the story, the word “research” was replaced with “Neutrogena survey” and “women surveyed”.

The wording in the news story is almost entirely reproduced from the media release. However, as mentioned, the news report has removed almost all reference to the organisation which carried out the research – resulting in one and a half paragraphs being cut. It also does not refer to the company until the final paragraph. This of course breaks one of the tenets of news stories that use media releases as a main source: that they show a positive bias towards the company highlighted in a release. It is also an example of the source being hidden from the audience, thus passing credit for the story onto the journalist. It is well known that the last paragraph is the least read in a story.

The news story uses the term “research” once, “survey” once and “nationwide study” once, conforming to the news writing rule that writers should avoid repetition (Sissons, 2006). The language used in both the media release and news story suggests credibility and implies the research was carried out by independent researchers. However, it was funded by Neutrogena’s parent company, Johnson & Johnson, and therefore the language is misleading.

In the media release and the news article, the interdiscursivity adds weight to the promotional tone. The medical discourse is strongly represented with words such as “suffering”, “struck by”, “high stress” and “triggers symptoms” which imply illness. It

is also inferred that the women can be cured from many of these problems if they look after their skin, the implication in the media release being with Neutrogena products. Here we see the discourse of nurturing with the words “alleviate”, “relieve” and “attention and care it deserves”.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Several key characteristics mark out intertextuality between the public relations and news genres and we see these in the examples in this chapter. The generic structure and topics chosen may appear similar; thus in theory media releases can be turned into news stories quickly. However, the perspective of a media release is likely to be positive rather than negative and the lexis will contain promotional words and phrases often associated with the organisation that has produced the media release (Catenaccio, 2008). Further, the sources quoted will usually reinforce the perspective of the organisation. This is because the role of the PRPs producing the release is to manage and enhance the reputation of the organisation they represent (Newsom *et al.*, 2004; Theaker, 2004) “with the aim of influencing opinion and behaviour” (Oliver, 2007, p. 9).

News reports should have a variety of sources or voices, which makes their intertextuality so rich (Scollon, 2004). However, it appears that news reports based mostly on media releases show much less intertextuality. Further, it is expected (Bell, 1991; Erjavec, 2005; Pander Maat, 2008) that news stories will tone down the promotional language used in media releases. In the examples produced here and in many in my study, this did not happen. In fact, the headline in the first example is more positive than the media release, and it also runs the heading “musical coup for Kerikeri”.

Reproducing a media release almost verbatim may not matter when it is from a local arts group about a forthcoming competition, although the use of fillers like this in a regional daily paper should be noted. Far more concerning for news discourse is the purely commercial promotion of a product, in this case skin cream, being reproduced almost unchanged. It encourages the reader to believe that what is being reported is the result of a journalist’s impartial and corroborated research. Some may also believe that because the story ran on an Internet news site, it is less influential as a news source. However, in the United States the majority of young people now get their news from the Internet. Even among the over 50s, almost as many people use the Internet to access the



news as read a newspaper (34% compared with 38% respectively) (Pew Research Center, 2011).

Both news stories are promotional in tone and message, yet in neither case is their origin admitted to the reader. The reporter's name is not attached, but neither is an "advertorial" banner added. This study contends that these are examples of what is becoming more common in journalism and is resulting in a narrowing of the range of discourses represented in our news. If journalists routinely accept public relations' materials uncorroborated, the result is that the powerful and/or the wealthy can dominate the supply of information (Moloney, 2006). The data illustrate this clearly. In the release from the National Piano Competition, the only voices are Houstoun and the concert organiser. In the Neutrogena release, a mental health therapist is quoted along with a dermatologist. There was no attempt to check with other mental health experts or groups and no ordinary woman's voice is heard. Taking into account the concept of news values, it is clear too that these media releases were not strong news stories. One was based on pseudo-research and the other was an update on a local event. They were both, however, published in full and substantially unaltered.

The findings in this chapter build on research by Davies (2008) and Moloney (2006), which claimed that journalists were failing to corroborate material they were receiving from sources. However, what has not been highlighted before is the extent of the cutting and pasting happening in newsrooms, leading to whole media releases being reproduced almost word-for-word. In fact, Erjavec (2005) said this is rare. Two important developments may have influenced this change: multi-skilling and the reduction in the number of journalists. Nowadays, journalists have to serve the website and perhaps also the Twitter feeds of their organisation as well as the newspaper or broadcast outlet. At the same time there has been the loss of thousands of traditional journalism jobs worldwide in the last decade (see Pew Research Center statistics, 2009)

By examining the media release and the news story genres, the accuracy of Catenaccio's (2008) claim that media releases can be so similar to news reports that they can be published unchanged has been demonstrated. Further, this study has proved that this is occurring. However, if we accept Pander Maat's (2008) thesis that media releases and news reports were in genre conflict because of their different functions, it is

clear that newsmakers and news consumers should be very concerned that media releases are becoming news stories almost or entirely unchanged.

While this chapter has examined one of the most visible products of public relations – the media release – the next chapter examines an equally well known, but less studied product, the media conference. It asks to what degree the public relations team organising the conference was able to manage the journalists' access to the conference and the interviewee, and to what degree this resulted in the team influencing the news agenda.

Chapter Four: **Journalists versus public relations practitioners:**  
**Power and agency at a media conference**

**4.0. Introduction**

Interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners (PRPs) produce much of the content in our news media (Davies, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Macnamara, 2010). In fact, scholars charting the growth in public relations activity have estimated that between 40 and 80% of news now shows some public relations influence, specifically public relations sources (as interviewees or in an agenda-setting role) and/or material lifted from media releases (Beder, 1997; Davies, 2008; Gregory, 2004; McChesney, 2003).

To date, most studies of information subsidies for journalists have focused on the most visible product of public relations, the media release, and how it is a pre-formulating (Jacobs, 1999a, 1999b) device for news (Catenaccio, 2008; Jansen, 2008; Lenaerts, 2002; Linardopoulos, 2005; Morton, 1988; Pander Maat, 2007, 2008; Sissons, 2012a). A small number of studies have examined the process of public relations writing using ethnographic methods. Sleurs *et al.*, (2003) and Sleurs and Jacobs (2005) carried out fieldwork in a bank to investigate public relations routines and the construction of media releases. Lindholm combined text analysis with ethnography to study media releases at the European Commission “from a product as well as a process perspective” (2008, p. 39).

L’Étang, in the respected text she wrote with Pieczka, *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice*, identified a need for more ethnographic research to understand relationships and work practices in public relations (2006, p. 27). Some researchers have responded, notably Edwards (2009), who examined power relations in a corporate affairs department in a passenger-transport company, and Daymon and Hodges (2009), who conducted cross-cultural ethnographic public relations research in three public relations departments in Mexico City.

The current study employed video-ethnographic methods to examine what Jacobs (2011, p. 1901) calls “the oral counterpart of press releases, viz. press conferences”. Three interactions were analysed, all of which occurred during a media conference organised by a city council’s public relations team at a waterfront industrial site. The

analysis examined the verbal and non-verbal actions of the journalists and public relations practitioners. It aimed to evaluate the successes and the flaws in the public relations practitioners' performance from a dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959) and to assess how much influence over the journalists, and hence the news agenda, they were able to gain through holding the media conference.

According to Jacobs (2011, p. 1901) media conferences have been and continue to be "a classical tool for organisations and public figures to get in touch with the media." In this case, the point of the conference was for the council to announce its plans to develop the industrial site as a destination for visitors to the Rugby World Cup to be held in New Zealand in 2011. The paper presents evidence that although the public relations practitioners effectively controlled access to the site of the media conference, as well as to the spokesperson they put forward, there remained significant risks for them in holding such an event. For example, there was still scope for journalistic agency in the approach taken to the plans for development (would it be positive or negative?), as well as the range and depth of questions asked of the council's spokesperson. However, despite the risks and the significant flaws in the performance of the spokesperson, including failing to address questions about the development's costs, the council succeeded in getting its message into the news media almost unchallenged. This builds on previous findings (Sissons, 2012a) that information subsidies are increasingly being relied upon by journalists and are often substantially unchanged.

#### **4.1. Methodology**

The data were gathered on video during ethnographic-style fieldwork, specifically participant observation in the two-person media relations department in a city council in New Zealand. This involved the researcher shadowing a senior media relations officer over two weeks as she dealt with journalists, interacted with her junior colleague and attended meetings in the wider communications and marketing group, of which her team was one division. The researcher was also able to accompany the practitioner to meetings with council officers and elected members. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the main actors and relevant paperwork was collected including emails, reports and media releases, and detailed field notes were kept. A comprehensive literature review suggests it is the first study where data showing journalists and public relations practitioners interacting were captured on video, allowing the interactions to be replayed and analysed in depth mode by mode. The data gathering was conducted

using university-approved ethics protocols. These included transcripts and/or results of the analysis being passed onto and, if requested, discussed with, the main participants.

The interactions were considered from the perspective of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework in which people are actors who must use their performances to communicate their personal characteristics as well as their aims and intentions. Goffman argues that all verbal and nonverbal actions convey an impression to others. The actors must control, as they would if stepping onto a stage, the setting and the impression they give. He calls this "impression management" (1959, pp. 203-30). The roles they prepare are then subjected to careful scrutiny by the audience for "believability", and the audience can play a part in the direction a performance takes and its outcome. For example, there are times when the audience will ignore flaws in a performance out of tact, such as if someone stumbles or drops something.

Goffman's (1959) framework is particularly useful in the case considered here, as it was through the media conference that the council hoped to stamp its definition of the future of the site (a wharf) on the public consciousness, and thereby influence its development. The team members needed the journalists to accept their description of what should be done and write news stories to this end. For example, when considering whether to provide historic archive images of the wharf during its heyday, the senior media relations officer described her thought processes as follows:

I thought about, sort of on the spur of the moment, to get some heritage images of the wharf, because...if we want to push the fact that they are valuable buildings it might be good to just let people see what they were used for and what they looked like back in the day. I'll need to check with [the development manager] though that it's a given that those sheds are going to stay because if they're not we don't want to be building up how important they are if they're going to be torn down.

Jacobs (2011, p. 1901) has noted that media conferences are "on the thin border line between back and front" regions. In Goffman's framework, a front region is the place where the performance is given (1959, pp. 111-12) and the back region is the equivalent of the "backstage" (1959, p. 114), where the performers can relax, where no audience is present and some of the illusions and impressions of the performance can be openly contradicted. What Jacobs means is that what is said and done at media conferences is in one sense a back region in that the performers present information used to write up media reports, but in another sense these conferences are a front region in that they may

be televised live or extracts used for broadcast. This paper treats the interactions at the conference as the public relations team putting on a front region “performance” for an “audience” of journalists (Goffman, 1959, pp. 26-7) because anything that occurred would potentially be reported to the public.

The analysis of the interactions involved all relevant communicative modes, including speech, gaze, manual gesture, facial expression and postural shift, allowing the researcher to integrate the social actor’s verbal and non-verbal actions as well as his or her interactions with objects and the environment (Norris, 2006).

#### **4.2. Setting of the interactions**

The interactions occurred a week after the regional council announced that it and the government had bought a large central city waterfront site. The council further announced that it intended to have the wharf site developed in expectation of the Rugby World Cup to be held in New Zealand in 2011. The city council was keen to influence the development, preferring less space devoted to cruise ships than the regional council was proposing along with the renovation of two existing 100-year-old cargo sheds, rather than a new build favoured by the regional council. Further, four days after the sale announcement, the city council voted to put NZ\$84m towards upgrading the wharf, including the two sheds, but there was little detail given about how this money would be spent.

The regional council’s preference for a cruise ship terminal (Dickison, 2010) was aligned with its responsibility for promoting tourism, while the city council’s preference for more open space was perhaps explained by its responsibility for providing essential community services, including public spaces, such as recreation areas for Rugby World Cup fans. But the city council’s lack of contribution to the purchase of the wharf weakened its position. As one senior public relations officer told a meeting of senior communications and marketing group staff, “We don’t own the site. Anything we plan to develop on the site has got to be approved by the site’s owners, and that’s the regional council and the government”.

The day before the media conference, the situation was not looking good for the city council. While coverage in the region’s most influential newspaper following the city council’s announcement of the NZ\$84m development money had been positive

(Orsman, 2009, June 9), an article over the weekend, quoting the regional council chairman, was less so. It referred to clearing “sick pigeons” out of the wharf’s main “tin shed”, and quoted the chairman saying of the second shed, “in our view it has no heritage value and is just cluttering the wharf” (Dearnaley, 2009, June 20, para. 10).

In an attempt to regain the initiative and advance its viewpoint through the media, the city council’s public relations team decided to hold a media conference at the wharf. Selected journalists were invited to the site where there would be photo opportunities and a relevant spokesperson. Taking the media to the wharf conferred on the PRPs a persuasive advantage over the invited journalists they would not otherwise have had. The wharf was still operational and entry by the public was restricted to those with special permission. In addition, because of its large size, the visiting reporters had to be ferried to and fro in minibuses. Therefore, only nine journalists and their photographers or camera crews were sent an invitation. Being singled out for such special access would possibly have encouraged the journalists to believe they were part of an elite group who were being afforded an opportunity to pull back the curtain on a usually secret area. In reality, these journalists were chosen because of the importance of their news organisation or because they were considered a “reliable” contact. One of the media relations team explained:

I guess that’s really a good example of just using contacts that we know – like literally who drop business cards or who call us regularly or who’ve given us good stories in the past.

Further, once they entered the site the journalists had little control over their movements. Where they went, who they spoke to and what they saw were all in the hands of the public relations team. Even what they wore was controlled, although this was not a public relations ploy as everyone was required for safety reasons to wear fluorescent safety vests.

#### **4.2.1. Interaction 1**

The first interaction sees the city council’s development manager setting out the proposals. He explains how accessible the developed wharf could be from the city’s main shopping street as well as its potential importance during the Rugby World Cup.



**Figure 4.1:** Explaining the vision



As already mentioned, the setting of the interaction, the wharf, is a focus throughout the media conference. The first two interactions were recorded inside one of the sheds on the wharf and this affects the stance (Goodwin, 2007) of the participants. The journalists position themselves around the development manager, close enough to hear what he says over the sound of machinery in the background, but also so that they can see his gestures and the internal structure of the shed. The development manager also positions his gestures so that they can be seen clearly by his audience (Goodwin, 2007).

The print journalists visible in the interaction (figure 4.1, images 5-8) are taking notes throughout and therefore have positioned themselves so that their line of sight easily moves between the page and the development manager with one small head movement. The television camera crew and journalists, who cannot be seen, are positioned next to the researcher where their camera equipment can clearly see the development manager. Goffman (1964, p. 135) referred to such a situated interaction as an “encounter” or “ecological huddle”, which involves the orientation of those involved towards one another and away from others who may be present, but not involved in the encounter. Therefore, the reporters are turned away from the workers on the wharf outside the shed and towards the development manager. They are thus signalling their cooperation with (Goffman, 1964), and shared focus on, the activity of the media conference.

In this interaction, the use of gesture enhances the verbal picture the development manager is trying to paint for the media about how the shed and the wharf could be transformed. As McNeill (1992, p. 12) writes, gestures exhibit images that cannot always be expressed in speech: “Gestures are like thoughts themselves. They belong not to the outside world, but to the inside one of memory, thought, and mental images”.

The development manager uses a mixture of iconic (pictorial), metaphoric (conceptual), beat and deictic (pointing) gestures to communicate the council’s proposals to his audience of journalists. From the moment he begins speaking, his speech is augmented by these gestures that are invariably large. As he says “the public of Auckland” he signals using a deictic gesture of the right hand towards the city centre and then sweeps it inward before resting it back on his folder (figure 4.1, image 1).

He almost immediately lifts the right hand again and opens his arms and on the word “onto” (figure 4.1, image 1) makes a beat gesture. This is a metaphoric gesture, as at

this point to the development manager the waterfront as a public destination is an abstract idea (McNeill, 1992). Therefore, rather than the arms drawing the concrete shape of the wharf, he is containing the wharf concept within his arms. It is not created yet, but he can imagine it. The beat gesture on the word “onto” suggests the theme, the reason behind the development (McNeill, 1992), to encourage the public onto the waterfront. He repeats the metaphoric gesture of open arms (figure 4.1, image 2) to allude to a “great opportunity”, and he makes a beat gesture on “I” with both arms serving a prosodic purpose as he attempts to convince his audience of the arguments.

Immediately after this declaration, comes the largest gesture in this interaction (figure 4.1, images 3 and 4) when the development manager uses an iconic gesture to draw a picture for his audience showing what he means by the “great opportunity”. In this case he inserts added emphasis to the gesture by using three beats that attach significance to the words “the spine of this wharf” and then with a further beat also stresses the word “absolutely” in the sentence “absolutely on the alignment with Queen’s Street”. This very large iconic gesture that involves the development manager’s whole arm brings passion and persuasion to what could have been a straightforward description. The arm drawing the spine of the wharf (figure 4.1, image 4) shows the audience how easy it would be to access the wharf from the city’s main street if it were to be developed as the city council wanted.

Next the development manager uses another metaphoric gesture accompanied by beats to illustrate the time-line the council anticipates for the development. Besides using the beat to emphasise important points, the manager also appears to be using it as an aid to memory (figure 4.1, images 6 and 7) (Goldin-Meadow, 2003).

As he says the words “and I think”, he lifts his hand and then gives three beats on the words “probably the development here’s”. At this point he swings his body to look around at what he might consider to constitute the “here” (figure 4.1, image 5), then he turns back to the reporters and makes a brief gaze shift down at his hand which is giving smaller beats as he says “probably in three phases”. On the words “three phases” he touches the little finger of his right hand with the forefinger of his left for the first time. But he pauses, makes another gaze shift to his hand and lifting the forefinger, says “uh” (figure 4.1, image 6), while re-touching the little finger lightly before lifting up the forefinger once again while still pausing. He then appears to decide how to proceed and

strongly pushes the little finger down with his left forefinger while stating “the first phase”. His forefinger remains on the little finger until the end of the interaction as he repeats that this is a “great opportunity” for “the live sites” (figure 4.1, image 7) and mentions that the Prime Minister has referred to the developed wharf as “party central” (figure 4.1, image 8). He needs to be reminded of the term “party central”, which is an important term for the selling of the redevelopment of the wharf to the public. Therefore, he turns for prompting to the public relations practitioner, who has remained proximate and within hearing, but slightly outside the “encounter” throughout the interaction.

Gaze is used by the development manager with his gestures to monitor whether the journalists are taking into account what he is saying (Goodwin, 2007). He speaks during the entire interaction and is constantly moving his gaze from one person to another or to the place to which he is referring. This is consistent with Kendon and Cook’s (1969) finding that the longer the speaker talks the shorter and more frequent their gazes become while they speak. For the journalists, when the development manager gestures to something in the shed, the arrangement is similar to the attention framework in Goodwin (2007, p. 22) “in which multiple actors are attending to the same object in the environment”. Throughout the journalists are either writing or looking at the development manager and what he is showing them, or at the public relations practitioner, when he speaks (figure 4.1, image 8).

In this interaction the council’s development manager is presenting to the journalists the council’s “big picture” or holistic proposals for how the wharf should be developed. While explaining these plans, the development manager is at his most comfortable. He uses large gestures and emphatic speech in order to enthuse the media. The next two interactions involve him responding to journalists’ questions.

#### **4.2.2. Interaction 2**

In the second interaction the development manager is responding to a question about how the two old sheds would be developed for use during rugby games. The city council’s argument is that the sheds, which are made of steel and the valuable New Zealand wood Kauri, are of historical importance and should be preserved. Also, the council argues, it would be cheaper to renovate the sheds than to demolish and replace them.

The interaction begins with the journalist's question:

“So what, what will these [the sheds] be when the rugby games are on?”



**Figure 4.2:** Responding to a question

The development manager's answer starts with his use of the hesitation token, “uh”, (Liddicoat, 2011, p. 48) and illustrates that he is not quite as assured as he was in the previous interaction. He was at his most fluent when talking about the general plans. Here he is a little less confident as the questions get more detailed. In the second line he has to correct himself. The question was “So what will these [the sheds] be when the rugby games are on?” He answers, “We would envisage that this would be uhm”. It appears as if he were about to describe the function of the shed, and then he makes a

repair. Speakers use repair talk when they need to resolve a problem with what they have said before (Schegloff *et al.*, 1977). In this case, perhaps the manager remembers that his role is to argue for the retention of the sheds, and so he needs to sell their historic value. He begins again, “The the roofing would be gone to expose all that uh beautiful timber ...”.

Again he uses gesture - deictic and iconic – to communicate how the council sees the building transformed and his gestures are still large. The first part of the interaction involves four deictic gestures, again involving his whole arm, as he explains the plan for the shed. He then appears to use an iconic gesture as an aid to his memory (figure 4.2, images 5 and 6), “This portion would be a large uhh ... event space.” He needs to grasp for the phrase, using the filler “uhh” to delay his response, although his gesture is showing it, a big square shape between his arms, and he uses a beat gesture on the word “this” for emphasis. When he finds the words (event space), he again uses a beat gesture to emphasise them.

In this interaction, when having to describe details of the council’s intentions, the development manager appears less prepared and less certain than in the previous interaction when he was addressing only the plan’s broadest aspects. He needs to grasp for phrases to precisely describe the council’s intent. His use of fillers “uh” and “uhm” indicates reduced confidence and fluency (Hirschman, 1994; Schegloff, 2010). He does not, however, turn to the public relations practitioner, who is still close by for advice, as he did in the previous segment.

#### **4.2.3. Interaction 3**

The first two interactions have taken place in a restricted setting inside the shed. The next interaction moves the group onto the wharf itself and illustrates the two sets of professionals’ different roles in relation to this event. As we have established, the public relations team and their spokesman see their role as to present persuasively the holistic plan to the journalists and through them to the public. It is the concept of retaining the sheds that the public needs to approve; the details can be worked out later once the council has been given a mandate. One PRP told the communications and marketing group that at the moment “there is a lot of confusion about what the plan is for Queen’s Wharf, in what order it will happen”.





**Figure 4.3:** Unable to respond to a question

While the development manager’s language at first says, “ah yes we are getting, we’re we’re getting that done now” and he keeps his tone light, implying they are dealing with the numbers, he soon shows his discomfort. His repetition is the first indicator of hesitation, “we’re we’re getting that done now”, and then he grinds to a halt, “and uhm” (figure 4.3, image 2).

His posture indicates his discomfort even sooner than his language. He swings his body away from the public relations practitioner standing beside him and looks to his right (figure 4.3, image 1) up the wharf concourse. He then swings back and drums his fingers on the folder. His gaze does not meet the journalists’ and, as he looks down at

his folder, he raises his eyebrows quickly (figure 4.3, image 3) and emits a small tutting sound. This behaviour is consistent with research findings by Kendon (1967, quoted in Kendon & Cook, 1969) that people look away more when discussing a cognitively difficult or embarrassing topic. It is understandable that the development manager would be embarrassed at being unable to answer a question the journalists would be expected to ask.

In this interaction the development manager is no longer making grand gestures. He holds onto his notes with both hands and the small manual drumming gestures appear nervous. As he swings his body, he seems to be casting around for help or inspiration, but not to the public relations practitioner on his left, as he knows he does not have the information. The raising of the eyebrows co-expressive with the tutting sound would also suggest frustration. Ekman and Friesen (1969) argue that the face is the site of affect displays and conveys more information about emotion than other body parts. The development manager then leafs through his notes (figure 4.3, image 4), but the search is not carried out with conviction. He knows he will not find the details among the papers either. He does extract a document, but it appears not to contain the information he needs. He tells the journalists that he will give them that price later (figure 4.3, image 4). Finally, he appears to be about to justify why he cannot provide costs now and his speech trails off (figure 4.3, image 5). He does not look up to suggest he has finished speaking (Kendon & Cook, 1969) and may well be trying to think of the next thing to say. In fact, a few seconds after the end of this extract he explains to the journalists that he needs to work out the figures – “to do a quick calcs” to get the answer.

#### **4.3. Discussion**

It is clear from the analysis of the three interactions that the city council’s public relations practitioners have succeeded in getting the journalists’ co-operation during the visit. They have controlled which journalists gained access to the wharf, what they saw and to whom they spoke.

Using a dramaturgical perspective (Goffman, 1959), the media visit to the wharf was a performance staged by the council and its public relations team. The journalists were the audience and the council and its members at the wharf formed the team giving the performance. The public relations practitioners have chosen carefully where to stage the performance, its timing and what props to use. Even part of the costume, the bright



safety vests, while not a public relations prop but a safety requirement, conveniently added to the sense of privileged access to a “back region” that the council wished to promote in the journalists’ minds. As the senior media relations practitioner explained about the event, “My role is to give them access to information that they wouldn’t normally have access to”.

In many cases public relations practitioners take the role of arranging interviewees such as expert spokespeople, specialists or politicians and then remain “backstage” at the events they put on, not wishing to appear as obviously taking part in (and perhaps being seen as “spinning”) the discourse. The senior media relations practitioner described how she sees her role compared with the role of the journalist.

Whereas I see with journalism one has to be overtly pushy, my philosophy about PR is that it’s the opposite. It’s not about you, it’s about pushing other people forward. That in a nutshell is what I think I’m quite good at. I don’t want to be the centre of attention or in any sort of conflict situation.

Here the PRPs were necessarily in full view of the audience but, as we have seen, not part of the “encounter” (Goffman, 1964, p.135). They took the roles of director, producer, script writer and prompter rather than actors. The centre stage actor was the city council’s development manager. However, the public relations practitioners were careful to accompany their main actor at all times and to ensure they were able to manage his performance. Because, although the development manager was a seasoned media performer who had spoken about the wharf development before, this was, as the media relations practitioner admitted, a “very rushed project and decision” in the light of the regional council and government’s purchase of the wharf. Therefore, limited time was available to prepare him. Further, at a meeting with other senior practitioners from the communications and marketing department earlier that day, it was made clear that throughout the city council there was confusion over the plan for the wharf, in what order it would happen and what the city council’s role was. One PRP at the meeting said they were “all over the shop”. Therefore, there was trepidation about the media conference and how prepared the development manager was for the performance.

The audience of journalists knew that the council’s development manager wished to present as believable a performance as possible, and they were looking for any signs that may indicate his performance (and hence the city council’s) was inauthentic (Goffman, 1959). Goffman asserts that every audience is likely to divide what they see

into two parts (1959, p. 18), the part that is easiest for the actor to control - the words they use, and the part that is less easy to control - their non-verbal actions. It is clear from the interactions that the non-verbal expressions displayed by the actor indicated his discomfort ahead of and more clearly than his verbal expressions. Goffman acknowledges that when performers make a mistake, or the accepted definition of the situation is fractured in some way, the audience may decide not to notice, either to avoid a scene or to assist the actor in maintaining face. The journalists did not capitalise on the development manager's discomfort. They moved to another question and asked him to list the wharf facilities that would be necessary for the Rugby World Cup. This suggests that the relationship between the journalists and the city council's public relations team was in this instance a co-operative not an adversarial one. Perhaps the reporters saw their role at the media conference as gathering information about what the council planned and not as challenging its position. Whatever the reason, their cooperation is a strong indication of the success of the public relations team's strategy for selecting journalists to be invited.

