

Dissertation
In partial completion of
Master of International Communication
COMM 9181

Defining Public Relations in New Zealand
through its history and practice

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*Frankly, to manufacture thought
is like a masterpiece by a weaver wrought.* - Goethe, *Faust*, 1832

I. Abstract

This project sets out to examine how public relations is conceptualised in theory and in practice in New Zealand. Further it aims to advise the profession's future direction.

An examination of the PR literature identified three struggles within the professional field of Public relations; (1) a gap between theory and practice, (2) PR is struggling with a bad reputation, and (3) there exists a huge diversity within the practice of PR, which makes it hard to offer a concrete definition of what PR is. The review showed that there are clear historical reasons for these struggles, and that they are slowing down the ongoing professionalisation of an ever increasing important practice to organisational communication.

A survey was conducted amongst Public Relations Institute of New Zealand's 735 working members (Student members were excluded as most of the questions in the questionnaire would be irrelevant to them), and with a response rate of 21%, the questionnaire more or less backed up the struggles. In-depth interviews were conducted on four senior practitioners in New Zealand, where the results from the questionnaires were discussed, and advices for the future of the profession were given.

The project concludes with several areas of research that must be conducted by the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ). PRINZ should in particular pay attention to Great Britain, where the industry has become chartered. The process that the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' (CIPR) has been through and their experiences from this shift should be studied by PRINZ in detail. The dissertation also recommends PRINZ to continue its communications with the tertiary institutions in New Zealand, as well as the media. It is also important that Statistics NZ understands what public relations is all about.

The dissertation concludes that the struggles listed above, need to be taken seriously by PRINZ, as they are decelerating the ongoing professionalisation of public relations in New Zealand. It is important to emphasise that the purpose of this report was not to generate a quantitative overview of the PR industry in New Zealand, rather the report intended to capture a 'snapshot' of the practice today.

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III. Declaration

Name of candidate: Morten Sele ID 1192926

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of International Communication.

The regulations for the degree are set out in the MIC Programme Schedule and are elaborated in the programme handbook. The research has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Candidate's declaration

I confirm that:

- This dissertation represents my own work;
- The contribution of any supervisors and others to the research and to the dissertation was consistent with the Unitec Code of Supervision.

Candidate: Morten Sele

Date:

Supervisors' declaration

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge:

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- Except where otherwise approved by the Board of Postgraduate Studies of Unitec, the research was conducted in accordance with the degree regulations and programme rules;
- The contribution made to the research by me, by other members of the supervisory team, by other members of staff of Unitec and by others was consistent with the Unitec Code of Supervision.

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v.iv List of Abbreviations

ABS	- Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANZSCO	- Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
APR	- Accredited in Public Relations
CIPR	- Chartered Institute of Public Relations
DEWR	- Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
GlobalPR	- Global Alliance of Public Relations and Communications Management
IABC	- International Association of Business Communicators
PR	- Public Relations
PRINZ	- Public Relations Institute of New Zealand
PRSA	- Public Relations Society of America
Statistics NZ	- Statistics New Zealand

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

In the age of information technology, the practice of Public Relations (PR) has become increasingly important in the past decades. It is no longer sufficient for an organisation to communicate just with stockholders and customers. Different communication strategies are needed for different organisational situations and different stakeholders. This increase in communication complexity, has lead to PR becoming more and more recognised by organisations as a vital ingredient in management (Gregory, 2002).

Despite this, the practice has earned itself a questionable reputation over the years. Words like spin doctors, conmen and propaganda are frequently associated with PR practice. This questionable reputation is rightly earned through a short yet eventful history.

1.2 Background

PR is struggling to distinguish itself from its professional 'brothers'; marketing and journalism. However, the comparison with advertising is appropriate. They are both management functions, and they both serve the interest of the sender. PR also, like marketing, seeks to influence the recipient in a pre-determined direction. This intention to influence has increased the scepticism around the PR profession. Along with the dubious reputation PR has acquired, the result has been a questionable credibility for a business and its practitioners. The fact that the practice of PR evolved before the body of knowledge, has also been an important factor in making PR confusing and hard to define (Moffitt, 2004). Historically, PR has recruited many of its practitioners from journalism and marketing, which in turn has limited the need for the profession to develop its own theory. Even though creating a unique body of knowledge has been important in PR's strive for acceptance and professionalisation, this is still at an early stage. The continuous overlapping with other professions has made it difficult to determine which activities are PR functions, and which are not.

A search through Unitec's library suggests that a gap exists between theory and practice. Most of the literature found were versions of practitioners' "10 easy steps to PR" guides, based on experience rather than research. Other textbooks that offered theories, told one story in the theory section, and another in the practical section (Duffy, 2000).

The tension between lack of trustworthiness and the aspiration for acknowledgement is a recurring matter in the historical evolution of the practice of PR. The review of the literature will focus on the development of Public Relations as a profession. Moffitt (2004) notes that in order to fully understand PR and how it grew into a profession, it is necessary to appreciate the historical settings that created the need for it. The literature review will further present some of the most prominent theories, before it attempts to describe the practice today. Finally the literature review offers a brief discussion about ethics, as this may be a “golden path” for PR to follow in the future.

1.3 Research Question and hypothesis

The research question for the project is: “How is PR conceptualised in theory and practice in New Zealand (NZ), and in which direction should PR go to continue its ongoing professionalisation?” This is a bisected question where the project seeks to compare and contrast theory with practice through a review of the literature, and a questionnaire conducted with members of Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ). The second part of the research question will be investigated by four in-depth interviews where PR’s future will be discussed.

The literature review will identify three struggles, which will work as hypotheses for the project:

1. The gap between theory and practice needs to decrease if the ongoing professionalisation of PR is to have a successful outcome.
2. The diversity of PR practices is huge, and this makes it hard to define, which is causing confusion and misunderstandings about PR amongst the general public.
3. PR has a poor reputation amongst the general public - This can, among other factors, reduce interest in developing academic courses and research in educational institutions, and make PR less attractive for university students deciding on a communication career.

The hypothesis is that these struggles will be confirmed by PRINZ’s members through the questionnaire, which will create the necessary link between the review of the literature and the survey of the practice in New Zealand. Senior practitioners from different areas of PR will be interviewed to investigate where they believe PR is heading in the future, and what they think should be done for PR to face these struggles, and successfully continue its ongoing professionalisation.

2 Literature Review

This review of literature will first look at the historical origins of public relations, then explore some of its main theories, before investigating the practice of public relations today. Finally it discusses whether a focus on ethics is the golden path for PR to follow towards social recognition as the important profession it is.

2.1 History – The beginning

Understanding the early practitioners' ideals and worldviews is important to fully realise the challenges and opportunities that lie in the future for PR as a profession. As Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) state, understanding the history of public relations is vital to the professionalisation of the practice. This gives an insight into beliefs and values that have shaped the profession as well as public perceptions of PR.

It is important to understand a significant characteristic with the profession of PR, which is that the profession and the practice preceded any theory (Moffitt, 2004). Though one can see evidence of groups within civilisations seeking to influence public opinion as early as 1800 BC, the profession of public relations as we know it today was born in the USA. As Cutlip et al. (2000) point out, "using publicity to raise funds, promote causes, boost commercial ventures, sell land, and build box-office personalities in the United States is older than the nation itself" (Cutlip et al., 2000:103). Many important historical occasions are identified as PR initiatives, with the Boston Tea Party in 1773 being described by some scholars as the first staged public relations event (Moffitt, 2004; Wilcox, Cameron, Ault & Agee, 2003).

In the early 19th century America went through some important social changes. This democratic revolution laid the foundation for public relations' appearance, and can be explanatory of PR's struggling reputation today. The change of paradigm, from an aristocratic world where the affluent had almost unlimited powers, (illustrated by incidents where businesses ended strikes amongst their employees using military force (Ewen, 1996; Wilcox et al., 2003) to a modern, democratic world where public ideals emerged among the lower classes of the community, led to the need for PR (Cutlip et al. 2000). In a time of struggling industries, improper and immoral business practices, and muckraking journalists, PR emerged as a necessity for corporations (Moffitt, 2004). Public relations activities were employed to

defend business interests against both journalists digging for scandals and government regulation developments. The main focus of PR was to take business' side, to influence public opinion and to persuade politicians not to increase regulation of business (Cutlip et al., 2000). As these were the reasons for PR's birth, public relations earned itself a negative reputation among the general public from its start.

Another reason for the public scepticism towards PR, resulted from how it was employed during World War I, where propaganda were used by the American government as they realised the need for public support, and founded the Committee on Public Information (CPI). CPI was under the management of George Creel, and included such members as Walter Lippman and Edward Bernays, who later would be very important to the development of public relations as a profession. CPI's objective was to unite public opinion using propaganda campaigns (Ewen, 1996). According to Pinkleton (1994), the committee contributed to the evolution of PR through its use of basic principles of communication. This was the start of public relations as a form of one-way communication, and the reason why many still regard it as a tool for persuasion. The committee openly stated that they utilised propaganda in their persuasion techniques. Pinkleton (1994) points out however, that propaganda did not have the negative connotations at that time as it has today. As he states: "...Creel and his committee reflected a naive faith in the integrity of the U.S. government and the power of ideas to transform public opinion" (Pinkleton, 1994: 238). The comparison with propaganda is something that has followed PR during its evolution.

2.2 Theorising PR - Two pioneers

As demonstrated, the historical evolution in the USA shows that PR was a profession that came into being to address a need from the upper class of the society. Gradually personalities came along who started intellectual discussions about the purposes of PR and theorised techniques and models. Among the many individuals from PR's infancy, two have been chosen in this project and they stand out as pioneers in the field; the first was a practical oriented craftsman, the second was a theoretician.

One of the first and most influential advisors within public relations was Ivy L. Lee (Cutlip et al. 2000). He had a background as a journalist, and he used this experience to establish himself as a well-known expert on the field. Though he referred to himself as a “publicity agent”, he is regarded as one of the fathers of public relations. Practitioners follow many of his techniques and principles even today. In 1906, when hired by a coal-company in a strike, he issued his “declaration of principles” to all of New York’s editors:

“This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency. [...] In brief, our plan is, frankly and openly, on behalf of business concerns and public institutions, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which is of value and interest to the public to know about” (Lee, cited in Cutlip et al., 2000:117).

This was a new approach to the press; instead of ignoring them or lying to them he informed them. This way Lee was able to influence the press while steering clear of muckraking journalists. He invented the press release by giving the journalists handouts and he succeeded in getting sympathetic news coverage for the coal operators. Lee was inspired by the French sociologist Gustav Le Bon, who considered the individual as rational, but the masses as irrational. Ivy Lee understood early on that the masses depended upon the newspaper when they formed their images of the world’s conditions (Cutlip, et al., 2000).

In 1914, the Rockefeller family, in the wake of a strike known today as the Ludlow Massacre, hired Lee. In this brutal tragedy, National Guards killed 20 coalmine workers, women and children for striking against Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation. Lee’s successful activities transformed a severe labour dispute into a positive situation for the Rockefeller family (Wilcox, et al., 2003). Ivy Lee’s innovative ideas were to become of great importance for PR in the future.

While Lee was the practical craftsman, the theorist who strongly influenced the development of PR as a profession was Edward L. Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud. He was also a practitioner, but gained more recognition for his theories in PR, through books, schooling and public debate. Bernays was the first to teach Public Relations, when New York University became the first university in the world to offer it as a course in 1923 (Wilcox et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2004). He started his career as a member of CPI during the First World War (Ewen, 1996). In 1923 he released his first book called *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, a book that is recognised as one of the first theoretical works within Public Relations. This book was about managing public perception, as Bernays realised that the aristocracy had fallen. The issue of

how the “elite” could conserve their social, economic, and political advances in these times was raised by the upper class, where they were attacked with critical questions by a more and more socially conscious lower class. Bernays, who himself belonged to the upper class, understood that this battle would be fought in the public sphere of the press (Ewen, 1996).

This was the ideology of the early pioneers of public relations: To develop a tool to “guide” the masses in a direction, so that powerful organisations and institutions could continue their business as before. Ewen (1998) points out that social change in the 20th century was the essential context in which early public relations practitioners shaped their profession. The fall of the aristocracy and the rise of power within the labour class, were changes that lay the foundations for the profession’s objectives, which at that time included lobbying, propaganda and keeping the upper class in power at the expense of the lower class.

Duffy (2000) states that PR textbooks often glorify the history of PR and fail to acknowledge many of the ‘dark sides’ of early PR-practice. “In the historical treatments, unethical activities of public relations pioneers are downplayed, portrayed as unfortunate, or characterized as a more primitive proto-public relations” (Duffy, 2000: 300). It is this project’s argument that the historical development of PR holds much of the explanation of PR’s questionable practices over the years and its bad reputation. Neither Lee nor Bernays were saints, however their far-sighted ideas and groundbreaking methods set the foundation for the PR we know today.

2.3 Definitions – It’s in the eye of the beholder

The attempt to get an overview of all the definitions of PR demonstrates how diverse the profession has turned out to be. There are hundreds of definitions which seek to describe the terms and functions of PR, but, as Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) note, most of them are rather vague. The duo further comment that the definitions rarely manage to agree on what practitioners do and do not do, which results in a professional field with a very diverse range of activities (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). This failure to present a collective understanding of what PR is can be used as an explanatory variable to PR’s reputation problems, as well as its complex diversity.

Wilcox et al. (2003) note that PR is a process with many subtle and far-reaching aspects. A profession with such a variety of subjects makes it challenging to find an accurate definition that will adequately cover them all. One early definition that gained wide acceptance was created by the newsletter 'PR News': "Public Relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance" (Cutlip et al., 2000: 4; Wilcox et al., 2003: 3).

The founder of what eventually became the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Rex Harlow, gathered and analysed 472 definitions. Based on these he came up with the following definition, which, according to Cutlip et al. (2000), includes both a theoretical and an operational approach:

Public Relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectually utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. (Cutlip et al., 2000: 4; Wilcox et al., 2003: 3)

Scholars have over the years attempted to offer various definitions of PR, however most of them end up being either too theoretical, or not fully being able to cover all of what PR is. It is a daunting task however, to produce a definition which is being both theoretical and practical, and at the same time is short and manageable. Cutlip et al. (2000) offer the following definition when they define PR as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip et al., 2000: 6). An equally unspecific definition was offered by Grunig and Hunt, when they proposed the following widely accepted definition: "Public Relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (Grunig and Hunt, 1984: 94).

Another source of definitions is the different national and international public relations organisations, which interestingly enough differs slightly from the textbooks. These definitions focus more on the operational side of PR, as opposed to the theoretical approaches from the textbooks. The American organisation, PRSA, adopted in 1988 the following

definition of PR: “Public Relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other” (PRSA, 2005). Although this definition offers a more practical position, like the previous definitions offered, it fails to be specific about the nature of the processes involved in PR. The British organisation, who newly changed their name to Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), defines PR as “a strategic management function that adds value to an organisation by helping it to manage its reputation. Reputation is extremely valuable to an organisation and PR practitioners help organisations manage their reputations by communicating with all the different groups who are connected to the organisation” (CIPR, 2005). This definition is very operational, and defines PR as reputation management. The New Zealand organisation Public Relations Institute in New Zealand (PRINZ) defines it as: “...the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its target audiences” (Peart & Macnamara, 1996: 16; PRINZ, 2005). This definition, like many of the others, emphasises mutual understanding and points out the importance of planning. As one can see from the definitions above, different national institutes of PR define their profession very differently.

An excellent way to sum up all the definitions is by using the words of Wilcox et al., (2003): “...a person can grasp the essential elements of public relations by remembering the following words and phrases: *deliberate...planned...performance...public interest...two-way communication...management function*” (Wilcox et al., 2003: 6).

There have not been many attempts to produce a worldwide accepted definition yet, however, Peart and Macnamara (1996) cite what has been called the Mexican statement, as it was agreed on by the World Assembly of Public Relations Associations at a conference in Mexico City in 1978: “Public relations practice is the art of social science in analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and the public interest” (Peart & Macnamara, 1996: 16). However, this definition has been criticised as being rather artistic and creative rather than practical or theoretical when using words like ‘the art of social science’ (Peart & Macnamara, 1996), and it therefore failed to get recognition as a worldwide definition.

Neither of these definitions fully describe what PR is and what it is not, however Wilcox et al. (2003) cite a definition they describe as their favourite when they quote Long and Hazelton's definition: "a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving their goals" (Long and Hazelton, cited in Wilcox et al., 2003: 4). Wilcox et al. (2003) argue that this is the best definition because they suggest that PR is more than persuasion. It emphasises that it is a management function, and it combines both a practical and theoretical approach to PR. This is therefore the definition used in this project.

2.4 Professionalism – The strive for acceptance

"...you would be hard pushed to find an industry which is as gleefully vilified as the noble profession of public relations – otherwise known as the 'latrine of parasitic misinformation'..." (Farish, cited in Gregory, 2002: paragraph 3).

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) state that PR has struggled to develop an identity separate from advertising, marketing or journalism over the years. According to the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GlobalPR) web site, "a profession is distinguished by specific characteristics, including mastery of a particular intellectual skill through education and training, acceptance of duties to a broader society than merely one's clients/employers, objectivity and high standards of conduct and performance" (Global Alliance, 2005).

PR is a term with a hereditary weakness; for many it has become synonymous with advertising, trickery, manipulative publicity agents and "con-men". The Norwegian version of *PRINZ* changed its name from the "*PR-union*" to "*The Norwegian Communication Association*" in the early 1980s to distance itself from the negative reputation, as part of an attempt to professionalise the business in Norway (Klasson, 2000). This has later led to the fact that almost no practitioners include the word PR in their titles, but use titles such as information consultant or information director. The word PR frequently appears in the press, but then it is often used as something negative. There is something fraudulent associated with the term PR, which has clear historical reasons (Klasson, 2000).

As long as PR has been practiced, theories have been adopted, but they have been few, and the quality has been various. PR has 'borrowed' theories from both marketing and journalism. In recent years however, there has been a rise in PR theory-making. In a study by Ferguson in 1984, 748 abstracts and articles published in *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research* and its predecessor *Public Relations Research Annual* from the beginning up to 1984 were analysed. And it showed that only 4% of the articles contributed to theory development. Compared to an extension of this analysis examining the same journals through the year 2000, showed that nearly 20% of the articles contributed to theory (Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru and Jones, 2003), which suggests that there is an increase in contributions to the field. This suggests that the field of PR is building its own theoretical platform, which is important in its quest for professionalisation.

