

**PROMOTIONAL WORK: THE CASE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS  
CONSULTANCY IN THE UK, 1995-2000**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.  
in the Faculty of Arts, University of Stirling**

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## PREFACE

This thesis was originally planned some eight or nine years ago when public relations in the UK was in a more precarious position than it is now, both as an academic subject and a legitimate object of academic research. Within the discipline, the discourse of 'two-way symmetrical public relations' ruled supreme; outside, the term 'creative industries' seemed hardly to have been invented. It was against this backdrop that I first asked my questions about how public relations existed as an occupational practice, and what it was really all about.

A lot has changed since I started searching for answers. Public relations as an occupation has grown in stature, surprisingly perhaps as public recognition has come hand-in-hand with public vilification throughout the period I have chosen to study. Public relations consultancy has consolidated and grown into a global industry. The change unfolded against the backdrop of the economic boom years of the late 1990s in the developed world, followed by a marked downturn in PR (and advertising) business at the beginning of the new millennium. The attractiveness of the profession to graduates; the continuing penetration of PR practices into all spheres of life and types of organisations; and the recognition of the profession signified by the chartered status awarded to the Institute of Public Relations in 2005, all have to be noted. Yet these facts also must be set against the continuing bad press and frustrated initiatives of self-improvement by the profession.

Thus, in order to tackle my original question, I found myself following the various strands of the 'story' of public relations in the UK in 1995-2000. I have examined public relations professional expertise, work, careers, and the industry, as well as the battles fought in the public eye over the image of the profession, and the PR professional. The thesis documents this intellectual journey.

Some of the material presented in this thesis has already been published:

- A section of Chapter 4 (roughly corresponding to pp. 72-80) formed part of a book chapter co-written with Jacquie L'Etang, 'Public relations and professionalism revisited' published in *Handbook of Public Relations* (Heath, 2001).
- Chapter 2 of this thesis is also included in *Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice* (forthcoming, 2006) as "'Chemistry" and the public relations industry: An exploration of the concept of jurisdiction and issues arising'.
- A substantial part of Chapter 6 was published under the title of 'Public relations expertise deconstructed' in *Media, Culture and Society* (Pieczka, 2002) and, in an extended version, as a chapter entitled 'Public relations expertise in practice' in *Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice*.

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Finally, I wish to acknowledge the influence the Examiners of this thesis had on its final shape: the running order of the chapters, somewhat unusual in putting the literature review and methodology chapters in the middle of the thesis, was imposed at the specific request of the Examiners.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about public relations as an occupation and a business. The study is focused on investigating the nature of the expertise utilised in public relations, ways in which it is exploited commercially, and the consequences such practices have for the occupational group and its economic existence.

The theoretical framework for this thesis combines insights from the sociology of the professions, studies of cultural/creative professions, Bourdieu's approach to the study of cultural practices, and critical examination of professional services, such as management consultancy.

In empirical terms, the thesis combines a range of data and analytical approaches. The key part of the thesis is a model of public relations expertise derived from an analysis of participant observation of professional training. Its component parts are identified as: picture of the world; conceptual frame; and working knowledge, which in turn is composed of problems, tools and truths.

The thesis also offers a narrative analysis of competition case studies, a particular genre of practitioners' accounts of their own work, leading to the conclusion that their role is to show practitioners how to make sense of the immediate experience of work within a more abstract and ordered professional framework.

A range of secondary data on the industry and the labour force are reanalysed to show how expertise is transformed into a commodity that can be priced and sold. The transformation involves an understanding of demand and supply dynamics for PR services.

Finally, through the analysis of routine practices, the thesis draws attention to the occupation's "split personality" — two coexisting yet contradictory ways in which practitioners think about public relations — and pursues it at the level of the group's strategies designed to counteract the weaknesses resulting from this unsettled identity.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about public relations as an occupation and a business and its aim is to provide a critical examination of the subject. This chapter will introduce both the theoretical approach taken in the thesis and, related to it, reasons for undertaking such a study.

The theoretical approach of this study is constructed on the basis of the extensive literature surrounding concepts of the profession and culture. While the first is used extensively to support the methodology employed in the thesis, that is its data gathering and much of the analysis; the latter is more important in providing a rationale for the study — so this is where we start.