In the final analysis, however, the organising of the media conference can only be considered successful if the performance influenced the media's framing of the story, whose voices were heard or what facts were highlighted. It appears that despite not producing a wholly believable performance, overall the city council did achieve its aims of influencing the news agenda concerning its proposals for how the wharf should be developed. An example of the coverage was the piece broadcast by a leading television station on that day's main evening news (see Appendix 1). There are three interview clips in the report, the first from the development manager explaining the historical importance of the sheds, the second from an architect, which backs up the development manager by supporting the renovation of the sheds, and the third, which comes towards the end, is the only alternative viewpoint.

The television report also omitted to mention the council's lack of precise figures for what the development would cost. In fact, in the broadcast report, there is a reference to price tags of NZ\$14m to renovate the sheds and NZ\$70m for the rest of the upgrade needed to the wharf. This is more specific than the development manager was able to provide on-site, suggesting the council came up with figures, admittedly very vague, (to match how much they had put aside for the redevelopment) in recognition of the importance to the media of "facticity".

The city's influential newspaper sent three journalists to the media conference and also ran a long piece on the visit. It too was positive about the plans:

The *[name of news organisation]* and other media got a rare glimpse behind the red fence midweek when the City Council's *[name of development manager]* pushed his case for retaining the sheds. We came away with an appreciation of why the stakes are so high. (Cumming, 2009, June 27, p. B5, para. 1)

The use of the words "rare glimpse" shows us that this reporter believed he and the other reporters on the visit had been given privileged access. The article includes no opposing views to the city council's and played down the differences between the regional council and the city council over the amount of space to be dedicated to cruise ships. It also described in detail how the sheds could be renovated, putting a price tag of NZ\$3.5m on fixing up one of them. There was no other mention of costs in the article. However, a second article that ran in the paper on the same day highlighted the different visions for the wharf held by the two councils. It should be noted, though, that the article, written by the same reporter, gives the city council's plan more room, with six paragraphs to the regional council's four. The only people quoted were the two leaders, and while the question of the cost is addressed, it again fails to give detail.

Renovating the sheds to highlight features including a kauri sarking ceiling and steel trusses would cost an estimated \$15 million but the council says it could cost up to \$84 million to upgrade the whole wharf, including a \$20 million contingency for structural repairs. (Cumming, 2009, June 27, p. A5, para. 7)

In neither article is mention made of the development manager's inability to come up with detailed figures during the visit. Therefore, while the public relations practitioners could not actually *decide* the angle the reporters took with the story, through their existing relationships with the selected journalists (and perhaps because of those journalists' need to stay on-side with the public relations team) along with the management of the information provided, the PRPs were able successfully to *influence* how the story was reported and receive positive coverage. It was noted that negative coverage was overwhelmingly prompted by public relations sources linked to the regional council, suggesting that additional reporting carried out by the journalists also relied on public relations sources.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

By analysing the multiple modes involved in these interactions, it has been demonstrated that in this instance public relations practitioners have worked with council officers to prepare a message designed to set the news agenda on an important development. They have controlled who was invited to receive the message, the setting of the message and who was available to be interviewed as a source.

The journalists responded by accepting the invitation and listening intently to the council's ideas for the wharf's development. Their behaviour illustrates a cooperative relationship. However, the reporters were interested in receiving details about how the sheds would be renovated and how much it would cost to make the wharf safe for "party central". It was on these details that the council's performance floundered. It appears the public relations staff failed to brief the development manager on an area of questioning that they should have realised would be part of the media conference. This failure could be a genuine oversight, or more likely, this researcher argues, it was an illustration of a fundamental difference in the two practices. It is proposed that in many cases the purpose of public relations is not to reveal all the details of an event or issue, but to build a general awareness of concepts and proposals – to give the big picture – in the hope of building a sense of the possibilities and promoting a sympathetic reaction. In this way the PRPs can give an idea a concrete identity, a sense of something already existing, even if the details are not yet clarified.

Therefore, it is believed that the PRPs knew the details would be asked for and could not be provided, but went ahead with the media conference anyway, as details were not the point. What they hoped to achieve was the planting of a general stake in the ground around an abstract idea. They believed it was crucial at this stage to announce to the public and the regional council that they wanted to be involved in the decision-making around the wharf. Therefore they were prepared for a breakdown in the performance.

The public relations practitioners would be aware that despite controlling access to the site of the media conference and to the spokesperson, they could not restrict the range or depth of questions asked by the reporters. Further, they would know that the cost of the project would be one of the questions asked. The two-way nature of media conferences or briefings, where journalists have access to a news source, is the main difference between this sort of information subsidy and a media release. However, the question of

why the journalists did not take advantage of the breakdown of the performance needs to be addressed and the answer is likely to lie in the personal-professional connection between the two sets of professionals.

Central to the event were the existing relationships between the public relations practitioners and the invited journalists. Much of the public relations literature is vague about such relationships (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2009), and in public relations theory there has been a bias towards building relationships with groups rather than individual and interpersonal communication (Jahansoozi, 2006). But as Jahansoozi points out, in practice public relations officers build relationships with individuals within the targeted media organisations not the organisations themselves.

In the case highlighted here, the council's public relations team were evidently using their established relationships for a persuasive purpose. While it was never mentioned, the journalists were part of an implied reciprocity: that the council would deliver a valuable information subsidy to selected journalists in exchange for those journalists complying with the council's communication aims. While the public relations officers cannot require journalists to communicate their plans positively to their audience, there could be consequences for those journalists who do not cooperate. Most of the journalists invited were reliant on good council contacts to cover their beat and for assistance with many of their stories and one readily admitted, "I couldn't do what I do without them". The implied stick is that for uncooperative reporters that assistance will not be so readily given in the future.

The next chapter goes behind the scenes at a public relations consultancy to examine how a public relations practitioner (PRP) handled a client during a time of financial crisis in the client's organisation. The analysis studied the verbal and non-verbal actions to discover what techniques the PRP employed and how much influence he had in constructing and disseminating the organisation's media strategy. The research addresses the day-to-day practices of PRPs in consultancy-client relationships, which is an area under-examined by researchers. The transcription style has been altered in the final two Chapters to reflect the increased importance of language in these interactions. Hence the language analysis has been presented to the right-hand side of the images, which still contain indications of non-verbal actions. A transcription key is included in the appendices (Appendix 2).

## **5.0. Introduction**

When public relations practitioners are successful in getting journalists to publish the media messages they prepare on behalf of a client, they are influencing the news agenda and hence the public agenda (Gregory, 2004; Macnamara, 2010; Sallot & Johnson, 2006b; Turk, 1985). However, little is known about exactly how PRPs go about constructing media messages with their clients, and how the power distributions in that relationship are operationalised (Berger, 2005; L'Étang, 2005). This study begins to address that gap.

In this chapter three videoed interactions are analysed involving one public relations practitioner (PRP), as he handled his client during a time of financial crisis in the client's organisation. The interactions, which were filmed as they happened during fieldwork at a public relations consultancy, show the public relations practitioner discussing media messaging with members of the client organisation over the phone and face-to-face. It is believed to be the first time data of this kind have been available to researchers. Through analysis of the verbal and non-verbal actions of the participants, the article considers the power-dynamics of this consultancy-client relationship and asks who controls the company's media strategy at this time, is it the PRP or the client? The chapter concludes that in practice it appears that PRPs have limited capacity to influence their clients, who often have strong ideas about what the key messages should be, as well as who in the media should receive them.

## **5.1. The PRP-client relationship**

There are two types of relationship that public relations practitioners can have with clients: one is as in-house PRPs in a range of commercial, public and voluntary organisations, and the other is as consultants in an agency. This section concentrates primarily on consultancy, as the case study examined in this chapter deals with a public relations practitioner employed as a consultant and his dealings with a client. According to Pieczka (2006), little attention has been given to consultancy and how it works in the existing public relations literature, with the practice either being studied generically, without distinguishing between in-house practitioners and consultants, or focusing on in-house practitioners.

Public relations consultants can work alone as sole operators, or in firms (agencies) that can range in size from a handful of consultants in a single office to many dozens in offices across the world. They offer communication advice and services to clients, and some agencies specialise in areas such as financial or political public relations. Doorley and Garcia (2011) outlined several reasons clients employ consulting firms, including to inject new ideas into the company, or to manage a specific event or promote a particular product. In the case being studied here, the consultant, who was a partner in a small single-office agency, was brought on board to deal with media relations at a time of financial crisis.

In such situations, Doorley and Garcia (2011) argued, the ability to build and maintain positive relationships with clients may be the most important skill a consultant could possess. A large part of the success, they added, lay in how comfortable the client was with the consultant. In fact “chemistry” came top of a poll asking clients what “relationship element” was most important to them (Doorley & Garcia, 2011, p. 368) ahead of the technical competence of the PRP. Other researchers have identified related elements such as confidence and trust as important factors in initially winning work and in developing a good relationship (Chia, 2005; Pieczka, 2006; Place, 2012). In such (good) relationships the PRP is in regular contact and ensures there are constant modifications made to how the connection is handled as the client’s needs changed. Enacting such ongoing “strategic” conversations was found to include a high degree of empathy and understanding of the client and their particular problems (Gregory & Willis, 2013).

However, Gregory and Willis (2013) stress that whenever a PRP gives advice to a client, no matter how good the relationship, whether they took that advice or not was a choice. The client is someone over whom the PRP did not have direct control, and this context required consultants to have a high tolerance of ambiguity and the ability to deal with clients who would say one thing and do another. Thus, such public relations practitioners needed a set of skills above the core technical skills to get things done.

#### **5.1.1. Practitioner power in public relations**

Whenever a public relations practitioner gives advice, they wish it to be accepted and consequently to shape decision-making in the organisation (Place, 2012). Reber and Berger (2006, p. 235) wrote that in order “to help shape organisational decisions,

actions and ideologies, the PRP needs to be able to influence the client”. A PRP’s ability to influence in this way was one signifier of the power he or she held (Grunig, 1992; Reber & Berger, 2006). In the Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992), it was found that practitioners who had the most influence were those with the skills and knowledge to play a management role by contributing to strategic thinking, as these practitioners were the most likely to be consulted by the senior managers of the dominant coalition.

The dominant coalition is a core concept in public relations theory (Berger, 2005). Within an organisation, the dominant coalition is the decision-making body that both influences the organisation’s values and allocates resources (Grunig, 1992). It is the “group of individuals in an organisation with the power to affect the structure of the organisation, define its mission, and set its course through strategic choices the coalition makes” (Dozier *et al.*, 1995, p. 15). Edwards (2009) added that the strategic importance placed on a PRP or team of practitioners was closely related to the value attached to it by senior managers.

By being part of the dominant coalition, the theory posits, public relations practitioners can represent the interests of others and shape an organisation’s ideology and decision making to benefit the profession, the organisation and society in general (Dozier *et al.*, 1995).

Berger (2005) challenged this assumption as too simplistic. He argued there was not a single dominant coalition, but multiple overlapping coalitions within large organisations such as the one in the case study here. The complexity of the processes inside dominant coalitions, Berger claimed, made it difficult for practitioners to influence positively an organisation’s decision-making, even if they wanted to. The claim is supported by Holtzhausen (2000) who found that despite PRP efforts to implement participatory and ethical practices into their organisations, they could be overruled or manipulated by management.

## **5.2. Methodology**

The current study utilised video-ethnographic methods of data collection involving observation over a period of time in a public relations agency to consider the power relations. It is believed to be the first study where data were captured on video allowing the interactions to be replayed and analysed mode by mode. In addition, the researcher



conducted semi-structured interviews with the main actors and took field notes. She also had emails containing media relations materials and announcements forwarded to her. All names of people have been changed although it is accepted that some individuals may be recognisable to friends and colleagues. The research has ethics approval from the researcher's university.

### **5.2.1. Critical discourse analysis**

A question for this study is how much influence public relations practitioners, who are employed as consultants, have in constructing and disseminating the organisation's media strategy. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective was taken (Fairclough 1995a, 1995b; Van Dijk 1988, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001), as CDA uses analysis of texts or oral exchanges to evaluate the discursive construction of power.

In this framework language, such as that employed in the interactions analysed, is always used for a purpose and can be a tool of control as well as communication. Thus, "[G]roups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups" (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 355). Specifically, CDA scholars such as Fairclough (1995b) are concerned with how syntactic features of language hide agency and normalise the actions of the powerful. This study uses CDA to analyse the way power is reproduced and resisted through interactions between a public relations practitioner and members of the dominant coalition in his client organisation.

CDA has been criticised (see Schegloff, 1997) for not considering the details of language. In accepting some of Schegloff's criticism, this paper examines both verbal and non-verbal actions. The analysis of the interactions employed multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) (Norris, 2004a, 2011a), which enables the examination of multiple communicative modes. Through the analysis of relevant communicative modes including speech (Jucker, 1986; Schegloff, *et al.*, 1977; Schiffrin, 1987) and non-verbal actions, such as posture (how someone holds themselves) and proximity (how close they position themselves to another participant) (Goffman, 1964; Norris, 2004a), gaze (Goffman, 1964; Kendon, 1967) and manual gesture (Goldin-Meadow, 2003; McNeill, 1992, 2005) the researcher can integrate a person's verbal and non-verbal actions as well as his or her interactions with objects and the environment. This is necessary

because in many interactions it takes several modes coming together to understand the full meaning of what is being communicated.

Researchers using MIA believe that all modes should be treated equally when approaching the analysis of an interaction. That means they consciously do not give preference to language over other modes and all modes which are relevant to the construction of meaning are analysed.

### **5.3. Data**

This study helps address the gaps identified by Berger (2005) and L'Étang (2005), who state that little is known about the day-to-day practices of PRPs and how decisions are made within the dominant coalition/s. The study examines how, in practice, PRPs consult with their clients to decide media messages and seeks to discover who influences whom in constructing and disseminating the organisation's media strategy.

This research explored the research questions by following one public relations practitioner confronting one PR crisis from initial discussions with the client around how to present the situation to the media, to addressing "leaks" to the media by the CEO of the client company, to resolution of the situation for the time being. This chapter tracks the situation with the intention of shedding a fresh light on the consultancy-client relationship.

### **5.4. The interactions: findings**

As mentioned, the interactions involve one public relations practitioner in New Zealand as he handles the media and a client during a period of financial and structural crisis in the client's organisation. During the study, the client company is millions of dollars in debt and its share price has dropped dramatically. Names and some details have been changed or omitted to protect the identity of those involved.

The relationship between the client and the PRP is relatively new and until now the CEO has been accustomed to giving all media interviews. Now, however, the PRP wishes to make the CEO less accessible to the media as, he says, there is little good news to talk about. He told the researcher, "We want to dial down the noise, and try to make Adam [the CEO] less available so he's not commenting on everything".

### 5.4.1. Interaction 1

It is Monday morning at the central city public relations agency where Craig is a partner. The first interaction involves a phone conversation between Craig and the client company's in-house legal counsel, Paul. Craig is checking what he calls the "position" concerning the announcement of an investigation launched by the Trustee into the company's finances. As the announcement was unexpected, there will be media interest and he needs to be able to respond. As the transcript shows (see Appendix 2 for the transcription key), a key motivation for Craig is to ensure that the message he gives the media is the same one that is coming from within the company. We only hear Craig's side of the conversation, but it is clear that he wishes to align (Tannen, 1996) himself with the management's view of the situation.

In this interaction, as previously mentioned, Craig is ensuring he understands the message Paul wants proffered if media approach him about the investigation. Craig may have his own ideas, but he wishes to establish what the legal representative wants and rehearses those ideas with him before checking whether he is right: "Would that be the way you'd wanna put it?" (figure 5.1, image 1). He pauses briefly between the "you" and the "d" and then before "want" indicating a slight uncertainty. This may be because he has used "we" when describing the message's content (again possibly as an alignment strategy) but "you" when assigning the task of deciding that content. Before he receives an answer, the call is cut off and Craig has to ring Paul back (figure 5.1, image 2). However, once he reconnects, Paul obviously begins explaining the situation and over the next minute Craig listens responding to the information with three different continuers "mm", "right" and "okay" (figure 5.1, image 3).

Specifically, a continuer encourages the speaker to carry on and is one of the three types of "backchannel" that Saville-Troike (1989, p. 149) identifies: Passive acknowledgement, active encouragement to continue or indication that a change of topic or speaker is called for. In figure 5.1, image 4 we see use of Saville-Troike's third type of backchannel communication. Here the "okay" is more emphatic than the previous one and is quickly followed by a "yeah so", perhaps indicating Craig understands what Paul is saying and wants to take over the turn, which he does. Paul has been explaining the situation, but Craig wants to know what can be said "publicly" to the media. He then repeats the reason for the call in figure 5.1, image 5 (as the call was interrupted and he had to start again) to make sure the message is clear.



so: the the position is ba:sically (0.4)  
'cos we've been focussed on other  
things we (0.2) probably didn't keep  
the trustees as informed as we should?  
(1.0) would that be the way you(.)d  
(0.5) wanna put it?



(7.6) you still there? (10.4) hhhh  
(10.2) ye:ah I dunno what happened  
the:re



(9.1) ((breathy cough)) (1.9) mmm  
(10.7) right (15.4) °mm okay.°



(12.4) okay (0.6) yeah so- but just (.)  
publicly I mean if I: do get some  
media calls



it's basically (0.2) uh::m (0.8) that  
that they just weren't awa:re of some  
of the things that were going on in  
the background? (1.7) or we hadn't  
made them awa:re (2.9) mm (3.5)  
yeah.



(6.1) no we:ll (1.4) no th- they're not  
part of the operational day-to-day  
 business ahhre theyhh<sub>ç</sub> ((laughs))  
 (8.1) yeah-



(15.9) °but you disagree with° (8.4)  
 mm (0.7) okay ((laughs)) (1.8) okay  
 (2.6) ye:ah alright



(0.9) okay (4.1) yeah- (3.6) a:nd the  
 expectation is that you'll have this  
resolved by the end of the week?



or<sub>ç</sub> (5.0) °okay-° (8.1) mm ((laughs))  
 (1.3) what's new about that?



(4.0) alright (4.1) OKAY (1.2) alright  
 (0.1) thanks Paul

**Figure 5.1:** Checking the media message. See Appendix 2 for the transcription key.

Lines 5 and 6 of figure 5.1, image 5 and those accompanying figure 5.1, images 6 and 7 are all backchannel response, which appear to have a supportive function. Each lets the speaker, Paul, know that Craig understands him but does not wish to take over the turn. Craig's laughter is another sign of his alignment with Paul in this situation. His backchannel responses once more become quicker; his "okay" in figure 5.1, image 8 is firm, emphatically signalling his understanding and is followed by a "yeah", perhaps expressing that he has understood the message and wants to take over the turn. Kjellmer (2009) argues the backchannel responses "yeah" and "okay" have a higher degree of interruption than "mmm", "uhm" or "uh huh".

Craig takes over the turn and checks how long it may take them to deal with the current crisis. Obviously, they then discuss humorously what might happen if that does not succeed. The call is then brought to an end, with the final "okay" again being louder and more emphatic than the preceding "alright".

During this conversation, Craig orients himself physically towards the phone for most of the time; he barely moves as he listens to Paul. The lack of movement is consistent with observations by McNeill (1992, p. 89), who noted that the "passive comprehender" role does not evoke gestures to anything like the same degree as the active producer". Craig changes position just before he indicates through the backchannel that he wishes to speak (figure 5.1, image 3). Hence when he says, "okay, yeah so, but just publicly" he is sitting up and leaning on his right elbow.

In an interview after the conversation, Craig explained that Paul wanted the media message concerning the investigation to centre on explaining that the Trustee, who was involved in launching the investigation, is not informed of everything that goes on day-to-day at the company, as that is not how its role is seen by management; but that if the Trustee had realised that there were announcements in the pipeline that would ease the company's financial position, it may not have acted as it did. Management feels frustrated by this turn of events as they argue it is "not like anyone would be surprised by the fact that we've got some financial pressure – everyone knows that".

In this exchange, it is clear the power is located with the client, represented in this instance by Paul, the company's in-house legal counsel. Craig's question, "would that be the way you'd want to put it?" makes sure he understands how the client wants the

issues facing the company presented to the media, and thus assigns the final decision-making with the client. His wish to align himself with Paul, shown by his backchannel signalling using non-verbal vocalizations such as “mmm” and “uhm” and verbal vocalisations “yeah” and “okay” as well as laughter, also assign control to the client. This interaction illustrates what both Berger (2005) and Edwards (2009) argue, that the position of the PRP in an organisation depends on the attitude of the dominant coalition/s towards them. Paul is part of higher management and has the ear of the CEO and, therefore, it is important for Craig to align with Paul and by extension to others in the dominant coalition/s. Further, when considering the positions taken by Craig and Paul, the interaction could convincingly be described using Tannen (1996) as an employer-employee exchange rather than an exchange of equals.

#### **5.4.2. Interaction 2**

The next day (Tuesday) Craig talks on the phone to Adam, the CEO. He is again rehearsing media messages, but this time about the company’s position as a whole rather than just in relation to the investigation.

In this interaction, Craig argues that the company needs to stress that the debt is because of an historical situation that is largely resolved. He makes his point using several persuasive techniques. First, in figure 5.2, images 1 and 2, Craig rehearses for Adam the forms of words that could be used with a journalist. He announces this strategy in line 1 of figure 5.2, image 1 with “we can say”. He then employs the discourse marker “well” possibly as a response to an imaginary question by a journalist.

The “uhmm” in line 1 of figure 5.2, image 2 marks a slight delay before Craig goes into the substance of his message and employs his most persuasive technique - repetition. He does a slight repair in the form of repeating “that’s”, but then he is into his stride. He uses three phrases that all start with the same words, “and that’s”. Tannen (1990) argues that hearers respond to familiar forms of discourse as much as they do the words used, and that patterns aid understanding. Repetition is also one of the most effective patterns in persuasive speaking and can encourage rapport, which would be one of Craig’s aims during this conversation with the CEO (Doorley & Garcia, 2011).

Craig believes an effective argument for the company is that everything the management has done, such as redoing the audit and putting the subsidiary into

receivership, is perfectly understandable in light of what has happened historically. This is what Edwards (2009) referred to as the power of PRPs to present a normalised version of reality which reinforces their organisation's position, in this case reassuring shareholders and the public that the events inside the company are not a surprise and the subsequent actions are an effective response.

In figure 5.2, image 3, Craig addresses Adam directly. Here we see slight hesitation; the repetition of “and” and “I” are not for persuasive effect but delay, as it will be important to Craig to get this part of the pitch right to ensure Adam's support for the message. He also mitigates the pitch with the restrictor “just”, as he is treading carefully. Therefore, it is not surprising when he sums up what he has written - that the removal of a subsidiary organisation makes the company's future path clearer - he ends on an upward inflection, like a question. He then uses the discourse marker “and”, which may be an indication that he wishes to continue, but is not emphatic and is cut off. Adam obviously comes in here with a brief comment to which Craig responds with a “yeah so” (figure 5.2, image 5) that indicates he is ready for another turn, but he is again interrupted by Adam. He then repeats the “yeah so” and quickly goes on with his message.

The “so” here, in figure 5.2, image 5, is a discourse marker, acting to connect what has gone before (the message) to the summary of what this actually means (Schourup, 1999, p. 230). To sum up, Craig uses a similar construction to that at the beginning of this extract, “we can almost say, well” as if he is about to address the journalist and then delivers his summary “yeah look, al[l] all that news is awful uhmm, and it's really bad, but it's historically bad”. This is almost the same message as that shown in figure 5.2, image 1, which begins “it's almost like we can say, well, yeah, we knew all that crap was coming, because it it's kind of historical anyway”. By repeating his message, Craig is likely to get more acceptance for it (Weiss, 1969).





it's almost like we can say we:ll (0.6)  
 yeah we knew all that crap was  
 coming because it's kind of  
 historical anyway:



(0.5) uhm and that's that's the stuff  
 we were trying to clear the decks  
 with and that's why we had to redo  
 our our audit, and that's why we had  
 to account for ((the subsidiary)),



(0.7) a- and I- I don't know if you had  
 a look at the: (0.5) what I wrote but I  
 just put in there



I- in in some ways getting rid of ((the  
 subsidiary)) gives you more  
clarityhhh? an-



(1.8) yeah so (2.8) yeah so we can  
almost say well yeah look al- all that  
 news is awful (0.4) uhm and it's  
really bad but it's historically bad

**Figure 5.2:** Constructing the media message. See Appendix 2 for the transcription key.

During this interaction, Craig's non-verbal actions are used to aid him in putting his argument. There is a clear divide between the gesture of the past (a sweep with his right hand across his body and towards his left shoulder as in figure 5.2, images 1 and 5) (Kendon, 2004; McNeill, 1992) and that indicating events are ongoing or in the future (a right-handed wrist roll away from the body as in figure 5.2, images 2 and 4) (Mittelberg, 2008). Therefore, it appears he is using gesture as an integral part of his communication, despite not being seen by his co-participant. This is consistent with Susan Goldin-Meadow (2003), who found that speakers still gesture even when they cannot see who they are talking to, as gesture can have a communicative role for speakers, helping them to form their thoughts and words. When Craig is approaching Adam about the media release he has written (figure 5.2, image 3), as we saw earlier, he is keen to get Adam's approval of his message. His gesture appears to help him focus. On the words "what I wrote", he seems to grip the body of words while making two quick beats (figure 5.2, image 3) for emphasis.

In this interaction, Craig is shaping and producing the texts to bring about a certain interpretation of the events in the company. In order for confidence in the company to be restored, Craig believes it is crucial that a narrative is put forward that shows what is going on is "hardly surprising", because as he says, "we knew all this crap was coming". Craig's view backs up what Edwards (2009) says that public relations texts, if they are successful, normalise what is going on.

It seems, at this point, that Craig has more influence than in the previous interaction. He is making suggestions about how to present the company's situation to the media and Adam is listening. In fact, Adam appears to accept Craig's approach to disseminating the company's message, but it soon becomes clear that he has not heeded Craig's advice to "dial the noise down". Later that day and the following morning, two interviews appear, one on a blog and one in a business newspaper. Craig tells Paul, the company's in-house counsel, over the telephone that he knew nothing about the interviews and would not have advised conducting them. Craig rings Adam and arranges to meet him with the intention of ensuring his media appearances are more tightly controlled.

### **5.4.3. Interaction 3**

The third interaction is from that meeting. Craig, CEO Adam and in-house counsel Paul are discussing media strategy in general, and specifically what the best approach would

be regarding the release of the annual result. The meeting is in Adam's office, which has a desk and two sofas. Here proxemics – or the distance people choose to position themselves to one another – (Hall, 1963) could be argued to be as important as the verbal mode. During the entire exchange Adam sits behind his desk, which faces down the length of the office, at some distance from Craig and Paul, who sit on two sofas. The placement of a desk in a closed position, where the desk is placed between the occupant and the visitor, is more likely to make visitors feel uncomfortable than if the desk is in an open position against the wall with nothing between the occupant and the visitor (Campbell, 1979; Morrow & McElroy, 1981; Zweigenhaft, 1976). This position confers authority on Adam, as it is the equivalent position to head of the table. It also puts a barrier between him and the others.