One of the most important researchers and the theorists on the field of Public Relations, who has contributed immensely to the professionalisation of PR in recent times, is James E. Grunig, who according to Sallot et al. (2003) is "by far the most cited scholar" in PR (Sallot et al., 2003: 36). He is best known for *Managing Public Relations*, a book he wrote together with Todd Hunt in 1984 which is recognised as a classical textbook within the subject of PR. And according to Sallot et al. (2003), this is the most cited work in public relations. During recent years Grunig has managed a research-team called *The Excellence Project*, started in 1982 on the initiative of IABC (International Association of Business Communicators), in an attempt to theorise the advantages of public relations. A USD \$400,000 project resulted in two publications; *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* in 1992, and *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (edited by Dozier in 1995). The result of this research was a theory with several broad principles that, according to the authors, applies throughout the world, although political and cultural considerations need to be taken in account. To use Grunig and Grunig's (2000) words: "...the theory offers a conceptual framework for a professional culture of public relations which, with appropriate applications and revisions in different organizational and national cultures, is a fundamental component of effective management throughout the world" (Grunig & Grunig, 2000: 304).

In *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Grunig, Repper, White, 1992), Grunig and White discuss the gap between theories and practice. They argue the definitions of PR are too theoretical, not applicable to real life, and the variety is huge from one practitioner's work to another. Then it is pointed out that too many are criticising the PR working field as "...unprincipled, unethical, and atheoretical" (Grunig et al. 1992:32). This is a concern Grunig voiced frequently during the 1970s and 80s (Sallot et al., 2003). Grunig et al. continue saying that theorising and researching can "...bring order to the chaos of public relations" (Grunig et al. 1992:32).

2.5 Theories – Towards an ethical model for PR

"For me, public relations boils down to getting people to do what you want them to do." – James L. Tolley (Cited in Grunig et al. 1992:38).

The early historical developments of PR have already been outlined above. The fact that the practice developed before the theory has naturally shaped the theoretical conceptualisation of Public Relations (Moffitt, 2003). The earliest practitioners who shaped the industry did not operate on a theoretical foundation, so the theories came after the practice, which is important to acknowledge when dealing with the industry. Another important quality of PR to take into consideration is that the theorisation of Public Relations is multidisciplinary. Moffitt (2003) reminds us that many theories draw from other disciplines in order to apply them to specific functions of PR. This complicates matters when attempting to obtain a complete overview of the theories used by PR as well as underlining the diversity one can find in the field.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) introduced four models of Public Relations. The quote in the beginning of this section comes from a practitioner, and describes a view many have on PR. It is a view that describes a practice of PR where businesses feel no pressure to tell the truth (Grunig & Hunt 1984, Grunig et al., 1992). According to Moffitt (2003) this was practiced by businesses during the early days of industrialisation, where if they could get away with a press release presenting an untrue version of a story that favoured the organisation, it was "fair game" to get away with it. Unfortunately, as Moffitt (2003) states, this is a model that is still practised today. According to Gregory (2002), it is estimated that 65% of PR practitioners operates with this model, which has been named as the press agency model.

The second model is the public information model, which differs from the press agency model by telling the truth. These two models do not utilise research of any kind, as the messages are designed with no real consideration for the needs or attitudes of the audience members (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Moffitt, 2003). This makes it a very popular model today as few organisations go through the trouble of researching the situation or the receivers of the information. They create the messages and submit them to a random public (Moffitt, 2003).

The last two models Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe are the asymmetrical model and symmetrical model. “Two-way” is added to symmetric and asymmetric, indicating that feedback is a part of the information flow. These, as opposed to the two previous models explained, use active research as an important tool to understand the organisation, the situation, the audiences, and any other outside factors (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Moffitt, 2003). The asymmetry model describes PR as honest and accurate information, however it only favours the organisation. This explains the word asymmetry, as only one part benefits from the information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Moffitt, 2003).

The symmetrical view is the total opposite. Grunig argues that it is a more realistic view, where dialogue and negotiation are used to achieve a desired outcome (Grunig et al. 1992). It practices equal communication between the organisation and its stakeholders, and make an effort to understand the audiences enough to adjust practices to benefit the stakeholders as well as the organisation (Grunig et al, 1992; Moffitt, 2003). The figure below presents Grunig’s four models of Public Relations.

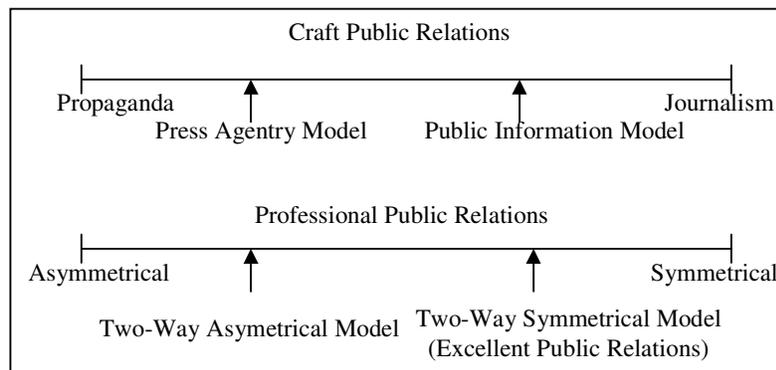


Figure 1: *Four models of public relations*, Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Grunig, Repper & White, 1992:312

The press agency model - PR serves a propaganda function. The information spread is the organisation's conviction, often as incomplete, twisted, or half-true messages.

The public information model – The purpose is the spreading of information, not necessarily with the intent of persuasion. Information is reported objectively about the organisation to the public.

Two-way asymmetrical model – Is described as scientific persuasion, where the aim is to persuade the public to take the organisation's standpoint, with the use of social science theory, for instance the study of human behaviour.

Two-way symmetrical model – Practitioners serve as mediators between the public and the organisation, with mutual understanding between them as the goal. Social science theory can be used, but communication theory and methods are preferred for planning and evaluation of public relations (Grunig et al. 1992).

One can see in the figure above that Grunig named the symmetrical model “excellent public relations”. He argues that it is almost impossible for PR-practitioners to be ethical and socially responsible when using an asymmetrical model. According to Moffitt (2004), this view has been advocated by many researchers as the ideal model for PR, as it leads organisations to interact with their stakeholders, which leads to better communication and understanding between the company and the audiences (Moffitt, 2004). Grunig argues that the model serves two functions. The first as situational strategies used by an organisation's PR department for dealing with different stakeholders and different problems, and the second as part of an organisation's ideology (Grunig et al., 1992).

There are people who disagree with this view, amongst them Miller in the article “*Persuasion and Public Relations: Two Ps in a pod*” which is cited in Grunig et al. (1992: 41), where he claims that it is in human nature to seek control, just as it is to breathe or eat. “...it is an inevitable aspect of being alive.” (Miller cited in Grunig et al. 1992:41). Others criticise the symmetrical view as idealistic and unrealistic, and the reason why PR people are hired in is because organisations need someone to advocate their case. Duffy (2000) points out that although many authors describe the two-way model in the theoretical part of the book, it rarely reappears in the practical part, so they fail to operationalise the concept. The books Duffy researched seldom had achieving mutual understanding as the goal when explaining the practical side of PR, rather a range of methods to influence and to persuade (Duffy, 2000). “If

the provision of “pure” information were the only objective of the socially-responsible corporation, it seems unlikely that these textbooks would devote hundreds of pages to methods of researching target audiences and crafting messages to induce attitudes and behaviors desired by the corporations” (Duffy, 2000: 306).

Cameron, Cancel, Sallot, and Mitrook (1997) also criticise Grunig’s models. Arguing that it is too unrealistic, they state that dialogue and compromise will not help much when two groupings have a deep disagreement. Saying that choosing one of the four models as the best and most effective model “tortures the reality of practicing public relations” (Cameron et al., 1997: 33), they point out that it fails to cover the complexity and multiplicity of the Public Relations environment (Cameron et al., 1997). The quartet proposes a model called ‘contingency theory’ that modifies Grunig’s four models, where they say an organisation’s choice of approach depends on the situation. They introduce a scale with two extreme-points; accommodation on one side, advocacy on the other. An organisation decides where on this scale its standpoint should be, depending on how the situation is considered (Cameron et al., 1997). Reber, Cropp and Cameron (2003) note that the contingency theory is a logical extension of Grunig’s four models, which allows the organisation to use techniques interchangeably, regardless of its stance (Reber et al., 2003). Cameron et al. (1997) suggest that this contingency theory is a more realistic illustration of PR practice, and they argue that it is more accurate in portraying the variety of public relations stances that organisations need to take when dealing with stakeholders (Cameron et al., 1997).

An advocate is one who pleads another’s case when needed. According to Cameron et al. (1997), the advocate role has been used by PR practitioners since the dawn of PR. Scholars such as Bernays (Ewen, 1996), Culip et al., (2000) and Grunig (Cameron et al., 1997) all have described many PR activities as advocacy, on behalf of their client. However, Grunig described the advocate role as an “unsolved problem”, because it is often associated with negative images of persuasion and manipulation (Cameron et al., 1997). On the other end of the scale is the accommodator, or the “builder of trust” (Cameron et al., 1997). This role refers to the PR role, as being mutually dependent relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Cameron et al., 1997). The authors argue that it is not about either/or, but a combination of factors contributes at any given time to where the organisation or practitioner is on the scale of advocate versus. accommodation in dealing with its publics (Cameron et al., 1997).

Cutlip et al. (2000) present a model called “Open systems model of public relations.”

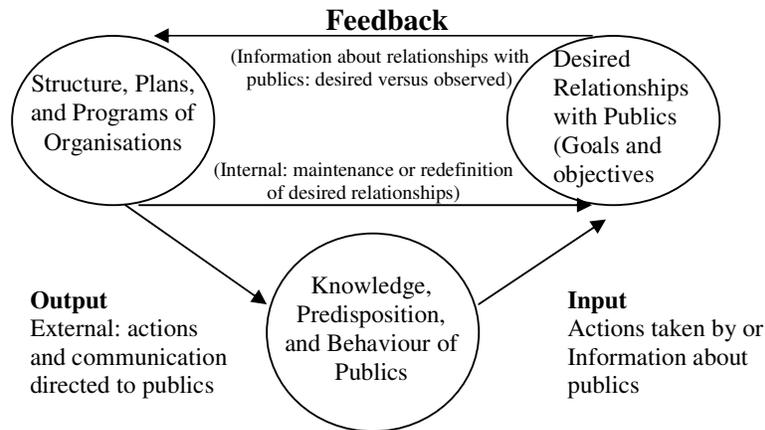


Figure 2: *Open Systems Model of Public Relations* - Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000:244

This model puts PR in the role of bringing about changes in both environments and organisations as a result of environmental inputs. Cutlip et al. (2000: 240), propose this model as a response to what they call ‘an all too common closed system approach to public relations’. According to them, much is to be saved by being proactive in addressing problems before they become problems or issues. Steps taken in advance reduce both the amount of effort required and the disturbance that surrounds crisis-oriented reactive PR. Organisations employing open systems Public Relations are better suited for changing and adjusting themselves and their publics to the ever changing social, political, and economic environment (Cutlip et al., 2000). The outcomes of the model are improved and closer relationships in both the organisation’s, and its publics’ best interests. This model has been developed and updated since Cutlip and Center released their first edition of their classic textbook already in 1952, and has, according to Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997) served as a useful framework for theory building in PR.

However, neither this nor most other theories of PR, explore and define the concept of relationships in the theory and practice of Public Relations. Broom et al., (1997) point out that relationship, which is such an important and central term in PR, was yet to be thoroughly defined in PR-theories. They argue that the absence of an explication of relationships limits theory building, and forces practitioners and scholars to continue to draw assumptions about relationships (Broom et al., 1997). Broom et al., (1997) offer a model, which works as a

continuum to Cutlip et al.'s (2000) open systems theory, where they explicate the concept of relationships. This model shows relationships as both the consequences of and cause of other changes. They further say that the interactions function as both dependent and independent variables in the construction of theory about relationships between organisations and publics (Broom et al., 1997). This perspective has advanced to a paradigm named relationship management, which, through defining relationships in PR, calls into question the very essence of the profession (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999).

2.6 So what happens in practice?

Gregory (2002) identifies some of the main issues that illustrate the complex world PR practitioners work in. Only the issues that are relevant in this context will be dealt with here, and the first issue is globalisation. This means that practitioners need to deal with a multiplicity of cultures, languages, people, organisations and media systems. The development of information technology is a second issue. This development has been, according to Gregory (2002), both positive and negative. The Internet, which brings invaluable information to researching practitioners, also forces organisations to become more transparent and open, simultaneously exposing them to examination and information leaking out (Gregory, 2002). Changes in the media are a third issue mentioned by Gregory (2002). Downsizing of media workforce and use of new technology means that journalists do not have time to source and write as they used to. With more and more space given to celebrities and infotainment, the proportion of news coverage is declining in what Gregory (2002) is calling the 'dumbing-down' of the media. Journalists are becoming more and more dependent on secondary sources, as a result of time and financial constraints, and their ability to question and analyse sources are being called into question (Gregory, 2002). This is, according to Gregory (2002) a complex, competing world full of contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainty, and PR is situated precisely where competing interests collide (Gregory, 2002).

Grunig and Hunt propose a stakeholder map which is reproduced below (See figure 3). This is an excellent tool for planning the communication with the stakeholders of an organisation, as it offers a decent overview of the different types of publics an organisation needs to communicate with. The different stakeholders are categorised into different links, the linkages of enabling, diffused, normative and functional. The functional is divided further into two categories, the input and output linkages. Enabling is a linkage organisations need in order to

exist. Examples are authorities, shareholders and legal systems. The diffused linkage is elements in the society that are not clearly identified as formal members of the organisation. This could be publics like media, environmentalists or women's rights groups. The normative linkage is organisations that have common problems or similar values as the organisation. The functional linkages are linkages that give input and take output from the organisation (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

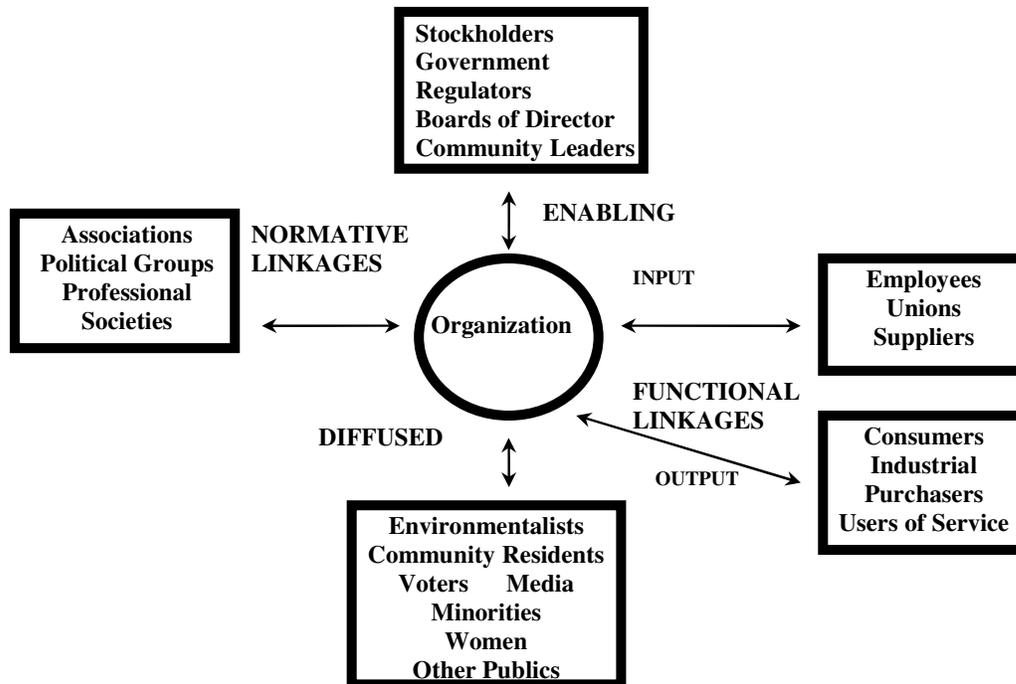


Figure 3: A stakeholder map - Grunig & Hunt, 1984: 141

Public Relations is of growing importance, according to De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh (2001), who state that three out of four American companies have a PR department. Growing consumer awareness calls for an increasing need for proactive PR activity. The trend, according to De Pelsmacker et al. (2001), is that this increase has led to companies specialising in niches within the field of Public Relations. Before, a PR company would offer solutions in all PR related activities, but now some firms specialise in one niche like investor relations or human resource management (De Pelsmacker et al. 2001), making PR a diverse and complicated professional field.

The rainbow of Public Relations was made to illustrate the diversity of Public Relations. It exemplifies some of the many work tasks one can find within the profession of Public Relations. This is not an exhaustive overview, many other responsibilities within the field of PR exist. This is only an attempt to illustrate the diversity of the field of PR, and it shows how versatile a PR practitioner needs to be. It also demonstrates how hard it is to exactly define the public relations profession; an expert in internal communications does not have much in common with an expert in investor relations, although both work with communication.

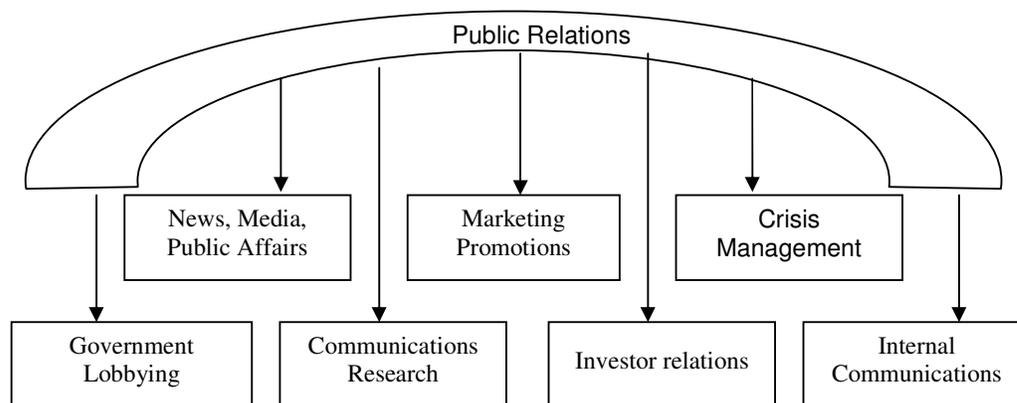


Figure 4, *The Rainbow of Public Relations*

2.7 Ethics – The golden path?

A half-truth is a whole lie – Yiddish proverb

Public Relations' negative reputation has been a recurring theme in this literature review, and it has been shown that there are historical reasons making the reputation well deserved.