Attempts to understand the nature of change in Western societies in recent decades have focused on consumption and consumer society (for example, Baudrillard 1988; McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1982; Wernick, 1991; Featherstone, 1991; Lash & Urry, 1994). As Nixon (2003, pp. 16-31) points out in his discussion of a number of these important works, they offer a set of 'heterogeneous arguments' rather than a consistent theory of modern society. The differences between those explanations cover: the nature of change — revolution vs. evolution; its periodization — mostly over the past two or three decades, but perhaps all the way back to the 18th century; there are also problems with the relative empirical lightness of some of the explanations on offer, and consequently a certain ambiguity in the use of key terms such as consumer/information society. Yet, at the core, there is an agreement over the changed articulation of different spheres of social life:

... economic and symbolic processes are more than ever interlaced and interarticulated; that is ...  
the economy is increasingly culturally inflected and that culture is more and more economically inflected.  
(Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 64)

Wernick is similarly clear about the interface of these different social spheres and he calls it 'promotion':

...the very distinction between the symbolic and the material economies, between the regime of accumulation and the regime of signification, cannot be clearly drawn. And for good reason. Promotional practice is generated exactly on the boundary [...] what the rise of promotion as a cultural force signals, in fact, is not simply a shift to a new mode of producing and circulating signs (cultural commodification), but an alteration in the very relations between culture and economy. (Wernick, 1991, p. 185)

As a consequence of this stance, promotional occupations and creative/cultural industries have become central to analyses of social change and culture since the late 1980s. Creative industries are presented as being 'paradigmat-

ic of broader changes in economic life' (Nixon, 2003, p. 23); while practitioners employed in these industries, for example according to Featherstone's analysis (1991), acquire 'a central role in the establishment of postmodern culture' (Nixon, 2003, p. 25). They are seen as the animators of change.

While their importance is not in doubt, there is much that is unclear about exactly which occupational groups are to be included, and exactly how they contribute. The ambiguity can be seen in the range of terms used and ways in which occupations are selected and grouped (see Davis & Scase, 2000, pp. 22-24; Hesmondhalgh, 2002, pp. 11-15). Lash and Urry (1994, pp. 111-143) focus on culture industries — television, publishing and the record industry — and the multiplicity of specialized functions within them, as well as the transformations in those over recent years. Advertising is offered as the 'new paradigm for the culture industries' (p. 138), but whether or not advertising itself is a culture industry remains somewhat unclear. Wernick (1991) in his focus on the practice of promotion pays less attention to industries and more to practices employed by groups of practitioners, primarily in advertising. He is, however, also sensitive to the involvement of other occupational groups in promotion:

. . . only a minority play a directly authorial role in the imaging and marketing of commercial produce. Fewer still are the named creators and performers of cultural goods [...] But the list grows if we also include all those playing a more specialist or subordinate role in commercial promotion, as well as those engaged in non- or quasi-commercial forms of promotional practice like electoral politics, or the public relations side of hospitals, schooling, or churches.  
(Wernick, 1991, p. 192)

Jackall and Hirota (2000) share Wernick's key interest in 'imaging', or the production of images and the role this practice plays in the shaping of 'our world'. These authors, however, choose to define the boundaries and extent of their interest somewhat differently by using concepts of 'advocacy' and the 'interpretive expert'. While the key occupational groups under their scrutiny are advertising and public relations practitioners, the field is extended, not by occupational identification, but by the preoccupation:

Professional advocates, not only men and women in advertising and public relations, but lawyers, lobbyists, consultants of various sorts, as well as men and women of cloth, are the paradigmatic claim makers. They make claims on behalf of clients, or defend clients against claims made by others, or frame the adjudication of claims, whether in administrative proceedings, in courts, in the realm of public opinion, or professional carriers of one religious tradition or another. (Jackall & Hirota, 2000, p. 154)

Perhaps the broadest and, I would argue, the most interesting treatment of such occupations is to be found in Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984), subsequently re-articulated in cultural studies by Featherstone's *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (1991, pp. 87-94). Bourdieu's work is not primarily interested in occupations, but in

... seeking in the structure of social classes the basis of the systems of classification which structure perception of the social world and designate the objects of aesthetic enjoyment. (1984, pp. xii-xiv)

Occupations appear to be specific places occupied by individuals not at random, but in ways structured by the different types of capital they possess and the ways in which they exploit this capital to secure the desired position in the social hierarchy. This intricate model of 'the relationships between the universe of economic and social conditions and the universe of life-styles' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xi) not only encompasses a range of factors, but it also attempts to account for change over time by introducing the concept of 'trajectory', the direction or route individuals follow in moving between different positions in the social structure.