Craig has two aims at the meeting: to clarify the media strategy ahead of the release of the annual result the following day and to get buy-in from the CEO for a more prudent approach to the media. Adam appears open to the suggestion he make himself less available to journalists, saying just before this excerpt begins that he is “sick of” the media. Craig offers to step in as the spokesperson, but mentions that there is an important interview the CEO should do with a radio journalist first. This compromise opens the door for Adam to admit that he has also been in contact with a different radio journalist.

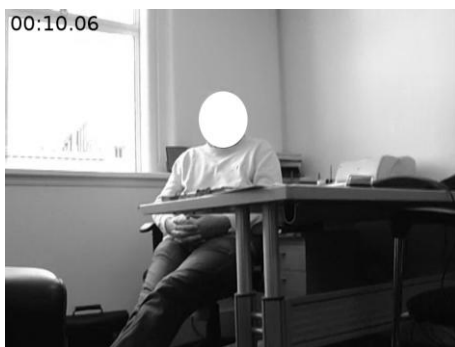
In this extract, Craig has moved from suggesting that he field all the media calls, to accepting that Adam do it, but on the understanding that he does not talk about anything other than the agreed media messages, “the results stuff and that”. All other subjects should be left alone. The techniques he uses to try to achieve his strategic aim of “dialling down” Adam are worthy of examination.

In figure 5.3, image 1, Craig repeats the modifier “just” when making his suggestion that if Adam is “sick of the media” he should allow him, Craig, to field all the media calls: “just let me do it”, “just put me in the middle of it”. By using the restrictor “just” he downplays the significance of the suggestion. Adam appears to agree until it becomes apparent that he will need to be interviewed about the results. But Craig makes it clear (figure 5.3, image 4) where the parameters lie, “I mean just doing the results stuff and that, I mean if you want to do that, that's fine. But let's put that other crap away”.



C: Just going back t- before though i- if you're (0.1) sick of the media then jus- (0.2) let me do it? (0.4) just (1.0) 'ust put me in the middle [of it]

A: [ oh ] don't



A: worry I bloody [will]

C: [an- ] I- I'll jus- (0.5) having said that though ((journalist)) from ((radio station)) does want to talk to you abhout the rehsult this ahfternoon hehe=



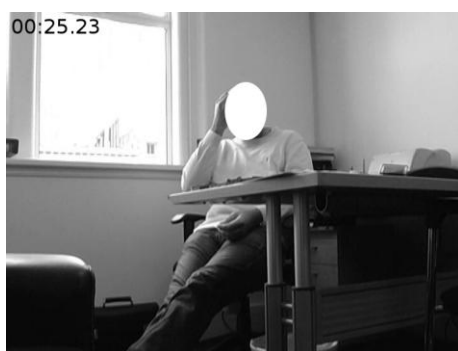
A: =oh yeah and so does uhm (0.2)what's his name from uhh ((radio station))

C: (0.6) oh okay

A: °yeah he sent me an email°=



C: =but I mean just doing the results stuff and that (0.7) °I mean° if you want to do that that's fine but let's put all this other crap away.=



A: =WELL no I don't

C: (0.8) or do you want me to do it<sub>i</sub>=

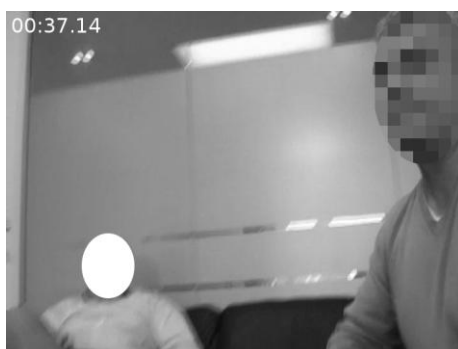
A: =I don't know whether it's  
necessary (0.2) Paul<sub>i</sub> (0.7) °mmm°



P: (1.4) well there's nothing<sub>i</sub>to say  
about the result=

A: =the only thing [is when you  
when you hide] from=

C: [(now) (0.4) it-  
it- (0.3) but-]



A: =you've got to be careful  
be[cause] when you hide from these  
things=

C: [yeah ]



A: =and you don't front up publicly  
and talk about it then subsequently  
(0.7) you're sort of (0.5) ta:rred with  
hiding?

**Figure 5.3:** Clarifying the media strategy. See Appendix 2 for the transcription key.

Even here, where he is issuing a directive not to talk about other subjects, he mitigates it with the use of “let’s”, which invites collaboration and maximises connectedness and partnership. This is in line with West (1995), who examined existing research into females and males in conversation. She discovered that women were more likely than men to maintain accord in conversation. One of the ways they did this was through the use of directives that minimised distinctions or hierarchies between themselves and those they were in conversation with. The women tended to use “let’s”, suggesting collaboration. As maintaining a consensus is one of the skills of a public relations practitioner, it is not surprising that Craig is very adept at it and uses the most effective techniques.

In response to the directive, Adam at first expresses doubt that there is much to say about the result (figure 5.3, image 5). However, he changes his tune in figure 5.3, image 6 when Paul, the in-house counsel, agrees that there is “nothing to say”. Adam then explains his concern that if he is perceived to be reluctant to “front up publicly” (figure 5.3, image 8) that people will think he is “hiding”. He uses the word “hide” three times, finally saying that if you don’t talk you are “sort of tarred with hiding”. His use of the word “tarred” is considered as he pauses just before it. It conjures up an image of public punishment and humiliation, and shows sensitivity on the part of Adam that not “fronting up” will elicit a negative, mob-like reaction from the media and that any refusal will “stick” to his reputation.

Non-verbally Craig is using various behaviours associated with rapport (Matsumoto, Frank & Hwang, 2013). He is sitting forward with his notes in front of him, his legs and arms are uncrossed and he makes regular eye contact throughout. As he says, “Just let me do it” he sweeps his right hand across his body from the left as if sweeping the problem away (figure 5.3, image 1). At the same time his gaze is on Adam and his head is shaking as if to say, “It is not a problem”. He repeats the gestures again as he says, “Just put me in the middle of it”. Adam is sitting back in his chair with his legs stretched out and his hands in his lap (figure 5.3, images 2-5). He looks relaxed, but for the entire interaction Adam sits behind his desk. It is also clear that Adam is unsure about whether he should talk to the media. When Craig gives his directive (figure 5.3, image 4) that if Adam speaks to the media he should “put all that other crap away”, Adam frowns and rubs his forehead (figure 5.3, image 5) as if struggling with an idea and replies, “Well no I don’t” – together these all express a doubt. Whether the doubt is

about Craig being the spokesperson or about the need to speak to the media at all, is not clear.

However less than a minute later, just as Craig believes he has got the agreement of both the CEO and the in-house counsel about who should speak and what should be said, Adam admits he has been told by the board of directors not to speak to the media. Paul adds that Adam has been told to send out the result “and turn off your cell phone”. Considering that this revelation comes around 30 minutes into a meeting that has concentrated on what should or should not be said to the media, it is surprising that Adam and Paul have delayed mentioning it. At first Craig, who is writing a note, does not respond. Then after Paul adds, “turn off your cell phone”, Craig looks up from his notebook and asks Adam whether he has annoyed his board. He is actually aware that Adam’s recent media appearances have annoyed the board of directors, but is not aware that they have banned him from speaking. Adam clearly does not wish to discuss whether or not he has annoyed the board, answering Craig, “No, they just have a different view than you do”.

The knowledge that he has been banned from speaking to the media may be the reason why Adam feels more comfortable being separated from the other two behind his desk. First, he is conscious that it is interviews he gave explicitly against the advice of Craig that led to the ban, and second he is mindful that Paul, the in-house counsel, is aware of the board’s instruction which Adam believes could lead to him being “tarred with hiding”.

The revelation renders the earlier discussions almost meaningless. However, it may be because both Paul and Adam realise the importance of the news media that they have failed, until now, to inform Craig. For example, Paul says at one point, “It would be unusual to put out your annual result and then not have any media”. He suggests that Craig explain to a particular board member that the statements to the media will be “kept very narrow and we’re going to be talking about positives”.

When Craig arrives at his office and telephones the board member, it immediately becomes clear that Adam is not going to be cleared to talk to the media and that they wish Craig to field all media calls, which he agrees to do, although he adds that “shutting him [Adam] off completely also sends a rather odd signal”. He requests that

he be allowed to “put it in the context of there’s more coming”. So, while he says he is happy to carry out their wishes, he adds that this change of strategy, of Adam not speaking to the media, will need managing. This solution may resolve the issue in the board’s mind for the time being, but Craig is aware that it will cause problems in his relations with journalists unless he can explain it as a temporary situation with a promise they will have access to the CEO in the future.

## **5.5. Discussion**

Craig’s most serious difficulty in all these interactions was Adam, the CEO’s, habit of speaking off-the-cuff to the media. Therefore, while Craig was counselling Adam to be cautious about giving interviews, as he said “there is nothing good to talk about” at the moment, Adam was afraid his reputation would be damaged if he “hides”. The board, on the other hand, viewed Adam’s loquaciousness as potentially very damaging and it is clear that the decision to remove Adam as the company’s spokesman was made without Craig’s involvement.

This situation, specifically the reaction of the main participants to it, may illustrate one reason why those in the dominant coalition sometimes choose to ignore public relations advice (Gregory & Willis, 2013; Moloney, 2012): when it clashes with personal ambition. While Adam may have understood that there was no good news to impart to the media, he believed he personally would be damaged by not agreeing to requests for interviews. The board members, on the other hand, were more interested in the image of the company as a whole than they were in the individual reputation of the CEO, or any difficulty posed for Craig in Adam’s not being available for media interviews.

Such issues of competing dominant coalition/s interests are highlighted by Berger (2005, p. 12), who described decision-making in large organisations as “porous”. That is, multiple and possibly competing dominant coalitions can meet outside official meeting times and at sites other than the office, leading to so-called final decisions being subject to alteration, sometimes significantly and without the knowledge of the PRP.

In public relations theory, it is accepted that in order to be successful, initiatives by the PRP must have senior management’s backing. This can be achieved either as part of the dominant coalition or through having a champion in the dominant coalition (Berger &



Meng, 2014; Edwards, 2009; Gregory & Willis, 2013). However, what is illustrated here is equally valid, that when the PRP is faced with competing dominant coalitions, which senior managers support your initiatives proves to be equally crucial. In this case the CEO, with whom Craig worked most closely, was overridden and silenced by the board.

This example demonstrates that the dominant coalition/s can contain members with vastly divergent views. For example, the client company contained a range of approaches to dealing with media messaging among senior managers. Initially Adam saw himself as the spokesperson and had ideas about which journalists to approach. He appeared prepared to listen to Craig's counsel, but often ignored it. Even when his position as spokesperson was challenged by the board, he was reluctant to let it go. Paul too was attentive to Craig and prepared to give him valuable advice about the thinking within the company. The board also listened to Craig's advice, but its members disregarded it at this time. In fact, by the time Craig spoke to the board member, their decision that Adam must be prevented from speaking to the media had already been made, without recourse to Craig. Despite not enthusiastically supporting the decision, Craig was expected to implement it.

What happened in the situation described here supports Berger's (2005) finding that while the dominant coalition/s may find the strategic counsel given by PRPs useful and may sometimes take it on board, they do not believe it is the PRP's principal role. In the opinion of management, the primary responsibility of PRPs is to provide a set of deliverables (texts such as media releases, speeches, statements) that require technical skills. In other words once decisions are made (with or without the involvement of the PRP) management expects the PRP to convey those messages to its publics in a way that is positive for the organisation.

## **5.6. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to examine an example of a public relations practitioner negotiating with a client over media messaging and, through the analysis, to discover how much influence the PRP had in the process. It studied three real interactions between a PRP and a client at a time of financial crisis in the client's organisation, thus addressing a gap in the literature surrounding how public relations practitioners actually interact with clients to design and set media strategy.

All relevant communicative modes were analysed, to determine how each mode was being employed in specific situations. It was thus possible to describe where the power was located in each of these interactions – who influenced whom - and therefore answer the question of who was actually setting the media message.

At the time, Craig, Adam and Paul were involved in managing an important news story in New Zealand. In relation to his client and the media messages, the data suggest that Craig sees himself as playing a management role and that he is consulted by senior managers. He also plays a technical role, as his technical expertise is needed to shape and construct the media releases and statements that are being released by the company. For Gregory and Willis (2013), both strategic and technical expertise were important for consultants in establishing and building ongoing strategic conversations with clients through which they could contribute insights and provide solutions. Craig told the researcher that this dual position is a common one for PRPs hired as consultants. In this instance, Craig's advice to senior managers was to suggest that the company's actions, including putting its subsidiary into liquidation, meant it was in a better position for the future.

According to the Excellence Study, the fact that Craig plays a management role should mean he is more likely to influence policy around the media messaging. However, the data demonstrate that while Craig participates in discussing how the issues should be explained to the media, he has limited influence over the final decisions around content, timing of the release, and choice of spokesperson.

In the first interaction, Craig shows he wishes to align himself with Paul and his interpretation of the situation as well as receive valuable specialist and background information. According to Tannen (1996), this could be described as an employer/employee interaction and not one of equals, locating the power with the client and not the PRP. The following day it becomes clear that Craig has failed to reign in Adam's tendency to speak his mind to journalists. This failure later leads to Craig being unable to persuade the board to lift the ban on Adam accepting interviews following the publication of the annual result, and he is named as the official spokesperson. Despite being unenthusiastic about the board's decision, Craig is expected, as the consultant, to

implement it. The advantage for Craig is that, as the official spokesperson, he would have an increased ability to construct meanings around the events (Edwards, 2009).

If we view the interactions through the lens of critical discourse analysis, we see this case study provides empirical evidence that the public relations practitioner- client relationship is one in which the PRP struggles to gain influence over the client from a position of relative powerlessness.

One important technique that Craig uses when he communicates with the client – modality - illustrates that he is aware of the power asymmetry in the relationship. Modality shows how speakers see themselves in relation to others as well as their commitment to what they say. Low modality is shown through the use of hedging (I think, I believe) that avoids being direct or specific, whereas high modality is seen in constructions such as “I will” (Machin & Mayr, 2012). By considering Craig’s use of modals in the first two interactions, where he is negotiating media messaging with the client (figures 5.1 and 5.2), we can see the strategies he uses to manage and attempt to overcome what he believes is his limited authority.

In the first interaction, Craig is talking to the client’s legal counsel and is attempting to find out where the client stands on the Trustee’s decision to launch an investigation into the company’s financial affairs. His language is modally complex. In figure 5.1, image 1, he employs the modal adverb “probably”, as in “we probably didn’t keep the trustees as informed as we should?”. This indicates uncertainty, either about whether “we” did keep the client informed or about whether this should be the “position” that the company admits to publicly. He also uses what Fairclough (2003, p. 169) refers to as “hypothetical modality” for the question at the end of this section (figure 5.1, image 1) “would that be the way you’d wanna put it”. This is a more tentative form of words than a direct question “is that how you’d put it”.

Craig also uses hedging (basically) and padding language, such as “some of the things” in this interaction as he cautiously attempts to find out how much he should say in media messages about management not keeping the Trustee informed. The vagueness of padding is often used to soften the impact of what is said (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 192). In figure 5.1, image 5, he says:

It's basically uhm that that they just weren't aware of some of the things that were going on in the background? Or we hadn't made them aware.

Craig is rightly cautious, as this is a sensitive situation about responsibility. He puts forward two alternatives. In the first part of the sentence the wording is that the Trustee was not informed, but no mention is made about who was supposed to keep them informed. In the second part of the sentence, the responsibility is clearly laid at the door of management. Figure 5.1, image 6, shows he has received a response to his inquiry and an explanation has been given for why the Trustee was not informed.

In figure 5.1, images 7 and 8, Craig switches from the inclusive “we” to the exclusive “you”, making it clear that decisions about the company’s financial future are not part of his remit. Earlier in the interaction Craig had used “I” when referring to media calls, which are his responsibility. Here he uses “you’ll”, a contraction of “you will”, which carries high modality suggesting he believes the legal counsel has what Fairclough (1995b, p. 167) refers to as the “socially ratified power of prediction”. That is, the legal counsel is in a position of knowledge to be able to predict what will happen in a way that Craig is not. However, it could be argued that Craig is still hedging, as he precedes “you’ll have this resolved” with “the expectation is”. This nominalisation of the verb “to expect” reduces the modality from the certain “will” to less certain “expect that you will”. We are also not told who is expecting the situation is resolved: the Trustee, the bank, management?

In the second interaction, Craig is talking to the CEO, Adam, on the phone about how to best explain the company’s current financial situation. Craig’s language continues with a mixture of high and low modality. He starts the interaction with “it’s almost like we can” and “it’s kind of historical anyway” (figure 5.2, image 1) showing hedging and lowered modality, and therefore uncertainty.

In figure 5.2, image 2, however, we see higher modality as Craig is rehearsing how he would explain what has happened to the media, and therefore is theoretically not talking to his employer, but to his equals in the media. Here he uses the modality of obligation (Fairclough, 1995b, p.151). According to Fairclough (1995b) using the “we had to” construction implies there was some form of external compulsion that has forced this action, which in this case Craig suggests were the “historical” problems. In explaining why certain actions “had” to be taken, Craig draws on the idiom “clear the decks”,

which means to get rid of unwanted or unnecessary things, originally from the deck of a ship, in order to be ready for action. This use of a military expression might indicate Craig recognises a feeling of embattlement on the part of the company.

At the end of the interaction (figure 5.2, image 5), after explaining what he would say to the media, Craig displays slightly increased confidence as he repeats the message made at the start of the interaction. Now he reduces the instance of hedging marginally to, “we can almost say” and “it’s historically bad”.

Following Edwards (2009, p. 270), it is proposed that while this chapter highlights only one case study, it has the “potential to inform understandings” of how power is exercised in PRP-client relationships. What the case study shows is that the PRP carried enough authority to ensure he was consulted about media messaging, but in reality, and it was clear he was aware of this, the power to act was always with the client. Therefore, the data presented here suggest that PRPs may advise on media messaging, but the decision on whether, when and how to use the messages, who should communicate them and to whom they should be communicated lies with the client, with little of decision-making around these questions being delegated to the PRP. Further, once decisions are made, whether they support them or not, public relations practitioners are expected to use their specialist skills to communicate those decisions and their implications in the best interests of the client company.

The following chapter moves the study into the newsroom and analyses two interactions between journalists and their public relations sources. It demonstrates the mixture of resentment and need that characterises the relationship and highlights journalists’ increasing difficulties in accessing information, even in publicly funded organizations, without going through public relations spokespeople. Earlier research (as mentioned previously) has shown this is problematic for the quality of the news product. However, this research provides new evidence that it may also be problematic at an individual level for journalists and PRPs, requiring them to adopt a working mode of opacity and duplicity in their dealings. The paper provides empirical evidence of the practice of what a PRP told the researcher was “telling the truth to journalists, but telling it rather creatively”, and how it manifests in actual interactions, both written and verbal. A transcription key is included in the appendices (Appendix 2).

## Chapter Six: **Negotiating the news: Interactions behind the curtain of the journalism-public relations relationship**

### **6.0. Introduction**

Both journalists and PRPs downplay their involvement with the other (Crikey.com, March 15, 2010; Davis, 2000a; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008; Peterson, 2001). Yet, as early as the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century journalists were accepting material provided by public relations practitioners (PRPs) while at the same time resenting it (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003). The relationship's tension lies in a rarely acknowledged interdependence (Reich, 2006) predicated on both practices being unwilling to admit that they are now so intertwined that neither could function in its current form without the other (Davis, 2013; McNair, 2011). Further, Davis (2003) argued that journalism and public relations were most effective when the links between the two remain hidden. Hence, public relations does not wish to concede it continues to need journalism's ability to reach the public on a mass scale and the third party endorsement assumed to be provided by gaining (independent) editorial. At the same time, journalism would prefer not to admit it needs help to fill editorial space from public relations facilitating access to sources and providing pre-packaged information (Davis, 2000a; Ericson *et al.*, 1989; Fishman, 1980; Franklin, 2011; Gans, 1979; Matthews, 2013).

Sensitivities arise on both sides for reasons of professional integrity. For journalists, there is a reluctance to be forthcoming about just how much they depend on public relations' materials as this reliance clashes with their perceived fourth estate role (Louw, 2010), which demands professional autonomy to carry out their watchdog function (Davis, 2013). For public relations, admitting the extent of their input into the news media would mean losing the advantage of third party endorsement.

This study attempts to shine light on this powerful, but enigmatic, relationship, the direct interactions of which have been largely unexamined by researchers. It explores two examples of journalists' interactions with public relations sources, one via email the other face-to-face, captured on video, during fieldwork in two newsrooms. The latter is an example of data that before now have been unavailable to researchers. The data are used to examine how much agency journalists have in their dealings with public relations sources, and what social practices they employ when negotiating the "uncovering" of a story with a source.

### **6.1. The journalist-source relationship**

The recognition by scholars of the importance of the journalist-source relationship on the content of news has led to increasing amounts of research. Recent work considering journalists' relations with political sources, relevant here as the two interactions involve local authorities (Davis, 2013; Davies, 2008; Louw, 2010; McNair, 2011), concluded there was more promotional activity aimed at journalists than ever. McNair (2011) wrote that as journalists' role in mediating between politicians and the public had grown, so had the role of the public relations intermediaries, meaning these days it would be unthinkable to venture into the political arena without professional public relations back-up. Consequently, according to Davis (2013), public relations increasingly attempted to control access to newsworthy information, public figures and some meetings.

Observers have suggested journalists have become more susceptible to pre-packaged public relations material in light of an expansion of media outlets online (McNair, 2011), coupled with an overall reduction in the number of full-time journalists. On average journalists were now expected to write three times as much copy as a decade ago (Starkman, 2010; Waldman, 2011), which has afforded greater opportunities for skilled PRPs to present journalists with pre-formulated texts, and hence shape the news agenda. Journalists are not unaware of the techniques of media management and some resent their vulnerability to it. Political coverage now sometimes includes critiques of events or campaign strategies, highlighting politicians' attempts to influence the news agenda (Hager, 2014; Louw, 2010; McNair, 2011).

McNair (2011) noted a shortage of research in the field focusing on local government. Those who have carried out such work (Franklin, 1986, 2004; Franklin & Murphy, 1991, 1998; O'Neill & O'Connor, 2008) concluded that the advent of poorly staffed free newspapers had led to a reliance on local government public relations practitioners to provide copy, which was almost invariably positive for their councils.

More generally, research focusing on the journalist-source relationship has often examined the result of the relationship, i.e. the texts, rather than the processes and interactions that constitute the relationship itself (Burton, 2007; Davis, 2000a, 2003; Franklin, 2011; Lewis *et al.*, 2008; O'Neill & O'Connor, 2008). Very little research has

been carried out ethnographically into how PRPs and journalists interact in practice, although studies have used interviews to shed light on what Reich (2006, p. 497) calls “the generally unapproachable point of transaction at which information is passed between sources and reporters” (Franklin, 2003; Hess & Waller, 2008; Lewis *et al.*, 2008; Oakham & Kirby, 2006; Reich, 2006; Sallot & Johnson, 2006b; Sterne, 2010). McNair (2011, p. 4) wrote that face-to-face meetings by their nature are hidden from the analyst, requiring “methodologically difficult and costly empirical research to uncover their secrets”. He added that access to these interactions could uncover the “potential gap between the public and the private in political rhetoric” (McNair, 2011, p. 4).

A selection of ethnographic studies across the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s discovered that newswriters’ routine practices led to their dependence on official sources from recognised institutions, such as government or the police (Berkowitz, 1992; Ericson *et al.*, 1989; Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1978; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). Recently, a new generation of ethnographic studies into newsroom practice has been carried out (Boczkowski, 2004; Cotter, 2010; Hannerz, 2004; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Perrin, 2003; Singer, 2004a, 2004b), but few have concentrated on journalists and their sources (Van Hout, 2011; Van Hout & Jacobs, 2008; Van Hout & Macgilchrist, 2010; Velthuis, 2006). Further, there is no evidence of ethnographic-style research focusing on public relations practitioners and journalists’ face-to-face interactions.

## **6.2. Materials and method**

The current study utilised ethnographic methods of data collection involving observation over a period of time in two newsrooms. It is believed to be the first study where data were captured on video allowing the interactions to be replayed and analysed mode by mode, and providing the researcher with unique insights into the current working practices of journalists. Further, while it may be easy to see the product of public relations in media releases and media conferences, it is arguable that most interactions between public relations and journalists go on behind closed doors in briefings, or via phone or email. All names of people have been changed although it is accepted that some individuals may be recognisable to friends and colleagues. The research has ethics approval from the researcher’s university.



### **6.2.1. Critical discourse analysis**

A question for this study is how much influence public relations practitioners have over the journalists with whom they interact. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective is taken (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b; Van Dijk, 1988, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001), as CDA uses analysis of a selected text, set of texts or oral exchanges to evaluate the discursive construction of power. In this framework, language is always used for a purpose and can be employed to control as well as to communicate. Specifically, CDA scholars such as Fairclough (1995b) are concerned with how syntactic features of language hide agency and normalise the actions of the powerful.

This study uses CDA to consider the way power is reproduced and resisted through text and talk in the professional context of interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners. It is argued that by looking at the micro level of the interactions we can better understand how power is distributed between the two practices.

CDA has been criticised by some scholars (see Schegloff, 1997) for not paying enough attention to the details of language, which it was argued should be properly understood before any wider connection or political claim was made. This study accepts some of Schegloff's criticism, but takes it a step further. The analysis of the interactions in the chapter included examining all relevant communicative modes including speech (Jucker, 1986; Schegloff, *et al.*, 1977; Schifffrin, 1987) and non-verbal actions, such as posture and proximity (Goffman, 1964), gaze (Kendon, 1967; Goffman, 1964) and manual gesture (Goldin-Meadow, 2003; McNeill, 1992, 2005). Through the investigation of different modes, the research demonstrates the complicated nature of journalists' relations with public relations practitioners, and the mixture of resentment, distrust and need.

### **6.3. The interactions**

While the two interactions discussed here both involve a journalist and a public relations source, one is an asynchronous email interview and the other is a face-to-face briefing. In both cases, the interactional goals are different for the journalist and the source. Despite not being explicitly expressed, their disparate nature has implications for the interactional process.

The first interaction is the result of a request by online journalist Sally to a PRP at Auckland Transport for information about "how the meeting went". Sally's interactional

goal (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006) is to learn about an event she has been unable to attend between the authority and residents affected by the widening of a road. The PRP at Auckland Transport's goal appears to be to ensure the resulting report carries a positive message about the progress of the road widening.

In the second interaction, a radio reporter, Matt, is expressing his frustration to a council media relations officer, Stuart, about the council's failure to provide a report it has prepared about events surrounding the Rugby World Cup. A secondary, but more important, interactional goal is to discover as much as he can about the report. Stuart's interactional goal is to explain to Matt that he will not get an exclusive, that the report is to be released simultaneously to all media and to ensure Matt will report its findings.

### **6.3.1. Setting of interaction 1**

The first interaction takes place in an online department of a national news organisation in Auckland, New Zealand in November 2011. While the website the department serves is national, this department is dedicated to covering Auckland.