However, practitioners and scholars seem to disagree on the ethical framework that the profession should follow, to deal with the reputation. Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) note that the criticism is a result of the general public misunderstanding the function of PR. Both Fitzpatrick & Gauthier (2001) and Gregory (2002) stress that the lack of definition of PR makes it hard to provide the ethical framework needed. But before this discussion, it is necessary to define thoroughly what is meant by ethics in this context.

According to Wilcox et al., (2003) ethics refers to the value system by which a person determines what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, just or unjust. This is not only measured against his or her conscience but also against some norm of acceptability that has been socially, professionally, or organisationally determined (Wilcox et al, 2003). Parsons (2004)

offers the following definition of ethics: “the application of knowledge, understanding and reasoning to questions of right or wrong behaviour in the professional practice of public relations” (Parsons, 2004: 10).

It is difficult to determine absolutely whether something is ethical or not, because individuals have different standards and perceptions of what is right or wrong (Wilcox, Ault, Agee, 1997). Ethics is not new to the subject of public relations. The late Smith, a former Executive Vice President of The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), once said that one of the first concerns of PRSA was “...the development of an ethical code so that ... its members would have behavioural guidelines, ... managers would have a clear understanding of standards, and ... professionals in public relations would be distinguished from shady promoters and ballyhoo advance men who, unfortunately, had been quick to appropriate the words ‘public relations’ to describe their operations” (Wilcox et al. 1997:55).

There is not a great deal about ethics in the literature, according to Gregory (2002). One example is to look at the two books described earlier, in the ‘Professionalism – The strive for acceptance’ – chapter; *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* from 1992, and *Manager’s Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (edited by Dozier in 1995). Two books of some 900 pages each, but only one of them points the reader to ethics in the index, a total of 7 pages (Gregory, 2002).

The PRSA Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations was agreed upon in 1950, and has been revised several times since. It was heavily debated for years that the code had ceased to work satisfactorily, and as a result, PRSA abandoned the code in 2000 in favour of a new and very different code called Member Code of Ethics (Wilcox et al., 2003). This Code is designed to be a useful guide for PRSA members as they carry out programs where ethics is a key topic. Taken from the PRSA website: “The Code is also meant to be a living, growing body of knowledge, precedent, and experience. It should stimulate our thinking and encourage us to seek guidance and clarification when we have questions about principles, practices, and standards of conduct” (PRSA, 2005).

A similar discussion appeared in New Zealand, when PRINZ changed its Code of Ethics in the wake of the widely publicised ‘Timberlands case’. The two authors Burton and Hager complained that the State-owned enterprise Timberlands behaved unethically when it used PR

consultants to lobby Government and to build public support (Marshall, 2002). Changes were made to the Code, in many ways the same way as PRSA decided that the focus of the Code had to be educational rather than disciplinary (Marshall, 2002). The Code of Ethics is now focused on providing PRINZ's members with support and advice, to minimise the needs for complaints. Instead of rules, the Code now consists of principles and standards under the headings 'advocacy and honesty', 'balancing openness and privacy', 'conflicts of interest', 'law abiding', and 'professionalism' (Marshall, 2002).

The ethical discussion results in an interesting divergence between practitioners and their clients or bosses. Do the latter want PR to help them gain mutual understanding between the organisation and the stakeholders, or do they prefer total influence over their publics (McCusker, 2005)? This conflict between practitioners and their clients or bosses is one of the most difficult and important discussions when defining the role of PR. According to McCusker (2005), Gregory (2002) and Parsons (2004), it evolves down to personal judgment of each individual case. Parsons (2004) addresses this conflict when the relationship between PR and its clients is compared with the role of lawyers and their clients. This analogy breaks down, according to Parsons (2004), when it comes to a case where the lawyer knows its client is guilty. When the lawyer is supporting the principle that everyone in most democratic countries has a constitutional right of defence, the PR practitioners are not bound by any such principles and would act unethically if they lied on their client's behalf. The point is that you "choose to serve clients whose self-defined interests are, in [your] view, correct. And [you] don't serve those whose purposes and interests are incorrect. Period" (Peter O'Malley, cited in Parsons, 2004: 18).

One of the problems with a code of conduct, according to McCusker (2005), is that there is not an industry-wide Code of Ethics. The codes are different from institution to institution and country to country. However, the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GlobalPR) did develop a code of conduct in 2003. This is supposed to work as a guideline for member organisations and their own codes (Parsons, 2004). Even more importantly, there is no enforceable requirement to join a membership organisation before one can practice as a PR practitioner (McCusker, 2005; Gregory, 2002; Marshall, 2002; Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). With the profession's inability to regulate practitioners effectively, McCusker (2005) notes, it leaves the poorly practising professionals with no real threat of reaction to unethical conduct. As a Canadian practitioner (cited in Cutlip et al. 2000)

said in a discussion about the codes: “Unfortunately, these codes have little real value unless they are accepted in turn by the employers of practitioners and applied to the conduct of the business itself” (Cutlip et al. 2000:172).

Most scholars seem to agree that what is needed is increased emphasis on research and education of practitioners (McCusker, 2005; Gregory, 2002; Marshall, 2002; Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). As individuals constitute the masses, improved education is, according to the scholars, the key to improving the profession of Public Relations.

2.8 Summary

This review of the literature has identified three struggles which are holding back the professionalisation of Public Relations: (1) The gap between theory and practice is too big, (2) PR has a poor reputation amongst the general public, (3) and the diversity of PR is making it difficult to define. McCusker (2005) notes the ‘sweet’ irony that the industry of PR, by some labelled briefly as reputation management, has such a hard time managing its own reputation. The review has shown the historical reasons for these struggles, before it reviewed some of PR’s most important theories. It has also presented outlines of some ethical discussions, which are a central theme in PR’s quest for recognition and professionalisation.

3 Methodology

The next chapter will discuss the application of research method approaches, followed by a description of the instruments used in this study. Finally the chapter will discuss the procedures for analysis of the results that was found.

3.1 Choice of method

There are two main philosophical approaches in research; the paradigms of positivistic vs. interpretivistic (Candy, 1989) are also referred to by some scholars as the phenomenological paradigm (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The positivistic paradigm can be described as being a scientific method, and this type of research is dominated by quantitative methods (Candy, 1989, Collis & Hussey, 2003). According to Webb (1990), this paradigm was a reaction to religious beliefs and other dogma, allowing only research to use objective observations as evidence when testing and formulating theories. Positivism is, according to Collis and Hussey (2003), grounded on the belief that studying human behaviour and studying natural sciences should both be conducted in the same way. This has been the traditional paradigm, but has lately been heavily criticised by many theorists who instead of law-like generalisations, rather aim to produce interpretive accounts of phenomena (Candy, 1989), called the interpretivistic paradigm. They argue that the universe can only be understood from individuals, not general laws. It originates, according to Webb (1990), from the Protestant quest for understanding the Bible. Later the method was applied to the interpretation of literature, law, history and in time to human interactions (Webb, 1990). Collis and Hussey (2003) refer to this paradigm as phenomenology, which derives from the word phenomenon, which means a fact, or occurrence, that is perceived (Collis and Hussey, 2003). The interpretivistic is based on understanding, or empathy, human behaviour from the participants' own frame of reference, and is dominated by qualitative methods, for instance interviews (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), the use of only one research method can produce a too narrow view, as each method has its strengths and weaknesses. Cohen et al. (2000), and Collis & Hussey (2003) suggest using a combination of methods, a technique named triangulation, as a way to avoid this. The project will therefore consist of both one quantitative and one qualitative method.

The quantitative method of choice was questionnaire. Choosing the right instrument is one of the most critical decisions a researcher has to make. As many factors influence a choice of this matter, e.g. nature of inquiry or population, a great amount of planning and analysis are required. Collecting data for a research project is a long process, which starts by identifying variables before the instrument is chosen. Once the instrument is chosen, the next phase is to design it.

The qualitative approach used in-depth interviews, where the perspective was turned from historical towards the present and the future. According to Cohen et al., (2000) interviews give the participants, interviewer and interviewee the opportunity to discuss their view and interpretations on the subject that is researched. This means that interview is an interaction between the participants, which increase the possibility of understanding a subject for both parts. This data collection tool is chosen because the researcher wishes to get a better understanding of public relations. Cohen et al., (2000) define the research interview as “a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information...” (Cohen et al., 2000: 269). By interviewing practitioners with experience from different areas of public relations, the study received first hand information on practitioners’ view on the future of PR. These in-depth interviews were created with the answers of the survey as a basis.

3.1.1 Questionnaire

The designing of a questionnaire is very important. Something as apparently trivial as the wording of the question might make a huge impact on the outcome. Nothing should be coincidental, and all questions should be thoroughly thought through (Cohen et al., 2000). It provides structured data, often numerical, making the analysis reasonably straightforward (Cohen et al., 2000). As the trio points out, the positive elements with questionnaire must be regarded in relation to its limitations. It has already been pointed out that the data is relatively uncomplicated, and in addition the data can be very suited for statistics. The downside however, is the scope of the data is narrow and limited (Cohen et al., 2000).

The structure of a questionnaire varies. According to Cohen et al. (2000), the rule of thumb is that the larger the sample, the more structured, closed, and numerical the questionnaire should be. Closed structured questions are useful as they are better suited for statistical treatment,

because they generate a frequency in the answers (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000). The questionnaire used in this project is semi-structured, which means that a mix of multiple choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions were used.

There are several reasons to choose multiple choice. Among the most important is less complexity for the respondent and the possibility for the researcher to categorise the answers more easily (Cohen et al., 2000). The rating scale is an effective way of collecting measurable data on respondent's opinions and attitudes. Two scales were considered: 1 – 6 and 1 – 4.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__

and,

Disagree Slightly Disagree Slightly Agree Agree
1__ 2__ 3__ 4__

The problem with this scale can be, according to Cohen et al. (2000), different respondents interpret the alternatives differently; one's 'agree' can be another's 'strongly agree'. To make it easier for both the respondents and for the researcher, in addition to minimising the differences in data, it was decided to go for the smallest alternative; 1 – 4. The reason for why uneven number of alternatives was avoided was that the researcher wanted to avoid the 'natural middle'. If a respondent are having a hard time making up his/her mind, it is very easy to just go for the neutral alternative in the middle. Since the scale in question had an even number of alternatives, it forced the respondents to think carefully about the answers.

Open-ended questions are helpful if you want information from the respondents that tell you more than numbers and boxes. These answers can not be handled statistically as other questions, but they give the researcher an opportunity to get more information on subjects, which numerical or rating questions are unable to give (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000). However, the researcher found the need to limit the use of open-ended questions, as this would generate much information; information that could be gathered from the interviews anyway. The use of too many open-ended questions is identified as a pitfall by Cohen et al. (2000) as they easily lead to misunderstandings and are demanding to the respondents' time.

The questions were divided into five categories; 'background', 'theory', 'diversity', 'reputation' and 'PRINZ'. The researcher wanted to find out how the PR practice in New Zealand aligns against PR textbook theory. When writing the literature review, it became evident to the researcher that PR practices are struggling with three issues, and the categories in the questionnaire were made with the intention of investigating if this was the case in New Zealand today. The questions in the 'background' and 'theory' category were made to investigate the gap between theory and practice. Finding out the background of the participants and their views and attitudes on education and theories would make the researcher able to test that. The questions in the 'diversity' section were few, but specific, and gave good data that described the second struggle. The latter two categories were intended to test the third struggle; PR's poor reputation.

A pilot was run, where 12 practitioners were picked out to test the survey. It was attempted to make the pilot-group as representative as possible to the whole target group. Three demographic areas were taken into consideration; geography, age and whether the participant was in-house or a consultant. The pilot was positive, and only minor changes were made to the survey based on their feedback.

3.1.2 In-depth open ended Interviews

The interview has both advantages and disadvantages. The number of response is much higher than questionnaire, but the overall reliability is limited for interviews (Hinds, 2000). Collis and Hussey (2003) point out that the questions asked and issues discussed in open-ended interviews change from one interview to another, as different aspects of the topic are revealed. The order of the interviews will therefore influence the balance of the emerging issues, which is important to recognise (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Collis and Hussey (2003) stress the importance of each interview being conducted similarly. They also point out the significance of that every question is asked, and understood by the participants, in the same way. This demands substantial planning and thought into the design of the interviews (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Another issue pointed out by Collis and Hussey (2003) is the fact that some interviewees give answers they believe is acceptable or expected by them. They further point out that this issue can be solved by the depth of the questions. Since the study conducted in this project was in depth interviews, the researcher believes these issues were overcome.

The questions were open-ended, and asked for the respondents' views on Public Relations and its future. As it was clear to the researcher that PR is facing some challenges, it was really interesting to see the practitioners' view on these. Collis and Hussey (2003) suggest that when conducting phenomenological study, it is recommended to encourage discussion on topics from the participants instead of creating many specific questions in advance, as the researcher should keep an open-mind at all times.

An audio recorder was used, as suggested by both Cohen et al. (2000) and Collis and Hussey (2003) as this ensures accurate data collection. The use of a tape recorder was agreed upon by the interviewer and interviewee before the discussion started, and Unitec provided the researcher with the equipment.

The interviews with practitioners from other parts of New Zealand were conducted by telephone. It is quite demanding to expect a busy practitioner to spend 45 minutes to an hour on the phone, but the researcher found no problem with finding participants willing to do just this.

3.1.3 Participants

In cooperation with the immediate past president of PRINZ, Tim Marshall, all PRINZ's 754 working members were surveyed. The student members however, were left out of the population, as too many questions were irrelevant for this group. This cooperation boosted the response rate, and instead of an expected 60-80 responses (10%), 151 responses (20%) came back, which gave sufficient data to work with.

For the four interviews, people from different areas of Public Relations were questioned. These were hand picked after consulting Tim Marshall (PRINZ). The aim was to interview senior practitioners from a geographical and professional spread within New Zealand. The selected group was a CEO of PRINZ from Auckland, a PR executive from a private organisation in Auckland, a PR consultant from Christchurch, and a PR executive from a government agency in Wellington. This gave the researcher first hand information on Public Relations, where the profession was represented by a broad range of professionals.

3.1.4 Hypothesis

According to Collis and Hussey (2003), a hypothesis is a proposition it is wanted to test through statistical analysis. This project identified three struggles in the literature review, that the researcher wanted to test if were true.

1. The gap between theory and practice needs to decrease if the ongoing professionalisation of PR is to have a successful outcome.
2. PR has a poor reputation among the general public - This can among other factors, reduce interest in developing academic courses and research in educational institutions, and make PR less attractive for university students choosing their career.
3. The diversity of PR practices is huge, and this makes it hard to define, which is causing confusion and misunderstandings about PR among the general public.

3.2 Ethics in research

According to Cohen et al., (2000), ethics is something that has become more and more important during the years. It is an important balance that researchers, in their quest for the truth, at the same time keep the participants' rights and values intact. In many cases this can be a difficult balance to keep. In this case it will not be as hard to keep a balance between ethics and validity, but ethical concerns are never the less as important to keep in mind. When this research was conducted, participants were asked to answer truthfully and honestly to questions. To be able to ensure this it is important that the participants feel safe and that they can trust the researcher to keep any information given to her confidential and that the information will not be misused. It is also important that every participant gives their consent before any data collection is started.

3.2.1 Informed consent

The principle of informed consent comes from the subject's right to freedom and free-will. This is an important principle that came to be to protect the participant's right to determine their own level of participation. There are four important elements of informed consent; competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension (Cohen et al., 2000). Competence entails that individuals make correct decisions if they are informed correctly. Voluntarism involves that participants choose to take part freely in the research. Full information is self explanatory, but this is an element that, according to Cohen et al., (2000),

is almost impossible to achieve in most research. In these cases the idea of reasonably informed consent are used, where the participants are informed as much as possible (Cohen et al., 2000). Comprehension refers to that the observed fully understands the nature of research.

The participants for both the questionnaire and the interviews received a letter informing them of the nature of research, the reasons for it and why they have been picked out. The interviews were also given a consent form, for them to sign if they accept the invitation. In this letter the participants also gave their consent to the use of audiotape and/or video recording during the interviews. The participants of the questionnaire gave their consent to participate when submitting their on-line survey.

3.2.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important, and something that must be kept at all times. This is significant to remember if the questionnaire holds specific questions that can reveal the participants identity. Answers must be coded in a way that the identity of the observed is not revealed, and the questionnaire should be able to offer the participant full anonymity. The interview however, is impossible to offer anonymity, but confidentiality is a matter of course, within agreed limits. Certain information may be more personal than others, and therefore be more threatening to the participant if misused. The contributor's privacy is therefore guaranteed. A transcript of the interviews will be offered to the participants for a read through, to see if they agree on what was said.

3.2.3 Information

Please refer to the appendices for the informed participation consent form and participant information sheet respectively.

This research would have been impossible to carry through without contribution from PRINZ and its members. To get the research project approved by the organisation a letter of approval was sent to members together with abstracts of the proposal. (See appendices for letter of approval from PRINZ.)

3.3 Different data, different analyses

Making the data suitable for analysis can be a challenge. The nature of this project, being a triangular study, requires the researcher to analyse both quantitative and qualitative data. This chapter will look at the reasons for the decisions regarding the analysis of the data.

3.3.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability is concerned with whether the findings of the research is credible or not (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000). If the research can be repeated, and produce the same findings, it is reliable. In other words, if the study were replicated, the findings of the new study need to match the original's findings, for the findings to be reliable. The criterion for reliability is very high for positivistic research, however for interpretivistic research, it may not be given the same status (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Validity is the extent to which the findings of the research actually represent the reality (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000). Validity can be undermined by research errors such as faulty research procedures, inaccurate measurement or poor sampling (Collis and Hussey, 2003). Validity can be assessed through face validity, a method where the researcher ensures that the tests or methods actually measure what they are supposed to measure (Collis and Hussey, 2000).

3.3.2 Quantitative and Qualitative variables

The questionnaire was designed to include both quantitative variables and qualitative variables. The quantitative variables, described by Collis and Hussey (2003) as a numerical attribute of an individual or object, were numbered to make it possible for the researcher to code the data. Coding of data is, according to Collis and Hussey (2003), an excellent way of sorting the data for the analysis. The qualitative variables are variables that, according to Collis and Hussey (2003), divide objects or individuals into groups. An example of this is question 1 in this project's questionnaire, dividing the participants between in-house and consultants.