It is in this context that Bourdieu refers to 'intermediaries', those whose trajectories bring them to somewhat indeterminate positions on the margins of the established strata. His discussion of the transformation of the petit bourgeoisie relies quite heavily on the analysis of them as 'intermediaries', and a close attention is paid to their positioning in the structure of existing and emerging occupations. The choice of an occupation is a strategy of individual trajectories. At the same time, however, concerted group effort is also required to capture an area of work and imbue it with a desired meaning. For example, downclassing can be avoided either by producing new occupations or by 'refurbishing' existing occupations. Such 'creative redefinition' is quite common in

the most ill-defined and professionally unstructured occupations and in the new sectors of cultural and artistic production, such as the big public and private enterprises engaged in cultural production (radio, TV, marketing, advertising, social science research and so on)... (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 151)

Bourdieu further elaborates on this conditioning of occupational destinations and concludes that:

[t]he new petit bourgeoisie comes into its own in all the occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth)... (p. 359)

But cultural theorists drawing on Bourdieu's work seem to have been captivated by another facet of his analysis of this specific group of intermediaries, namely the role they play in popularizing the legitimate culture, i.e. in mediating between the high culture and popular, mass culture. Here, they become:

the new cultural intermediaries (the most typical of whom are producers of cultural programmes on TV and radio or critics of 'quality' newspapers and magazines and all the writer-journalists and journalist-writers) (p. 325)

and the products of their work become the main subject of study and critique. The focus thus is shifted from the sense of 'intermediary' as occupying a position between two points or places, to that of the 'intermediary' as a mediator, agent between two parties. (See also Hesmondhalgh, 2002, pp. 53-54 for his views on the use of the term 'cultural intermediaries' by different cultural theorists.)

Although from a theoretical point of view, those intermediary or promotional professions occupy the same space, they have not all attracted the same amount of academic analysis. While journalism, advertising, and fashion design, for example, may have acquired a varied and rich literature — covering history, professional practices and practitioners, and the analysis of their economics and institutions — others, such as public relations or market research, remain comparatively obscure.

In his study of the cultural industries, Hesmondhalgh devotes considerable attention to reviewing the ways in which cultural production has been studied (2002, pp. 27-48). The focus of his analysis is, as the title of the book suggests, an industry; but he is also attentive to the part that analysis of work has to play in his enterprise. For example, he points out the importance of sociological studies of cultural work (e.g. Peterson, 1976; Becker, 1982) not as the autonomous endeavour of 'talented individuals', but 'as product of collaboration and a complex division of labour' (p. 35). He comments on the contributions made by seminal studies — Tuchman's (1978), Gans' (1979), and Schlesinger's (1978) — which view creative work as 'structured by bureaucratic requirements and routines' (p. 37). Finally, Hesmondhalgh is outspoken about the neglect of the issues of work conditions and pay for cultural workers (p. 70). Yet in comparison to the study of public relations, this neglect appears relative.

Advertising, the industry most resembling public relations amongst the cultural industries, has attracted ethnographic studies approaching practitioners' work through following their daily routines, bureaucratic requirements, and specific organisational or occupational cultures (Schudson, 1984; Alvesson, 1994; Nixon, 2003). Like other creative/cultural occupations, the advertising labour force and its conditions of work have been tracked by the Office of National Statistics and the regular censuses conducted by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (as discussed in Chapter 3). Other groups of cultural workers have also been followed through surveys conducted by their relevant industry bodies, such as Skillset (for example, Skillset 2001, 2004), the British Film Institute (1999), or the Journalism Training Forum (2002).

As I argue in Chapters 3 and 4, the study of public relations has traditionally been carried out through a narrower set of theoretical approaches, and consequently has been less engaged with the empirical data focused on work and the labour force. It seems also clear that the subject has not necessarily been well served by patchy academic research, polarised between the managerialist, uncritical approach evident in much of the published work in the field; and a highly critical view taken by those writing usually from outside of the discipline of public relations and from, broadly speaking, Marxist positions. Consequently, there is a need for a study willing to sidestep these well-articulated positions and take a fresh look at what public relations practitioners actually do; how the practice as a whole functions in commercial, social and cultural terms. Hence the primary focus for the study is an analysis of professional expertise which makes professional practice possible. Relying heavily on the concept of professional jurisdiction drawn from the sociology of the professions, my aim is to link this expertise meaningfully to the conditions of its production and exploitation by the occupational group.