The news editor, Caroline, arrives at the office at 7am. She checks her emails, which include dozens of media releases and advisories, she ensures the competition – broadcast, print and online – is monitored for any stories the department may have missed. Throughout the morning she makes sure the stories on the website are updated or changed regularly to keep the site fresh. Further, as the department's reporters arrive on shift, Caroline briefs them and allocates stories she wishes them to follow up. Reporter Sally was asked the previous day (Monday) to find out about a meeting between Auckland Transport, an arm of the regional council responsible for transport services, and residents living near a planned road expansion. Earlier news reports had covered opposition from residents to the plans, and so it was of interest to discover whether the meeting was able to address their concerns. Sally contacted the public relations practitioner responsible at Auckland Transport and asked to talk to her about what happened at the meeting. However, rather than be interviewed over the telephone, the PRP requested that Sally send a list of questions. Sally told the researcher that the practice of providing a list of questions by email for response by email was “pretty standard” practice with PRPs in many organisations.

They generally, quite a lot of the time, they ask you to email through questions. Like you'll call them and they'll ask you to send through questions and they go and find out from wherever and then send you a written statement back. Yeah, which is kind of time consuming and then you can't just like catch them unexpected.

#### **6.3.1.1. Interaction 1**

This research treats Sally's request for information, the list of questions she sends and the responses from the PRP, as an interaction. It is useful to view it this way as it is commonplace, or as Sally said "standard practice", for such interactions to occur via email rather than over-the-phone or in person.

What adds to its interactive qualities is that the PRP has inserted each answer, which I have put into italics, under the relevant question or questions in Sally's original email, and so it is laid out like a question-and-answer session, or as if turn-taking has taken place. Further, participants in email discussions have been found to perceive themselves as engaged in conversation (Harrison, 2002). In her study of the discourse structure of email discussions, Harrison (2002) discovered that emails between participants were interactionally managed making them resemble a conversation. She wrote, "Email discussions use where possible and adapt where necessary the pre-existing rules of conversation. This is comparable to the way in which the telephone was assimilated as a medium of communication" (Harrison, 2002, p. 246).

Thus the analysis of the email interaction uses conversational analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), because the relevant mode is language and we do not have access to the actors' non-verbal actions. CA was chosen as despite email being a hybrid of oral and written forms of communication (Yates, 2001), it is still a naturally occurring interaction (Iimuro, 2006). Therefore, it is argued, CA is applicable (Harrison, 2002).

From: Sally Hackett

Sent: Monday, 7 November 2011 2:01 p.m.

To: Christina Friendly

Subject: Media query - Te Atatu public meeting

Hi Christina,

Regarding the public meeting at Flanshaw Road School just want to know:

· how the meeting went?

- were concerns raised about the token 10 cents payment for property access? if so, how were these concerns addressed/resolved?
- what, if any, other concerns were raised by residents? how were these addressed?
- what's the next step in the public consultation process?

Thanks for your help.

Sally

Sally Hackett | Digital Reporter | Mass Media |

From: Christina Friendly

Sent: Monday, 7 November 2011 5:50 p.m.

To: Sally Hackett

Cc: Christina Friendly

Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY - TE ATATU

Here you are Sally

Sent from my iPad

Subject: MEDIA INQUIRY - TE ATATU

Sally,

It was a very successful meeting on Saturday with a large turnout and the feedback was that people were generally very positive about the project.

**Answers to your questions below.**

From: Sally Hackett

Sent: Monday, 7 November 2011 2:01 p.m.

To: Christina Friendly

Subject: Media query - Te Atatu public meeting

Hi Christina,

Regarding the public meeting at Flanshaw Road School just want to know:

- how the meeting went?

*188 people attended the meeting on Saturday including representatives of the local board and general election candidates Tau Henare and Phil Twyford. Feedback from*

*those who attended was that the meeting provided a lot of information and they were a lot clearer about the proposed work. They said they appreciated the chance to ask questions, see the proposed plans and talk to expert staff one-on-one.*

- were concerns raised about the token 10 cents payment for property access? if so, how were these concerns addressed/resolved?

*There was very little discussion about the token 10 cents payment, in fact 29 people signed and submitted the agreements giving the surveyors and engineers access to their property. Representatives of Auckland Transport explained to people about the access agreement and re-assured them that they would be given notice if engineers or surveyors needed to go on to their property. They were also told that any visit would only last a short time and there is no intention to park machinery on their property.*

- what, if any, other concerns were raised by residents? how were these addressed?

*Overall people were positive about the road upgrade, the only concerns were around possible disruption to businesses and access to driveways. People thought the proposal for traffic lights at Edmonton and Te Atatu Rd was a good idea.*

- what's the next step in the public consultation process?

*There is now a period of consultation with affected residents and businesses, the detailed design will be finalized in February. Already more than 5000 flyers have been sent out and many people have received personal visits from staff of Auckland Transport. A site office will be set up, regular flyers will be sent out and stakeholder managers will communicate directly with businesspeople and residents who are directly affected.*

Thanks for your help.

Sally

Sally Hackett | Digital Reporter | Mass Media |

**Table 6.1:** Email exchange

### 6.3.1.2. Analysis

This interaction, despite being asynchronous, can be described as a journalistic or news interview, as opposed to a casual conversation or Internet discussion. An interview involves the interviewer asking a question or making a statement that elicits a response from the interviewee. Past research has for the most part examined news interviews that form part of news programmes broadcast on radio or television (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Cohen, 1987; Heritage, 1985; Jucker, 1986). The interaction considered here is not a live broadcast interview, but the interview responses are still for publication in a news story online rather than on air.

The interaction starts with Sally's request for information, which is considered a "dispreferred" action (Iimuro, 2006), as it requires the co-participant to do something for the benefit of the speaker. The request here is framed as a "want statement" (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), which is a direct request, although Sally tones it down by prefixing "just". Sally also gives no explanation, known as an account (Heritage, 1988), for the request. This suggests that Sally's understanding of the PRP's role makes her believe that no account or explanation is necessary and the PRP is obliged to comply with the request (Jalilifar, 2009). Her manner of addressing the PRP with "Hi" and the use of her first name imply familiarity, but also demonstrate the more egalitarian approach taken by Internet users (Harrison, 2002).

At first glance, it appears that the email is simulating an informal oral communication. For example, the first sentence, the request, is incomplete, lacking the "I".

Regarding the public meeting at Flanshaw Road School [I] just want to know

However, Yates and Orlikowski (1993) found incomplete sentences are common in email messages that reproduce and then respond to previous messages. Sally had previously spoken briefly on the phone to the PRP and requested information about the meeting. In the email she is quickly referring to what was said.

The language, syntax and punctuation are as expected. It is unsurprising that while the email has characteristics that are informal and conversational, it has others more typical of written documents. This is because traditional interviews are prepared beforehand, and questions often written down for reference, before being delivered verbally to the

interviewee. In this case, the interview is not a synchronous conversation and so there are notable differences with a more traditional arrangement. In questions two and three Sally has written a follow-up to the initial question. She will not hear the response to the first part of the question, and so has imagined the interviewee's answer in order to frame a follow-up. Journalists are trained to do this when preparing a line of questioning (Sissons, 2006, p. 162), but do not usually give away their follow-up until hearing from the interviewee.

The response from the PRP is also initially conversational, using the informal "Here you are Sally". However, it comes with the subject line MEDIA INQUIRY – TE ATATU, which is repeated in the body of the email, and has been altered from the one used by Sally from a lower case "media query – Te Atatu public meeting" to "MEDIA INQUIRY - TE ATATU". There are two points worth making about this change: It indicates the email has not been written as a straight reply and it shows a difference in perception from what is being asked in the email. Sally's use of the word "query" implies a request for information. It might also hint at opposition to something and/or doubts about the veracity of information such as "she queried the hotel bill", or in this case "she queried Auckland Transport's actions". By reframing the response emphatically as an "INQUIRY", the PRP suggests an official process has been undertaken by which understanding is acquired and doubts (Sally's doubts perhaps) are put to rest.

Already, in the subject line, we are seeing a positive angle being put on the interaction. Sally is then addressed informally by her first name and an introduction to the answers frames (Tuchman, 1978) the meeting as "successful".

It was a very successful meeting on Saturday with a large turnout and the feedback was that people were generally very positive about the project.

**Answers to your questions below.**

This summary sets out how the PRP hopes the rest of the interaction will be interpreted. The answers that follow are placed under the question they refer to and are written in full sentences, often repeating the subject of the question. Hence, in question one to Sally's question "how the meeting went?" the PRP does not respond "it went...", assuming Sally knows what is being referred to. Instead, she writes an answer that could stand on its own without the question.

188 people attended the meeting on Saturday including representatives of the local board and general election candidates Tau Henare and Phil Twyford.

The reason for this strategy lies in the purpose of and audience for the PRP's copy. Clearly, the audience for the PRP's responses is the readership of the story that will be written by Sally. If these answers are going to be used as "quotes", then they need to be able to be cut and pasted into the story; therefore they must make sense on their own. The responses also afford insight into the PRP's strategy to manage the road-widening message. First, the answers are overwhelmingly about procedure, what Auckland Transport has done and will do. They do not address in any detail the residents' reactions. Where reactions are mentioned, they are carefully framed. For example, answer one says people were a lot clearer about the proposed work and appreciated the chance to ask questions. It does not say they were happy with the proposal or the responses to their questions. Answer two diminishes a continuing controversy, which had been highlighted in the media, involving an offer of a 10-cent payment by Auckland Transport to residents for access to their properties. At least one person has previously labelled this amount "insulting". To the first part of the question, the answer says there was little discussion, implying there was little concern from residents. It also finesses the access issue, saying 29 people had opted to sign an agreement allowing "surveyors" and "engineers" access to their property. To the follow-up question, the PRP says people were "re-assured" by being informed they would receive notice when these surveyors and engineers would enter their property. There is also a downgrade of the effect the "machinery" would have on property saying there was no intention to "park" any machinery there. Answer three gives an assessment that "Overall people were positive about the road upgrade" it then moderates "concerns" raised by prefacing them with "only", and vaguely attributes them to "possible disruption". The use of "possible" invites the reader to believe there might not be any disruption. Answer four is about the procedure, which is not surprising as the question asks about it.

The email then includes a couple of appendices, which were also analysed using conversational analysis. The first of these is a bullet-pointed report from the PRP reiterating the main points, the last mentions an individual resident by name. This is the resident who appeared in a negative news story complaining about the token 10 cents payment. It says:



Joe Seumoff was there most of the time, I requested for him to be seated and not to disturb our team, he calmed down and went about talking to the people and taking down email addresses for future correspondence.

Here we see an example of a strategy used by PRPs to “neutralize opposing interests” (Ericson *et al.*, 1989, p. 25). This can include contextualising negatively a source who opposes the client’s point of view or otherwise marginalising or discrediting contradictory or dissenting voices. In this case, the PRP implies that Mr Seumoff’s behaviour was disruptive. The language used infantilises Mr Seumoff, saying he needed to be asked to sit down and not disturb “our team”. The use of “our team” suggests unanimity, and places Mr Seumoff as an outsider to the process. This one sentence suggests Mr Seumoff is not a credible source, is immature and is governed by emotion rather than rationality.

The PRP addresses this message to the journalist who has the power to grant or deny access to the media. However, on this occasion, when Sally discussed Auckland Transport’s responses with Caroline, the editor was concerned they did not have the whole picture and asked Sally to contact a resident who attended the meeting for their reaction.

Cos I mean that’s 29 out of 200, I think, signed. Is it an indication that people are OK with that? I’d rather have a clearer indication from the residents rather than just Auckland Transport spin – of ‘it’s all fine actually’

This indicates an awareness that taking the authority’s word for how it went is problematic. Sally then phones Joe Seumoff. Afterwards, she explained how his answers differed from those of Auckland Transport.

They said it went well and it was a really positive meeting, and they got positive feedback from the residents. Whereas this man says following on from that meeting a new group has been set up in the community which will, he said about 35 people have signed up and they are going to be having a meeting next week.

Sally then tells the editor, Caroline, that the resident was “disappointed with the meeting” and he believed that it was “all PR talk”. When she said he was going to be setting up a community group, Caroline responded, “oh good” because at this point she recognised what the angle or message of the story should be, which she spelt out to Sally.

Because I think we can just, uhm. I think we should go in on them, because it's the majority of people. It's not like 180 people have signed up and a final 20 are just being rabble rousers. You know. I just think we should go in on a uhm, "residents haven't been pacified by a meeting over the blah blah" and then and you've got Auckland Transport stuff already. So we just put the residents on top.

The published article reversed the proposition advanced by the PRP and highlighted residents' objections to the road widening plans. In this case the media's ability to choose whose voices are heard and arrange the material they gather as they wish resulted in a routine bureaucratic source losing out to a non-bureaucratically aligned resident. It should be noted though that it required the editor's intervention and her guidance of the younger reporter to override the public relations message.

### **6.3.2. Setting and background of interaction 2**

The second interaction occurs at an Auckland Council meeting in mid-December 2011 between radio reporter, Matt, who covers Auckland city and his regular council contact and media relations officer, Stuart. They have previously communicated about a report being prepared by the council of its handling of events during the Rugby World Cup earlier in the year. During the tournament, the council faced criticism about overcrowding and transport problems on opening night, and Matt wants to discover what decisions were made by councillors and officials in the build-up to the event, and whether they now accepted mistakes were made.

In September, Matt submitted a request for information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA) through Stuart. He also asked Stuart "to set the clock ticking" as soon as he received the request, as under LGOIMA requests must be answered within 20 working days. When the council failed to respond within the set time, Matt complained to the Ombudsman. On December 8, he was advised by the council that the report would not be released until December 22, one working day prior to the Christmas shutdown. He wrote to the Ombudsman again saying:

I consider this unacceptable. This will be more than 3 months after the initial request (which was already a refinement of an earlier verbal request), and will allow almost no follow-up reporting, of what was a significant event.

Following the Ombudsman's involvement, on December 13 the council agreed to release the information. However, on receiving the report, Matt found vital sections were missing, which the council claimed was for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

### **6.3.2.1. Interaction 2**

Three days later Matt meets Stuart at the council meeting. He explains about the withheld information saying, "So the bad guys have won on the Rugby World Cup front". We enter the interaction as Matt explains the latest development.

In this extract from a longer interaction, it is clear Matt is frustrated with what he sees as the council's underhand tactics to prevent him gaining access to information he believes he is entitled to. He refers to the appeal process as a "game" (figure 6.1, image 3), which is reminiscent of Gans' (1979, p. 116) "dance" and "tug of war" (p. 117) metaphors, to refer to journalists' relations with sources.

After his update (figure 6.1, image 1), he does not look at Stuart, which indicates he has more to say. He looks away and gives a breathy "uh:m" (figure 6.1, image 2). His voice then takes on a singsong character to show how the "game" is played (figure 6.1, images 2 and 3). His words are rhythmic, as he uses repetition to illustrate the back and forth of the complaint process. The intonation or speech melody begins with the words "timing frame" (figure 6.1, image 2) and we hear the lengthening and rise of "now" and it remains constant with the lengthening and rising intonation of the word at the end of each line. The change from the future "will" to the modal "can", shows the progression of the process. The repetition appears to function as an illustration of the tediousness of the to-ing and fro-ing. The melody and intonation abruptly stop as Matt gives his summary in a flat tone (Schiffrin, 1987), "So game's over" (figure 6.1, image 3).

It is more than two seconds before Stuart responds to what is a clear criticism of his organisation. In talk, a space of more than one beat of silence (about a tenth of a second) is interactionally relevant (Liddicoat, 2011), indicating to the co-participant that there is a problem. Part of Stuart's delay may be that Matt is not looking at him to signal he has finished (Kendon, 1967), but it is unlikely to account for the entire postponement. When Stuart does speak, his response suggests discomfort. An audible in-breath is followed by the discourse marker "well" (figure 6.1, image 4), which is often used when speakers sense their response is unlikely to satisfy the hearer (Jucker, 1986; Schiffrin, 1987).



M: I got a ring from the Ombudsmen's office this morning saying the council have to send

S: (0.2) mm

M: (0.3) those reports to the Ombudsmen saying 'this is why we are with-holding them'?



M: (1.4) uh:m and of course the way the timing frame works no:w<sub>l</sub>, the Ombudsmen will conside:r<sub>l</sub>, will respo:nd<sub>l</sub>,



M: the council can respo:nd<sub>l</sub>, into the New Yea:r<sub>l</sub>, so game's over.



S: (2.2) .hh well I think the ((cough)) (0.6) advantage we- I was hoping to give you: (1.4) will pro- will be (1.5) uh overtaken now by the release [of the (0.5) report (.) next week]

M: [ah absolutely (0.4) yeah ye-yeah]

S: (0.6) unfortunately=

M: =yeah=

S: =so I'm sorry about that=



M: =but that's fine but I mean I'm still going to pursue with the Ombudsmen's office because I think the council has actually (1.6) uh::h well in the end they may of course be ruled that they were wrong to withhold it



M: so they've used every (indistinct) they could possibly I'm swinging more of the conspiracy theory than the chaos theory



S: (2.0) I would probably swing to the other one

M: yes

S: uh:m=

M: =I knowhhe

S: (1.1) uh:m so yes so as far as next week is concerned



S: uhm my understanding i- of w- what I have suggested (0.6) is that we bring interested journalists together on Wednesday morning?

M: yeah



S: (0.7) uhh essentially take the chance to (1.2) read the report, digest the report, talk to council spokespeople

M: yeah

S: and then (1.8)



S: it's essentially put on the council website (0.6) for all intents and purposes the embargo's lifted [at ] (0.6) midday on Wednesday °that's when it's all going ahead°

M: [yeah]

**Figure 6.1:** The game's over.

This is one minute 21 seconds of a four-minute interaction. See Appendix 2 for the transcription key.

Perhaps because of this, Stuart next uses the parenthetical verb “think” which reduces the explicitness of a response (Jucker, 1986) followed by a cough, and a pause of 0.6 seconds. Therefore, the first 3.4 seconds of Stuart’s response are disfluent, which is likely to reduce Matt’s confidence (Fraundorf & Watson, 2011; Smith & Clark, 1993) in what is about to be said, perhaps indicating to him that the “advantage” Stuart talks about in line 1 of figure 6.1, image 4 was always in doubt. This refers to Matt’s attempts to arrange access to the council’s report ahead of other media.

Stuart next makes a repair (Schegloff *et al.*, 1977) from “advantage we..” to “advantage I was hoping to give you” (line 2, figure 6.1, image 4). Speakers use repair talk to resolve problems, which here would appear sensible considering Stuart’s organisation has prevented Matt getting an exclusive. Stuart further pauses for a second and a half (line 3, figure 6.1, image 4), suggesting again that he is either reluctant to continue or is struggling with the form of words. He appears to consider the hedge, “will probably”, but changes to “will be”, still hesitating, using the filler “uh”, before finally admitting that Matt will not now get the information ahead of the release of the report. Matt signals his understanding by overlapping Stuart’s talk in line 5 of figure 6.1, image 4 (Liddicoat, 2011). His repetition of “yeah”, indicates both understanding and a possible wish to take over the turn (Kjellmer, 2009), which he does in figure 6.1, image 6.

Matt opens with the phrase “but that’s fine” which appears as if he is accepting Stuart’s apology, except it is prefixed with the contrastive marker “but” (Schiffrin, 1987). This use becomes clear when he states what he means is that he will continue with his complaint. He then begins to explain why. However, he carries out a self-repair, perhaps backing off from a direct accusation against the council. He finishes though by stating his belief that there may have been a conspiracy to prevent him getting the story (figure 6.1, image 6).

Stuart pauses for two seconds before disagreeing with Matt’s assessment, although he downgrades it with “probably” (figure 6.1, image 7). Stuart then changes the topic, perhaps to avoid discussing the implications of what Matt is saying (Maynard, 1980). In figure 6.1, images 8 and 9, Stuart lays out the plan for the report’s release. He is fairly fluent throughout, using repetition to emphasise his point, “to take the chance to read the report, digest the report”. The only time he hesitates is in line 4 of figure 6.1, image 9 after the connective “and then” when he must explain that as soon as the media have

seen it, the report will be published on the council's website (figure 6.1, image 10). He possibly hesitates because he understands the information will scupper any chance Matt still entertains of an exclusive. During this explanation, Matt utters "yeah" three times, probably to indicate his understanding of, rather than agreement with, what is being said.

Non-verbally, the position and proximity of Matt and Stuart who sit reasonably close, as the council meeting room is noisy, illustrates they are known to each other. However, while Stuart leans in to Matt, and places his arm along the back of Matt's chair, Matt sits upright towards the front of his chair and places his hands in his lap (this can be seen in figure 6.1, images 9 and 10), where his right hand holds two batteries. His legs and shoulders are slightly oriented towards Stuart, but not fully. Therefore, while this interaction adheres to what Goffman (1964, p. 95) calls "an eye to eye ecological huddle" arranged to maximise "the opportunity to monitor one another's mutual perceivings", there appears to be reluctance on Matt's part to orient himself fully to the interaction.

Matt and Stuart's gaze patterns during the interaction also indicate difficulties. At the end of his explanation of the complaint process (figure 6.1, image 3), Matt does not gaze at Stuart but looks into the middle distance, which has been found to be an expression of facially communicated avoidance-orientated or negative emotion (Adams & Kleck, 2003). Although he is smiling, the smile appears to be one of frustration. The failure to signal to Stuart that he has finished speaking by looking in his direction may partially account for the long gap before Stuart speaks. When Stuart does begin to talk, his gaze is also averted.

Later, (figure 6.1, images 6 and 7) as Matt finishes his accusation of a conspiracy, he again looks into the middle distance and smiles. When Stuart responds, "I'd probably swing to the other one" (figure 6.1, image 7) he sits up and forward towards Matt, straightening his collar with his left hand and looks straight at Matt, who picks up the cue and responds with "yes" and "I know" with a small laugh. Speakers look to listeners when they wish to have acknowledgement that a message is received (Kendon, 1967). Once Stuart has that acknowledgement he sits back and gives a slight smile and a nod. He then looks away before glancing back at Matt, which he does regularly until the end of his utterance. Matt, on the other hand, mostly looks past Stuart, but acknowledges he

understands what is being said, by regular quick glances accompanied by nodding or “yeah” (figure 6.1, images 8-10). At the end of Stuart’s utterance, “that’s when it’s all going ahead”, Matt gives a much bigger nod and turns his head away from Stuart to the right. This gaze pattern is unusual, as listeners normally look at speakers with fairly long gazes. Looking away during listening indicates dissatisfaction with the other’s speech, while looking away during speaking can indicate uncertainty or problems formulating what to say.

Neither Matt nor Stuart uses gesture much in this extract, suggesting they do not want to give much away, and/or that their focus is on their speech (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2013). Stuart’s visible left hand only moves once to tidy his collar. His hidden hand moves slightly up and down in beat gestures on the chair behind Matt during his most fluent utterance explaining the release of the report. At one point he cups his hand as he mentions the report being put on the council’s website, which appears to be a conduit gesture, the palm acting as the website holding the report (figure 6.1, image 10) (McNeill, 2005).

Matt’s largest gesture comes after finishing his update in figure 6.1, images 2 and 3 when, as has been said, his voice takes on a singsong character to show how the “game” is played. Matt’s hands are going back and forth with this rhythm. He begins by making two left-handed wrist rolls away from his body (figure 6.1, image 2), to show how the “timing frame” works as a continuous process (Mittelberg, 2008). He then drops his hand to his lap to finish the gesture before again lifting his left hand to make a wrist roll away from his body and back towards him to show that the Ombudsman’s office will consider and then respond (back to him). When he says, “the council can respond” (figure 6.1, image 3), he lifts his right hand to move his two hands in parallel to his right-hand side (as if showing the council is an organisation substantial enough to need two hands to contain) and then back across his body to the left on “into the New Year”. Later, in figure 6.1, image 6, when Matt says “I’m swinging more of the conspiracy theory than the chaos theory”, he uses a similar gesture of moving his hands in parallel first to the left then to the right, indicating that he is again talking about the council.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

If we take the lens of critical discourse analysis to view these two interactions we see that the journalism-public relations relationship is a site of struggle for power and



influence over the journalistic text. The language used by the parties in these interactions has the purpose of influencing the final news story. Both the questions being asked by the journalists and the answers being given by the public relations practitioners are designed to fulfil the interactional goals of the four participants.

These goals explain the patterns evident in the verbal and non-verbal actions, despite them never being explicitly expressed. Both interactions are in some ways suggestive of informal talk between people known to each other, while in other ways they reveal characteristics of more formal dialogue. This duality is indicative of the complex relationship between journalism and public relations. On the one hand the participants must remain on reasonably pleasant terms as journalist and source, while on the other they compete for control/interpretation of the information to be published in the news.

How much influence the PRPs were eventually able to assert over the final shape of the news story in these two cases mattered to the two authorities, as these were important events that could affect their reputation with the public. Securing the third party endorsement of the news media could “legitimise” their position (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 73). In the first case, Auckland Transport officials needed support from the public affected by the road widening or it could have faced trouble advancing its plans. In the second case, Auckland Council was likely to be criticised in the report, which was the subject of the interaction. Controlling its release and the time available for public discussion could help mitigate any negative effects.

By taking each interaction separately the power relations can be examined. The first interaction shows many characteristics typical of written language, perhaps because of its asynchronous nature. A limitation for the analyst using conversational analysis in such interactions is that the transcript does not include some features expected in talk. These include vocal stress (although using upper case indicates the raising of the voice), overlapping talk and rate of speech. Among the most obvious difference between synchronous oral discourse and many types of written discourse is the ability to edit, and shape the message before communicating it. Sally has given thought to the questions and it is evident from the change in the subject line and the nature of the answers that the PRP has carefully shaped the responses. For example, she has framed the meeting as a “professionals” and “clients” encounter, describing Auckland transport staff as “expert”. Further, she has used the reporting verbs (Fairclough 1995b, p. 83),

“Auckland Transport [italics added] *explained* ..... and *reassured*”, and “*told*”. In contrast the reporting verbs (Fairclough 1995b, p. 83) attributed to the people attending the meeting, were “they [italics added] *said*” and “people *thought*”, which were much less powerful.

There are also traces of what Fairclough (1989, p. 52) called “synthetic personalisation”, which is where officials who are interacting with “the public” wish to give the impression that each person is being treated as an individual, when in reality it is not the case. In the line, “They [the public] said they appreciated the chance to ask questions, see the proposed plans and talk to expert staff one-on-one”, the use of “one-on-one” shows synthetic personalisation, whereas the reality is illustrated by the use of the third person plural throughout that paragraph.

The PRP (consciously or unconsciously) disempowered the public attending the meeting in her choice of naming terms. She used “people”, “those who attended the meeting”, “they” and “them” in response to the first three questions. In none of these responses were the people referred to as residents, which was their rightful status and would clearly bestow legitimacy on their position. It was only in the response to the last question, “what’s the next step in the public consultation process?”, that the PRP referred to the people as “affected residents and businesses” as it was important at this stage to state that these would be the only people who would now be directly consulted.

In fact, the PRP was careful throughout (whether consciously or unconsciously) where she assigned power and agency. In response to the third question, “what, if any, other concerns were raised by residents?” she assigned agency to the people when she wrote “Overall people were positive about the road upgrade” and deletes them altogether in the second half of the sentence “the only concerns were around possible disruption”. This removes the “specificity” (Richardson, 2007, p. 55) of the concerns making the statement vague, as we are not absolutely sure who is concerned. We may ask why she had not written “their only concerns...”?