3.3.3 Analysis for questionnaire

The variables being pre-coded, the closed questions of the questionnaire fitted in computer analysis tools such as SPSS for Windows. This is a program which, according to Collis and Hussey (2003), consists of a worksheet where data can be stored, which is supported by a series of commands, accessible from a menu. Once all the data has been stored, SPSS will be able to offer frequency tables, cross-tabulations and present the results in tables and graphs, which can be imported to the final report (Collis and Hussey, 2003). There is usually made a distinction between descriptive statistics and inferential statistics in scholarly texts (Cohen et al., 2000; Collis and Hussey, 2003). Collis and Hussey (2003) describes descriptive statistics as summarising or displaying summarising data, whilst inferential statistics involves using data collected from a sample to draw conclusions on a whole population. The statistics presented in this project will be descriptive.

The open-ended questions, or the qualitative variables, were analysed using content analysis. Most of the queries regarding this data were quite similar to the data collected from the interviews, and will therefore be treated under the next heading.

3.3.4 Analysis for Interviews

According to Collis and Hussey (2003), analysing qualitative data presents problems for researchers coming from both positivistic and interpretivistic studies. They argue that the methods for analysing qualitative data are poorly described in scholarly texts. They continue pointing at the lack of separation between collection methods and analysis methods (Collis and Hussey, 2003). As the duo state: “In some published studies we are aware that the researcher must have had hundreds, if not thousands, of pages of qualitative data, but it is difficult to appreciate how this data has been summarised and structured to arrive at this problem” (Collis and Hussey, 2003: 253). However, there are some approaches to qualitative data analysis, though only the ones used in this project will be dealt with here.

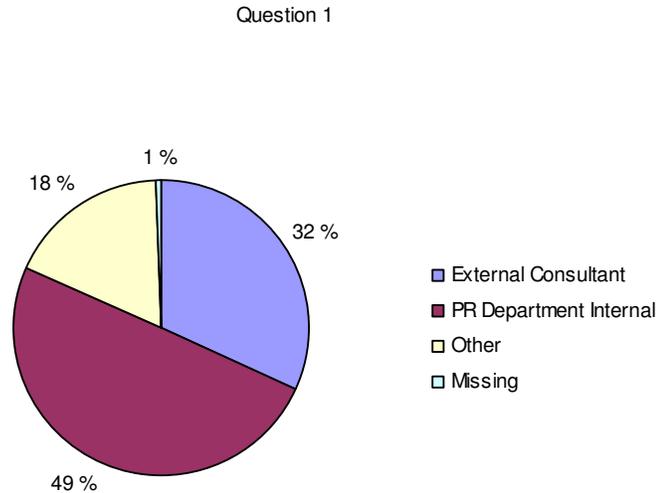
Quantifying data is a method, that according to Cohen et al. (2000), where the researcher turns the qualitative data into numerical data. By informally quantifying the data, the researcher can reduce and examine repetitive or patterned behaviour (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000).

Content analysis is a formal approach to analysing qualitative data. It is a method of systematically converting qualitative data to numerical variables (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000). By creating categories for opinions and statements, and then coding the replies accordingly to these categories, the researcher can identify which problems, issues, opportunities and possibilities for Public Relations in the future. It is important to include that content analysis has been criticised for producing trite conclusions. There have also been comments that the theoretical basis of the approach is unclear (Collis and Hussey, 2003). A third and even more worrying criticism has been that the data reduction the researcher makes, is at an early stage of the process, and therefore can discard vital pieces of information (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000).

4 Findings from the questionnaires

The surveys offered a great deal of data, both numerical and open ended. The following chapter displays the findings from the analyses of the questionnaires.

Question 1 - How would you describe your work?



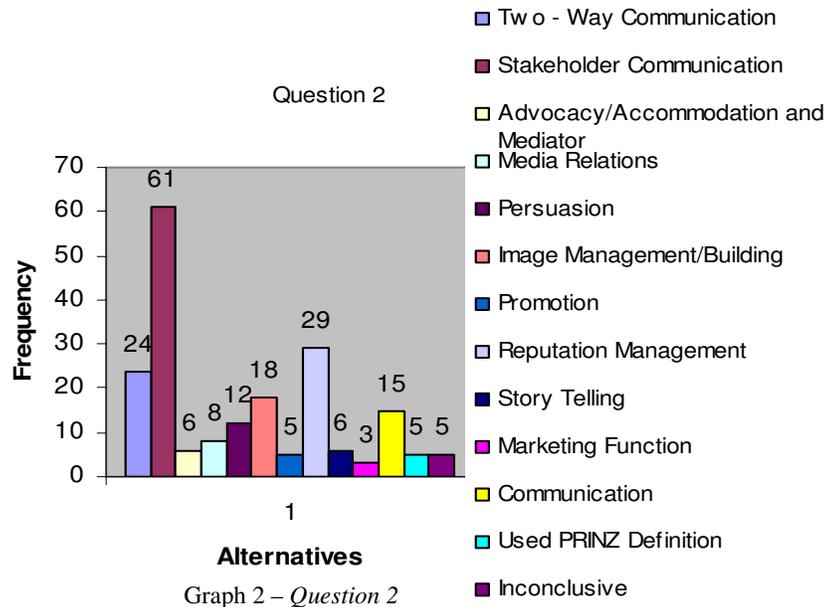
Graph 1 – *Question 1*

One (0,6%) respondent chose for some reason not to answer the first question, which queried how the respondents described their work. 49.7% of the respondents answered they were working in an internal PR department, whilst 31.8% gave ‘External Consultant’ as a description of their work. As many as 17.8% did not find any of the alternatives suitable for them, and answered ‘other’, with marketing/communications and education being the two bigger groupings.

Question 2 - There is no clear definition of PR. Please explain what it means to you?

Question 2 asked for the participants’ understanding of PR. Four respondents chose not to answer this question. The definitions offered by the participants were divided into four categories, but as expected, more were needed. A further nine categories were added as the analysis progressed. Some definitions were more advanced than others, including elements qualifying them for two, or even three categories. The answers give evidence to the difficulty

of defining PR. When only 157 definitions are divided into 13 different categories, it proves how different meanings PR has got to different people. It must be emphasised that the categorising process is very subjective from the researcher's part. Therefore, this analysis can only be treated as directing, and not statistical.

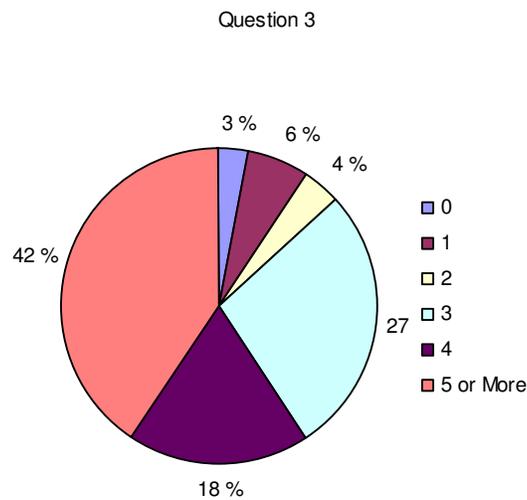


Twenty-four answers used ‘two-way communication’ or mutual communication/understanding as a theme in their definitions. This stands for a pleasingly 15.3% of the responses. The biggest category was, as expected, the ‘stakeholder communication’ group. 38.9% of the definitions included phrases that qualified them for this grouping. Six definitions (4%) referred to public relations as ‘advocacy/accommodation’ on behalf of, or being the ‘middleman’ for, the organisation and its publics. Surprisingly lowly 8 answers (5%) described PR as a ‘media relations’ profession.

Of the groupings that appeared as the category process advanced, ‘reputation management’ was the term most frequently mentioned, with 18.5% (29 definitions) of the responses using that phrase in their definition. 15 definitions (9.6%) used ‘communication’ as an explanatory phrase, and 18 answers (11.5%) suggested PR was about ‘image building/management’. 7.6% (12 responses) of the participants used the phrase persuasion when they suggested a definition. Five definitions (3.2%) included ‘promotion’ in the definition, six responses (3.8%) were used in the ‘story telling’ category, and only 3 answers (1.9%) labelled PR as a ‘marketing function’. Five participants (3.2%) used PRINZ’s definition of PR, and a further 5 suggestions (3.2%) were either inconclusive or did not fit into any of the proposed categories.

Another way to extract information from the definitions is to search all of them for the frequency rate of key words. A search after the words including ‘ethics’ (3 words), ‘honest’ (3 words) and ‘truth’ (5 words) suggests that ethics was not a theme of importance to the participants’ definitions. Fifteen definitions included the word ‘planned’ and 6 had ‘deliberate’ (5 of them was from PRINZ’s definition). Although words including ‘manage’ appeared frequently, none of them referred to PR as a leadership function, all of them were having a rather functional approach.

Question 3 - How many years of tertiary education do you have?

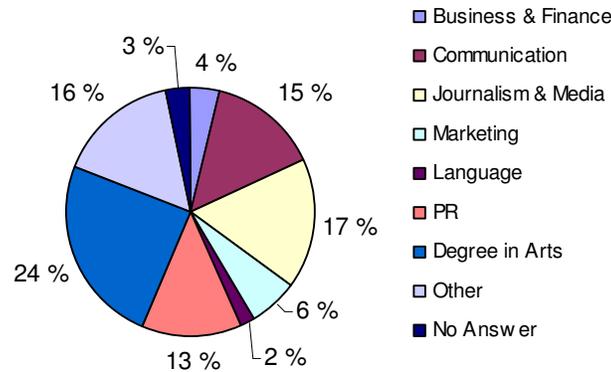


Graph 3 – Question 3

This question asked for how many years of tertiary education the participants have, and it turns out that the participants are an educated group of people. As many as 40.8% had 5 years or more with tertiary education. 18.5% percent had four years, and 27.4% had done 3 years of tertiary training. This means that 86.6 of the participants had more than 3 years of tertiary education, leaving the participants with fewer years of education to only 13.4%. 3.8% of the participants had 2 years of higher education, 6.4% answered they had 1 year of tertiary training, and as few as 3.2% of the participants had no tertiary education.

Question 4 - Which area did you specialise in, during your tertiary education?

Question 4

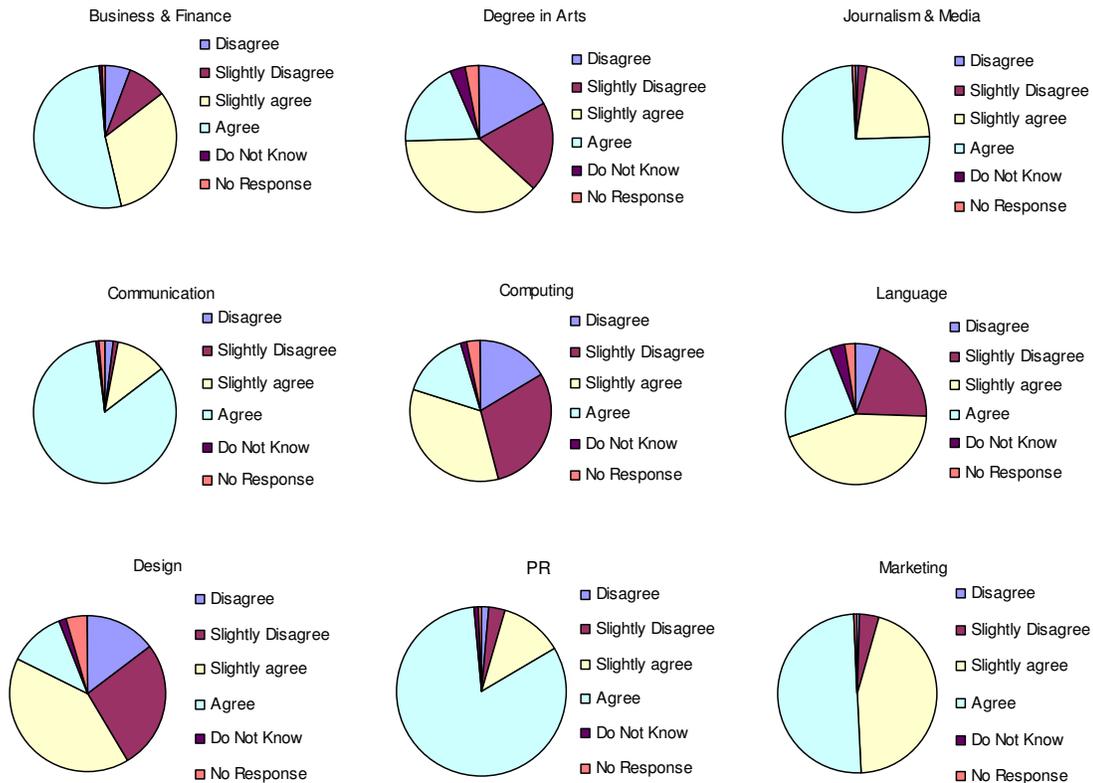


Graph 4 – Question 4

With such a high number of tertiary educated participants, it was interesting to see which areas of specialisation they did their schooling within. Only the 5 respondents (3.2%) who had no tertiary education chose not to answer this question. As expected the range of specialisations were broad, with none of the alternatives standing out as dominant for the participants. Only 12.7% said their degree was in ‘PR’. ‘Journalism and Media’ counted 16.6%, ‘communication’ was ticked 23 times (14.6%), and ‘marketing’ was at a surprising low 6.4%. The biggest specialisation for this group of PR practitioners was a ‘degree in arts’, with 24.8% of the total population specialising in this field. The reminding specialisations were smaller, with ‘Business and finance’ scoring 3.8 percent, while 3 participants (1.9%) had ‘language’ as their specialisation.

As many as 25 (15.9%) of the respondents ticked ‘other’ on question 4, and two specialisations stood out from the rest. Five participants gave science as their specialisation, equally as many did a degree in politics.

Question 5 - Please rate the following education areas on what you would say is the most important to the profession of PR



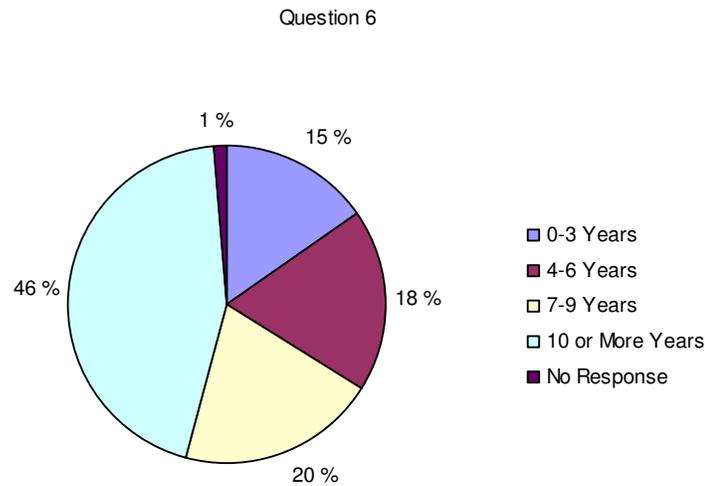
Graph 5 – Question 5

Another thing that would be interesting to find out was which of the specialisations offered in question 4, that the respondents meant was important to the professional development of Public Relations. Interesting here was to see that ‘communication’ received more ‘agrees’ than ‘PR’. 131 respondents (83.4%) answered ‘agree’ to communication being an important educational area for PR. 11.5% said ‘slightly agree’, while few respondents gave ‘slightly disagree’ (1.3%) and disagree (1.9%) to this field. One said ‘do not know’, while two respondents chose not to answer. ‘PR’ received 129 ‘agrees’ (82.2%), 19 respondents (12.1%) replied ‘slightly agree’, while ‘slightly disagree’ and disagree received respectively 3.2% and 1.3% of the votes. 1 answered ‘do not know’ and a further 1 respondent chose not to answer. As expected did ‘journalism & media’ receive a high score, with 74.5% replying ‘agree’. ‘Slightly agree’ also had a high number of votes, with 22.3%, while slightly disagree (1.9%) and ‘disagree’ (0.6%) receiving few choices. No respondents said ‘do not know’, but one chose not to answer.

A specialisation that received an average score was 'marketing'. 50.3% of the respondents agreed with this field being important to PR, and 44.6% said 'slightly agree'. Also this field had few opponents, with 3.8% answering 'slightly disagree' and 0.6% ticking 'disagree'. One respondent chose not to answer. 'Business and finance' was another field that received a decent number of votes. 52.2% of the respondents said they agreed with this specialisation being important to PR. This is higher than 'marketing', however the number of participants 'slightly agreeing' with this field were vaguely lower than 'marketing', with 31.8%. 8.9% said they 'slightly disagreed' while 5.7% of the respondents answered 'disagree'. 1 respondent did not know, and a further one respondent chose not to answer. A field that did surprisingly well was 'language', with 24.8% of the participants agreeing. 43.9% answered they were slightly agreeing with this educational field being important to the development of PR. 19.7% said they were slightly disagreeing and 5.7 percent of the respondents said they were disagreeing with 'language' being important to PR. Participants were evidently more uncertain with this field than the previous ones, with 3.2% answered they did not know, and 2.5% chose not to answer.

Of the lower scoring educational fields that were listed in question 4, a 'degree in arts' received most 'agree' votes (19.1%). A healthy 37.6% answered they were 'slightly agreeing' with this specialisation being important. 19.7% answered 'slightly disagree' and 17.2% answered they disagreed to 'arts' being important to PR. 3.2% answered 'do not know' and just as many chose not to answer. 12.1% agreed to 'design' being important to PR. As many as 40.8% ticked the 'slightly agree' option, and 26.8 chose 'slightly disagree'. Twenty-three participants (14.6%) disagreed with 'design' being important to public relations. Two participants said 'do not know', while as many as 7 chose not to answer. The lowest score of the educational fields were given to 'computing', however 15.9% of the respondents agreed on it being important to PR. 33.8% answered 'slightly agree', and 29.3% of the participants responded 'slightly disagree' to the question. 16.6% of the participants said that they disagreed to 'computing' being important. Two respondents answered 'do not know, and 5 participants chose not to answer.