It is at this point that the concept of profession becomes helpful. Chapter 4 offers an in-depth discussion of approaches, debates and key concepts in the sociological study of the professions as well as an explanation of how they apply to the current study. As this literature review shows, definitions of the profession routinely encompass a number of dimensions, such as knowledge; practice understood as tasks undertaken by professionals; and the group level of organisation, usually with reference to education, training, and control of access to work. Finally, one can also point to an interest in the market dimensions of supply and demand for the services offered by the profes-

sion — here the competitive element may also cover relationships with other professions who compete for the same work. Although the various existing approaches to the study of occupations/professions may each choose to focus on different aspects of the phenomenon, there is a shared understanding that the profession can be understood meaningfully only if studied at a number of levels, i.e. the level of an individual practitioner, of the occupation, and finally that of social change (Elliott, 1972, p. 5). This thesis pays attention to the multiple levels of analysis in two ways: through the logic of its overall structure and, within individual chapters, by linking the analysis of public relations at the individual and group level in order to highlight the interdependency of the two.

The analysis of the empirical material is presented in Chapters 2, 3, 6 and 7; the theoretical and methodological approach is laid out in Chapters 4 and 5 (see Acknowledgements for explanation). The two early chapters examine the conditions under which professional expertise is produced and exploited; while the last two chapters offer an analysis of the expertise itself as emerging from practice conducted by both individual players, that is practitioners and firms, and by the whole of the occupational group. The thesis begins with the examination of public relations jurisdiction, specifically the ways in which the claim to professional status is made in the public arena. This involves an understanding of the insecurities involved in the routine consultancy practice; strategies used both by individual practitioners and by the occupational group to deal with these issues; and finally the way in which the practice is embedded in the important institutions of British society: its mass media, politics and business.

Chapter 3 follows up the importance of competition, but unlike its predecessor looks away from questions of social status and reputation to offer an examination of the ways in which market dynamics have had a bearing on public relations. The primary focus of this analysis is public relations consultancy treated as an industry. This chapter lays out the economic basis of attaching financial value to expert PR service; and it follows up the behaviour of PR companies in regard to their organisational structures and strategies. An important element of these strategies relates to the labour force; thus an attempt is made to offer a picture of the available pool of workers, the characteristics of such individuals, and the way in which individual careers interlock with public relations companies, or more broadly with employers of PR practitioners. At this stage of the analysis comparisons are made to other professions and industries, such as management consultancy, accountancy, advertising, and marketing. A broader, historical perspective allows us to see public relations as following well-established trends of development and expansion characteristic of other consulting and creative industries. A more synchronic view indicates that public relations as an occupation shares many characteristics with other promotional professions, most notably advertising and marketing. This, together with an examination of how public relations practitioners are involved in elite networks in politics and the media (see Chapter 2), brings the analysis to the key question about the place of public relations in the social structure, culture, and in large-scale processes of social change. Can a more satisfactory way of theorising public relations be found that goes beyond both the limitations of explanations offered by the liberal pluralist tradition (embraced by much of the literature) which legitimises it as a necessary mechanism of social life; and those Marxist-inspired critiques which see it as a tool of domination?

The final two chapters of the thesis explore a way to achieve just that: they offer an analysis of professional expertise, as knowledge arising out of practice and its strategic needs, drawing on Bourdieu's analysis of cultural practice as well as on the sociological analysis of professional expertise. As the literature review shows, the concept of professional expertise, although omnipresent in discussions and definitions of the profession, is by no means straightforward. Much of the sociological literature is biased towards traditional professions, such as medicine and the law, and their bodies of knowledge. Such comparisons are unhelpful in the study of public relations. The main difficulty is to do with the nature of knowledge possessed and utilised by those working in public relations. Although sociologists of the professions have long recognised the difference between an abstract body of knowledge and a more practical knowledge used in hands-on professional practice, in public relations the abstract body of knowledge is relatively underdeveloped and its links to practice remain unclear. As with management consultancy, the practical knowledge in public relations is therefore ambiguous both in its nature and status. Chapter 6 aims to describe and analyse this knowledge by offering a model of public relations expertise based on participant observation of professional training. The model differentiates between clearly organised strategies for action (professional tools) and looser, framing structures which serve on the one hand to establish the occupation's positioning in relation to its clients and competitors, and which, on the other hand, are responsible for the existence of the professional instinct, i.e. a set of taken-for-granted ways of acting and relating to the world (see sections 'Picture of the world' and 'Conceptual frame'). Professional expertise is thus seen as inseparable from the work and the circumstances in which it has been gained and delivered over a period of time. As such, PR practice can be usefully interpreted as a cultural practice following the framework offered by Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice*.