The PRP’s (conscious or unconscious) strategy to disempower the residents may have been successful had not the editor, Caroline, been keen to hear from their point of view. Given the continuing downsizing of newsrooms, this is concerning. The example

suggests that without editorial oversight, inexperienced journalists may tend to accept bureaucratic information without checking or challenging its angle.

The question of why Auckland Transport asked for written questions should not be ignored. A telephone interview would have been quicker, and cheaper in terms of staff costs. However, PRPs are not usually experts in the areas they cover and need time to check information and frame answers. In this case, over 3.5 hours elapsed between the sending of the questions and the return of the responses. Further, the advantage to the PRP of email is there is a record of the interaction (Yates & Orlikowski, 1993), which can be checked against any published story. The disadvantage to the journalist is as expressed by Sally: it is “time consuming and then you can’t just like catch them unexpected”.

The second interaction is full of disfluencies, highlighting problems both with expressing the complaint and responding to it. Notably, both participants are more fluent in the areas they find most important and have possibly spent time thinking about: Matt when he is explaining the back and forth of the complaints process and Stuart when he outlines the report’s release. However, Matt’s frustration with the process, which he obviously suspects was managed to ensure he did not receive an advance copy of the report, and Stuart’s discomfort with having to respond to Matt’s complaints are obvious. Matt believes he has played by the rules by putting in a request under the LGOIMA process. When unsuccessful, he appealed to the Ombudsman who sided with him and ordered the council to hand over the withheld documents, which it failed to do. What frustrates Matt the most is that, even if it is finally ruled to have been in the wrong, the council may think it was worth it to manage the release of this crucial report. Here, the different interaction goals have put the participants into a situation where they do not have congruency between what they signal with their words and what they signal with their bodies. Neither party can actually fully say what they are feeling because they have to preserve the relationship for the future.

Matt was aware of the media management being used and resented it, as per the trend noted earlier in the chapter. However, as has also been noted by researchers (McNair, 2013; Louw, 2010), journalists are not without power, and can use their coverage to critique the public relations efforts. Therefore, in the piece Matt wrote for broadcast later that day, he mentioned the council’s delaying tactics (see Appendix 3). However,

when the report was released later that week, Matt reported the contents faithfully and did not repeat his criticism of the council.

In both cases the PRP's role appears to be control of knowledge, rather than its facilitation. In the first interaction, it was evidently not an equal struggle among sources for the attention of the journalist. On the one side were well-resourced professional PRPs and on the other individual residents. The actions of the PRP suggest she was trying to ensure a positive news story about a "very successful meeting" and to diminish the concerns of residents. This must make us uneasy as the meeting was supposed to be about public consultation over the widening of a road. Further, it is potentially concerning that a PRP could frame the legitimate objections of a resident against the behaviour of a publicly funded body as illegitimate and disruptive. It is equally worrying that it was not considered appropriate for the resident to remonstrate at a meeting designed specifically to allow residents to express their concerns. Overall, the data suggest a powerful, official source from a publicly funded bureaucracy providing partial knowledge, or, as Ericson *et al.* (1989, p. 383) describe it, "policing the knowledge".

The second example sees an elected body ignoring an order from the Ombudsman, in order to ensure a journalist does not get access to information ahead of its carefully planned public release. Further, the public release appears to be timed to prevent discussion of the contents of the report. The council originally claimed it would be released in "mid-December", then announced it would be released on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, one day ahead of the council's Christmas shutdown. Whether or not this was deliberate, it nonetheless acted to prevent debate. It is difficult not to conclude that the considerable talents of the PRPs were used not to enrich and foster debate about the activities of a publicly funded body, but to prevent embarrassment and to close down discussion.

This study may have examined only two examples of journalist-source interactions, but as Serini (1993, p. 6) argued, while the weakness of a case study is that it is limited to one experience and one set of dynamics, its strength is that it provides an in-depth look at the dynamics of the phenomenon under investigation.

The data presented here strongly suggest that in many cases their interactional goals prevent journalists and PRPs being open with each other, and yet they must maintain

the fiction of openness to preserve the journalist-source relationship. Further research into what public relations' scholar Waymer (2013) called non-voluntary relationships would perhaps prove fruitful. Waymer argued that not all relationships have the potential to be positive ones, no matter how much time and effort is put into them by public relations practitioners. Thus, he added (Waymer, 2013, pp. 329-330), understanding distancing behaviours of non-voluntary publics - those who are forced by circumstance to maintain a relationship with the organisation – may be useful, especially if those publics, which I argue could include journalists, have in the past been manipulated or taken advantage of by the organisation.

## **7.0. Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings of the research. Firstly, it provides a recap of the aims and methodology used in the study, followed by the explication of the findings. The chapter then turns to a consideration of the implications of the findings for scholars and practitioners working in the fields of journalism and public relations, before finally making recommendations for further research.

### **7.1. The aims of the study**

This thesis aimed to investigate the current working practices of journalists and public relations practitioners in New Zealand, with the purpose of understanding how they interact and how those interactions affect the news that ultimately all New Zealanders consume. The research was timely considering the enormous changes new technologies have brought to both journalism and public relations (Deuz, 2008; Gregory & Willis, 2013; Johnston, 2013; Sissons, 2014). It sought to collect video data of journalists and public relations practitioners that before now had been unavailable to researchers and through its analysis made an original contribution to the discussion of the independence of journalism (Riordan, 2014; Rosensteel, 2002; Schultz, 1998), communication techniques in public relations practice (Berger, 2005, 2006; Edwards, 2009; Grunig, 1992) and the health of the public sphere (Davis, 2002; Habermas, 1989 [1962]; Moloney, 2006) in New Zealand.

The thesis built on previous research that identified between 40 and 80% of news internationally as showing some evidence of the use of public relations material (Davies, 2008; Gregory, 2004; Macnamara, 2012, 2014; Moloney, 2006). While that research looked at “what” public relations material had found its way into the news, this thesis endeavoured to understand and explain “how” it happened. How in practice did public relations practitioners interact with journalists and how did the interactions influence the news agenda?

Four research questions guided the study. They were:

RQ1. How in practice do the two sets of professionals interact?

RQ2. How in practice do those interactions lead to the outputs the news audience receives?

RQ3. What pressures or processes influence the products of both practices?

RQ4. Whose news are consumers ultimately receiving?

In order to address the questions, the research examined the complicated nature of journalists' relations with public relations practitioners, those working in media relations in particular. It sought to appreciate what each set of practitioners hoped to achieve in their relations with the other. Thus, it also aimed to understand, through observation of specific interactions, why both journalists and public relations practitioners in New Zealand reported feeling "conflicted" (Tilley & Hollings, 2008) towards one another, with the relationship generally being characterised as one of antipathy (Ashwell, 2012; Callard, 2011; Sterne, 2010; Tilley & Hollings, 2008).

## **7.2. Summary of the methodological approach**

The thesis addressed the research questions through a critical discourse analysis approach (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b; Van Dijk, 1988, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) to the evaluation of the way power is reproduced and/or resisted in interactions between journalists and public relations practitioners and between public relations practitioners and their clients. In the first part of the research, it studied the transformations (Pander Maat, 2008) made by journalists to public relations' materials in their construction of news stories, thereby highlighting whether the influence of the public relations sources was accepted or refused. In the second part of the research, it examined representative "strips" (Gumperz, 2001, p. 223) or short extracts of action from among the data. However, it expanded the CDA approach by accepting Schegloff's (1997) criticism that CDA did not pay enough attention to the detail of language, and therefore also examined verbal actions below the sentence and non-verbal actions by employing multimodal interaction analysis (MIA), (Norris, 2004a, 2011a).

Overall, the analysis considered how power was distributed between the two groups to reveal which discourse was better insulated (Bernstein, 1990), and therefore the stronger. To do this it also used Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy perspective to consider how successful PRPs were at convincing journalists of the veracity of a message, along with theories of the fourth estate and the public sphere to question whether current newsroom practices and relations with public relations sources were undermining journalism's traditional watchdog role. In examining the influence PRPs had over their clients when constructing media messages, it employed the concept of the dominant

coalition (Berger, 2005; Edwards, 2009; Grunig, 1992). Taking all these elements, the thesis could assess whether journalists were fulfilling their fourth estate role as public watchdogs or whether they were allowing or even facilitating the public sphere to be shaped by special interests.

All data were collected and analysed in the interpretive tradition, which is concerned with people's reasoning and their perceptions of situations and events. It considers discourse as context-dependent or situated and that interactions are goal orientated, that is, the actors have a purpose. It also accepts that the interactions and communications are to some extent indicative of a social actor's assumptions, values and beliefs (Heracleous, 2004).

The study involved participant observation in two newsrooms and two public relations departments (one in-house and one agency). It also entailed in-depth interviews with six journalists and six public relations practitioners involved in the main fieldwork, and an additional 26 semi-structured interviews with journalists and public relations practitioners from organisations not directly involved in the study. In addition, the research included textual analysis of 35 media releases and the news stories that were produced using them as a main source.

In the next sections the findings of the study will be discussed along with their significance to the field and their limitations. Lastly, some suggestions for future research will be suggested.

### **7.3. Summary of the findings**

This research has three key findings. The first is the extent of the interdependence between public relations and journalism in New Zealand is pervasive enough to call journalists and PRPs *content siblings*, together constructing the news we all consume. However, it is also evident that the partnership is not an equal one, with the effects of media and information management clear in both the products of the relationship (as shown in Chapters Three and Four) and the interactions between the two practices (seen in Chapters Four and Six).

This leads to the second finding, which is the empirical evidence of some of the techniques used by public relations practitioners in media and information management.



These include the well-known ones of sending out media releases and setting up special media events, dubbed “pseudo events” by Boorstin (1962), but also more hidden ones such as consciously controlling who attends a media conference, or who receives an interview, as well as neutralising opposing voices and delaying publication of a message, even in the face of an ombudsman’s order.

The third finding is empirical evidence of the subordinate position that PRPs still hold within organisations in relation to the dominant coalition/s (seen in Chapter Five). Even highly experienced PRPs, who are considered respected advisors, are often not involved in decision-making, but are still expected to use their skills as communicators to implement and/or communicate decisions, including ones they disagree with.

Together these findings answer the first three research questions and go a long way to answering the fourth, “Whose news is the New Zealand public consuming?” The next section addresses each research question separately.

### **7.3.1. RQ1: How in practice do the two sets of professionals interact?**

The research highlighted several regular interaction points for journalists and public relations practitioners. They interacted through media releases, as illustrated in Chapter Three; at planned events such as media conferences or open meetings as shown in Chapters Four and Six; and behind-the-scenes, either over the phone, by email or face-to-face as demonstrated in Chapter Six. The first two of these could be considered semi-public, occurring between the organisation, the PRP and the journalist, and the second two are essentially private.

In all interactions, the analysis revealed that the two practices had contrasting goals. While the journalists wished information and details about the events that they could pass to their audience, the public relations practitioners sometimes wished to withhold certain details and privilege others or perhaps to delay releasing information in the interests of their organisation. For one side (journalists) full disclosure was desired, and for the other side (public relations practitioners) information management was considered a requirement.

These conflicting purposes should have resulted in open hostility between the two sets of practitioners. However, the interactions at the media conference (Chapter Four) and

those highlighted in Chapter Six were evidence of an ongoing civility, which this thesis argues is because of the extent of the interdependence, or overlap (Mitchell, 2014), that exists between journalism and public relations. Previous research has reported the relationship between journalists and PRPs in New Zealand to be “conflicted” (Tilley & Hollings, 2008) and as characterised by antipathy (Ashwell, 2012; Callard, 2011; Sterne, 2010; Tilley & Hollings, 2008). The fieldwork in this research found it is conflicted, and there is antipathy, but there is also a growing awareness among journalists that they are dependent on PRPs, whether they like it or not.

The vast majority of journalists interviewed for the study admitted that they relied on public relations’ materials, even if only as a starting point for a story. Some were more open about their dependence on PRPs than others, with one (quoted in Chapter Four) confessing, “I couldn’t do my job without them” [AJ1]. For the journalists who participated in the research, daily contact with public relations practitioners was the norm. A senior newsroom manager [HJ1] explained that if PRPs could guarantee a story then they were assured of becoming a source, as cuts to the number of journalists for traditional investigation has meant “the ability, the time to go out and find the story has gone, and therefore people [journalists] are going for the safe harbours of, ‘I can guarantee this is going to end up as a story’ ”.

However, the research revealed that journalists’ dependence has led to feelings of resentment towards PRPs, directed mostly at the control public relations practitioners exercised over access to the information journalists needed to write their stories. This news reporter [FJ3] was typical when she said, “I was calling a police comms guy, and he’s notoriously ... useless. He doesn’t give out any information at all”.

What the fieldwork illustrated was that journalists’ frustration with their PRP colleagues did not appear to be voiced openly to the PRPs they met. At both the media conference (Chapter Four) and during the interactions shown in Chapter Six, the participants appeared to remain on reasonably pleasant terms as journalist and source, while at the same time both practices competed for control/interpretation of the information to be published in the news.

While journalists in the study expressed frustration with the relationship, public relations practitioners appeared comparatively happy, with a senior practitioner at a

consultancy giving a typical response when he said he worked “very closely with journalists on a daily basis”. Most of those spoken to said they had pretty good relations with journalists. Where there were frustrations, they often seemed to be triggered by the PRP spending time explaining a situation to a journalist and then finding that the printed story did not reflect any of the conversation and presented the client organisation in a bad light. One PRP [PC2] described being “hurt” when this happened. The same PRP described how they sometimes repaid journalists who, for whatever reason, found themselves offside.

Sometimes we like to be a bit tricky with our responses to people – just give them the most boring, long-winded information that they have to trawl through purely because we know it’s going to take them ages to go through.

New technology has also had an effect on the relationship, with the two practices increasingly interacting using technologies such as email. This has proved both a positive and a negative development. Journalists prefer receiving media releases, fact sheets and advisories via email, but several complained that they did not like conducting interviews via email (as shown in Chapter Six) as there was no chance to build a rapport or challenge an answer. PRPs on the other hand felt that email questions and answers afforded them some protection against being misunderstood or misquoted. Their accountability to their organisation for what was reported in the media made them more sensitive to what they perceived as the journalistic practice of sometimes oversimplifying a situation or editing quotes or facts to fit a preconceived story.

Overall, the research demonstrated that journalists relied heavily on their public relations sources, especially those in publicly funded organisations including police, local health and transport authorities, and councils, but that these sources were often reluctant to provide disclosure, displaying a keen wish to control both the detail and the timing of any information the media received. For example, many used the technique described by Doorley and Garcia (2011, p.104) of having a set of standby statements ready as a way “to avoid questions on a sensitive subject”. This entailed offering a prepared statement as soon as approached by a journalist. The first interaction in Chapter Five is a good example of a PRP anticipating media interest in an event affecting the organisation and preparing a response in consultation with a senior manager.

It is evident from this research that PRPs (in consultation with their clients) were putting enormous effort into shaping the information the media receives about their organisations. They were found on occasion to be actively withholding information, or deploying only partial information, and to be purposefully managing access to important sources, which in their view minimised risk. Further, in many cases there appeared no way for journalists to avoid dealing with PRPs. When approaching most organisations, journalists were now required to go to the communications office, and those who were eventually approved to speak to them were prepped and trained beforehand and restricted in what they were allowed to say. In sum, public relations practitioners were in most cases in control of when and how they met with journalists and almost always the journalist was invited into a space under the regulation of the PRP, such as during a planned event as in the council meeting in Chapter Six or the media conference in Chapter Four.

In response, journalists appeared to accept these management measures, albeit reluctantly sometimes. Hence, overall the research suggests newsrooms in New Zealand were, however unwillingly, handing over control of the news agenda to public relations practitioners. Recent changes in the news industry have seen experienced journalists lose their jobs and be replaced by over-worked juniors with little institutional knowledge or confidence to question the status quo. Therefore, it is understandable that many were failing to obtain disclosure even from publicly funded organisations that have a mandate to inform the public of how their money is spent. However, what this research demonstrated was the struggle that even seasoned journalists had in getting timely and complete information. It also highlighted a confidence bordering on arrogance on the part of some organisations at the controls they expected to be able to implement, as seen in Chapter Six.

### **7.3.2. RQ2: How in practice do the interactions lead to the news outputs?**

As mentioned in the previous section, the research found that PRPs, in consultation with their clients, expended a considerable amount of effort crafting and shaping the messages they circulated to the media either in media releases and advisories or through planned events and interviews. It was clear that information was a site of struggle between PRPs and journalists. The research also found evidence that public relations practitioners saw information as one of their power bases, and that the concept of transparency, so important to communicating corporate responsibility (Doorley &

Garcia, 2011) and to the perceived authenticity and genuineness of an organisation (Gregory & Willis, 2013), was sometimes seen as carrying too many risks. In these instances, the disadvantages of losing control of the information appeared to be perceived in the organisation and by their PRPs as outweighing the advantages of full disclosure, and obfuscation resulted. This could be seen in Chapter Six and to a lesser extent in Chapter Five, where the PRP wished to make the CEO less available for interviews because the news was almost all bad.

In theory, once public relations messages are passed to the media, they move beyond the control of the PRPs and their client's organisation and into the journalists' territory. Here the information can be corroborated, contradicted and/or augmented by the journalist through additional material and interviews with other sources. This selection and corroboration process, plus the moulding of information into a news story, is where the power of the media comes into play, including as fourth estate watchdogs informing the public sphere of the crucial events of the day.

However, this thesis demonstrated that journalists took little opportunity to exercise their power. Overwhelmingly, as shown in Chapters Three and Four, the information subsidies were accepted by the journalists and reproduced in the media almost unchanged. Auckland City Council's media conference led to positive stories for the authority, and in the collection of 35 media releases, used as the basis for Chapter Three, only eight had new material added and only two of the news articles changed the macro proposition of the media release. Twenty-three of the 35 media releases were reproduced word-for-word or almost word-for-word, including the two chosen for closer analysis in the chapter.

In Chapter Six, we saw more of the picture in the behind-the-scenes negotiations of journalists with their sources. In one case, a relatively junior journalist in an online newsroom was prompted by a senior editor to call another source, rather than accept the PRP's emailed assertions about how a meeting went. Following up with that source garnered a different and contradictory perspective to the PRP's, but one which may not have been made known had not the senior editor suggested it. With the profile of newsrooms getting younger and more inexperienced, it is suggested that there will be an increase in cases where the views or experiences of alternative sources are not sought. In the second example in Chapter Six, a senior radio journalist failed in his attempt to

compel Auckland Council to release information, despite months of requests and a direct order from the ombudsman. He did make his battle with the council sources clear in one of his reports, but the authority's monopoly on the information meant that there was no alternative source not under its control.

The consequence of the acceptance (willingly or not) of information subsidies by journalists was found by this research to be an increase in stories telling good news about organisations. Media releases, advisories and fact sheets are almost invariably angled in such a way as to present the organisation in a positive light. The research revealed that news stories based on information subsidies showed much less intertextuality (material from other sources) than did those that were the product of genuine journalistic investigation, and included more promotional language. Therefore, the angle of the media release or advisory along with the source quotes provided were more often than not reproduced by the journalist, and often entirely unchallenged. Therefore, the journalists' choices regarding media relations materials appeared to be based on convenience rather than news values. The same appeared to be true of stories created from planned events. Here again, journalists are exposed to the organisation's perspective along with sources to back it up. Yet, considering the history and controversy surrounding the development of the area highlighted in Chapter Four, it was surprising there were not more opposing voices included in the reports.

In fact, the example in Chapter Four is a good illustration of how, in practice, public relations practitioners harnessed their relationship with journalists in order to influence the news agenda. By appearing to give the selected journalists a privileged peek into the future, and by providing enough good material, even if some details were missing, the PRPs succeeded in gaining the journalists' cooperation in announcing through the news media the city council's vision for the development. This was not a risk-free proposition as the journalists were free to ask the spokesperson any questions they wished. However, this thesis argues that the PRPs had effectively set up an unspoken agreement. While it was never mentioned, when the journalists received the information subsidies, they became part of an implied reciprocity. That is, in exchange for the information, the journalist complies with the organisation's communications aims. While PRPs cannot require journalists to report their plans positively, there could be consequences for those journalists who do not cooperate. As the research found, most journalists were reliant on the public relations sources to cover their beats and for assistance with many of their

stories. The implied stick is that for uncooperative reporters assistance would not be so readily given in future.

### **7.3.3. RQ3: What pressures or processes influence the production of both practices?**

The research determined that the main influences on both journalists and public relations practitioners came from the relationship each had with their own practice. The routines and expectations of their offices had more of an effect than any part of the relationship they had with each other.

For example, central to public relations is the PRP-client relationship, which at its core is an economic pressure. Evidently, the client organisation pays the public relations practitioner's wages or fees and hence it is crucial for the PRP to maintain a good relationship. As outlined in Chapter Five, previous research found that how much a client trusts and feels comfortable with a PRP is more important than how competent they are (Doorley & Garcia, 2011; Pieczka, 2006; Place, 2012). Moreover, in order to have any influence in the organisation, it is accepted in public relations theory that the public relations team must have the support of senior managers in the dominant coalition/s (Berger, 2005; Broom, 2009; Edwards, 2009; Grunig, 1992; Newsom *et al.*, 2004).

The findings in this thesis suggest that any product, such as a media release or a planned event, has to satisfy the client before the PRP can turn to the question of whether it is appealing to a journalist. One practitioner [PC1] described the tortuous procedure media releases had to undergo to gain client approval, including sometimes being scrutinised and commented on by multiple managers. The process proved so slow that she and her team avoided writing media releases, relying instead on advisories and fact sheets. Other pressures from clients mentioned by PRPs included the expectation that the PRP could secure them the front page of the newspaper or a spot on television, even if the event was not newsworthy. This pressure was closely related and usually stated at the same time as a client's insistence that something controversial (and hence newsworthy) be kept out of the media, or at the very least given a positive gloss.

Chapters Four and Five contained behind-the-scenes discussions between PRPs and clients, including some of the ways PRPs strategised about how they would represent

their organisation to journalists and what they anticipated as possible pitfalls. For example, in Chapter Four we heard the PRP contemplating providing historic pictures of the sheds at Queen's Wharf to highlight their heritage value. However, before acting she was keen to check her idea with the development manager, as she did not wish to draw attention to the sheds if there was any possibility the council may decide to demolish them.

In Chapter Five we saw how competing interests among the dominant coalition/s could disempower a PRP. The PRP used a variety of strategies such as repetition, the language of collaboration and alignment and non-verbal behaviours associated with rapport to try to influence both the behaviour and the media messages of the client. However, despite giving the appearance of agreeing with the PRP, the CEO continued with behaviour that the PRP and the board felt was damaging to the organisation. This led to the PRP's plans and advice being overridden by the CEO and, ultimately, the board.

The example demonstrated that while the PRP could advise and be listened to by the dominant coalition/s in the client organisation, the power did not lie in his hands but in those who had hired him. However, as the official spokesperson he would have had an influence on the framing of the message (even if the key messages were decided by the client) and thus would have an impact on how journalists received the message. Therefore, the thesis suggests that PRPs may advise on media messaging, but the decision on whether, when and how to use the messages as well as who should communicate them and to whom they should be communicated lies with the client, with little of decision-making around these questions being delegated to the PRP. Further, once decisions are made, whether they support them or not, public relations practitioners are expected to use their specialist skills to communicate those decisions and their implications in the best interests of the client company.

In journalism, a detailed literature review, along with the fieldwork and interviews with working journalists pointed to three important changes that have affected how they work and how they construct news. These changes are newsroom cutbacks, moves towards multi-skilling and an increase in the amount of public relations' materials being offered to journalists. The first two of these developments occurred in the newsroom. An increasing requirement to be multi-skilled along with a reduction in the number of



journalists available for traditional journalistic investigation has meant the average journalist is now expected to file three times the number of stories they would have in the same newsrooms a decade ago (Starkman, 2010; Waldman, 2011). Besides working for their newspaper or broadcast outlet, many of these journalists must also serve the website and perhaps the Twitter feeds of the organisation. At the same time, there has been the loss of thousands of traditional journalism jobs worldwide (Guskin, 2013).

Taken together these changes have resulted in fewer journalists being expected to create more content more quickly, leaving them little opportunity for corroboration, exploration of the subject or creativity. Hence the information subsidies (Gandy, 1982) of public relations practitioners have gone from being an added extra used to spark ideas to a necessity to fill the news hole. One online journalist [JT1] said the speed at which they worked meant “new” trumps “newsworthy” in decisions about whether to publish a media release, as the website needs to be constantly refreshed. He also admitted that he rarely checked the information he was given, as there was no advantage to delaying putting up a story while checking it out.

You’re not going to get in trouble for banging up a whole lot of new stuff and maybe the credibility of the stories isn’t as good but you’ve done your job in the eyes of the editor, whereas if you go through like, you know, like a squirrel through every story and take your time and are slow, in reality you’re more likely to get in trouble for that, because you’re being slow and not, you know, doing the job.

Therefore, it is clear that the most worrying consequence of the cost cutting in newsrooms is the shrinking resources (mostly in the form of time) available to journalists for investigation, making it difficult for all but the most privileged newswriters to carry out the role of trusted provider mentioned by the BBC’s James Harding in his 2014 WT Stead lecture (Harding, 2014, January 14). This opens the door to public relations practitioners to exert substantial influence on the media allowing them to affect opinion, and ultimately, potentially to shape policy making.

#### **7.3.4. RQ4: Whose news are consumers ultimately receiving?**

Taken together the findings of the thesis suggest that a heavy reliance on information subsidies by journalists was promoting an overly cooperative relationship with public relations practitioners. However, the analysis also revealed that journalists and PRPs often had unspoken but contradictory goals that resulted in both parties being unable to be transparent with one another. This could be observed in both Chapters Four and Six,

and led to the collection, construction and dissemination of information becoming a site of often silent power struggle between the two practices.

Of concern to the research is that the struggle was seen as an asymmetric one in which the public relations sources were often better resourced and more experienced than the journalists. Further, the more resources a client organisation had the more experienced were the PRPs they could hire and the more influence those PRPs could wield over the information they held. The research demonstrated that some PRPs used their advantage deliberately to restrict media access in order to control the tone and/or the substance of the media coverage.

This situation was also found to foster a belief among journalists that if they wanted to remain inside the information cordon then they had to portray the organisation as it would wish. Getting offside with the public relations practitioners through writing negative stories could result in a less helpful reaction from the PRP the next time the journalist needed their help, or could even result in their being deleted from the list of journalists included in briefings. This could damage a journalist's career or result in them having to change the stories or beat they covered. However, the research also found certain journalists had more agency than others. One journalist in particular was described by a PRP as invoking such fear that only the most senior of the media relations team dealt with him.

Overall, the data in the thesis highlighted some of the ways PRPs attempted to manage the information they released to journalists and demonstrated journalists' increasing difficulties in accessing information, even from publicly funded organisations. In general, it appeared that the PRPs' aims were the control of information rather than its facilitation. The research also revealed that the reaction of many (but not all) journalists was to accept the public relations' materials and use them uncorroborated and substantially unchanged. Consequently, only the public relations source's view made it into the final news story. Seldom was this acknowledged by the reporter, meaning that the news audience was unaware of the provenance of its news, believing it to be the work of journalistic investigation.