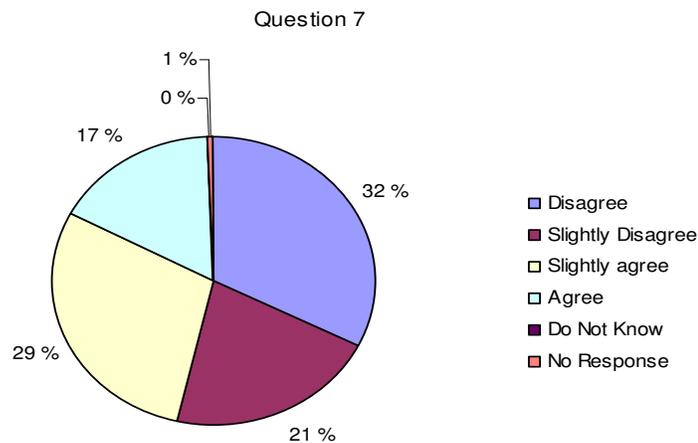
Question 6 - How many years have you held a PR position?



Graph 6 – Question 6

This question was more of a demographic question, where the aim was to see how experienced the population was. Two respondents gave no answer to the question. Almost half the group (44.6%) have held a PR position for 10 years or more. 20.4% of the participants had worked 7 to 9 years in the PR business, while 29 respondents (18.5%) answered 4-6 years as the length as a PR practitioner. Only 15.3% of the participants had recently started their careers in PR, answering 0-3 years.

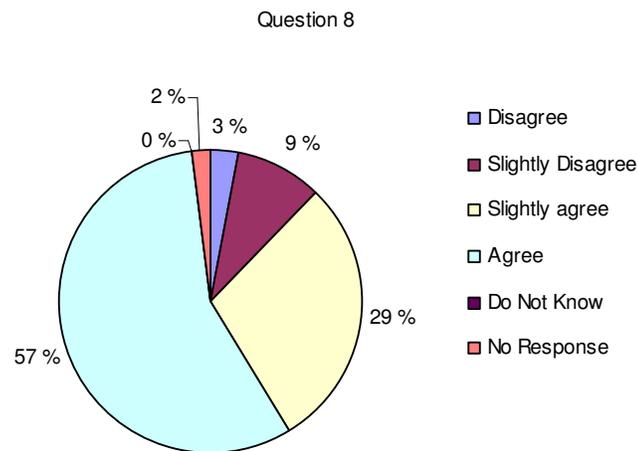
Question 7 - PR is primarily a marketing function that helps the organisation with its communication issues



Graph 7 – Question 7

The next questions (Q7 – Q15) were looking at the participants’ attitude towards theory. Question 7 was the first ‘statement’ of the questionnaire, where the respondents were rating their agreement to a statement, and was as follows: “PR is primarily a marketing function that helps the organisation with its communication issues”. Twenty-six participants (16.6%) agreed with this statement. 29.3% said ‘slightly agree’, 21% answered ‘slightly disagree’ while the last 32.5% of the participants disagreed with the statement. One respondent gave no answer.

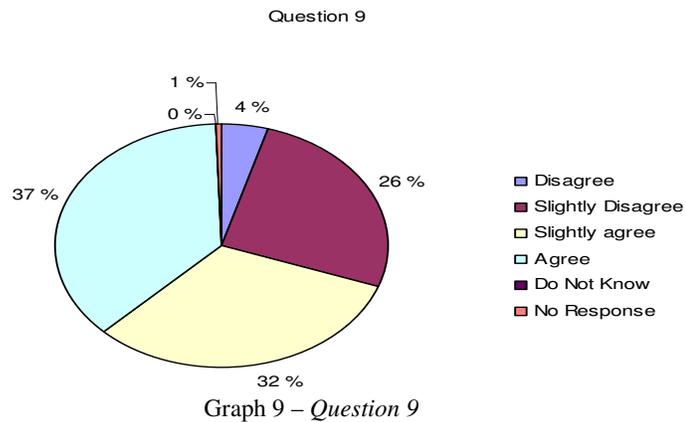
Question 8 - As a PR-practitioner, I see my role as a mediator between the public and the organisation



Graph 8 – Question 8

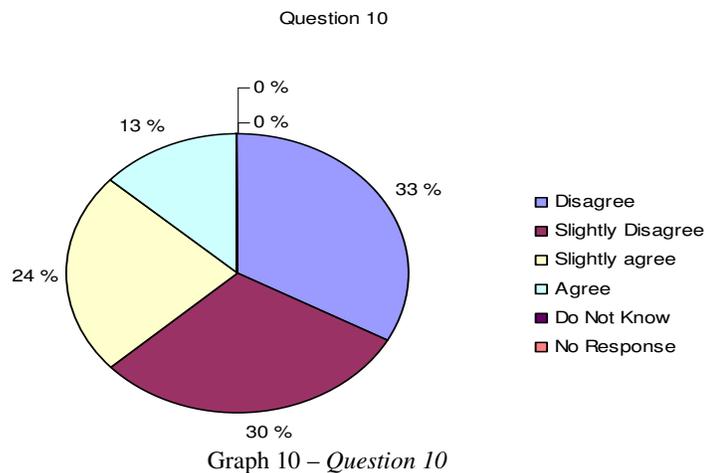
Next question was a statement as well: “As a PR-practitioner, I see my role as a mediator between the public and the organisation.” The answers were more united here, with 56.7% agreeing and 29.3% answering ‘slightly agree’. Only 8.9% answered ‘slightly disagree’ and five respondents (3.2%) said ‘disagree’ to the statement. Three participants did not give their answer to question 8.

Question 9 - I find it easy to explain to an outsider what a PR practitioner does



The third statement was: “I find it easy to explain to an outsider what a PR practitioner does.” 36.9% of the respondents agreed with this statement. 31.8% answered that they ‘slightly agreed’, while 26.1% of the participants said ‘slightly disagree’. Only 4.5% said that they disagreed with the statement. One respondent chose not to answer.

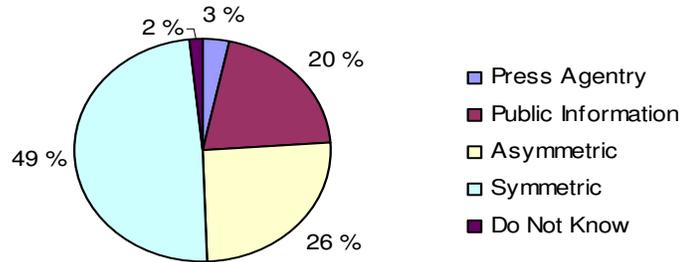
Question 10 - My theoretical background is not important in building my competence in PR.



The next statement was one where the answers were well spread out over the whole scale, and was the only statement where all participants gave an answer. The statement was: “My theoretical background is not important in building my competence in PR.” 13.4% said they were agreed with the statement. 23.6% answered ‘slightly agree’, while 29.9% said ‘slightly disagree’. ‘Disagree’ was the biggest alternative, with 33.1% of the respondents choosing this as their answer.

Question 11 - Professor James Grunig sums up PR in four models. Which of the following would you say describe your work?

Question 11

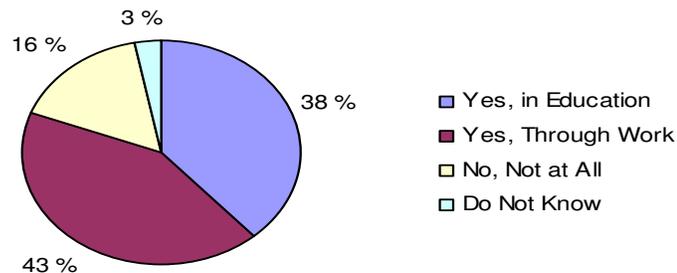


Graph 11 – *Question 11*

The literature review described in detail Grunig’s four models on public relations, and this question aimed to measure whether the participants were able to identify their work with these models. The question asked which of Grunig’s models described their work. The respondents were allowed to tick several alternatives. One participant chose not to answer. As can be seen on the graph below, the ‘two-way symmetric’ model were by far the most popular one, with 115 participants (73.3%) choosing this alternative. The third alternative, the ‘two-way asymmetric’ model were chosen 60 times (38.2%), while the ‘public information’ model were following closely with 30.6% of the participants ticking this one. The ‘press agency’ model was not a popular alternative, with only 8 participants (5%) including this alternative in its answering mix.

Question 12 - Have you ever come across any of the models used in question 11 before?

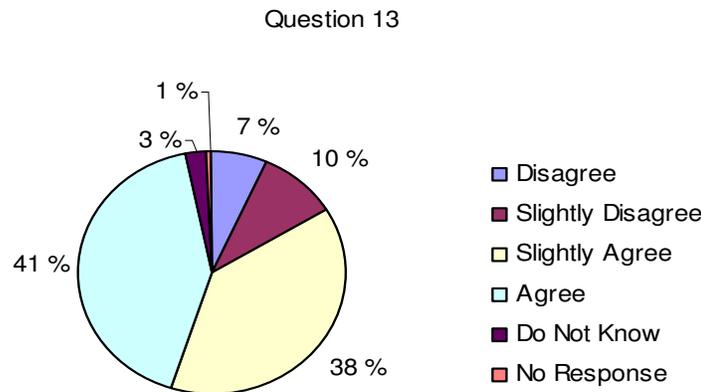
Question 12



Graph 12 – *Question 12*

On the question if the respondents had ever come across the models in question 11 before, only 15.9% of the respondents answered ‘no, not at all’. Almost half, around 42.7% said ‘yes, through work’ while 38.2% of the participants replied ‘yes, through education’. 5 answered that they did not know.

Question 13 - I think the models used in question 11 are relevant to my daily practice.



Graph 13 – *Question 13*

Question 13 was also a statement, and this time it was: “I think the models used in question 11 are relevant to my daily practice.” And 42% agreed with the statement, while 38.2% answered ‘slightly agree’. Only 15 respondents (9.6%) ticked the ‘slightly disagree’ option, and 11 participants (7%) disagreed. 2.5% said that they did not know, while 1 respondent chose not to answer.

Question 14 - Please elaborate on your previous answer here

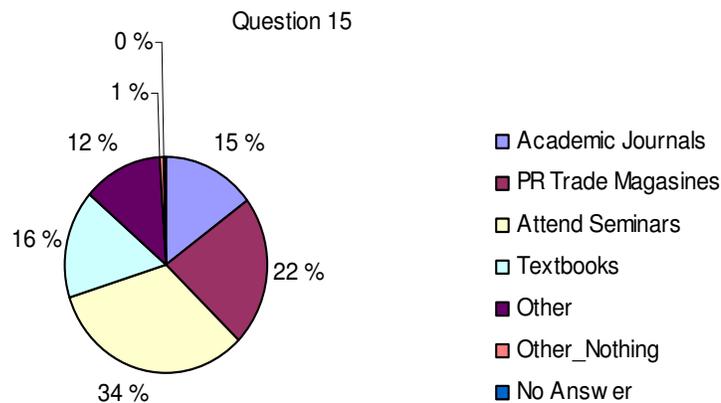
Here the respondents were asked to elaborate on the previous question. All the comments were categorised after their answer to the previous question. As many as 32 respondents chose not to answer. The critics of the models were the ones who were most eager to elaborate, with all the respondents that answered ‘disagree’ in question 13 (11 respondents) giving their comments. The models were criticised for being either too theoretical, or insufficient to cover the reality.

Only three of the participants who answered ‘slightly disagree’ in the previous question were among the 32 not answering, giving 12 comments from this group. Even though the criticisms were going in the same direction as the ones from the ‘disagree’ group, several comments made one addition to them. It is situational whether one of the models works for one client.

In the ‘slightly agree’ category one could find comments both criticising and supporting the models. Of 60 respondents answering question 13, only 42 chose to elaborate on their answer. The critics voiced the opinions described in the first two groups, while the supporters ranged from agreeing with some of the models to all of the models. It was emphasised by some respondents that the models works well explaining and conceptualising PR at an academically level, even though the models are somewhat simplistic.

Naturally, the ‘degree’ section included mostly comments being positive to the models. Fifty-seven of the 66 respondents that answered the previous question gave their comments. Some of these emphasised that it depends on the situation which model to choose, whilst others commented that at least one of the models either described their work, or what they aspired to do in their work.

Question 15 - What sort of professional development do you do?

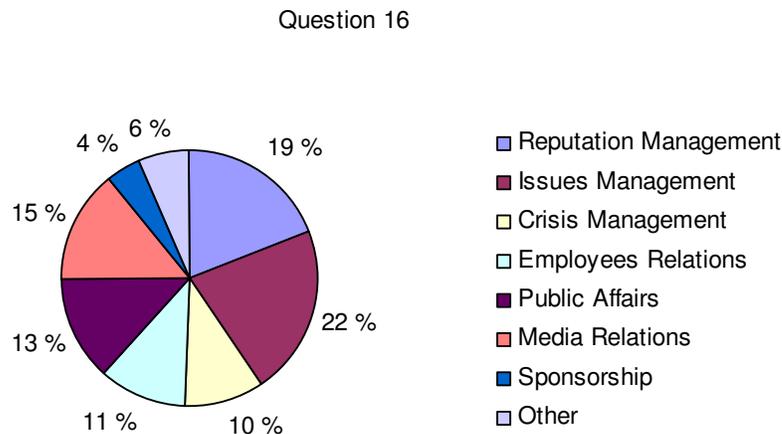


Graph 14 – Question 15

The last question of the ‘theory’ section asked what sort of activities practitioners employed to develop professionally. This question allowed the respondent to choose several options. One respondent gave no answer. As many as 134 participants (85.4%) stated that they ‘attended seminars’ to develop professionally. 91 respondents (58%) said they read ‘PR trade magazines’. Just under half the population (42.7%) answered ‘textbooks’, and 38.2% said

they read ‘academic journals’. Fifty-four participants (31.9%) gave ‘other’ as their answer, with discussing/observing (with) peers/senior practitioners, researching internet (PR websites, blogs etc.) and networking being the three most common areas. One respondent did not give an answer, and four of the 54 ‘other’s said ‘nothing’.

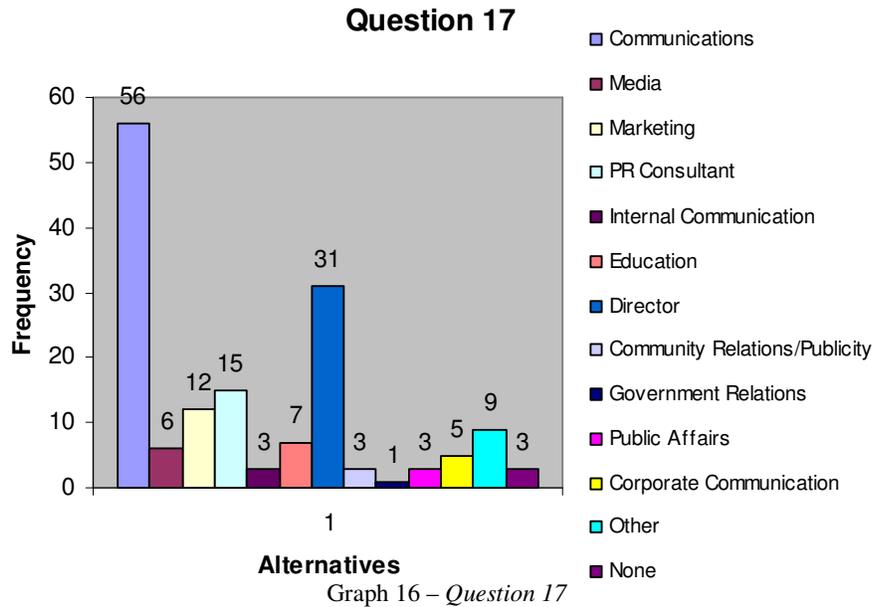
Question 16 - What areas of PR are you most involved with in your daily practice?



Graph 15 – Question 16

This question was also a multiple choice question, as it asked for which PR areas the respondents are most involved with in their daily practice. ‘Issues management’ was chosen most, with 118 respondents (75.2%) opting this alternative, whilst ‘reputation management’ came second with 106 answers (67.5%). The third most ‘popular’ area was ‘media relations’ with 51.6% (81 respondents) of the participants choosing this, and 46.5% (73 participants) of the respondents dealt with ‘public affairs’. Sixty (38.2%) of the practitioners said they worked with ‘employee relations’, and 54 participants (34.4%) included ‘crisis management’ in their answering mix. Only 15.3% (24 respondents) worked with ‘sponsorship’. Thirty-five participants answered ‘other’, with ‘marketing’ standing out as the biggest group with 14 respondents adding this to their answer mix. The attempt to categorise the 35 ‘others’, underline the argument of PR’s diversity, with 16 additional categories including: event management, government relations, brand management, promotion, investor relations, publicity, community relations, research, fundraising, knowledge management, etc.

Question 17 - What is your job title?



This was an open-ended question that asked for the participants’ titles. This question was asked for two main reasons. The first was to prove the diversity in practitioners’ titles, the second was to examine the organisational level the participants are working at. Three respondents chose not to answer, and a further three stated they did not have a title.

By sorting all the titles, the researcher found an expected high number of 13 different categories. The biggest group was by far the ‘communications’ category, including 63 different titles. The second biggest was ‘consultants’ with only 15.

It is just as interesting to search the titles for keywords. However, the most interesting feature was the lack of a certain word in the titles; PR or public relations. Only 10 of the practitioners included it in their titles. In comparison, ‘communications manager/advisor’ appeared 48 times. The new ‘substitute words, corporate communications and public affairs, were used by 8 participants.

Other keywords that were analysed were manager (53 hits), director (28 hits), senior (11) and chief executive (7 hits), indicating that 99 of the practitioners (63%) holds senior positions in the organisations they work in.

Question 18 - What percentage of your time do you spend on the following?

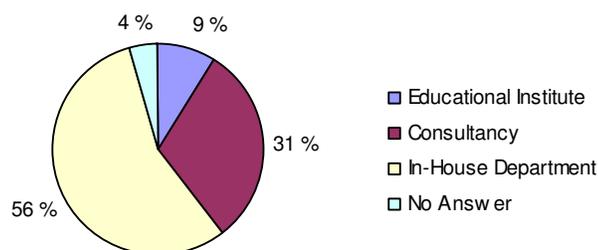
	Strategic Planning	Staff Supervision	Financial Control	Implementation	Research
Average	24	11	7	44	10
Median	20	10	5	45	10
Mode	20	0	5	50	5

Table 1 – Question 18

This question asked for how the practitioners spend their time in an average working situation. The results shows that implementation was the activity that occupied the participants most of the ones that were mentioned, with strategic planning coming second. (Please refer to the table above)

Question 19 - Which department do you work in?