If Chapter 6 is primarily focused on what individual practitioners know, use in commercial practice, and pass on to others; Chapter 7 pays close attention to the role of a professional association in creating and promoting professional expertise and expert work, thus extending the analysis to the level of the occupation. A narrative analysis of competition case studies, a particular type of account of work offered by practitioners, is conducted in this chapter, leading to the conclusion that the function of such accounts is not to reflect the actual experience of an individual's work, but to construct institutionally-sanctioned models of individual practice. Thus, case study narratives written as entries to various award schemes, and repetitive annual cycles of such events, teach practitioners how to make sense of their experience in terms beneficial to the needs of the occupation.

To sum up, this study is driven by two aims: to provide as much empirical detail as possible about public relations as an occupation, believing it to be the necessary basis for any theoretical work; and to take a fresh theoretical view of the subject by sidestepping the well-established ways of examining public relations. The empirical side of the study is self-evident in that every chapter deals with clearly-defined material and takes the analytical work to its logical conclusion; the theoretical framework is provided by a combination of ideas drawn from the sociology of the professions and sociology of culture, specifically where they intersect, i.e. the questions about organisation of creativity studied as creative/cultural professions and industries.

## CHAPTER 2: PR JURISDICTION

The starting point for this chapter is the concept of jurisdiction, that is tasks claimed by a profession and the way in which the claim is made. This concept was built into a theoretical framework explaining how professions exist and change by Abbott (1988) discussed extensively in Chapter 4: Literature Review. Briefly, one could say that a profession is defined by its jurisdiction: the work it does and whatever social or legal recognition it can claim to carry out a particular set of tasks. To be able to hold on to a jurisdiction, a profession requires a system of knowledge capable of supporting successful professional work, but it also requires public acceptance of this expertise and a certain public image helping to secure such approval. A profession in practice can be seen as constituted by constant competition. Expertise, standard practices, and social standing are weapons used to secure the most advantageous outcome. A jurisdiction is also never completely safe, as a challenge might come at any time driven by changes in neighbouring occupational jurisdictions, or by technological or legal change. From this point of view, we cannot talk about the public relations profession in a general sense, but need to take account of the competitive and time-dependent nature of this phenomenon.

This chapter examines public relations jurisdiction in Great Britain in the late 1990s. The main interest pursued here is to anchor public relations jurisdiction in the broader environment and to reconnect practitioners' routine practices with the forces and factors to which they as a profession need to respond. The approach taken in this chapter aims to answer three broad questions:

- How do public relations consultants get and deliver their work?
- What factors influence the process?
- Finally, how do the exigencies of routine work and the conditions under which it is carried out influence the occupation in its self-identity and behaviour?

A range of empirical material has been utilised to answer these three questions: interviews with practitioners conducted during fieldwork in a PR consultancy in January/February 1997; observation of a professional training course in July/August 1998; and analysis of the relevant trade magazines — specifically *PR Week* — as a reflection of the topical issues, opinions and attitudes. (For details see Chapter 5: Methodology).

The chapter consists of three sections. The first focuses on routine elements of public relations practice, pitching and client management, as they are experienced by the individual practitioner. This section draws attention to the importance of what is often referred to as 'intangibles', or 'chemistry' between the practitioner and the client. It is claimed that PR practice is understood by practitioners in two, apparently contradictory, ways: one relies on the dis-

course of professionalism and instrumental rationality; the other evades such descriptions, and emphasises the role of intuitive judgements and interpersonal relations. The second part of the chapter takes up the theme of the occupation's split personality and pursues it at the level of group action designed to counteract the occupation's weaknesses resulting from this unsettled identity. Two important debates are analysed here, about evaluation and regulation of the industry. If the first of these is an example of a tactic designed to improve the occupation's standing, particularly when competing against other occupations; the second one makes the point about the importance of wider public acceptance for public relations. The final section develops the point of the importance of the reputational capital for the public relations occupation. The theme is pursued by analysing the representation and careers of those practitioners who are thrust into the public eye (often via the mass media) more than others due to nature of their work or clients they serve.