If we add to these results the finding that PRPs have limited success in influencing their clients, meaning they were often instructed by their clients as to what the key messages

should be and who should receive them, then it is clear whose news New Zealanders are consuming – that of the most powerful corporations as well as the ruling political classes.

#### **7.4. The significance of the study and some implications of the findings**

By considering the texts produced by the two practices, as well as interactions within and between them, this research has produced empirical evidence of how public relations' materials are constructed and how they come to be heavily used by journalists, despite the demonstrated efforts of some to avoid them.

The research offers useful data to inform the continuing debate within journalism studies about the future of news. Specifically, the analyses of the interactions form important New Zealand case studies in the discussion of journalists' use of public relations sources as well as of workplace practices that produce an over-reliance on these sources. Within the field of public relations, the research presents rare examples of formal workplace interactions including public relations practitioner-client meetings to discuss media messaging. The study also provides interviews that relate to specific experiences, situations or interactions, which were witnessed during the research. These supply explanations, opinions and/or further information about the situations and interactions.

The research concludes that the discourse of public relations appears to be in the ascendancy over the discourse of journalism, showing journalism as not having strong insulation from public relations, therefore demonstrating weak classification and making it harder to differentiate journalism from public relations (Bernstein, 1990). This finding has important implications. For example, the journalism that resulted from the use of public relations' materials was often positively angled towards the organisation that composed the materials and included more promotional language. Thus journalism produced in this way should be considered as PReditorial (Franklin *et al.*, 2009, pp. 162-163), that is a hybrid mix of public relations and journalism that signifies the coming together of the two practices in a way that blurs the boundary between them. The relationship that creates this PReditorial is not harmonious, but proceeds from a more or less reluctant cooperation. Therefore, it can be characterised, the thesis argues, as a non-voluntary (Waymer, 2013) relationship, or one in which people must interact who do not like one another and/or do not approve of what the

other person stands for. The basis for such relationships is a belief that the people have no choice but to continue their connection for the time being, and to this end adopt practices that make this bearable such as expressing resentment among themselves, as seen in the interviews, or writing about the struggle for information as happened with the journalist in Chapter Six.

It is argued here that when power is gained by PRPs, for the most part it is used for the benefit of the client organisation. This seems an obvious conclusion, and this study found that the public relations practitioners who participated assumed that they were employed to be effective spokespeople for their organisations. The vast majority also believed in the aims of the organisations they represented. Nevertheless, this power raises a concern for those interested in the health of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989 [1962]), although it is recognised that the concept is not universally accepted. That being said, taking a Habermasian lens, if public relations practitioners gain influence over spaces where public discourse occurs, such as the media, and the texts they produce encourage certain ideas and practices at the expense of others, then they are distorting debate in order to shape public opinion in favour of their client organisations' private interests. Thus, the information on which people make their decisions, especially those at election time, is being "managed" and, instead of the strongest arguments dominating public discourse, the best-funded arguments overshadow all others. In allowing this to happen, this thesis concludes journalism is failing in its fourth estate role and permitting the integrity of the public sphere to be weakened.

As these results are a snapshot in time, they do not demonstrate whether the reliance on public relations is something new or whether the relationship has been one of high dependence from its beginnings. However, two findings in the study suggest there has been a change. First, the increase in the number of public relations practitioners employed in the last 15 years combined with a reduction in the number of journalists carrying out traditional roles; and secondly, interviews with senior journalists that underscored their changed relationship with public relations.

#### **7.4.1. Some practical applications**

As has been mentioned, the study has provided New Zealand case studies that will inform the debate on the future of news. However, as New Zealand is a modern, liberal democracy (and the research was carried out by someone who has a journalistic and

academic background in the United Kingdom and the United States), it is assumed that these findings will be more or less relevant to other countries with a similar system. It is hoped that practitioners of both journalism and public relations will use the data assembled in this study to examine their work practices and gain a better understanding of the challenges and constraints they face in their everyday routines. In particular, it is expected that this study will raise awareness of how news workers appear to be heading into a future where journalistic investigation is a rarity. Even corroboration of material handed to them by the larger, better-resourced public relations industry is seen in the data to be the exception rather than the rule.

It is also hoped the study will lead to changes in the journalism curriculum in colleges and universities to encourage new ways of thinking about the relationship with public relations sources. At the moment, a common experience for students is that their journalism lecturers, who are often former journalists, teach that they should, as much as possible, avoid public relations' materials and rely on personal contacts and their own investigations. These students then enter a newsroom and find they are inundated with media releases and are constantly in contact with PRPs. Because they have been taught to steer clear of public relations practitioners and their materials, they are ill equipped to handle them proficiently.

To better prepare their students, journalism lecturers need to acknowledge the unavoidability of public relations. Instead of remaining aloof from public relations, they should empower their students with an understanding of public relations routines in the same way journalism routines are taught to public relations students. Journalism textbooks should include a chapter on dealing with public relations sources and materials and it is a skill that should form part of all college courses. For example, students should be made aware of common tactics used by practitioners and some of the ways they can counter them. Young journalists should be clear that public relations sources are not their allies, but that they can be useful if managed appropriately, and any relationship with a practitioner should be cordial, but treated sceptically. Being public relations literate is now crucial to being a good journalist and to ensuring our news media retains its usefulness to its consumers.

Holladay and Coombs (2013) have argued that the unseen but ubiquitous nature of public relations makes it a necessity that public relations literacy be taught in schools,

just as media literacy is. The ability of public relations messages to be concealed in news stories means people do not notice when they are reading or observing it, and therefore can fail to realise when they are being influenced by it. This makes it more crucial that journalists learn, not only how to work with public relations material in a way that challenges and corroborates it, but also that they are transparent in their use of it. This thesis agrees with Riordan (2014) that it is important for journalists to be open about where they get their information by linking back to original reports, data or media releases allowing the interested reader to investigate the background to the story. All sponsored content and advertorial should also be clearly labelled. However, as Riordan also made clear, being transparent as to where materials have come from does not preclude the need for the basics of reporting, including ensuring accuracy and corroborating information used.

Finally, it is hoped that public relations practitioners, especially those paid by the taxpayer, will recognise that it is not in the industry's, let alone society's, interest to block legitimate public debate or to weaken the traditional media. The more trust in the traditional media is eroded, and thus audience is lost, the less useful the media is for public relations in the long run. PRPs may be able to bypass journalists by communicating with their publics through social media, but as Johnston (2013) noted, the traditional media is still considered the more important shapers of public opinion and the sphere in which politics and public life are enacted.

#### **7.4.2. The study's limitations**

This study's main limitation is that, by necessity, it is restricted in its scope. It has examined a small number of texts, 35 in total, as discussed in Chapter Three, and carried out ethnographic research in only two public relations departments and two newsrooms. The requirements of a full-time academic position in addition to the PhD study necessitated that the amount of data gathered be manageable. The research relied on Serini's (1993, p. 6) argument, that while the weakness of a case study is that it is confined to one experience and one set of dynamics, its strength is that it provides an in-depth look at the dynamics of the phenomenon under investigation. Further, it drew from Small (2009, p. 24) that a single-case study (this research has two case studies of each practice), provided the execution is robust, can demonstrate reliably that, among other things, a particular process, relationship, dynamic, or practice exists.

However, in an attempt to overcome the weakness of scope, the study was advised by Singer (2009), and in order to boost the reliability of the ethnographic data, carried out interviews with the participants as well as with journalists and public relations practitioners in other organisations to see if the experiences witnessed within the participant organisations were perceived to be occurring elsewhere. It also incorporated quantitative techniques in the form of textual analysis of the outputs created by the two practices. As a further addition, the research incorporated an active participant observer element in four community newspaper newsrooms between 2007 and 2011. A week was spent at each newspaper with a small group of students on work experience. As the students' chief reporter, almost total immersion in the workplace was required. According to Singer (2009), this triangulation should increase confidence in the interpretation of the findings.

A further limitation is that the research was carried out over a short time-scale: an average of two weeks in each of the public relations offices, and two weeks in one journalism office and two days in the second as that was all that could be negotiated. Access is a recognised limitation to any ethnographic research in newsrooms (Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Reich, 2009)

Media outlets were never enthusiastic about giving unfettered and long-term access to visiting researchers, but the doors have closed tighter with the consolidation of corporate media ownership. (Paterson & Domingo, 2008, p. 8)

The days and times of the fieldwork were chosen after consultation with the participants and newsroom/public relations office managers. It was noticed that ethnographic research projects in the communications fields were often carried out over a short time-scale (Wallace, 2009; Singer, 2004b). In fact many, especially of what Cottle (2000) describes as the "first wave" of news ethnography, did not report in detail how they went about their studies (Puijk, 2008).

The study noted the field strategy of Domingo (2003), who was also a journalism academic and former news professional. He carried out his study at four sites (his were newsrooms) spending a similar amount of time in the field. Domingo (2003) argued that the sample size allowed him to do a deep analysis of each of the cases and enabled comparisons. He conducted his research across six months in five stages of three days in each of the four newsrooms (a total of 15 days in each newsroom). He maintained that

as a journalism researcher and former communications professional he already understood the mindset and many of the routines of news production and hence required less time in the newsroom, plus his teaching duties did not allow him full-time immersion in the field.

The current study found, as Domingo (2003) argued, that a background in journalism (of 17 years) and public relations (of two years) meant many of the professional routines were already familiar. The ability to speak the language of the two practices further enabled acceptance into the workplaces without difficulty and a relatively quick understanding of the specific processes, the professional norms and values of the workers, and how the ideology behind their work is translated into content. There was awareness that this background could create bias or prejudice, such as lacking professional distance or identifying too much with either or both sets of practitioners. Being conscious of possible bias helped the development of a resistance to making quick interpretations of actions and events.

#### **7.5. Recommendations for future research**

This thesis has provided further evidence that journalists are increasingly becoming churnalists (Harcup, 2004), dependent on media releases that are pre-packaged in news style and require little or no input from the journalist. It has demonstrated that in many cases journalists are failing to challenge the perspective of these media releases or to add any supplementary material from their own investigations.

The study has added to the current research by revealing how this happens. It has demonstrated in detail, through specific examples, how public relations practitioners negotiate with their clients to frame media messages, how they then interact with journalists and how these interactions influence the news agenda. Identifying the processes public relations practitioners use to influence the news product will help the news industry develop better strategies for coping with the opportunities as well as the risks of their relations with them. It will also raise awareness within public relations of some of the tactics that are in common use, are not conducive to transparency and counter-intuitive to the rhetoric of transparency and authenticity in public relations practice. These tactics are not sufficiently acknowledged, and need to be questioned if the industry intends to develop as a profession.



However, as this research is based on a few case studies, further research at the interface between public relations and journalism would contribute to a fuller understanding of the pressures and processes influencing the two practices and ultimately the news agenda. This is a crucial field, the systems and procedures of which affect the quality of the information we all receive and yet, as this study has found, its interactions are under-examined by academics.

One reason for the lack of data is that ethnography, which this study argues is a most useful methodology for this type of research, is time-consuming, requiring long-term and intimate contact with subjects. Further, as Reich (2006) and Paterson (2008) acknowledged, gaining access to newsrooms is difficult. Even more problematic is negotiating permission to witness (let alone film) the sensitive interactions between journalists and their sources. Despite the difficulties, this work shows that gaining access is not impossible, and it is hoped that it will inspire other scholars to enter the newsroom and gather case studies and “thick description” (Geertz, 1973a, pp 3-32) needed to increase our understanding of the routines and processes involved in journalist-public relations interactions.

Further ethnographic-style public relations research would also promote a better understanding of the routine everyday practices of public relations practitioners, media relations specialists in particular. A general familiarity with this field, which has such a hidden influence on our news, would benefit society as a whole, and the health of our journalism. In fact, it is argued here that the field of media relations is a critical area for public relations scholarship, as there is very little evidence of the precise nature of this work in many regions of the world (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009).

The data presented here strongly suggest that in many cases their interactional goals prevent openness between journalists and PRPs, and yet these same interactional goals force them to maintain the appearance of openness. Public relations scholar Waymer (2013) called this sort of relationship a non-voluntary one, that is one that the participants believe must be continued despite antipathy on one or both sides. Waymer argued that not all relationships between organisations and publics can be positive ones, no matter how much public relations practitioners wish them to be and work to build relationships with a targeted public. Thus, he believed that understanding distancing behaviours of non-voluntary publics may be useful. He did not include journalists in the

publics he mentioned, but it is argued here that journalists would fit well into the definition of a non-voluntary public – one that believes it does not have a choice but to interact. If anything came out clearly from this research project it was the perception among both public relations practitioners and journalists of being trapped in a relationship that neither finds satisfactory.

## References

- Adams, R., & Kleck, R. (2003). Perceived gaze direction and the processing of facial displays of emotion. *Psychological Science*, 14(6), 644-647.
- Adesara, H. (2004, August). Not so hunky dory after all: The international public relations scene. *Indiantelevision.com*. Retrieved from [http://www.indiantelevision.org.in/perspectives/y2k4/international\\_pr.htm](http://www.indiantelevision.org.in/perspectives/y2k4/international_pr.htm).
- Ahmed, S. (2013, July 10). Journalists say online doesn't make dollars or sense. *Idealog*. Retrieved from <http://www.idealogue.co.nz/news/2013/07/journalists-say-online-doesnt-make-dollars-or-sense>.
- Allen, S. (2005). Hidden in plain sight - journalism's critical issues. In S. Allen (Ed.), *Journalism: critical issues* (pp. 1-19). Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Altschull, H. (1995). *Agents of power: The media and public policy*. New York: Longman.
- Andrews, L. (2006). Spin: from tactic to tabloid. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 6, 31-45.
- Antaki, C. (1994). *Explaining and arguing: The social organization of accounts*. London: Sage.
- Ashwell, D. (2012). Barriers to the public communication of science: Commercial constraints versus public understanding. *PRism* 9(1). Retrieved from <http://www.prismjournal.org/homepage.html>.
- Associated Press & Context-Based Research Group. (2008). *A new model for news: Studying the deep structure for young-adult news consumption*. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/alirafat/studying-the-deep-structure-of-youngadult-news-consumption>.
- Auckland University of Technology Postgraduate Centre (2013). *AUT University Postgraduate Handbook 2013*. Auckland.
- Baines, P., Egan, J., & Jefkins, F. (2004). *Public relations: Contemporary issues and techniques*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin: University of Texas.
- Baldry, A., & Thibault, P. (2006). *Multimodal transcription and text analysis: A multimodal toolkit and coursebook with associated on-line course*. London, England: Equinox.
- Bantz, C.R., McCorkle, S., & Baade, R.C. (1980). The news factory. *Communication Research*, 7(1), 45-68.
- Barry, A. (Director). (2008). *The hollow men* [Documentary]. Wellington, New Zealand: Community Media Trust
- Beder, S. (1997). *Global spin: The corporate assault on environmentalism*. Melbourne: Scribe.
- Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

- Bell, A. (1998). The discourse structure of news stories. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse*. Malden, MA, United States & Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bentele, G., & Wehmeier, S. (2003). From "literary bureaus" to a modern profession. The development and current structure of public relations in Germany. In K. Sriramesh & D. Vercic (Eds.), *The global public relations handbook: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 199-221). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Berger, B. (2005). Power over, power with, and power to relations: Critical reflections on public relations, the dominant coalition and activism. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 5-28.
- Berger, B. (2006). Public relations and organisational power. In E. Toth (Ed.), *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: Challenges for the next generation* (pp. 221-235). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Elbaum Associates.
- Berger, B., & Meng, J. (Eds.). (2014). *Public relations leaders as sensemakers: A global study of leadership in public relations and communication management*. New York: Routledge.
- Berkowitz, D. (1992). Non-routine news and newswork: Exploring a what-a-story. *Journal of Communication*, 42(1), 82-94.
- Bernstein, B. (1990). *Class, codes and control*. London: Routledge.
- Bernstein, B. (1996). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique (Revised edition)*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, S., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Boczkowski, P. (2004). The processes of adopting multimedia and interactivity in three online newsrooms. *Journal of Communication*, 54(2), 197-213.
- Boorstin, D. (1962). *The image*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Bourdieu, P. (1981). *Language & symbolic power* (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Boyer, D., & Hammerz, U. (2006). Worlds of journalism. *Ethnography*, 7(1), 5-17.
- Breed, W. (1955). Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis. *Social Forces*, 33(May), 326-335.
- Bridges, J., & Nelson, R. (2000). Issues management: A relational approach. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 95-115). Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Broom, G. (2009). *Cutlip and Centre's effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (2009). Concept and theory of organisation-public relationships. In J. A. Ledingham & S. Bruning, D (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations* (pp. 3-23). New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burkart, R. (2009). On Habermas: Understanding and public relations. In O. Ihlen, B. Van Ruler, & M. Fredriksson (Eds.), *Public relations and social theory: Key figures and concepts*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Burkeman, O. (2002, November 25). Fox on the Run. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/nov/25/ruPERTMURDOCH.mondaymediasection>.
- Burns, T. (1977). *The BBC: Public institution and private world*. London: Macmillan.
- Burson-Marsteller. (2010). *Burson-Marsteller media survey*. Brussels: Burson-Marsteller. Retrieved from <http://issuu.com/burson-marsteller-emea/docs/bm-media-survey>.
- Burton, B. (2007). *Inside spin: The dark underbelly of the PR industry*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty, R. E. (1989). Effects of message repetition on argument processing, recall and persuasion. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 10(1), 3-12.
- Callard, H. (2011). *Attitudes and perceptions of newspaper journalists towards public relations practitioners* (Master of Communication Studies (MCS)). Auckland University of Technology, Auckland.
- Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L., & Curtin, P. (1997). Public relations and the production of news: A critical review and a theoretical framework. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 20* (Vol. 20, pp. 111-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Campbell, D. E. (1979). Interior office design and visitor response. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 64(6), 648-653.
- Carey, A., & Lohrey, A. (1996). *Taking the risk out of democracy: Propaganda in the US and Australia*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press.
- Carlyle, T. (1840, May 19). Lecture V: The hero as man of letters. Johnson, Rousseau, Burns. In E. E. Rhys (Ed.), *Sartor resartus and on heroes, hero worship and the heroic in history by Thomas Carlyle*. London: JM Dent & Sons. Retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20585/20585-h/20585-h-htm>.
- Carroll, K., Iedema, R., & Kerridge, R. (2008). Reshaping ICU ward round practices using video-reflexive ethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(3), 380-

- Catenaccio, P. (2008). Press releases as a hybrid genre: Addressing the informative/promotional conundrum. *Pragmatics*, 18(1), 9-31.
- Cheney, G., & Christensen, L. (2001). Identity at issue: Linkages between "internal" and "external" organisations communication. In F. Jablin & L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organisational communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chia, J. (2005). Is trust a necessary component of relationship management? *Journal of Communication Management*, 9(3), 277-285.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Clark, H., & Fox Tree, j. (2002). Using uh and um in spontaneous speaking. *Cognition*, 84, 73-111.
- Clayman, S., & Heritage, J. (2002). *The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A., A. (1987). *The television news interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Comrie, M. (2002). Spin in the news. In J. McGregor & M. Comrie (Eds.), *What's news? Reclaiming journalism in New Zealand* (pp. 158-173). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press Ltd.
- Cotter, C. (2001). Discourse and media. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 416-431). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Cotter, C. (2010). *New talk: Investigating the language of journalism*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cottle, S. (2000). New(s) Times: Towards a 'second wave' of news ethnography. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 25, 19-41.
- Cottle, S. (2003a). News, public relations and power: Mapping the field. In S. Cottle (Ed.), *News, public relations and power* (pp. 3-24). London: Sage.
- Cottle, S. (Ed.). (2003b). *Media organisation and production*. London: Sage.
- Cottle, S. (2007). Ethnography and news production: New(s) developments in the field. *Sociology Compass*, 1(1), 1-16. Cottle, S., & Ashton, M. (1999). From BBC newsroom to BBC Newscentre: On changing technology and journalist practices. *Convergence: The international journal of research into new media technologies*, 5(3), 22-43.
- Cottle, S., & Ashton, M. (1999). From BBC newsroom to BBC newscentre: On changing technology and journalist practices. *Convergence*, 5(3), 22-43.
- Crikey.com (2010, March 15). *Spinning the media*: Crikey.com. Available at:

- Cripps, K. (2012, January 18). It's hot in here - results from the council's latest survey. *Council of public relations firms (CPRF)*. Available at: (<http://prfirms.org/voice/2012/it's-hot-in-here> —results-from-the-council's-latest-industry-survey).
- Cumming, G. (2009, June 27). Two councils, two opposing wish lists. *The New Zealand Herald*, A5.
- Cumming, G. (2009, June 27). Theatre of the water with 36-degree views. *The New Zealand Herald*, B5.
- Curtin, P. (1999). Reevaluating public relations information subsidies: Market-driven journalism and agenda-building theory and practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(1), 53-90.
- Cutlip, S., Center, A., & Broom, G. (2000). *Effective public relations* (8th ed.). New Jersey, United States: Prentice Hall.
- Davies, N. (2008). *Flat earth news*. London, England: Chatto & Windus.
- Davis, A. (2000a). Public relations, news production and changing patterns of source access in the British national media. *Media, Culture & Society*, 22, 39-59.
- Davis, A. (2000b). Public relations, business news and the reproduction of corporate elite power. *Journalism*, 1(3), 282-304.
- Davis, A. (2003). Public relations and news sources. In S. Cottle (Ed.), *News, public relations and power* (pp. 27-42). London: Sage.
- Davis, A. (2013). *Promotional cultures: The rise and spread of advertising, public relations, marketing and branding*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Daymon, C., & Hodges, C. E. M. (2009). Researching public relations occupational culture in Mexico. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 429-433.
- Dearnaley, M. (2009, June 20). Queens Wharf idea given the bird. *New Zealand Herald*. A005.
- DeLorme, D. E., & Fedler, F. (2003). Journalists' hostility toward public relations: an historical analysis. *Public Relations Review*, 29, 99-124.
- Department of Trade and Industry, & Institute of Public Relations. (2003). *Unlocking the potential of public relations: Developing good practice*. London, England.
- Deuze, M. (2008). Understanding journalism as newswork: How it changes, and how it remains the same. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 5(2), 4-23.

- Dickison, M. (2010). Mayors reject Queens Wharf funding plan. *New Zealand Herald*. Available at: (www.nzherald.co.nz/news/print.cfm?objectid=10627226&pnum=1).
- Doctor, K. (2014, July 25). The newsonomics of how and why *Nieman Journalism Lab*.
- Domingo, D. (2003, September). Ethnography for new studies: a field report of its weaknesses and benefits. Paper presented at the Symposium: New Research for New Media: Innovative Research Methodologies, Institute for New Media Studies, University of Minnesota.
- Domingo, D., & Paterson, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Making online news – Volume 2: Newsroom ethnographies in the second decade of internet journalism*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Doorley, J., & Garcia, H., F. (2011). *Reputation management: The key to successful public relations and corporate communication* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Dozier, D., Grunig, L., & Grunig, J. (1995). *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Duffy, M. (2000). There's no two-way symmetric about it: A post-modern examination of public relations textbooks. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17(3), 294-315.
- DuFon, M. (2002). Video recording in ethnographic SLA research: some issues of validity in data collection. *Language Learning & Technology*, 6(1), 40-59.
- Duke, S. (2002). Wired science: Use of World Wide Web and e-mail in science public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28(3), 311-324.
- Edgecliffe-Johnson, A. (2012, October 3). PR and news boundaries are being redrawn. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4ce3ec34-0d3b-11e2-99a1-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3CblzJKKB>.
- Edwards, L. (2009). Symbolic power and public relations practice: Locating individual practitioners in their social context. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(3), 252-272.
- Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. (1969). The repertoire of nonverbal behaviour: Categories, origins, usage, and coding. *Semiotica*, 1, 49-98.
- Ekstrom, M. (2006). Interviewing, quoting and the development of modern news journalism: A study of the Swedish press 1915-1995. In M. Ekstrom, A. Kroon, & M. Nylund (Eds.), *News from the interview society*. Goteborg: Nordicom.
- Ekstrom, M. (2007). Conversation analysis in journalism studies. *Journalism Studies*, 8(6), 964-973.
- Ekstrom, M., & Kroon Lundell, A. (2011). Beyond the broadcast interview: Specialised forms of interviewing in the making of television news. *Journalism Studies*, 12(2), 172-187.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity:



- Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage. Pp. 733-768.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(Autumn), 51-58.
- Epstein, E., Jay. (1973). *News from nowhere: Television and the news*. New York: Random House.
- Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. L. (1987). *Visualising deviance*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. L. (1989). *Negotiating control: A study of news sources*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Erjavec, K. (2005). Hybrid public relations news discourse. *European Journal of Communication*, 20(2), 155-179.
- Ewen, S. (1996). *PR! A social history of spin*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995a). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995b). *Media discourse*. London: Arnold.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 121-139). London: Sage.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Fengler, S., & Russ-Mohl, S. (2008). Journalists and the information-attention markets: Towards an economic theory of journalism. *Journalism*, 9(6), 667-690.
- Fine, G. (2003). Towards a peopled ethnography developing theory from group like. *Ethnography*, 4(1), 41-60.
- Fisher, D. (2014, August 22). Slater faces prosecution for breaching privacy. *The New Zealand Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?id=1&objectid=11312691>
- Fishman, M. (1980). *Manufacturing the news*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Flewitt, R., Hample, R., Hauck, M., & Lancaster, L. (2009). What are multimodal data and transcription? In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 40-53). Abington, Oxon: Routledge.
- Franklin, B. (1986). Public relations, the local press and the coverage of local government. *Local Government Studies*, 12(4), 25-33.
- Franklin, B. (1988). *Public relations activities in local government*. London: Charles

Knight.

Franklin, B. (1997). *Newszak and the news media*. London, England: Arnold.

Franklin, B. (2003). 'A good day to bury bad news?': journalists, sources and the packaging of politics. In S. Cottle (Ed.), *News, public relations and power* (pp. 45-61). London: Sage.

Franklin, B. (2004). *Packaging politics: Political communications in Britain's media democracy*. London: Arnold.

Franklin, B. (2005). McJournalism: The local press and the McDonaldization thesis. In S. Allen (Ed.), *Journalism: Critical issues* (pp. 137-150). Berkshire, England: Open University Press.

Franklin, B. (2006). *Local journalism and local media: Making the local news*. London: Routledge.

Franklin, B. (2011). Sources, credibility and the continuing crisis of UK journalism. In B. Franklin & M. Carlson (Eds.), *Journalists, sources and credibility: New perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Franklin, B., & Carlson, M. (Eds.). (2011). *Journalists, sources and credibility: New perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Franklin, B., Hogan, M., Langley, Q., Mosdell, N., & Pill, E. (2009). *Key concepts in public relations*. London: Sage.

Franklin, B., & Murphy, D. (1991). *What's news? The market, politics and the local press*. London: Routledge.

Franklin, B., & Murphy, D. (1998). *Making local news: Local journalism in context*. London: Routledge.

Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 931-952.

Fraundorf, S., & Watson, D. (2011). The disfluent discourse: Effects of filled pauses on recall. *J Mem Lange*, 65(2), 161-175.

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2(1), 64-90.

Gandy, O. J. (1982). *Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy*. New York, United States: Albex Publishing Corporation.

Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Pantheon.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gass, S. M., & Houck, N. (1999). *Interlanguage refusals*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Gee, J. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (2nd ed.).

New York & London: Routledge.

Geertz, C. (1973a). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, United States: Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (1973b). Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (pp. 412-455). New York: Basic Books.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Glasgow University Media Group. (1976). *Bad news*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Glasgow University Media Group. (1980). *More bad news*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. (1964). The neglected situation. *American Anthropologist*, 66(6), 133-136.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis*. New York: Harper Colophon.

Golan, G., & Wanta, W. (2001). Second-level agenda setting in the New Hampshire Primary: a comparison of coverage in three newspapers and public perceptions of candidates. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 78(2), 247-259.

Goldin-Meadow, S. (2003). *Hearing gesture: How our hands help us think*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Goodwin, C. (1981). *Conversational organization*. New York, United States: Academic Press.

Goodwin, C. (2007). Participation, stance, and affect in the organisation of activities. *Discourse and Society*, 18(1), 53-73.

Greatbatch, D. (1998). Neutralism in British news interviews. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Gregory, A. (2003, September 1). The press, public relations and the implications for democracy Symposium conducted at the meeting of the The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management Retrieved from <http://www.globalpr.org/news/features/gregory-1-9-03.asp>.

Gregory, A. (2004, November 9). Powerful PR: a force for the future Symposium conducted at the meeting of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Retrieved from [http://www.ipr.org.uk/news/speeches/old/Anne\\_Gregory-rep-IPR\\_Conf\\_09\\_11\\_04.htm](http://www.ipr.org.uk/news/speeches/old/Anne_Gregory-rep-IPR_Conf_09_11_04.htm).

Gregory, A., & Willis, P. (2013). *Strategic public relations leadership*. London: Routledge.

Grunig, J. (Ed.). (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication*

- management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Grunig, J. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 151-176.
- Grunig, J., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Texas, United States: Harcourt Brace.
- Grunig, J., & White, J. (1992). The effect of worldviews on public relations theory and practice. In J. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 31-64). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Grunig, L., & Grunig, J. (2009). Public relations in the United States: A generation of maturation. In K. Sriramesh & D. Vercic (Eds.), *The global public relations handbook, revised and expanded edition* (pp. 677-714). New York: Routledge.
- Guardian Staff. (2014, June 6). Robert Peston's speech warns of threat to journalism from native ads - full text. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jun/06/robert-peston-threat-journalism-native-ads-charles-wheeler-lecture-full-text>.
- Gumperz, J. (2001). Interactional sociolinguistics: A personal perspective. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 215-228). MA United States & Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing.
- Gumperz, J., & Berenz, N. (1993). Transcribing conversational exchanges. In J. Edwards & M. Lampert (Eds.), *Talking data* (pp. 91-120). New Jersey, United States: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2005). *Theorizing about intercultural communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA, United States: Sage.
- Guskin, E. (2013, June 25). Newspaper newsrooms suffer large staffing decreases. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/25/newspaper-newsrooms-suffer-large-staffing-decreases/>
- Habermas, J. (1989 [1962]). *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001).
- Hager, N. (2006). *The hollow men*. Nelson, New Zealand: Craig Potton.
- Hager, N. (2008, November). *Imagining a world where the PR people had won*. Paper presented at the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand, University of Otago. Retrieved from <http://www.nickyhager.info/imagining-a-world-where-the-pr-people-had-won-sociological-association-of-aotearoa-new-zealand-conference-university-of/>
- Hager, N. (2014). *Dirty politics: How attack politics is poisoning New Zealand's political environment*. Auckland: Craig Potton.

- Hall, E. T. (1963). A system for the notation of proxemic behavior. *American Anthropologist*, 65(5), 1003-1026.
- Hall, S. (2005). Introduction: Hidden in plain sight - journalism's critical issues. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Journalism: critical issues* (pp. 1-19). Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state and law and order*. London Macmillan.
- Hallahan, K. (1999). Seven models of framing: implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3), 205-242.
- Hallin, D., & Mancini, P. (2004). Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hannerz, U. (2004). *Foreign news: Exploring the world of foreign correspondents*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hannis, G. (2014). Understanding journalism: First things first. In G. Hannis (Ed.), *Intro: A beginner's guide to journalism in 21st-century Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Wellington: The New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Harcup, T. (2004). *Journalism: Principles and practice*. London, England: Sage.
- Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280.
- Harding, J. (2014, January 14). Why BBC head of news James Harding is 'extremely optimistic about the future of journalism'. Available at: [www.pressgazette.co.uk/.../why-bbc-head-news-james-harding-extremely-optimistic-about-future-journalism](http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/.../why-bbc-head-news-james-harding-extremely-optimistic-about-future-journalism).
- Harrison, K., & Galloway, C. (2005). Public relations ethics: A simpler (but not simplistic) approach to the complexities. *Prism*, 3(1).
- Harrison, S. (2002). *The discourse structure of email discussions*. University of Central England, Birmingham.
- Heracleous, L. (2004). Interpretivist approaches to organizational discourse. In D. Grant, N. Phillips, C. Hardy, L. Putnam, & C. Osrick (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational discourse* (pp. 175-192). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Heritage, J. (1985). Analyzing news interviews: Aspects of the production of talk for an overhearing audience. In T. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol.3, Discourse and Dialogue* (pp. 95-117). London: Academic Press.
- Heritage, J. (1988). Explanations as accounts: A conversation analytic perspective. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp. 127-144). London: Sage.
- Herman, E., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. New York, United States: Pantheon.

- Hess, K., & Waller, L. (2008). An exploratory study of relationships between local government media officers and journalists in regional Australia. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 9, 151-160.
- Hirschman, L. (1994). Female-male differences in conversational interaction. *Language in Society*, 23(3), 427-442.
- Hobsbawm, J. (Ed.). (2006). *Where the truth lies: trust and morality in PR and journalism*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Hohendahl, P. U., & Silberman, M. (1979). Critical theory, public sphere and culture: Jurgen Habermas and his critics. *New German Critique*, 16, 89-118.
- Holdthefrontpage. (2007, June). British hacks will do anything for a free lunch. Holdthefrontpage.co.uk. Retrieved from <http://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2007/news/british-hacks-will-do-anything-for-a-free-lunch/>
- Holladay, S. J., & Coombs, W. T. (2013). Public relations literacy: Developing critical consumers of public relations. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 2(2), 125-146.
- Hollings, J., Lealand, G., Samson, A., & Tilley, E. (2007). The big NZ journalism survey: Underpaid, under-trained, under-resourced, unsure about the future - but still idealistic. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 13(2), 175-197.
- Holtzhausen, D. (2000). Postmodern values in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(1), 93-114.
- Holtzhausen, D. (2012). *Public relations as activism: Postmodern approaches to theory and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Iimuro, A. (2006). Conversation analysis of e-mail requests by second language speakers *Second Language Studies*, 24(2), 65-113.
- Iino, M. (1999). Issues of video recording in language studies. *Obrin Studies in Language and Literature*, 39, 65-85.
- Itule, B., & Anderson, D. (2007). *News writing & reporting for today's media* (7th ed.). New York, USA: McGraw Hill.
- Jacobs, G. (1999a). *Preformulating the news: An analysis of the metapragmatics of press releases*. Amsterdam, Holland/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Jacobs, G. (1999b). Self-reference in press releases. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 219-242.
- Jacobs, G. (2011). Press conferences on the Internet: Technology, mediation and access in the news. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 1900-1911.
- Jahansoozi, J. (2006). Relationships, transparency, and evaluation: The implications for public relations. In J. L'Étang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp. 61-93). New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

- Jakobs, E.-M. (2003). Reproductive writing - writing from sources *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35, 893-906.
- Jalilifar, A. (2009). Request strategies: Cross-sectional study of Iranian EFL learners and Australian native speakers. *English Language Teaching*, 2(1), 46-61.
- Jansen, F. (2008). Conciseness, an outsider's perspective and a smooth intonation contour: A comparison of appositions in press releases and news stories based upon them. *Pragmatics*, 18(1), 115-142.
- Jeffers, D. W. (1977). Performance expectations as a measure of relative status of news and PR people. *Journalism Quarterly*, 54(Summer), 299-306.
- Jempson, M. (2005). Spinners or sinners? PR, journalists and public trust. *Journal of Communication Management*, 9(3), 267-276.
- Jewitt, C. (2009). An introduction to multimodality. In C. Jewitt (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (pp. 14-28). Oxon, England: Routledge.
- Johnston, J. (2013). *Media relations: Issues & strategies* (2nd ed.). Sidney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Jones, N. (2002). *Control freaks: how New Labour gets its own way*. London, England: Politico's Publishing Ltd.
- Jucker, A. (1986). *News interviews*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kawulich, B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum: Qualitative social research*, 6(2), 1-19.
- Keeble, R. (2005). *Print journalism: A critical introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kendon, A. (1967). Some functions of gaze-direction in social interaction. *Acta Psychologica*, 26, 22-63.
- Kendon, A. (1997). Gesture. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26, 109-128.
- Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible Action as Utterance*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kendon, A., & Cook, M. (1969). The Consistency of gaze patterns in social interaction. *British Journal of Psychology*, 60(4), 481-494.
- Kircher, T., Straube, B., Leube, D., Weis, S., Sachs, O., Willmes, K., & Green, A. (2009). Neural interaction of speech and gesture: Different activations of metaphoric co-verbal gestures. *Neuropsychologia*, 47(1), 169-179.
- Kjellmer, G. (2009). Where do we backchannel? On the use of mm, mhm, uh huh and such like. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 14(1), 81-112.
- L'Étang, J. (2005). Critical public relations: Some reflections. *Public Relations Review*, 31(4), 521-526.
- L'Étang, J., Hodges, C. E. M., & Pieczka, M. (2012). Cultures and places: Ethnography in public relations spaces. *Public Relations Review*, 38(4), 519-521.

- L'Étang, J., & Pieczka, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Labour Force Survey Employment Status by Occupation, April-June 2014. (2014, August). Retrieved from Office of National Statistics  
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-force-survey-employment-status-by-occupation/april---june-2014/index.html>
- Lang, K., & Lang, G. E. (1953). The unique perspective of television and its effect: A pilot study. *American Sociology Association*, 18(1), 3-12.
- Langett, J. (2013). Meeting the media: Towards an interpersonal relationship theory between the public relations practitioner and the journalist. *PRism*, 10(1), 1-12.
- Lassen, I. (2006). Is the press release a genre? A study of form and content. *Discourse Studies*, 8(4), 503-530.
- Lattimore, D., Baskin, O., Heiman, S., & Toth, E. (2009). *Public relations: The profession and the practice*. New York, United States: McGraw-Hill.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, United States: Cambridge University Press.
- Ledingham, J., A., & Bruning, S., D (Eds.). (2009). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Leitch, S., & Neilson, D. (1997). Reframing public relations: New directions for theory and practice. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 17-32.
- Leitch, S., & Neilson, D. (2001). Bringing publics into public relations: New theoretical frameworks for practice. In R. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 127-139). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lemke, J. (2008). Identity, development and desire: Critical questions. In C. Caldas-Coulthard & R. Iedema (Eds.), *Identity trouble: Critical discourse and contested identities* (pp. 17-43). Hampshire, England & New York, United States: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lenaerts, G. (2002). In pursuit of the functional quality of political press releases. *Document Design*, 3, 210-223.
- Leveson, L. J. (2012, November 29). *An inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press*. London: The Stationary Office of the House of Commons. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leveson-inquiry-report-into-the-culture-practices-and-ethics-of-the-press>.
- Lewis, J., Williams, A., & Franklin, B. (2008). A compromised fourth estate? Uk news journalism, public relations and news sources. *Journalism Studies*, 9(1), 1-20.
- Lewis, J., Williams, A., Franklin, B., Thomas, J., & Mosdell, N. (2006). *The quality and independence of British journalism*. Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies.



- Liddicoat, A. (2011). *An introduction to conversation analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Linardopoulos, N. (2005). Commentary: The use of press releases. A case study of the Athens Olympic Games. *PRism*, 3.
- Lindholm, M. (2008). A community text pattern in the European Commission press release? A generic and genetic view. *Pragmatics*, 18(1), 33-58.
- Lloyd, J. (2004). *What the media do to our politics*. London: Constable.
- Louw, E. (2010). *The media and political process* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Macaulay, T. B. (1828). Hallam's history. *An essay by Thomas Babington Macaulay*.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. London: Sage.
- Macnamara, J. (2010). *Spinning the media: 80 years worth of research on spin in media*. Retrieved from <http://www.crikey.com.au/2010/03/23/spinning-the-media-80-years-worth-of-research-on-spin-in-media/?source=cmailer>.
- Macnamara, J. (2012). Journalism and public relations: unpacking myths and stereotypes. *Australian Journalism Review*, 34(1), 33-50.
- Macnamara, J. (2014). Journalism-PR relations revisited: The good news, the bad news, and insights into tomorrow's news. *Public Relations Review* (in-press).
- Marcus, N. E. (2009). Continuous semantic development of the discourse marker *well*. *English Studies*, 90(2), 214-242.
- Martin, T. (2011). The walls are falling: Will brand journalism replace public relations? Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/conversedigital/will-brand-journalism-replace-public-relations>.
- Matsumoto, D., Frank, M. G., & Hwang, H. S. (Eds.). (2013). *Nonverbal Communication: Science and applications*. London, UK: Sage.
- Matthews, J. (2013). Journalists and their sources. In K. Fowler-Watt & S. Allen (Eds.), *Journalism: New challenges* (pp. 242-259). Bournemouth: Centre for Journalism & Communication Research, Bournemouth University.
- Mawby, R. (2010). Chibnall revisited: Crime reporters, the police and 'law-and-order news'. *British Journal of Criminology*, 50, 1060-1076.
- Maynard, D. (1980). Placement of topic change in conversation. *Semiotica*, 30(3/4), 263-290.
- McAthy, R. (2012, July 9). Lessons from the Guardian's open newslist trial. *Journalism.co.uk*. Retrieved from <http://journalism.co.uk/news/open-journalism-guardian>.
- McChesney, R. (2003). The problem of journalism: A political economic contribution to an explanation of the crisis in contemporary US journalism. *Journalism*

*Studies*, 4(3), 299-329.

- McChesney, R., & Nichols, J. (2002). *Our media, not theirs: The democratic struggle against corporate media*. New York, United States: Seven Stories Press.
- McChesney, R., & Nichols, J. (2010). *The death and life of American journalism: The media revolution that will begin the world again*. New York: Nation Books.
- McGregor, J., &. (2007, August 11). *What is the state of the news media in New Zealand*. Speech to the Journalism Matters Conference, Wellington: Available at: [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10457282](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10457282).
- McKie, D., & Munshi, D. (2009). Theoretical black holes: A partial A to Z of missing critical thought in public relations. In R. Heath & E. Toth (Eds.), *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations II* (pp. 61-76). Abdingdon, New York: Routledge.
- McLaren, Y., & Gurău, C. (2005). Characterising the genre of the corporate press release. *LSP and Professional Communication*, 5(1), 10-30.
- Mcmanus, J. (1994). *Market-driven journalism: Let the citizen beware?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McMillen, A. (2012, April 4). Sources of tension. *The Global Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobalmail.org/feature/sources-of-tension/170/>
- McNair, B. (1999). *News and journalism in the UK* (3rd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- McNair, B. (2011). *An introduction to political communication* (5th ed.). London: Routledge.
- McNeill, D. (1992). *Hand and mind: What gestures reveal about thought*. Chicago, United States: University of Chicago Press.
- McNeill, D. (2000). *Language and Gesture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McNeill, D. (2005). *Gesture and Thought*. Chicago, United States: Chicago University Press.
- McQuail, D. (2000). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. London: Sage.
- Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., & Hays, T. (2008). *In-depth interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sydney, Australia: Pearson Education Australia.
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2014). *Occupation outlook 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/lmr/occupational-outlook/occupation-outlook-report-2014.pdf>
- Mitchell, A. (2014, March 26). State of the news media 2014. From Pew Research Center's Journalism Project <http://www.journalism.org/2014/03/26/state-of-the-news-media-2014-overview/>
- Mittelberg, I. (2008). Peircean semiotics meets conceptual metaphor: Iconic modes in

- gestural representations of grammar. In A. Cienki & C. Müller (Eds.), *Metaphor and Gesture*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Moffitt, M. A. (1994). Collapsing and integrating concepts of "pubic" and "image" into a new theory. *Public Relations Review*, 20, 159-170.
- Moloney, K. (2006). *Rethinking public relations*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Moloney, K. (2012). KM Commentary. In Power – it's personal and public. Prism 9(2). Retrieved from <http://www.prismjournal.org/powerintro.html>.
- Moloney, K., Jackson, D., & McQueen, D. (2013). News and public relations: A dangerous relationship. In K. Fowler-Watt & S. Allen (Eds.), *Journalism: New challenges* (pp. 259-282). Bournemouth: Centre for Journalism & Communication Research, Bournemouth University.
- Morris, T., & Goldsworthy, S. (2008). *PR a persuasive industry: Spin, public relations, and the shaping of the modern media*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morrow, P. C., & McElroy, J. C. (1981). Interior office design and visitor response: A constructive replication. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 66(5), 646-650.
- Morton, L. (1986). How newspapers choose the releases they use. *Public Relations Review*, 12(3), 22-27.
- Morton, L. (1988). Effectiveness of camera-ready copy in press releases. *Public Relations Review*, 14(2), 45-49.
- Morton, L., & Warren, J. (1992). Acceptance characteristics of hometown press releases. *Public Relations Review*, 18(4), 385-390.
- Motion, J., & Leitch, S. (1996). A discursive perspective from New Zealand: Another world view. *Public Relations Review*, 22, 297-309.
- Motion, J., Leitch, S., & Cliffe, S. (2009). Public relations in Australasia: friendly rivalry, cultural diversity, and global focus. In K. Sriramesh & D. Vercic (Eds.), *The global public relations handbook: Theory, research and practice. Revised and expanded edition* (2nd ed., pp. 107-129). New York: Routledge.
- Motion, J., & Weaver, K. (2005). A discourse perspective for critical public relations research: Life Sciences Network and the battle for truth. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 49-67.
- Napoli, P. M., Taylor, M., & Powers, G. (1999). Writing activities of public relations practitioners: The relationship between experience and writing tasks. *Public Relations Review*, 25(3), 369-380.
- Nessmann, K. (1995). Public relations in Europe: A comparison with the United States. *Public Relations Review*, 21(2), 151-160.
- Newman, B. (n/d). A review in political marketing: Lessons from recent presidential elections. *Michigan Ross School of Business*.

- Newsom, D., Turk, J. V., & Kruckeberg, D. (2004). *This is PR: The realities of public relations* (8th ed.). Belmont Ca, United States: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Newsom, D., & Wollert, J. A. (1988). *Media writing: Preparing information for the mass media* (2nd ed.). Belmont, California, USA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Norfolk, A. (2014, August 27). Scandal of the 1,400 lost girls. *The Times*.
- Norris, S. (2004a). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: A methodological framework*. New York, United States: Routledge.
- Norris, S. (2004b). Discourse Analysis: A conceptual framework. In P. LeVine & R. Scollon (Eds.), *Discourse and technology: Multimodal discourse analysis*. Washington, DC, United States: Georgetown University Press.
- Norris, S. (2006). Multiparty interaction: A multimodal perspective on relevance. *Discourse Studies*, 8(3), 401-421.
- Norris, S. (2011a). *Identity in (inter)action: Introducing multimodal (inter)action analysis*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Norris, S. (2011b). Three hierarchical positions of deictic gesture in relation to spoken language: a multimodal interaction analysis. *Visual Communication*, 10(2), 129-147.
- Norris, S., & Jones, R. (2005). *Discourse in action: Introducing mediated discourse analysis*. London, England: Routledge.
- O'Malley, P. (n.d). In praise of secrecy: The ethical foundations of public relations. Retrieved from <http://www.aboutpublicrelations.net/ucomalley.htm>.
- O'Neill, D., & O'Connor, C. (2008). The passive journalist. *Journalism Practice*, 2(3), 487-500.
- Oakham, M., & Kirby, B. (2006). Feeding the chooks in the country: A study of successful public relations media strategies in regional Victoria. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 7, 95-108.
- Office for National Statistics. (2014, August). Labour force survey employment status by occupation, April – June 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-force-survey-employment-status-by-occupation/april---june-2014/index.html>.
- Oliver, S. (2007). *Public relations strategy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Kogan Page Ltd.
- Ornebring, H. (2009, February). The two professionalismisms of journalism: Journalism and the changing context of work. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*.
- Orsman B (2009, June 19). Cargo shed 'magic' for \$84m. *The New Zealand Herald*, A1.
- Ostini, J., & Fung, A. (2002). Beyond the four theories of the press: A news model of national media systems. *Mass Communication and Society*, 5(1), 41-56.
- Pander Maat, H. (2007). How promotional language in press releases is dealt with by journalists. *Journal of Business Communications*, 44(1), 59-95.

- Pander Maat, H. (2008). Editing and genre conflict: How newspaper journalists clarify and neutralize press release copy. *Pragmatics*, 18(1), 87-115.
- Park, Y. Y. (1998). A discourse analysis of contrastive connectives in English, Korean, and Japanese conversation: With special reference to the context of dispreferred responses. In A. Jucker & Y. Ziv (Eds.), *Discourse markers: Descriptions and theory* (pp. 277-300). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Paterson, C. (2008). Introduction: why ethnography. In C. Paterson & D. Domingo (Eds.), *Making online news: the ethnography of new media production* (pp. 1-11). New York: Peter Lang.
- Paterson, C., & Domingo, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Making online news: the ethnography of new media production* (Vol. 1). New York: Peter Lang.
- Perrin, D. (2003). Progression analysis (PA): Investigating writing strategies at the work place. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35, 907-921.
- Perrin, D., & Ehrensberger-Dow, M. (2006). Journalists' language awareness: Inferences from writing strategies. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 19, 319-343.
- Peston, R. (2014, June 6). Robert Peston's speech warns of threat to journalism from native ads – full text. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/jun/06/robert-peston-threat-journalism-native-ads-charles-wheeler-lecture-full-text>.
- Peterson, M. (2001). Getting to the story: unwriteable discourse and interpretive practice in American journalism. *Anthropological Quarterly* 74, 201-211.
- Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. (2009). The state of the news media: An annual report on American journalism – News investment. Retrieved from <http://www.stateofthemedias.org/2009/overview/>
- Pew Research Center for People and the Press. (2011). Internet gains on television as public's main news source: More young people cite Internet than TV. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2011/01/04/internet-gains-on-television-as-publics-main-news-source/>
- Philo, G. (2007). Can discourse analysis successfully explain the content of media and journalistic practice? *Journalism Studies*, 8(2), 175-196.
- Pieczka, M. (2006). Public relations expertise in practice. In J. L'Étang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp. 279-303). New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Pieczka, M. (2006). "Chemistry" and the public relations industry: An exploration of the concept of jurisdiction and issues arising. In J. L'Étang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp. 303-333). New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Place, K. (2012). Power-control or empowerment? How women public relations practitioners make meaning of power. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 24(5), 435-450.

- Ponsford, D. (2014, January 14). Labour force survey suggests surge of 12,000 in number of UK journalists since 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/print/content/labour-force-survey-suggests-surge-12000-number-uk-journalists-2009>.
- Puchan, H. (2006). An intellectual history of German public relations. In J. L'Etang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp. 111-122). New York: Routledge.
- Puijk, R. (2008). Ethnographic media production research in a digital environment. In C. Paterson & D. Domingo (Eds.), *Making online news* (pp. 29-44). New York: Peter Lange.
- PWR. (2011, February). What we learned from our 2011 journalist survey (It may surprise you). From PWR New Media Website <http://www.pwrnewmedia.com/site09/archives/2011JournalistSurvey.html>.
- Qu, H. (2013). Social media and the Boston bombings. When citizens and journalists cover the same story. [Weblog message]. Retrieved from <http://www.niemanlab.org/2013/04/social-media-and-the-boston-bombings-when-citizens-and-journalists-cover-the-same-story/>
- Quek, F., McNeill, D., Bryll, R., Duncan, S., Ma, X., Kirbas, C., & Ansari, R. (2002). Multimodal human discourse: gesture and speech. *ACM Transaction on Computer-Human Interaction*, 9(3), 171-193.
- Reber, B., & Berger, B. (2006). Finding Influence: Examining the role of influence in public relations practice. *Journal of Communication Management*, 10(3), 235-249.
- Reich, Z. (2006). The process model of news initiative: sources lead first, reporters thereafter. *Journalism Studies*, 7(4), 497-514.
- Reich, Z. (2009). *Sourcing the news: Key issues in journalism - an innovative study of Israeli press*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Richardson, J. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Hampshire, England & New York, United States: Palgrave.
- Riordan, K. (2014). Accuracy, independence, and impartiality: How legacy media and digital natives approach standards in the digital age. *Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper, University of Oxford*. Retrieved from <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Accuracy,%20independence,%20impartiality-%20Look%20at%20legacy%20and%20digital%20natives.pdf>
- Roeh, I. (1989). Journalism as storytelling, coverage as narrative. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 33(2), 162-168.
- Roper, J. (2005). Symmetrical communication: Excellent public relations or a strategy for hegemony? *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 69-86.

- Rosensteil, T. (2002, November 25) quoted in O. Burkeman, Fox on the Run. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/nov/25/rupeurtmurdoch.mondaymedias action>.
- Rusbridger, A. (2010, November 19). The splintering of the fourth estate. *theguardian.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/nov/19/open-collaborative-future-journalism>.
- Rusbridger, A. (2011, October 6). The importance of a free press. *theguardian.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/oct/06/importance-free-press-alan-rusbridger>.
- Ryan, M., & Martinson, D. (1988). Journalists and public relations practitioners: why the antagonism? *Journalism Quarterly*, 65(1), 131-140.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organisation of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696-735.
- Sallot, L., & Johnson, E. (2006a). To contact or not? Investigating journalists' assessments of public relations subsidies and contact preferences. *Public Relations Review*, 32(1), 83-86.
- Sallot, L., & Johnson, E. (2006b). Investigating relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners: Working together to set, frame and build the public agenda, 1991-2004. *Public Relations Review*, 32(2), 151-159.
- Sallot, L., Steinfatt, T. M., Salwen, M. B., & B, S. D. (1998). Journalists' and public relations practitioners' news values: perceptions and cross-perceptions. *Journal of Mass Communication Quarterly* 75(Summer 2), 366-377.
- Salter, L. (2005). The communicative structures of journalism and public relations. *Journalism*, 6(1), 90-106.
- Saville-Troike, M. (1989). *The ethnography of communication: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford, England & MA, United States: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schegloff, E. (1968). Sequencing in conversational openings. *American Anthropologist*, 70(6), 1075-1095.
- Schegloff, E. (1982). Discourse as an interactional achievement: Some uses of 'uh huh' and other things that come between sentences. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1981 (Analyzing discourse: Text and talk)*. (pp. 71-93). Washington DC, USA: Georgetown University Press.
- Schegloff, E. (1997). Practices and actions: Boundary cases of other-initiated repair. *Discourse Processes*, 23(3), 499-545.
- Schegloff, E. (1997). Whose text? Whose context. *Discourse & Society*, 8(2), 165-187.
- Schegloff, E. (1998). Reflections on studying prosody in talk-in-interaction. *Language and speech*, 41(3-4), 235-263.