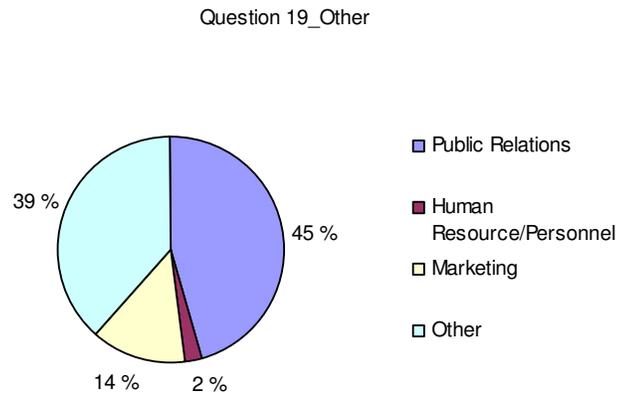
Question 19



Graph 17 – Question 19

Question 19 asked the participants to state whether they worked in an ‘educational institute’, ‘in-house’ or in a ‘consultancy’. Eighty-eight of the respondents (56.1%) answered they were working in an ‘in-house department’ in an organisation, 48 participants (30.6%) said ‘consultancy’, whilst 14 (8.9%) answered they were working in an ‘educational institute’. Seven respondents chose not to answer.

The question further asked the respondents that answered ‘in-house department’ to specify what kind of department they were working in.



Graph 18 – Question 19_Other

All the 88 ‘in-house’ respondents answered, and almost half of those (45.5%) gave ‘public relations’ as the name of their department. Twelve respondents (13.6%) answered ‘marketing’, while 2 respondents said ‘human resource’. 38.6% (34 respondents) did not find any of the alternatives suitable, and chose ‘other’. These answers included ‘communication’, ‘marketing’ and ‘corporate communications’.

Question 20 - What is the job title of the person you report to?

Again a question for titles, this time from the persons the participants report to. Sixty-nine respondents (44%) answered that they reported to a manager, director or leader of a department (‘Communications’: 17, ‘corporate/public affairs’: 16, ‘marketing’: 5, ‘combination communication/marketing’: 8, ‘PR’: 3, ‘other’: 17)

48 respondents (30.6%) replied they were reporting to a CEO, director or manager of the organisation. Eight respondents chose not to answer the question.

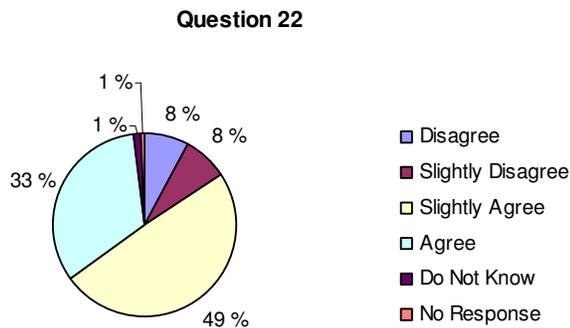
Question 21 - What is your understanding of how the general public perceives the reputation of PR?

This was the first question in the ‘reputation’ section, and asked for what the participants thought the general public is of opinion on public relations. This question offered the most harmonised answers of the whole questionnaire. As many as 126 respondents (80.3%) said they believed the public understands PR as being misunderstood and about spin, lying, deceiving and such. Seven participants (4.5%) commented that PR is a misunderstood function, but the reputation is improving among the general public. Eight participants (5.1%)

believed the public’s idea of PR was about managing public opinion or media relations. Three respondents believed it is being compared with other “bad reputation” professions such as second-hand car salespeople or accountants, while one respondent commented that he/she preferred using communication instead of PR, as the first had a better ring to it. Two Respondents said PR’s reputation was poor, but people in business and organisations understand it better. Only two respondents said they believed the public is positive to PR, one answered that he/she had no idea, and two respondents replied that people’s attitude towards PR were mixed. Eight respondents gave no answer to the question.

Using the “keyword searching” method gave similar numbers. The word ‘spin’ appeared 89 times in a search through all the answers, which is 60% of the answers including that word. Lie or lying appeared 10 times, propaganda twice, ‘underst’ (to find misunderstood, no understanding and such) appeared 40 times (25.5%). Eleven of the comments blamed bad media coverage for the bad reputation.

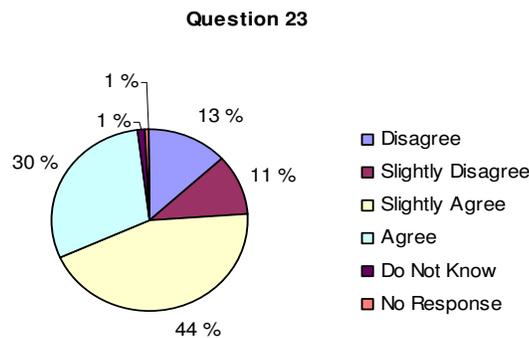
Question 22 - As a PR practitioner I am concerned about people who hold a negative image of PR.



Graph 19 – *Question 22*

Another statement, which was: “As a PR practitioner I am concerned about people who hold a negative image of PR.” Fifty-two respondents (33.1%) answered that they agreed with the statement, and 49% (77 participants) answered ‘slightly agree’. Only 8.3% (13 respondents) replied ‘slightly disagree’, and almost as few (7.6%, or 12 respondents) disagreed with the statement. Two respondents said ‘do not know’, and one respondent gave no answer.

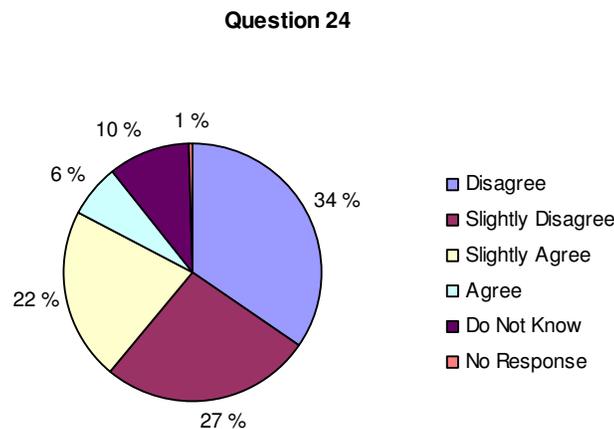
Question 23 - Persuasion is at the core of PR practitioners work.



Graph 20 – *Question 23*

This statement alleged: “Persuasion is at the core of PR practitioners work.” 29.9% of the participants (47 people) agreed with the statement, and as many as 43.9% (69 participants) answered ‘slightly agree’. Seventeen participants (10.8%) said ‘slightly disagree’, and 21 respondents (13.4%) answered ‘disagree’. Two participants answered ‘do not know’, and one respondent chose not to answer.

Question 24 - The PRINZ code of conduct looks good on paper, but has no real value to me in my daily practice.



Graph 21 – *Question 24*

Question 24 was a provoking statement which claimed: “The PRINZ code of conduct looks good on paper, but has no real value to me in my daily practice.” Fifty-four respondents (34.4%) disagreed with the statement, while 42 participants (26.8%) replied ‘slightly disagree’. As many as 34 respondents (21.7%) said ‘slightly agree’, and 10 participants (6.4%) agreed with the statement. This was obviously a statement that made many respondents uncertain, as 10.2% (16 participants) answered ‘do not know’. One respondent chose not to answer.

Question 25 - Can you please describe PRINZ's role in your everyday work life?

The last five questions queried about the participants' relationship with PRINZ, and the first on asked about their role in the participants' working life. Many gave long comments that fitted into several categories, 43 answers were for that reason registered multiple times.

55 practitioners (35%) said they participated in PRINZ's seminars or professional training sessions. Thirty-six respondents (22.9%) said networking and events was PRINZ's role in their working life. Almost equally as many (35, or 22.3%) gave PRINZ's on-line resources or newsletter as what they used from PRINZ's contributions. Twenty-five respondents (15.9%) said that PRINZ's role was being a professional backbone to rely on, and 9 of these pointed out that the code of ethics was important to them. Five respondents said they were involved at varying degrees, without commenting how or why, and a further 5 gave inconclusive answers. Forty practitioners (25.5%) said PRINZ played a minimal or no role in their everyday work life, two of these having just joined. Four participants gave no answer.

Question 26 - What would you like PRINZ to do differently in the future to better suit your needs?

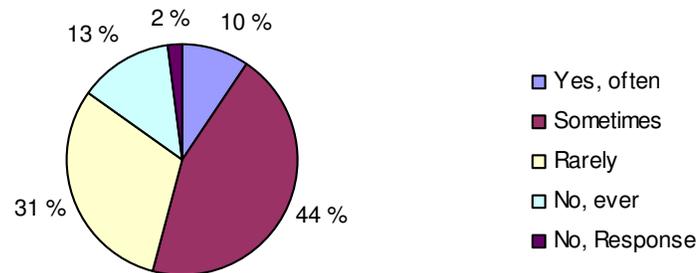
This is a valuable question for PRINZ, which should be given more attention than just being categorised and presented in percentages. This sort of feedback is precious for an organisation which seeks to improve member satisfaction. The comments varied a lot, and ranged from improving seminars to increased emphasis on research.

Twenty-two practitioners commented that they would like to see improved courses/seminars/events in the future. Ten participants would like more research, either on consumers or educational studies. Nine respondents commented they wanted PRINZ to promote PR publicly to improve its reputation among the general public. Eight answers commented that PRINZ's pricing on different offerings were too expensive, and equally as many would like to see improvements on webpage/newsletters. Categories which included 7 comments were improved networking opportunities, PRINZ expanding offerings to other regional areas and events/seminars better suited for senior practitioners. Six participants hoped to see more case studies, and the same number of respondents would like PRINZ to improve the quality on many speakers at their arrangements. Twenty-four participants made

comments that were put in an ‘other’ category, however these should be treated with equally care as the categorised ones. 15 participants answered that they did not have a comment, while as many as 34 respondents chose not to answer.

Question 27 - Do you take advantage of the training that is offered through PRINZ?

Question 27

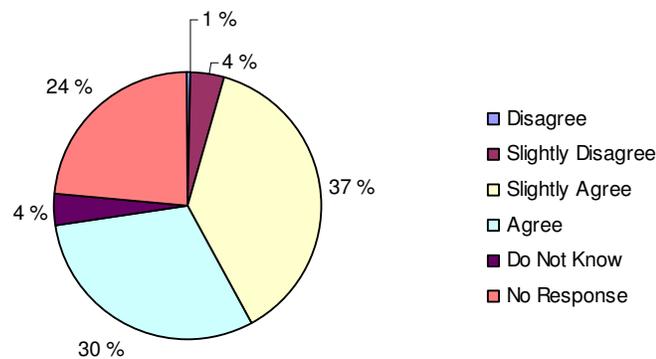


Graph 22 – Question 27

This question asked for if they made use of the training offered by PRINZ. Fifteen respondents (9.6%) answered ‘yes, often’, however 70 practitioners (44.6%) ticked the ‘sometimes’ alternative. 30.6% of the participants (48 answers) said they were using the training ‘rarely’, while 21 respondents (13.4%) said ‘no, never’. Three participants chose not to answer.

Question 28 - I find the training offered by PRINZ worthwhile

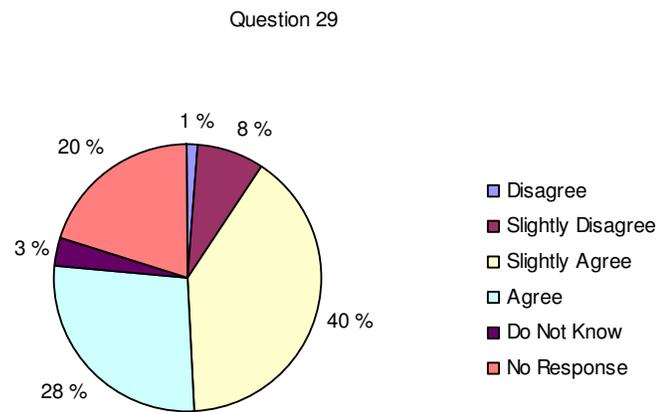
Question 28



Graph 23 – Question 28

Question 28 was also a statement, which was: “I find the training offered by PRINZ worthwhile.” 30.6% of the respondents (48 answers) said they agreed with the statement, while 37.6% (59 respondents) gave ‘slightly agree’ as their answer. Only 6 participants (3.8%) said ‘slightly disagree’ and a single respondent answered ‘disagree’ to the statement. Six respondents (3.8%) replied ‘do not know’, while as many as 37 participants gave no answer.

Question 29 - The training offered through PRINZ helps me develop as a PR practitioner



The last statement of the questionnaire was: “The training offered through PRINZ helps me develop as a PR practitioner.” The numbers were pretty similar as to the previous statement, with 43 respondents (27.4%) agreeing with the statement, while 62 participants (39.5%) said ‘slightly agree’. Thirteen answers (8.3%) was ‘slightly disagree’, and two respondents said that they disagreed with the statement. Five participants answered ‘do not know’, and 32 respondents chose not to answer.

Question 30

The final question of the questionnaire asked what other courses the participants would like to provide in the future. The respondents may have been tired at this stage, as 75 participants (47.8%) chose not to answer the question. No types of courses stood out, however 13 respondents asked for more senior courses. Otherwise many interesting suggestions came, including crisis management, government relations, media relations, strategic planning, financial control etc.

5 Discussion

As stated in the methodology chapter, this project has operated with three research statements. These statements were identified in the literature review, and dealt with three major struggles that are decelerating the professionalisation process of public relations. The statements were given in the introduction chapter, however as a matter of ease these have been repeated below:

1. The gap between theory and practice needs to decrease if the ongoing professionalisation of PR is to have a successful outcome.
2. The diversity of PR practices is huge, and this makes it hard to define, which is causing confusion and misunderstandings about PR among the general public.
3. PR has a poor reputation among the general public - This can, among other factors, reduce interest in developing academic courses and research in educational institutions, and make PR less attractive for university students choosing their career.

This chapter will follow the same order as the previous chapters, discussing the findings from the surveys on the three struggles. Each struggle has been divided into sub-chapters, which will discuss the findings from both the questionnaires and interviews. Finally, the chapter will discuss the interrelating elements of the struggles.

Few surprises came when analysing the collected data, however many interesting insights and conclusions could be drawn from them. This chapter will function as the glue in the project, merging the theory together with the data. It will also work as a basis for the next chapter, which aims to conclude the project and offer suggestions for future research of public relations.

Two of the questions in the questionnaire were asked to obtain some information about the respondent group. This helps both the reader and the researcher understand the group of participants, as it gives information about who they are, and where they come from. Question one revealed that nearly half the respondents identified themselves as 'in-house practitioners'. This was as expected, although the number of external consultants were lower than expected, as 31,8% gave 'external consultant' as a description of their work. This led to a surprisingly

high number of respondents choosing 'other'. However it came as no surprise that the majority of these identified themselves with marketing or communication. The researcher interprets the number of participants giving 'education' (7 participants) as the description of their work, as this group of people being more sympathetic to a researcher's toils in collecting data than practitioners belonging to the other alternatives.

Question 6 proved that the respondents were an experienced crowd, as almost half the group belonged in the '10 or more years' category. A further 20% answered they had worked with PR for more than 7 years, which underline the experienced-claim. It is important to acknowledge this, as it could influence the representation of the total population. As commented in the previous paragraph, people who are involved with students, or have been students for a number of years themselves could be more sympathetic to a researcher, or more interested in research, than people who have not studied for a very long time. As a result of this, the group of respondents might not be representative to the total population, and the results from the analyses must therefore be treated with care.

5.1 The gap between theory and practice

It is this project's claim that the gap between theory and practice in PR is problematically wide. This is causing confusion among students and users of PR, when there is little or no correlation between how the profession is taught and how it is practiced. It is also a struggle because practitioners are not being able to contribute to the growth and development of the industry. When research, which is thought to be the locomotive to push the growth of PR, is ignored by many of its practitioners, at the same as the people practicing, who should be the engine of the locomotive, are being ignored by the academics, then the development and growth of the industry is likely to stop. As both surveys will show, many participants had a different view on the matter. However, as the research progressed, these views were contradicted a number of times.

5.1.1 Questionnaire

Several questions in the questionnaire were designed to explore whether the participants agreed in the assertion, or the fist struggle. Question three was deliberately positioned in the 'background' section of the questionnaire, as it helps the researcher learn about the participants. However, the data gathered from the question were used in the first struggle as it

revealed how many years of education the participants had, which is indicative of how much theory the respondents are likely to have been exposed to. It can also explain the participants' attitude towards the subject. With the fact that 86,6% of the participants had completed three years of higher education, suggests that the respondents were educated and are likely to have some understanding of public relations theory.

When asking the participants to rate different educational areas on how important they perceived them to be for the professional development of PR, the answers were as expected. The only surprise was to see that 'communication' received a higher share of 'agrees' than 'PR'. It was also interesting to see that 'journalism & media' received a far higher score than areas like 'marketing' and 'business & finance'. This indicates that older attitudes still remain, with media relations still perceived as one of the most important aspects of PR. It would be interesting to see if these numbers would be the same in 5 years' time, or if 'business & finance' would increase in importance.

A number of statements were used to test the participants' attitudes towards public relations theory. As the struggle maintained that there is a problematically gap between theory and practice, this attitude would be interesting to test. The first statement of the questionnaire said that PR primarily was a marketing function, which had an even dispersion of answers. Almost as many agreed or slightly agreed to the statement as those who disagreed, or slightly disagreed, while the group of opposing respondents was slightly larger. However, the researcher had anticipated the number of disagreeing respondents being larger, as many practitioners work under marketing departments, and this could suggest that respondents see PR as something different than the marketing function. The next statement argued that practitioners were "mediators" between the organisation and the public, and only 12% of the respondents either disagreed or slightly disagreed with the statement. Question 10 was a similar statement, where the questionnaire claimed that the theoretical background was not important to the respondent in building his/her competence in PR. Sixty-three percent of the respondents either disagreed or slightly disagreed, while the remaining 37% agreed or slightly agreed with the statement. Although smaller than the 'disagree' or 'slightly disagree', the latter number was somewhat disconcerting. Although there can be several different individual reasons for the participants responding that they agreed with the claim, it can mean that a fairly high proportion of the respondents operates without the use of a theoretical base for their practice.

Grunig's four models of PR were presented in the literature review as one of the major contributions to public relations theories. These models were reproduced in the questionnaire where the participants were asked if they were able to identify their work with these models. The data shows that the participants were able to do this. As expected, the two-way symmetric model was the most popular one, with almost twice as many votes as the two-way asymmetric model. This means that over 70% of the respondents perceive their role as being a mediator between the organisation and their publics and these numbers support the findings from the statement described earlier in question 8. With just under 40% of the participants including the two-way asymmetric model in their answering mix, surprisingly few respondents perceive their role as being persuasive. Also interesting to note is that only 8 participants chose the press agency model, clearly suggesting that practitioners disagree with many of PR's cynical critics, when so few believe that their role is to disseminate information in order to persuade, even if it means telling half-truths. This can imply that Grunig's views on PR are not so far away from the reality, and that the participants agree with the theory.