## Getting and delivering the work

Public relations practitioners work in two main work settings: in-house, in a range of commercial, public and voluntary organisations; and in consultancy, either as employees of a consulting firm, or as freelancers, working on their own. This section focuses primarily on consultancy for two reasons. Firstly, studying public relations as a service sold in a competitive market to clients who need to be convinced about its effectiveness helps to focus on the presentation and value of public relations expertise. Secondly, as will be explained in Chapters 3 and 5, little attention has been given to public relations consultancy in the existing literature. This chapter aims to help redress that imbalance.

### The pitch

There appear to be two main ways in which consultants obtain clients and work: through a competitive pitch for an account; or a contractual appointment with no pitch involved. The first is routinely used, especially for work considered by the client as substantial, both in terms of importance and expense. The latter usually depends on an existing level of knowledge and trust between the two parties from previous work, or a credible recommendation. The pitch is important in two ways: it is the first step in the client/consultant relationship; and it involves a necessary business risk — the cost involved in preparing a pitch has more often than not to be written off a loss, as there is only approximately a one in four or one in five chance of winning the account.

The pitch may be set for new work a client requires or be part of a review process of either an existing account or an entire public relations area. PRCA guidelines for managing the pitch included in a *PR Week* feature on 'a painless pitch process' offer a useful starting point:

#### PRCA Guidelines: dos and don'ts of agency reviews

- Don't ask more than five agencies to pitch.
- Establish what you want from your agencies before briefing them.
- Make sure that all agencies are given the same brief.
- Don't arrange for agencies to pitch if you are not serious about appointing one— don't just trawl the market for ideas.



- Don't expect detailed recommendations unless you are willing to pay for them.
- Don't ask an incumbent agency to repitch if you have already decided to ditch it.
- Don't drag out the pitch process. Make a decision as fast as you can.
- Have the courtesy to tell unsuccessful firms why they failed to get your business. (Gray, 1996a)

The process is managed on the client side either by a senior in-house PR specialist, or — particularly if there is no such post — by marketing, or human resource managers, or even the CEO. In training, the process was described as starting with the identification of the specific needs for which a consultant should be appointed and then the putting together of a 'long list' of possible agencies. This may either be done using existing listings (e.g. PRCA) or recommendations and previous experience. Assessing agency credentials is part of the process. Good practice here was summarised in training as:

What do we need to know about the consultancy before we appoint them: references, levels of experience, financial situation, size, basis for fee, evidence of previous work, ownership structure, CVs of key people, membership of professional bodies, awards won. (Training session 6/8/98a)

Very importantly, in the view of one of the experienced in-house practitioners, 'you go to see them' for the presentation of credentials, and you refuse to give a brief at this stage:

...otherwise they'll dig up everything they've ever done for your sector because they think they should prove to you their knowledge rather than present themselves, how they work. (Training session 6/8/98a)

The brief, offered to the shortlisted agencies, is the launchpad for the proposal presented to the client; in other words, it is the trigger for the expert analysis and solution. In reality, consultancies often complain about being given a poor brief, for example: '[...] one page briefs typed on Victorian typewriters [or] documents of 20 pages that look more like legal briefs' (Palmer, 1996). A more recent DTI-IPR study shows that the quality of the brief given by client organisations was rated by 75% of consultants as poor to mediocre (1-3 on a six-point scale), as opposed to 25% as good to excellent (4-6 on a six-point scale). Common problems included: lack of objectives; unrealistic expectations; failure to take account of the realities of programme planning; clients' lack of PR experience and business communications skills; standard procurement templates, notably in the public sector; and lack of a broad appreciation of PR issues. As a result, consultancies often have to educate clients in PR and the preparation of briefing documents (DTI and IPR, 2003, p. 34). Clients, for their part, judge pitches on a number of criteria — of which the actual response to the brief, i.e. the display of expert knowledge, is only one:

Factors in judging competitive pitches: understanding of the brief, overall quality of response; budget/cost management; quality of the actual account team; account handling, chemistry. (Training session 6/8/98a)