- Schegloff, E. (2000). On granularity. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 715-720.
- Schegloff, E. (2004). On dispensibility. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 37(2), 95-149.
- Schegloff, E. (2006). On possibles. *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), 141-157.
- Schegloff, E. (2010). Some other "Uh(m)"s. *Discourse Processes*, 47(2), 130-174.
- Schegloff, E. (2011). Word repeats as unit ends. *Discourse Studies*, 13(3), 367-380.
- Schegloff, E., Jefferson, G., & Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organisation of repair in conversation. *Language*, 53(2), 361-382.
- Schensul, S., Schensul, J., & LeCompte, M. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods: observations, interviews, and questionnaires (Ethnographer's toolkit)*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schiffrin, D. (2001). Discourse markers: Language, meaning, and context. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Hamilton, H. (Eds.). (2001). *The handbook of discourse analysis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schlesinger, P. (1978). *Putting 'reality' together: BBC news*. London: Constable.
- Schourup, L. (1999). Discourse Markers. *Lingua*, 107, 227-265.
- Schudson, M. (2001). The objectivity norm in American Journalism. *Journalism*, 2(2), 149-170.
- Schultz, J. (1998). *Reviving the fourth estate: Democracy, accountability and the media*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Scollon, R. (1998). *Mediated discourse as social interaction: A study of news discourse*. Essex, England Pearson Education.
- Scollon, R. (2001). *Mediated discourse: The nexus of practice*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Scollon, R. (2004). Intertextuality across communities of practice: Academics, journalism and advertising. In C.L. Moder & A. Martinovic-Zic (Eds.), *Discourse across languages and cultures*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 149-176.
- Serini, S. (1993). Influences on the power of public relations professionals in organisation: A case study. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 5(1), 1-25.
- Shin, J. H., & Cameron, G. T. (2004). Conflict measurements: analysis of simultaneous inclusion in roles, values, independence, and dyadic adjustment. *Public Relations Review*, (30), 401-410.



- Siebert, F., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four Theories of the Press*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Sigal, L. (1973). *Reporters and officials: The organisation and politics of newsmaking*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.
- Sigelman, L. (1973). Reporting the news: An organisational analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(1), 132-151.
- Singer, J. B. (1997). Still guarding the gate?: The newspaper journalist's role in an online world. *Convergence: The international Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 3(1), 72-89.
- Singer, J. B. (2004a). More than ink-stained wretches. The resocialization of print journalists in converged newsrooms *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(4), 838-856.
- Singer, J. B. (2004b). Strange bedfellows? The diffusion of convergence in four news organisations. *Journalism Studies*, 5(1), 3-18.
- Singer, J. B. (2009). Ethnography. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86(1), 191-198.
- Singer, J. B. (2012). The ethics of social journalism. *Australian Journalism Review*, 34(1), 3-16.
- Sissons, H. (2006). *Practical Journalism: How to write news*. London: Sage.
- Sissons, H. (2011). Multimodal exchanges and power relations in a public relations department. In S. Norris (Ed.), *Multimodality in practice: Investigating theory in practice*. London, England & New York, United States: Routledge.
- Sissons, H. (2012a). Journalism and public relations: A tale of two discourses. *Discourse and Communication*, 6(3), 273-294.
- Sissons, H., & (2012b). *Transcribing multimodal interaction* [The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics]. Wiley Blackwell.
- Sissons, H. (2014). Using social media. In G. Hannis (Ed.), *INTRO: A beginner's guide to journalism in 21st-century Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 47-62). Wellington: The New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Sissons, H., & Mulrennan, D. (2014). Writing for news websites. In G. Hannis (Ed.), *INTRO: A beginner's guide to journalism in 21st-century Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 282-292). Wellington: The New Zealand Journalists Training Organisation.
- Sleurs, K., & Jacobs, G. (2005). Beyond preformulation: an ethnographic perspective on press releases. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37, 1251-1273.
- Sleurs, K., Jacobs, G., & Van Waes, L. (2003). Constructing press releases, constructing quotations: A case study. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7(2), 192-212.
- Small, M. L. (2009). "How many cases do I need?": On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography*, 10(1), 192-212.

- Smith, R. (2014). *Public Relations: The basics*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Smith, V., & Clark, H. (1993). On the course of answering questions. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 32, 25-38.
- Soloski, J. (1989). News reporting and professionalism. *Media, Culture and Society*, 11, 207-28.
- Sriramesh, K., & Vercic, D. (Eds.). (2009). *The global public relations handbook: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Starkman, D. (2010, September-October). The hamster wheel. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 1-9.
- Stauber, J., & Rampton, S. (1995). *Toxic sludge is good for you: Lies, damn lies and the public relations industry*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.
- Sterne, G. (2010). Media perceptions of public relations in New Zealand. *Journal of Communication Management*, 14(1), 4-31.
- Stokes, J. (2003). *How to do media & cultural studies*. London: Sage.
- Susen, S. (2011). Critical notes on Habermas's theory of the public sphere. *Sociological analysis*, 5(1), 37-62.
- Taleghani-Nikazm, C. (2006). *Request sequences: The intersection of grammar, interaction and social context*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Tannen, D. (1984). *Conversational Style*. Norwood, NJ, USA: Ablex Press.
- Tannen, D. (1987). Repetition in conversation: Towards a poetics of talk. *Language*, 63(3), 547-605.
- Tannen, D. (1990). Ordinary conversation and literary discourse: Coherence and the poetics of repetition. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 583, 15-30.
- Tannen, D. (1996). *Gender & Discourse*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Tannen, D. (2007). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tench, R., & Yeomans, L. (2006). *Exploring public relations*. Essex, England: Pearson Education.
- Theaker, A. (2004). *The public relations handbook* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Routledge.
- Tilley, E. (2005). Media relations. In F. Sligo & R. Bathurst (Eds.), *Communication in the New Zealand workplace*. Wellington: Software Technology New Zealand.
- Tilley, E. (2012). *The blame game: Professional stance and ethical self-examination in public relations*. presented at the meeting of the ANZCA Conference 2012: Communicating change and changing communication in the 21st century Adelaide, South Australia.
- Tilley, E., & Hollings, J. (2008). *Still stuck in 'A love-hate relationship': Understading*

*journalists' enduring and impassioned duality towards public relations.*  
presented at the meeting of the ANZCA 2008 Conference: Power and Place,  
Wellington.

- Titscher, S., Meyer, M., Wodak, P. R., & Vetter, E. (2000). *Methods of text and discourse analysis*. London, England: Sage.
- Tracy, K., Martinez-Guillem, S., Robles, J., & Casteline, K. (2011). Critical discourse analysis and (U.S.) communication scholarship. In C. Salmon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 35* (Vol. 35).
- Treadwell, D., & Treadwell, J. (2005). *Public relations practice: Principles in practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Tuchman, G. (1972). Objectivity as strategic ritual: An examination of Newsmen's notions of objectivity. *American Journal of Sociology*, 77(4), 660-679.
- Tuchman, G. (1973). Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(1), 110-131.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: Macmillan.
- Tuchman, G. (1991). Qualitative methods in the study of news. In K. B. Jenson & N. Jankowski (Eds.), *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*. London: Routledge.
- Tuchman, G. (2002). The production of news. In K. B. Jensen (Ed.), *A handbook of media and communication research*. Abingdon Routledge.
- Turk, J. V. (1985). Information subsidies and influence. *Public Relations Review*, 11(3), 10-25.
- Turk, J. V. (1986). Public relations influence on the news. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 7(4), 15-27.
- USC Annenberg, (2012). *Seventh biennial communication and public relations generally accepted practices (GAP VII) study*. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg.
- Van Dijk, T. (1988). *News as discourse*. New Jersey, United States: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van Dijk, T. (2001). Critical Discourse Analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Van Dijk, T. (2010). *Discourse and Context*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Hout, T. (2011). Sourcing business news: A case study of public relations uptake. In B. Franklin & M. Carlson (Eds.), *Journalists, sources and credibility: New perspectives* (pp. 107-126). New York: Routledge.
- Van Hout, T., & Jacobs, G. (2008). News production theory and practice: fieldwork notes on power, interaction and agency. *Pragmatics*, 18(1), 59-85.

- Van Hout, T., & Macgilchrist, F. (2010). Framing the news: An ethnographic view of business newswriting. *Text & Talk*, 30(2), 169-191.
- Velthius, O. (2006). Inside a world of spin: Four days at the World Trade Organisation. *Ethnography*, 7(1), 125-150.
- Waldman, S., & The working group on information needs of communities, F. C. C. (2011). *The information needs of communities: The changing media landscape in a broadband age*. Washington DC: Federal Communications Commission.
- Walters, L., & Walters, T. (1992). Environment of confidence: daily newspaper use of press releases. *Public Relations Review*, 18(1), 31-46.
- Walters, T., Walters, L., & Starr, D. (1994). After the highwayman: Syntax and successful placement of press releases in newspapers. *Public Relations Review*, 20(4), 345-356.
- Warner, M. (1971). Organisational context and control of policy in the television newsroom: A participant observation study. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 22(3), 283-294.
- Waters, R., Tindall, N., & Morton, T. (2010). Media catching and the journalist-public relations relationship: How social media are changing the practice of media relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23(3), 241-264.
- Waymer, D. (2013). Democracy and government public relations: Expanding the scope of "Relationship" in public relations research. *Public Relations Review*, 39, 320-331.
- Weaver, K., & Motion, J. (2002). Sabotage and subterfuge: public relations, democracy and genetic engineering in New Zealand. *Media, Culture & Society*, 24(3), 325-343.
- Weaver, K., Motion, J., & Roper, J. (2006). From propaganda to discourse (and back again): Truth, power, the public interest and public relations. In J. L'Etang & M. Pieczka (Eds.), *Public relations: Critical debates and contemporary practice* (pp. 7-23). New York; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Weiss, R. F. (1969). Repetition of persuasion. *Psychological Reports*, 25, 669-670.
- West, C. (1995). Women's competence in conversation. *Discourse & Society*, 6(1), 107-131.
- White, J., & Hobsbawm, J. (2007). Public relations and journalism: The unquiet relationship - a view from the United Kingdom. *Journalism Practice*, 1(2), 283-292.
- Wilcox, D., Ault, P., & Agee, W. (1992). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics* (3rd ed.). New York, United States: Harper Collins.
- Williams, A. (2014, August 11). The growing pay gap between journalism and public relations. From Pew Research Center <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/11/the-growing-pay-gap-between-journalism-and-public-relations/>

- Williams, M. (2000). Interpretivism and generalisation. *Sociology* 34(2), 209-224.
- Williams, N. (2011, September 15). Media under threat from its own financial backers. *National Business Review*.
- Wilson, J. (1996). *Understanding journalism: A guide to issues*. London: Routledge.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London, UK: Sage.
- Wood, L., & Kroger, R. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*. California, United States & London, England: Sage.
- Yates, J., & Orlikowski, W. (1993, July). *Knee-jerk Anti-LOOPism and other e-mail phenomena: Oral, written, and electronic patterns in computer-mediated communication*: MIT Sloan School.
- Yates, S. (2001). Researching Internet interactions: Sociolinguistics in corpus analysis. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor & S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis* (pp. 93-147). London: Sage.
- Yin, J. (2008). Beyond the four theories of the press: A new model for the Asian and the world press. *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, 10(1), 3-62.
- Young, P. (2004). *Ethics in public relations: As clear as your conscience*. Retrieved from [http://publicsphere.typepad.com/mediations/files/ethics\\_survey\\_feedback.pdf](http://publicsphere.typepad.com/mediations/files/ethics_survey_feedback.pdf)
- Zawai, C. (1994). Sources of news: Who feeds the watchdogs? [Study of the contribution of public relations sources to the news content of Australian newspapers]. *Australian Journalism Review*, 16(1), 67-71.
- Zweigenhaft, R. (1976). Personal space in the faculty office: Desk placement and the student-faculty interaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 61(4), 529-532.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Transcript of television news report following news conference in Chapter Four.

Appendix 2: Transcription key to analysis in Chapters Five and Six.

Appendix 3: Transcript of radio report originally aired 16 December 2011.

Appendix 4: Notification of publication in *Journalism Studies*.

Appendix 5: Notice of acceptance with changes in *Public Relations Inquiry*.

Appendix 6: Ethics approval from AUTECH for the study.

Appendix 7: Information form for participants.

Appendix 8: Consent form for participants.

Appendix 9: Observation protocol.

**Appendix 1:** Transcript of television news report following news conference in  
Chapter 4

**Presenter intro:**

More has been revealed on what Auckland's waterfront will look like in a spruced up time (sic) to coincide with the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Grace Edwards went on a tour of the two old sheds set for a multi-million dollar make-over and called in some expert opinion.

**Reporter voice over:**

Welcome to party central. This is where rugby fans could be gathering to soak up the World Cup atmosphere, come 2011. One News was shown around Queens Wharf today by the man who plans to create the public space and a cruise ship terminal from what are basically two ninety-year-old tin sheds.

**Quote by the development manager**

"There's something that is an essential part of the Auckland waterfront: a unique part of our character and certainly worthy of preserving and keeping if we can."

**Reporter voice over:**

It may not be a very inviting space right now but the council's planning to spend 14 million dollars to transform these sheds. That's on top of the \$70 million the council has budgeted for the rest of the project.

To give us an idea of just how these dilapidated sheds could be overhauled we invited along a top Auckland architect to take a look.

**Quote by first architect:**

"Sandblast some of the steel columns that you see over here painted yellow, get it back to its natural material. Sandblast all the timber structure back and create a very natural feel, a very New Zealand feel.

**Reporter voice over:**

But not everyone is a fan. Architect David Mitchell says Queens Wharf should be home to a statement building with a design selected from a competition of international architects in much the same way as the Sydney Opera House.

**Quote from second architect:**

“Doing up the sheds is a real cheap-jack kind of a way of going about it. I mean what for? This is a great site, one of the greatest sites in Auckland.”

**Reporter voice over**

The council will be calling for designs to transform the sheds soon and wants to get work underway by the start of next year.

ENDS



## Appendix 2: Transcription key to analysis in Chapters 5 and 6

### Transcription symbols used

(0.4) The number in the brackets indicates intervals between talk

(.) A dot enclosed in a bracket indicates a pause too short to measure

= There is no discernible interval between one speaker finishing and another starting

. A closing intonation or stopping fall in tone

: The speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter. The more colons the more extension there is to the sound

, Indicates a slight upward continuing intonation such as when someone is reciting a list

[ ] Square brackets show where talk overlaps

? Rising intonation

˘ Rising intonation is weaker than above

°Word° Words spoken between the degree symbols are softer than those before or after

hh a speaker's out-breath

.hh a dot before the 'h' shows a speaker's in-breath

- A hyphen indicates an abrupt cut off of sound

Word Underlining indicate the speaker's emphasis

WORD shows words spoken are louder than surrounding talk

( ) The words within a single bracket are the translator's best guess.

(( )) The words within double brackets indicate a description or comment from the Translator

- For more information about transcription see the transcription module on Emanuel Schegloff's website [www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/)

**Appendix 3:** Transcript of radio report originally aired 16 December 2011

**Auckland Council to Release Review of Rugby World Cup, But Withholds Report**

A detailed report out this week will look at the causes of overcrowding and transport problems in Auckland during the Rugby World Cup opening.

At the same time Auckland Council continues to withhold internal reports on decisions that it made in the build-up to the September opening.

Our Auckland Correspondent Matt Campbell reports.

An estimated two hundred thousand people crammed downtown Auckland for the Rugby World Cup opening celebrations, taking organisers by surprise.

The commuter rail system was overwhelmed, and compensation was given to those who arrived late or missed the opening ceremony and match at Eden Park.

On Wednesday Auckland Council will release a report running to hundreds of pages, reviewing the conduct of the tournament in the city.

However, for three months the council and the Minister for the Rugby World Cup have refused to release internal papers relating to the opening night, to [name of radio station].

The Office of the Ombudsman is considering [name of radio station's] complaints about the refusals.

In Auckland, Matt Campbell.

## **Appendix 4:** Notification of publication in *Journalism Studies*

### **Publication Options for your Article**

joel.phipps@tandf.co.uk

Sent: 05 October 2014 21:03

To: Helen Sissons

Helen Sissons

[helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz](mailto:helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz)

02 Oct 2014

Your article listed below is currently in

production with Taylor & Francis. Journal: RJOS,

*Journalism Studies*

Manuscript ID: 973147

Manuscript Title: NEGOTIATING THE NEWS: Interactions behind the curtain of the journalism-public relations relationship

By: Sissons

We are delighted that you have chosen to publish your paper in *Journalism Studies*. This email is to inform you of the publication options available to you.

#### **Standard publication route**

Your paper will be published in the journal, and made available online permanently for subscribers and licensed institutions throughout the world, including provision of online access through developing world initiatives. You will also receive a link via email that you can send on to 50 colleagues who can download the paper free of charge. After the appropriate publisher embargo period, you may deposit the Accepted Manuscript into an institutional or subject repository (Green Open Access). (See

<http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/publication/rapidonlinepublication.asp> for further information.) If we do not hear from you, your article will be published on this basis.

#### **Gold Open Access publication**

You have the option to pay a charge to make the final version of your article freely available online at the point of publication, permanently, for anyone to read (Gold Open Access). This requires payment of an article publishing charge (APC). Please note that this option is strictly your choice, and is not required for publication in the journal. It is not available for research articles of less than two printed pages in length.

If you would like to publish your article via the Gold Open Access route please read the notes below:

- You will retain the rights in your article but will be asked to sign an appropriate article publishing agreement to enable us to publish the article.
- If you are affiliated with an institution that has a prepayment or Open Access partner scheme membership (see <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/openaccess/funders> for further information), please email [apc@tandf.co.uk](mailto:apc@tandf.co.uk), providing your full name, article title, journal title and details of any funding.
- Find out more information on Open Access licence options and APCs by journal here: <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/permissions/Green-OA-AAM-embargo-periods.xlsx>
- Otherwise, please follow the link below to pay the APC (this will require registration with our partner Rightslink). <http://cats.informa.com/PTS/go?t=rl&o=oa&m=973147>

If you have questions about Open Access please contact or visit for further information.

Yours sincerely, Joel Phipps  
Taylor & Francis Group Ltd  
Floor 2  
4 Park Square Milton Park Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 4RN  
UNITED KINGDOM Email:joel.phipps@tandf.co.uk Phone:+44 (0)207 017 6000  
Fax:+44 (0)207 017 6336

**Appendix 5: Notice of acceptance with changes by Public Relations Inquiry**

Public Relations Inquiry - Decision on Manuscript ID PRI-14-0025

onbehalfof+JLetang+qmu.ac.uk@manuscriptcentral.com on behalf of JLetang@qmu.ac.uk

Sent: 15 August 2014 23:15

To: Helen Sissons; helen.sissons@gmail.com

15 August 2014

Dear Ms. Sissons:

Manuscript ID PRI-14-0025 entitled "Lifting the veil on the PRP-client relationship" which you submitted to Public Relations Inquiry, has been reviewed. The comments of the reviewer(s) are included at the bottom of this letter.

The reviewer(s) have recommended publication, but also suggest some revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments and revise your manuscript.

To revise your manuscript, log into <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pubri> and enter your Author Center, where you will find your manuscript title listed under "Manuscripts with Decisions." Under "Actions," click on "Create a Revision." Your manuscript number has been appended to denote a revision.

You may also click the below link to start the revision process (or continue the process if you have already started your revision) for your manuscript. If you use the below link you will not be required to login to ScholarOne Manuscripts.

[http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pubri?URL\\_MASK=c29603fab674007878f5cc4bf602d23](http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pubri?URL_MASK=c29603fab674007878f5cc4bf602d23)

You will be unable to make your revisions on the originally submitted version of the manuscript. Instead, revise your manuscript using a word processing program and save it on your computer. Please also highlight the changes to your manuscript within the document by using bold or colored text.

Once the revised manuscript is prepared, you can upload it and submit it through your Author Center.

When submitting your revised manuscript, you will be able to respond to the comments made by the reviewer(s) in the space provided. You can use this space to document any changes you make to the original manuscript.

In order to expedite the processing of the revised manuscript, please be as specific as possible in your response to the reviewer(s).

IMPORTANT: Your original files are available to you when you upload your revised manuscript. Please delete any redundant files before completing the submission.

Because we are trying to facilitate timely publication of manuscripts submitted to Public Relations Inquiry, your revised manuscript should be uploaded as soon as possible. If it is not possible for you to submit your revision in a reasonable amount of time, we may have to consider your paper as a new submission.

Once again, thank you for submitting your manuscript to Public Relations Inquiry and I look forward to receiving your revision.

Kind regards

Jacquie L'Etang  
Editor in Chief, Public Relations Inquiry  
JLetang@qmu.ac.uk



# MEMORANDUM

## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH)

---

To: Martin Hirst  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTECH  
Date: 9 April 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/37 **PR-isation of the news media. Who is now the gatekeeper?**

---

Dear Martin

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 10 March 2008 and that the Chair of AUTECH and 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 12 May 2008.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 9 April 2011.

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

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 9 April 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 9 April 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

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, if your research is 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.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. 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](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Banda', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Madeline Banda  
Executive Secretary  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee  
Cc: Helen Sissons [helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz](mailto:helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz)

# Participant Information Sheet

## Date Information Sheet Produced:

25 February 2008

## Project Title

***Journalism and public relations: who is now the gatekeeper?***

## Project Synopsis

My name is Helen Sissons and I am inviting you to take part in this project which is being undertaken to meet the requirements of a PhD at AUT University. The project supervisor is Associate Professor Sigrid Norris.

The purpose of the research is to explore the impact of the rise of a global public relations industry on the news media in New Zealand at a time when journalists are under pressure to become multi-skilled.

I am interested in exploring the relationship between public relations professionals and journalists and in examining whether changes in the working practices of journalists has led to a more open relationship with their public relations counterparts.

The interviews will cover information relating to the following topics:

1. What is the relationship between public relations professionals and journalists?
2. How important is the practice of public relations to journalism?
3. How important is the practice of journalism to public relations?
4. How the working practices of journalists have changed over the past decade.
5. Do these encourage the use of pre-formulated material?
6. How multi-skilled are journalists now expected to be?
7. How often do they get out of the office to meet sources?
8. Do they feel the quality of news is being affected?

The main research component will involve interviews and/or video observation with various members of the media industry here in New Zealand. Quotes from the interviews and material from the video observation may be published in the candidate's written exegesis, a book and in relevant academic journals.

## An Invitation

I invite you to participate in this project. You have been selected based on your expertise and involvement in the media industry. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time prior to the completion of data collection

## What will happen in this research?



I would like to interview you and video or audio tape the interview. The interview will be about 30 minutes long or take place at intervals as you go about your work.

Further I would like to observe and video tape you as you go about your daily work. This would be done over a period of about five to eight days.

### **What are the benefits of the research?**

I hope you are as interested as I am in the ongoing changes occurring in the New Zealand news media, particularly in relation to media convergence and the relationship with a growing public relations industry.

The findings of the research will provide a better understanding of public relations officers and journalists at work and provide an overview of the direction the news media is taking.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

If during filming there are any times when you wish the camera to be turned off, it will be. Also if you inadvertently say or do anything during filming which you would rather was not used in the research, then your wish will be respected.

In any written transcript of the interview, your identity will be kept confidential. I will not use your name, your organisation's name or anything else which may readily identify you. You will be given the opportunity to review anything I write about you. If I decide to use any videotaped material then obviously your identity cannot be kept confidential. I will however once again give you the opportunity to review any footage that I would use either in my thesis or in future publications.

The interview questions will focus on professional issues. If you inadvertently make irrelevant personal comments they will be discarded from the transcript. If at any time you wish to move 'off-the-record', or provide information on 'background', recording will be stopped so that you can discuss the issue with the researcher and reach an agreement on how the material is to be treated in the final report.

### **What are the costs of participating in this research?**

Participating in the research will require you to allow me about 30 minutes to interview you and/or allow me to "shadow" you for a period of days. I am experienced and cause minimum disruption to the work of those I follow.

### **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You are free to respond to the letter at any time. You have ten working days to consider this invitation. After that the researcher will contact you by phone and seek to arrange an initial meeting to discuss/confirm your involvement. If you agree to participate in this research you will be asked to complete and sign the attached consent form and return it to the researcher, care of AUT University.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You are free to respond to the letter anytime. I will contact you after ten days of you receiving this letter to see if you are interested in participating and seek to arrange an initial meeting to discuss your involvement. If you agree to participate in this research you will be asked to complete and sign the attached consent form and return it to the researcher, care of AUT University.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Sigrid Norris, [sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz](mailto:sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 9219999 xt 6262.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), +64 9 921 9999 xt 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*****Researcher Contact Details:***

Helen Sissons

Email: [helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz](mailto:helen.sissons@aut.ac.nz)

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 xt 7859

Mobile: +64 21 0763270

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Associate Professor Sigrid Norris

Head of Research

School of Communication Studies

Faculty of Design & Creative Technologies

AUT University

Email: [sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz](mailto:sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz)

Phone: +64 9 921 9999 xt 6262

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on April 9, 2008, AUTECH  
Reference number 08/37.**

## Consent Form



*Project title:* Journalism and public relations: Who is now the gatekeeper?

*Project Supervisor:* Sigrid Norris

*Researcher:* Helen Sissons

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated February 2008.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be video and/or audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that while my name or any other identifying feature will not be used, images of me will be used and so I cannot be kept entirely confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the information freely given by myself during the interview will be made available to me for checking from the transcript and that I may, at that time, amend any entry that is not accurate, or clear in meaning.
- ☐ I understand that once I have amended the transcript to my satisfaction that it is my final consent to publication of this material in the final report, in the form outlined to me in the information sheet and in discussion with the researcher (namely a PhD, a book and future academic articles).
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection (namely on amendment of the transcript, if required), without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that while copyright of this work belongs to the researcher, I will upon request be given copies of the video material in which I appear which I may use as I wish.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts of thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....  
.....

Participant's name:

.....  
.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 10 March 2008 AUTECH Reference number 08/37.***

***Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.***

## **Appendix 9: Observation protocol**

### **Observation Protocol**

Project title: Journalism and Public Relations: Who is now the gatekeeper?  
Student's name: Helen Sissons  
Student ID: 0796470

Journalists in two newsrooms and public relations professionals in two public relations offices will be observed and videotaped in their offices and at meetings as they go about their daily work.

Participants: Journalists and public relations professionals

Location: In their offices and at meetings. There will be outside participants at the meetings. All will be made aware of the research and their permission sought before filming will occur. If anyone says no, their wish will be respected.

Background: This study is designed as a video observation, relying primarily on qualitative data collection and analysis. The researcher will use a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Interaction Analysis to examine the data.

Observation: The interactions of the participant will be videotaped when they are:

- On the phone with sources, clients or journalists
- Writing news stories or news releases
- Interacting in meetings with sources, clients or journalists
- Interacting with colleagues

Note: Each participant will have the right to review any material containing them.

Other: This study asks for voluntary participation. Each participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time and the collected data up to that point will be securely destroyed or disregarded.