In order to investigate the theory further, the questionnaire asked the participants if they were familiar with Grunig's theory, and it was gratifying to see that only 16% of the respondents answered 'no, not at all'. Even though this number is relatively high for the most significant theoretical model in the professional field they are working in, it was feared that the number would be even higher. The questionnaire offered two different alternatives for the respondents wishing to state that they are known to the models. Both of them were given a quite evenly number of votes, making the total number of respondents being familiar with the models just around 80%. A pleasing 42% answered that they felt the models are relevant to their daily work, and almost as many slightly agreed with the relevance of Grunig's theory. With 17% either slightly disagreeing or disagreeing, it clearly shows that the respondents were happy with Grunig's ideas, which suggest that the struggle is not as big as anticipated.

Question 14 asked the participants to elaborate on their answers from the question before. The respondents said that the models were either too theoretical, or that they were insufficient to cover the reality. The respondents who said 'slightly disagree' in the previous question had many of the same comments, but one element were added in this group, which was that it is situational whether any of the models works for a particular client. The comments that these

two groups voiced, supports the criticism brought forward by Cameron et al. (1997), and Reber et al. (2003), presented in the literature review. Respondents in the 'slightly agree' category and the 'agree' category also pointed out that it may depend on the situation. Naturally there were many supporters in these two categories, pointing out that the models work well in conceptualising PR, however some participants in the 'slightly agree' category mentioned that they could be a little bit simplistic. All in all did the data gathered from the questions regarding Grunig's models suggest that PR practitioners had knowledge about them, and the models were relevant to their work.

The last question of the 'gap between theory and practice'-struggle, asked about how the participants develop professionally. A healthy 85% of the respondents answered that they attended seminars, which again suggest that the participants make an effort to up-skill themselves. Fifty-eight percent said they read 'PR trade magazines', whilst 42% answered they used textbooks and 38% said they read academic journals. This suggests that PR practitioners do use available sources to maintain and increase knowledge about their craft. Almost half the population regularly used PR textbooks to develop professionally, which indicates that practitioners do use theories in their work, and it also suggests that practitioners find theories relevant for their practical work.

All in all did the questionnaire not find any evidence of a gap between theory and practice being problematic. From a practitioner's point of view, the gap is not any bigger than average for any other profession. However, some of the project's limitations must be emphasised in this relation. The fact that the respondents of this theoretical survey may be more interested in PR theories, than the remaining 80% of the total population, must be mentioned. It is also important to point out that the understanding of the word 'theory' can be subjective. What one practitioner considers theory might be different from what another would consider to be theoretical. This is especially important in a professional field like PR, where many PR textbooks that can be found in a library are not based on research at all. It is not said that these books are unimportant or useless for a practitioner's professional growth, it is just this projects claim that too many books are based on experience rather than research, which is enhancing the gap between theory and practice. The literature review presented Duffy's (2000) complaint about the profession of PR, where it was stated that even the theoretical work recommended by PRSA, one could find a difference in how PR was described in the theoretical and the practical section.

5.1.2 Interviews

The questionnaire did not find any evidence of a problematic gap between theory and practice, and the researcher was therefore eager to see if the discussions with the four participants for the interview would provide different perspectives. All four participants started off saying they did not agree with the struggle. Three of them agreed with the gap being wide, one respondent even named it 'daunting'. However they all felt that the gap is not larger than it can be dealt with over time. They felt it was not different from what can be found in other professional areas as medicine or law.

One of the participants said that much of the theoretical work, for instance that by Grunig, was just not relevant. The respondent argued that the models looked good on paper, however they fail to explain anything that would improve the respondents' understanding of his/her work. As the respondent claimed; "they [the theoreticians] never asked me about my job. Therefore they are not making them relevant for me and my work". Another respondent made similar arguments, although slightly more carefully expressed, when he said that theories tend to be somewhat pragmatic. The respondent said that there will always be an area of disagreement between academics and practitioners. Both participants felt there was a two-way game, where it is not always just about practitioners with a lack of education, but also academics being too far removed from the practice of PR. This argument supports the claim this research is making. However, as it does not matter who is far removed from whom, when both sides are far away from each other. The gap between theory and practice is, in other words, wide.

One of the reasons for the gap between theory and practice could be that many of the practitioners come from different areas such as journalism, marketing or business, and bring with them a range of types of educational background. This argument was supported by one interviewee, who said that the different educational backgrounds can make practitioners unaware of the PR theory. This argument was also made by another practitioner who argued that many practitioners came from journalism through the 1980s and 1990s. The same respondent argued that it could be possible for a practitioner to operate effectively without much knowledge of PR theory. The interviewee also noted, however, as did another participant, that there are many benefits in terms of decision making in having knowledge of

theories. But he also stated that many practitioners would have difficulties making the link from their practice to the theoretical body of knowledge, and to use this theory to upgrade their skill and knowledge of PR.

Two of the interviewees suggested having a case study library available, for instance through PRINZ. According to one of the participants, this has been done in America, where a case study library provides a basis for students and practitioners wanting to learn from others' experiences. This is an interesting thought, although as the interviewees pointed out, there are a few reasons why this could be hard to implement in New Zealand. It is a country with a relatively small working environment of PR practitioners and it is hard to disappear in a crowd where individuals are easily identified. Other reasons could be the protection of intellectual property, sensitive information of clients, or lack of resources. However PRINZ has, according to one of the participants, made American cases available, and maybe with time this could be done with New Zealand cases as well. Another interviewee, referring to a speaker from a conference in Italy, said that maybe PR should not be taught at undergraduate level, but only at post-graduate level. This was an interesting thought, that Grunig, who was among the spectators in the same conference strongly opposed to, according to the interviewee. This argument needs to be further articulated before it can be discussed here, however how educational institutions organise their courses when teaching PR is an area that needs to be looked at.

Lack of theoretical knowledge limits practitioners' ability to articulate a better position internally in the organisation they are working in. This was supported by an interviewee who stated that the department of corporate affairs had only recently been able to 'own' the corporate brand, as it 'belonged' to the marketing department before. The respondent pointed out the classic problem that PR often has, is how to acquire a seat with the senior management team. Access to the leadership of a company is, according to the interviewee, vital to PR executives having their views and roles understood and respected. This is why the area of education is so important to PR at the moment. Academic institutions are not only producing communications executives or PR practitioners, they are also producing the other members of an organisation's senior management team. If Unitec or AUT treats PR as a communication stream or tool, then this is how the leadership of a company perceives PR. The interview emphasised the importance of having access to the leadership, whether the PR practitioner has a seat at the table, or reports to the committee from project to project.

Another area of research on the PR function could be measurement of expenditure and income. This was suggested by an interviewee, who pointed out the success marketing has had could be due its ability to point towards measurement and defend its existence. This is an area of growth and development in PR, and having a solid research base could become a strength for the industry in terms of how it operates. Two participants pointed out how external consultants were often under-budgeted and time-constricted, making it difficult for practitioners acting after textbook models and forcing them to act on short term plans instead of long term. Both pointed out that some in-house departments on the other hand tended to be ineffective, making some organisations outsourcing the services and making plans more short term. More research on measurement could help both worlds improve their reality. The external could argue for more long term plans, and in-house departments could become more efficient.

The area of post-graduate education and research is one of the areas of PR that needs the most improvement. This argument was supported by a respondent who said that this area probably is one of the weaker areas operating in the practice of New Zealand. When universities and Academies fail to recognise PR as a strategic management function, it will limit the research on PR, which again results in a lower amount of theoretical textbooks. When searching for theoretical work in the library at Unitec, the number of textbooks based on research rather than practitioners' experience was disturbingly few for an institution educating future PR practitioners. One respondent, when this was brought up, said that he could see the value of textbooks based on practitioners' experience, as he saw the similarities between those and the way PRINZ's seminars and 'Accredited in Public Relations' (APR) courses are run. However, that does not exclude the fact that a profession needs research and education to develop properly, as stated by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, in their declaration of principles (Global Alliance, 2005). Again, it is about finding the right balance between the two worlds of theory and practice. As another participant pointed out, a huge challenge internationally is to determine PR's position strategically in the organisation. The discussion is about whether PR works as the umbrella of all the communication streams, or as one aspect of communication. When many institutions regard PR as the latter, and use this as a basis for teaching and research, it adds to the confusion surrounding the PR industry.

PRINZ is in a very good position to influence the educational development in New Zealand. They are having regular contacts with most academic institutions in the country, and through this contact they can influence the direction of how PR is taught to the future PR practitioners of New Zealand, either at undergraduate or post-graduate level. All the respondents saw PRINZ role in this as important. The APR program and the seminars offered through PRINZ encourage young and mid-career practitioners to up-skill and enhance their theoretical understanding. As we could see from the comments made by some participants of the questionnaire, one challenge here would be to make these seminars interesting and educational to more senior practitioners as well.

5.2 The diversity of PR

Public Relations is an industry with a huge range of different activities and tasks. This makes the profession difficult to understand and define, which in turn causes confusion and misunderstandings about PR among the general public. This confusion is confirmed again and again, most recently with a newspaper article by Philp (2005), where PR was described by the author as the biggest threat to democracy. This confusion lives on, not only among journalists, but among users of PR services, leadership of organisations, students choosing their careers and so on. At the same time, the diversity of the profession is the nature of the industry. Its wide 'field of fire' enables PR practitioners to act quickly and precisely in a world where it is becoming harder and harder to keep familiar in the areas of business and technology.

5.2.1 Questionnaire

The second question of the questionnaire asked for the participants' understanding of the profession they work in. It was an open ended question, where the answers underlined the sentence on the cover page of PRINZ's annual report: Ask 20 people and get 20 different answers. Only 157 definitions were divided into 13 different categories, and it demonstrates how many different meanings PR has for different people. This is the core of the struggle; people have so many different responsibilities, ranging from organisation to organisation, position to position, and even working field to working field. How is one definition created to suit each and every one? Or even more importantly, how is a body of knowledge and body of ethical principles created to fit all different types of public relations?

Question 4 queried the different backgrounds public relations practitioners in New Zealand have. Also this question confirmed the struggle, as no education stood out as being the dominant. The four biggest groups were 'degree in arts', 'journalism & media', 'marketing' and 'communications'. No surprises there, as 'PR' is a rather new field of studies, and academics are only beginning to understand PR's importance. This is especially not surprising, that the population of the participants was a rather senior group of practitioners. However, one can wonder why this development is still moving slowly within the world of academia. This having been said, in a profession which is as diverse as PR, it must be a strength that the total population of PR practitioners come from a variety of backgrounds, bringing with them different backgrounds and perspectives from other professional fields. It was interesting to note that only 17% of the respondents came from 'journalism & media', indicating that PR is moving away from being only 'media relations' type of work.

It seems that the practitioners responding to the questionnaire did not have many problems explaining to outsiders what PR is. Question 9 received a high number of concurring participants, and the statement said that it is easy to explain to outsiders what PR is, and a surprisingly low 30% disagreed or slightly disagreed with the statement. This came as a surprise to the researcher as this number was expected to be higher.

Towards the end of the literature review this project sought to demonstrate the variety of PR by illustrating some different sections of the industry in 'the rainbow of PR' (See figure 4). It seemed interesting to use this model, and to see what kind of activities PR practitioners are involved with. Therefore question 16 was included in the questionnaire. With 75% of the participants including it in its answering mix, 'issues management' was the most popular choice. Not surprisingly did many practitioners choose 'reputation management' and these to alternatives stood out as the most popular activities. Just about half the population chose 'media relations' and almost as many chose public affairs. Again, looking at the graph (see graph 15) which gives evidence to the fact that the range of activities PR practitioners are involved with is big. It was interesting to see that under half of the participants chose traditional PR activities as 'crisis management' and 'media relations'. Although 'other' was chosen fairly often, none of the additional groupings stood out in a way that made the researcher want to add them to the 'rainbow of PR' (See figure 4).

The following question (number 17) searched for the participants' titles. This question was asked to see if there was coherence in the titles used by the practitioners. Since the question were open-ended some variety was expected, however as many as 13 different categories were surprising. It can be discussed whether or not titles matter, however it gives an indication on the diversity of the field. It can illustrate what organisational level practitioners have as well. Two of the categories stood out from the rest in terms of frequency, which was the rather unspecific groups of 'communication' and 'director'. The remaining 11 categories were more precise in describing the practitioners' work, and none of the categories were particularly dominant. Again the data confirmed the diversity of PR, and showed how difficult it must be for an outsider to obtain an overview of the profession. The 'key-word' analysis gave some interesting results as well. Only 10 practitioners included 'PR' or public relations in their titles, showing that the respondents seem to prefer communication. Other keywords that were analysed were manager (53 hits), director (28 hits), senior (11) and chief executive (7 hits), indicating that 63% of the practitioners holds senior positions in the organisations they work in. This is suggesting that PR in many organisations has a seat high up in the hierarchies. Also question 20 asked for titles, this time of those the practitioner reports to. The data for this question confirmed this.

5.2.2 Interviews

The data gathered from the questionnaire did show that PR is a profession that is hard to obtain a full overview of. It's an industry that is hard for outsiders to fully understand, resulting in misunderstandings clearly demonstrated by Philp (2005) in his article earlier this year. One interviewee stated that the problem starts within the department of statistics not even having PR as a professional category. Furthermore, it is a hard call to expect to be recognised as a profession by users of PR, students and academic institutions, when the government is not accepting public relations as one. This is a battle PRINZ should start fighting if the confusion around the industry is ever going to come to an end. In fact, well after the interviews were finished analysed, ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) which is a joint project between the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Statistics NZ, and Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), produced a paper for new classifications of industries for 2006 and 2007. In this paper, ANSCO has acknowledged PR as a profession. The only problem however, is that PR has been classified under 'sales and marketing', using an assumption that

a PR practitioner is selling an item or a service. The paper did not acknowledge communication as a profession. Two major conclusions can be drawn from this. The first is that Public Relations is finally being accepted as a profession. However, the battle has only just started as the second conclusion is that the general public does still not have a slightest idea of what PR actually is. One of the participants pointed out during the interview that this is a battle PRINZ is not fighting. But when this report was handed over to the offices of the Institute, PRINZ were thrown into the fight, though somewhat reluctantly.

Another argument the industry should deal with, is which name to use for the industry, either communication or PR. As one interviewee argued, which name to use was irrelevant as long as the industry, its members, and the educational sector used the same name. The problem is when PR is referred to by some as a communication stream, while at the same time as others consider PR as the umbrella of communications. The confusion is being exemplified by the existence of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). What is the difference between this organisation and the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (GlobalPR)?

The problem of whether PR is a communication stream or the umbrella of communications is reflected in the general public's misunderstanding of its objectives and potential. A participant pointed out that there are many CEO's and general managers in organisations in New Zealand who does not understand what PR actually can do for their business. However, another participant stated that there is a degree of sophistication happening in the industry, as PR today has better access to senior managing level, then what it used to have before. The same participant argued that the reason for why New Zealand companies are performing better these days than in the 80's, is as a result of better internal communication. This sophistication has been, in other words, resulting in better management in New Zealand. Another participant however, believed that still many PR practitioners were struggling to be included in dialogues with the senior management. This is not due to practitioners' not being informed and active in key-issues, but because they are struggling to be locked in with the executive directors. This could mean that the situation is improving, however there is still some way to go before PR is fully accepted and understood in the business life.

An area where PR is largely misunderstood is its traditionally most important channel of communication; the media. All respondents agreed that media's view on PR is negative and misunderstood. One respondent thought media looked at PR as an extorter of news, and therefore were quite suspicious towards the industry. The participant also argued that media's role in PR's communication is falling, and other aspects are now being used to target its publics. Another participant also brought up a naturally mistrust against PR from the news media's point of view, in what the respondent called a healthy tension between the two. However it was pointed out by the respondent, who was a former journalist, that the suspicion towards PR was misplaced, and there are many activities done by practitioners that will never see the light of the day. The respondent then went on to suggest a secondment between the professions, so that practitioners and journalists would have a better understanding of each others' work. The possibilities of actually implementing something like this would be rather small, however, educating both sides about each others' work seems like a good idea to improve situations for both industries. One respondent did mention that interfaces like this has happened earlier, where chief reporters and the PR industry got together, where everybody had the chance to say what was on their minds. This sounds like an interesting exercise, and if the media actually is willing to participate in events like this, then it could be a good start for the industry to reach a better understanding in the media.

Another reason to why people have distorted perceptions on what PR is and does, can be that people do not see all of the work PR consultants are doing. As a respondent exemplified it, it is very evident who has done what, when a marketing campaign sets off. Whereas the work the respondent does is not something people hear about as this work is not obvious to them. Work such as when researching the publics for six months to understand its needs, and then working out a communications strategy towards that, Another respondent also mentioned all the PR work that people never get to hear about. It was emphasised by the participant that this had nothing to do with the work being ethical or not, it was just irrelevant or uninteresting to the publics. Another reason for not sharing everything is, of course, organisations protecting their competitive advantages.

The questionnaire showed that PR covers different areas of communication in an organisation. This was emphasised by several respondents in the interviews as well. One interviewee stated that in the global organisation he worked for, one can find a whole range of different titles and roles covered by PR practitioners. They also pointed to the development of new technology

opening up even more doors for public relations to enter. According to one participant the growth of PR will continue with web-based technology, making PR's field of fire even wider than it is today. Two of the respondents also emphasised the development towards internal communication which, according to the participants, might be growing into a separate PR profession, creating a division between internal PR and external PR. Whether or not we will see this division in the future, what we do see is external PR consultancies specialising in niche-areas of PR, for instance investor relations or IT relations. This was pointed out by a respondent who also mentioned that many consultancies can do things better, more quickly and efficiently than the organisation can do themselves, as a result of the specialisation that is happening in the industry.

So the struggle is about defining the industry. If the students, users and practitioners of PR struggle to obtain an overview of the industry, and to understand its use and potential for an organisation, the professionalisation is being slowed down. One respondent described his/her role in the organisation as managing its reputation. As the practitioner put it, everything you do either builds or brings down your brand, and a PR practitioner is looking after this. Another interviewee also suggested that PRINZ should find a way to define the industry. This would not mean, according to the respondent, that all the different specialisations in PR were disregarded, but pulling these together to something that all could agree on. Also this respondent suggested reputation management as something that summarised the practitioner's role in the organisation. The respondent went on arguing that almost everything could be linked back to this, and then mentioned crisis management, long-term planning, product PR, internal and external communications as examples where all were about looking after the organisation's reputation.