So, at the very point of entry, the differing interests and resulting tensions between clients and consultants become apparent. At this stage, given the expense of mounting a pitch, the pitching consultancy will be focused on minimising the risk. The attention seems to have been focused, one might say paradoxically, not on the expert sub-

stance of what is proposed, but on presentation skills and beyond, on impression management. A set of telling connections is revealed in the following excerpt from a *PR Week* feature, which offers a brief historical background to this aspect of the practice. Businesses emerged from the recession of the early 1990s with a tighter grip on the cost base, including the purchase of PR services, which in turn led to more competitive pitching:

Client companies are leaner and meaner and far more discerning. The retainers of the 1980s have been replaced by ad hoc projects and PR practitioners find themselves facing an increasing number of their peers in competitive pitches. As a result, more pressure is put on the pitch presentation. Time out of the office is expensive. Pitching for new business is time spent without earning fees. So what can be done to ensure a decent success rate from the client presentation to justify these costs and grow the business? (Smith, 1996)

As a result, the attention moved beyond the look of the presentation to its feel — the notorious, and somewhat magical, ‘chemistry’:

It is commonly accepted that even in the hi-tech 1990s no matter how flash the audio visuals, and how well cut the suit at the final presentation, if the chemistry is missing from the first handshake, so is the business. (Smith, 1996)

It may sound somewhat vague, but there is no doubt about the crucial role of ‘chemistry’ in selling PR services:

- There is this whole issue of intangibility of PR [...] chemistry is such an important factor. The clients who had appointed us were the ones who said they like us, they could work with us. [...] The decision-making process is ‘We feel we could work with these people’. (Interview, 4/2/1997)
- Do [I] feel comfortable with these people? [Do] I feel comfortable that they should represent me [?]  
(Training session 6/8/98a)
- When I ask companies what made them choose one public relations consultancy over another, they usually tell me it was because they liked the people and felt they could work with them. The proposals might have been equally creative, the credentials evenly matched, but it was the personal chemistry that tipped the balance. (Stuart, 1996)

For consultants, ‘chemistry’ may work partly as a substitute for detailed expert advice, which at this stage has not yet been paid for, while for clients it functions as a guarantee that an appropriate service will be obtained. There is a clear indication in the PRCA guidelines quoted above that asking agencies to pitch might be used as a cheap way of getting expert advice (‘trawling for ideas’). According to a *PR Week* editorial, having your ideas ‘plagiarised’ was a ‘long running complaint of agencies’ (‘Pitching for a fairer deal’, 1996). The problem was succinctly laid out in a comment piece:

Agencies pitching for new clients have always been on shaky ground. Do you lay all your cards on the table and risk your ideas being pinched and reproduced without you being hired, or do you hold back and risk not getting the account because you didn’t demonstrate what you’re capable of? It is a thin line and most agencies — particularly small ones — don’t know which side of it they should be on. (Hamlett, 1998)

This state of affairs reveals a weakness on the part of the industry: while copyright protection could not be extended to pitches ('ideas' themselves are not protected), the evidence of the 1990s shows the industry's inability to introduce a standard solution obeyed by all agencies, which may require putting the industry's interests before commercial interests of an individual agency in any given pitch. When the Irish industry body (PRCA Ireland) introduced new rules imposing a charge for submission of creative proposals, a *PR Week* editorial claimed that such a solution could not be imposed in the UK:

Attempts to introduce such diktats [payment for creative pitches] in the UK have floundered — mainly because there are more agencies outside the industry associations than within them, and, despite a return to growth, most are still feeling the pressure to undercut rivals where they can. ("Pitching for a fairer deal", 1996).

One reason for the agencies' vulnerability was the competitive nature of the market, undermining their ability to act as a group<sup>1</sup>; another was the nature of the services provided. Although in many respects, the public relations consultancy industry is comparable to advertising (it employs the idea of creativity), it is not a creative industry in the sense of being based on the creation and exploitation of intellectual property, as the official definition used in the UK has it (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2001). In this respect, public relations consultancy is more akin to a traditional professional service — providing a diagnosis and treatment derived from a body of expert knowledge. A lawyer or doctor is paid for the ability to identify the client's problem as a specific medical or legal problem to which an appropriate solution can be applied. They may be paid for offering the same solution in innumerable cases. The expert solution is not protected by copyright; the fee is derived from the application of existing, publicly-accessible knowledge.