Another respondent stated that the diversity of PR was the "beauty of the beast", or the nature of the profession. This interviewee felt that gathering all the different aspects of PR into one 'box', would be impossible. The respondent rather suggested creating a 'professional box', including a body of knowledge, code of conduct, ethics, and best practice, and use this as a guide for the industry to develop further. The respondent disagreed with that the diversity is a struggle and that although slowly, things are in development for the better. More students are being produced by the tertiary institutions, there is an increase in research, and people are accepting PR more today than a decade ago. However, more students produced by academic institutions regarding PR as a communication stream rather than an umbrella, can hardly be

regarded as an improvement. The 'professional box' the interviewee suggested is pretty much the role PRINZ has at the moment. The respondent is right, things are improving. However, the struggle still exists, and it does slow down PR's development and growth. One respondent suggested that PRINZ should follow Britain's example and go chartered. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in the UK has moved to the next stage. However this would have to involve the government funding an expensive process in both going chartered and running the institute, which would be much more resource-demanding than the situation for today. This means PRINZ has to start fighting the battle, because as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the government through statistics New Zealand does not even recognise PR as a profession. The discussion on whether or not PRINZ should go chartered will continue in the next chapter.

5.3 PR has a bad reputation

Partly as a result of the first two struggles, PR has gained a bad reputation amongst the general public. In an informal conversation in class earlier this year, it was revealed that most students doing a communication degree were reluctant about becoming public relations practitioners when they finished studying. The lecturer investigated a little by asking why, and it turned out that the students were not keen on lying and deceiving on behalf of an organisation. This is a very disturbing picture indeed.

5.3.1 Questionnaire

The first question in the 'reputation' section asked the participants about their thought of the general public's opinion of public relations. This question offered the most harmonised answers of the whole questionnaire, which is quite remarkable considering it is an open-ended question. Eighty percent of the respondents commented that they thought PR was perceived as spinning, lying or deceiving. This data does not tell that the reputation really is bad, but it does show that this is what its practitioners think how the general public perceives the profession.

These results came as no surprise and the follow up question, was a statement to find out if the respondents were concerned about the bad image. Eighty-two percent responded either 'agree' or 'slightly agree' to the statement, which implies that PR's bad image really is something that concerns its practitioners. It is important to recognise that there is a possibility

that the data might be different if the general public were surveyed. However, being PR practitioners, they know their markets and they ought to know their publics. This is something they deal with every day, and they should have a feeling about how matters in the industry are at the moment. Therefore, this data could be treated as an indication of the reality which the industry should be concerned about.

In an attempt to provoke the respondents they were asked to give a rating for their agreement on the following statement:” *The PRINZ code of conduct looks good on paper, but has no real value to me in my daily practice*”. As many as 10% of the respondents said ‘I don’t know’, which could imply that the question actually was provoking and slightly difficult for the respondents to answer. While the number of participants saying ‘agree’ to the statement was rather few, the ‘slightly agree’ respondents were surprisingly many, making the number of practitioners agreeing or slightly agreeing with the statement just under 30% of the population. This means that the number of respondents disagreeing with the statement was just over 60%. This is interesting in regards to the discussion about becoming a chartered institution later in the chapter.

5.3.2 Interviews

The questionnaire revealed that practitioners believe PR has a bad image amongst the general public, and the data also revealed that this is a concern to the majority of the participants of the study. An interviewee pointed out that part of the problem could be to do with how the industry evolved. As the literature review argued, the fact that PR evolved out of a need and preceded the literature to service the business world, has made people traditionally sceptical towards the profession. One of the interviewees, however, disagreed with the fact that people are sceptical towards PR. In the respondent’s view, the perception of PR was improving as the general public is being more exposed to PR and is therefore getting more comfortable with the industry. This was mostly due to more academic institutions training more students, hence, leading to more users working with PR practitioners. When confronted with the results from the questionnaire, the respondent said that people are sceptical with things they do not understand, and if studies are showing that PR has a bad image, then there needs to be a greater disclosure of what Public Relations is about.

There are other reasons for scepticism towards the industry. Another respondent said that people perceive PR as being well-paid, with commercial interests to an organisation who would do and say anything, even half-truths and dodgy activities that serves the organisation. The respondent did point out that in a conversation with a stranger, he would say that he started as a media journalist to justify the position as a PR practitioner. This indicates that what the literature review described was happening in Norway, could be happening in New Zealand as well; that practitioners prefer not to use the word PR when presenting themselves and what they do. The respondent pointed out that PR's image is similar to the reputation of lawyers, in that it is seen as a necessary evil, although PR practitioners rarely get into a position equivalent of defending someone who is wrongly accused. So in that respect the respondent felt that PR practitioners were even worse off than lawyers. The respondent who disagreed with the reputation being bad, maintained this view as the interviewee stated that the ethics of the industry are extremely high at the moment. The participant continued, saying that there is no culture in the industry for deliberately cheating and misreporting and one rarely heard of examples of a PR practitioner acting unethically.

As stated in the literature review, there are reasons for PR's bad reputation, however, history has shown many overseas examples of PR deceiving and lying to put an organisation in a better light. In this day and age of the media-thirsty society, the media will in many cases portray PR as the evildoers of a story. A respondent commented that the news media likes contrasts, portraying cases in a way where you as a listener/viewer either like it or hate it. Another interviewee used a rugby analogy when describing a practitioner's dilemma. You are in the game to win, because no one will hire a consultancy firm that's imbuing with a view that it will not win, so it is about figuring out when it is off-side. When have you gone too far? Two of the respondents brought up the Timberland saga unprompted: They both felt it was an instance of the media failing to offer a balanced view of the case. Although in some issues the accused practitioners were slightly off-side, the wrongdoings were, according to the respondents, blown out of proportions, which is a very interesting problem for PR practitioners.

PR is about representing an organisation in a good light as best as possible. Question 23 of the questionnaire was a statement which claimed that persuasion is the core of a practitioner's work, and as many as 74% of the respondents answered either 'slightly agree' or 'agree'. However, being in the game to win does not mean that you cheat, lie or misrepresent.

Whether or not something is unethical is extremely subjective, which makes the discussion very difficult. A respondent brought up the changing working environment for journalists as a reason for media being sceptical towards the industry. The increasing hunt for profits within the media industry has resulted in increased pressure on journalists to finish their stories, which means they have less time than before to investigate and research. As a result of this, PR practitioners are more successful nowadays than before with getting their pieces published almost unedited. This is an understandable concern, when biased stories are published as unbiased. However, this is telling more about the poor state of the news media profession, than the deceiving profession of public relations, which is also where the real threat to democracy lies.

The difficulties of defining PR, discussed in the previous chapter, are also helping to damage PR's reputation. This statement was supported by a respondent, who argued that this is a problem that has to be worked out by PRINZ. It was suggested that PRINZ, within its available resources, decide their most important audiences. It was the respondent's opinion that the "general public" was the least relevant at this time, and it was suggested that PRINZ focussed their communication towards the users of PR. Prioritising its audiences is very important, however labelling the general public as not important will not be a clever move, as this group includes potential users of PR services such as prospective students and customers. It is essential for PR's future that these people have got a real understanding of what PR really is. One of the other respondents thought that it would be an ongoing job for the industry to constantly raise its profile and improve the understanding of the industry. However this was something the respondent was optimistic about, as more and more people are practising and using PR, and more students are being trained at the tertiary institutions in New Zealand. Public Relations is moving to a more professional status as part of its natural evolution, which is improving the reputation amongst the general public.

The previous chapter discussed the fact that people have doubts about whether or not PR is a profession, which is slowing down the professionalisation of the industry. This is of course affecting the profession's reputation. One respondent argued that as long as there is voluntary registration to be a member of PRINZ, meaning that many firms and practitioners are not members of the professional body, it is hard to maintain that PR is a profession of its own. In the eyes of this particular participant, the task of getting PR to be recognised as a profession would be far easier if it were compulsory to be a member of PRINZ. However, the respondent

pointed out that this would be very hard to implement, as there is a high degree of independence and independent thought in the industry. Another participant pointed out that PRINZ needs the authority to act when a practitioner has behaved inappropriately. This authority is fairly meaningless when membership of the organisation is voluntary and it is not a problem at all to practice as a PR practitioner without membership of a professional body.

However, at this time PRINZ is too small and too short on resources to act as a body as described above. Furthermore, when some members are already complaining about the fees, saying it is too expensive to be a member of PRINZ, this seems like a dead-end street to follow. One option is, as one respondent pointed out, to follow the UK example and become a chartered institution. This would give PRINZ more recourse as it would become a government led organisation. It would become compulsory to be a member of PRINZ in order to practice in the industry, and the profession would receive a much higher degree of acceptance amongst academic and governmental circles. Having a piece of legislation to refer to that says what PRINZ is, would aid tremendously in doing this. As this is something that only recently happened in the UK, using this as a case study would be highly recommendable. Both the process of becoming a chartered institution, and the effects it has had for the industry in the UK would be extremely interesting to examine thoroughly.

5.4 Three struggles, one problem

However it is not all doom and gloom in the PR profession. As has been pointed out already, there is an increase in tertiary institutions offering degrees in communications and public relations. Users of PR are seeing the value of having the services available at their organisation. There is a sophistication going on in the industry, in terms of PR acquiring seats around the executive tables in New Zealand. PR has achieved a platform to operate from, and research is being done in the field to ensure further growth and development. However some things are slowing the process down, and the struggles outlined in this discussion need to be confronted if PR is going to continue to grow and develop even further.

6 Conclusions

The literature review identified three struggles or challenges that have made the foundation of the whole report. This chapter will sum up the discussions for each of these challenges, and will further conclude the discussions and give recommendations for further research. These recommendations are aimed at both PRINZ as an organisation, as well as students and tertiary institutions in New Zealand, as they identify several areas where research can help professionalise Public Relations.

6.1 The gap between theory and practice

The questionnaire did not find any evidence supporting the project's claims about the gap between theory and practice being problematic. The data revealed that the respondents were educated and an experienced group of people. This could suggest that the respondents taking an effort to answer the questionnaire would have a bigger interest in PR theories and personal competence building than the average practitioner.

Even though the respondents to the questionnaire did not indicate that they experienced a problematic gap between theory and practice, the data did reveal that almost four out of ten practitioners did not feel that their theoretical background was important in building their public relations competence. However, the data from all the four questions relating to Grunig's four models of PR, explained in the literature review, suggested that this theory was both known to them and relevant to their practice. When answering what sort of professional development the respondents engage in, the data indicated that PR practitioners in New Zealand do make an effort to up-skill and maintain their competence.

When investigating this more thoroughly through the interviews, these findings were contradicted, however. Only one of the interviewees was familiar with Grunig's work, but she did not find these models relevant for her work. Arguments were made by the respondents stating that theoreticians are too far removed from the practice of PR, and theoretical models were seen to be too pragmatic to be relevant. These arguments, made by all four interviewees to a varying degree, support the claim that there is a problematic gap between theory and practice in public relations.

Case study libraries and more emphasis on post-graduate research were mentioned by the interviewees as solutions to decrease the gap. Better communication between the industry and the tertiary institutions were emphasised as important by some of the interviewees, and especially between PRINZ and the academic institutions of New Zealand.

6.2 The Diversity of PR

The questionnaire did find evidence supporting the second struggle of PR, that the diversity of public relations is too wide, making it difficult for outsiders to understand the profession.

When asking for the respondents' understanding of their profession, an astonishing variety of answers were given, which were categorised into 13 different groups. If the people working in the industry have different understandings of the profession, then it is unfair to expect outsiders, such as users of PR, students or academics deciding future syllabuses for courses, to understand what public relations is all about.

Furthermore, when asking for backgrounds or job-titles of the respondents, the data backed up the struggle. A wide variety both in education, what titles they used, or the titles of the persons they reported to, indicated that there is a great diversity in the industry. These things do matter as they send out confusing signals to the different users of PR.

All the different activities a PR practitioner is involved with imply the diversity of the industry. The big variety in all the activities, from investor relations to internal communications, is not necessarily a negative thing. The fact that a practitioner is able to execute strategic operations across such a wide area is a strong point for the profession. However, the great diversity of the profession does also make it hard for tertiary institutions to create courses in strategic PR with appropriate syllabuses.

The interviews supported the findings from the questionnaires regarding the second struggle. The interviews revealed that even Statistics NZ did not recognise PR as its own profession. However, after the interviews were finished, and most of the discussion-chapter was done, a report arrived to the offices of PRINZ. PR had finally received its recognition, however being placed under sales and marketing shows that the road to final recognition is still long. The start of this road could be to make it easier for Statistics NZ to understand the profession, by

agreeing with everyone what the name of the industry should be, and what kind of communication streams to include and exclude. Once this has been sorted out, then one can expect outsiders to start understanding and appreciating the profession.

Another step on the road to better understanding is to try to educate media journalists that PR is more than spin, deception and distortion of news. The media is a channel for communication that has been very important to PR practitioners for years, although, according to one interviewee, the media's importance to PR is declining. However, it is still very important to maintain a good relationship with the media, as opinions among the general public can be affected by the media's misunderstandings of the profession. A very interesting exercise was suggested by an interviewee, where representatives from both camps get together and described each others' worlds, which could lead to better understanding of each others' professions.

The industry must define itself so that the users of PR can acquire a better understanding of the profession. Whether calling it communication, PR, or reputation management, it doesn't matter. As long as all the stakeholders involved with PR understand what it is and what it can do for an organisation, that is all that matters. PRINZ has got to try to influence Statistics NZ in this regard. In 2006, public relations is for the first time acknowledged as a profession, however, being classified under 'sales and marketing' the industry still has some work to do to be fully understood amongst the general public.

6.3 PR has a bad reputation

The questionnaire found evidence indicating that the third and last struggle, that PR has a bad reputation amongst the general public, could be true as well. In an open-ended question, where the participants were asked about how they think the general public perceives public relations, 80% of the respondents said they think the public looks at the industry as being about spin, lying or deceiving. The data also revealed that this bad reputation is a concern to the respondents.

The findings from the interviews suggested that there are several reasons for this bad reputation. It is not only due to the reasons explained in the first two struggles, but there is also scepticism towards the industry because of its history and the nature of the profession.

The fact that the craft emerged before any theory and research, and that PR is about representing an organisation to promote its needs, has put the profession in a bad light. The latter reason has led to comparisons with other professions with questionable reputations, such as real-estate agents and accountants.

However, although PR's reputation is bad, as part of the evolution of the profession, the reputation is improving. As more people are involved in PR activities, more people are getting used to public relations. At the same time, the tertiary institutions are offering courses recognising PR's importance, and more students are being introduced to the craft. As people see and hear more positive stories connected to PR, more people are accepting its importance. However, although improving, the situation is not where it should be. For all the reasons explained in the three struggles, the good reputation of PR still has a long road before being fully accepted in the general public.

One thing that could help PR being fully accepted with the general public is to follow UK's example when the professional body of Great Britain changed to the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR). The idea of PRINZ becoming a chartered institution was suggested by an interviewee, which would mean that all PR firms and practitioners would become authorised by PRINZ, ensuring mandatory membership by all practitioners and giving PRINZ the authority to act when practitioners are acting badly. It will also make the industry's ambition to be accepted by the wider society more achievable. Becoming a chartered institution would also mean a closer relationship with the government, which again could make the cooperation with tertiary institutions better. The downside however could be that many practitioners or firms might feel smothered, as they could feel that their independence would disappear. On the other hand, most practitioners should welcome this process, as it would aid in the cause of getting the general public taking PR more seriously. In any case, it is this project's recommendation that New Zealand should use UK as an example, and research both the process of going chartered and the effects it has had on the industry.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

This report recommends the industry to look into the possibilities of becoming a chartered institution. This has been done in the UK, and the researcher can see many positive effects for the profession by doing this, especially in regards to the three struggles discussed in this dissertation. However, this can be a long and resource-demanding process, and all possible preparations should be done even before the process is started.

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) in the UK is a perfect case study for the New Zealand industry. Although UK is a much bigger and very different market, many of the issues experienced in Britain, may be relevant to New Zealand. The situation in the UK today needs to be researched to find out whether or not becoming chartered has been positive for the industry, and if UK has had a desired outcome on becoming chartered. There might be several things that have to be done differently, but if lessons are learnt from CIPR's experiences the industry in New Zealand can end up with a smooth and functional process.

Becoming chartered would do much to improve the situation for PR as a profession in terms of the three struggles discussed in this dissertation. It would lead to tertiary institutions and the government taking the profession more seriously, which in turn could lead to more people doing degrees in PR and more research. It would also force the industry to decide what is PR and what it is not. Becoming chartered means that all PR firms and practitioners must be authorised by PRINZ, forcing them to define exactly who the PR industry is. All of these factors would do very much good for the reputation of the whole industry.

The second recommendation is for PRINZ to communicate with the tertiary institutions in New Zealand. There is already established communication between PRINZ and the academic institutions in the country. However, PRINZ could communicate even more. This is an important resource for the industry, which in time can have many positive effects. One, for instance, could be to decrease the gap between theory and practice. Another could be to ensure students are being taught in courses that are relevant to today's practice.

Recommendations on syllabi and courses, placing students in touch with PR companies and departments for internship or completing projects, and getting practitioners in touch with academic institutions for up-skilling and refreshment courses are some of the steps PRINZ could do to enhance the communication.

The PR industry is also communicating with the media industry. One respondent said in an interview that there have been interfaces between the industries, and these exercises could lead to a future without articles like the one by Philp (2005), where PR was named as the biggest threat to democracy in New Zealand. A better understanding by the media could be a better understanding by the general public. It is therefore recommended that PRINZ do continue to try to improve the understanding of PR in the media.

Public relations is an industry that is evolving quickly. It is expanding in size, meaning that there are more people working in the industry, more people educating themselves to work in the industry, and more users of the industry. Gradually more people are accepting PR as an important strategic organisational function. However, the three struggles discussed in this dissertation are the obstacles that the industry must take seriously as they are holding back the professionalisation of PR. Becoming chartered could do much to improve the situation in all three areas of struggle as it would serve to unify the disparate body of practices and practitioners and would create formal, institutional structures that could forge links between government, academia and the professional in the field.

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8 Appendices

- ❖ PRINZ Statement of permission**
- ❖ Questionnaire**
- ❖ Findings from the interviews**