Thus the kind of knowledge that lies at the core of the occupation's expertise has profound implications for the way in which the occupation acts and presents itself. In recent years, as we shall see later in this chapter, the issue of measurability of results and of articulating a body of knowledge that can be employed with predictable results has come to occupy an important place on the industry's agenda. At the same time, however, references to 'chemistry', 'art', or 'intangibles' persist. These can be understood as a way of acknowledging other types of knowledge: intuition, judgement, *savoir faire*, cultural or even somatic knowledge (as discussed in Chapter 2) revealing other identities which public relations can or has assumed in the past.

## Client relations

Client-consultant relationships (client relations, for short) are usually understood as those between an outside consultant and a client organisation. For the client organisation, the relationship is seen as a generic management of a supplier. It is framed by an articulation of 'advantages: objectivity, anonymity, resources, skills, fixed fee, cross industry fertilisation, choice; and disadvantages: cost, learning curve' (Training session, 23/7/98b) — in other words, factors relating to the management of cost and access to standard professional skills as well as competitive knowledge. For consultants, the management of such relationships is treated as part of professional expertise and labelled client management or client handling (Field notes, 3 February 1997). The key here is the need to inject more security and stability into a commercial relationship which by its nature is very tenuous:

...there is very little [...] that locks a purchaser in [...] there are an awful lot of companies out there and it's pretty easy to disentangle yourself as a purchaser if you want to. You don't think you are getting good value?  
You phone up and say 'You're fired.' (Interview, 4/2/1997)

Client-consultant relationships are supported by: a legal infrastructure contained in the contract; their substantive definition, contained in the agreed programme of work; and a set of skills or tools employed by the consultant specifically to manage the relationship, rather than to discharge contractual duties. The contract usually deals with the consultant's fees, recovery of costs, mark-up on services bought in and managed by the consultant on behalf of the client, and finally with the extent and nature of any possible legal liabilities that might arise in the course of work. The authorship of the contract may be an area of power play in the relationship: consultancies usually have their own contracts, but from the point of view of service buyers,

'You... never ever sign their contract. Get your legal department to raise your own' (Training session, 27/7/98b).

There are two main types of financial arrangements between the consultancy and its clients: retainers and projects; while freelancers appear to be mostly paid on a daily rate basis (Fawkes, Fielden & Tench, 2001). There is anecdotal evidence pointing to the shift away from retainers in the 1990s, which is explained either by a tighter cost control culture, mentioned in the previous section, or by the growth of in-house ("Don't Ditch PR", 1997) presumably taking up a lot of the longer-term or cyclical work most suited to retainer agreements. Regular reporting of the hours worked on the account is part of good account management practice. It is underpinned by timesheet keeping. Both of these are sensitive issues as they raise questions about the accuracy of such reports, consultant skills, and ultimately honesty and power relations.

For example, a joke told by a trainer in the context of discussing account management, implies a practice of exaggerating the billable time.

A PR consultant dies and goes to heaven. He is 25 years old. There is nothing wrong with him. At the gate, Saint Peter says, 'Ah, Mr Smith'. Smith says, 'Excuse me, but I shouldn't be here. There is nothing wrong with me. I haven't been in a car accident or anything like that...'. Saint Peter says, 'Oh, let me check'. He taps into his computer.' Now, Mr Smith, according to your timesheets, you are one hundred years old!  
(Training session, 22/7/98b)

However, there is another, more publicly recognised, issue related to time: overservicing, i.e. not billing the client for all the time spent on their account. It appears to be a somewhat embarrassing fact of consultancy life; although an occasional public acknowledgement of its existence is made, there is a reticence to discuss it in too much detail.

'[I]sn't it time we all stopped repressing the most serious debate our industry faces — the fact that growth in turnover and profits is all too often at the expense of the employees who work such long hours overservicing clients, commonly with little reward or redress. [...] While giddy targets are set and reached, and fat bonuses pocketed, something unwholesome and downright immoral is going on underneath. Am I the only person to find the free-market motto of 'no one gets sacked here, people sack themselves' a heartless denial of responsibility to staff...?' ("Stop Feeding the Egos", 1998)

For this angry correspondent, who signed himself 'a boy in the boiler room', the issue is not so much that clients are overserved as the fact that this is made possible by the exploitation of staff, institutionalised in its free market value: the individual's effort and ability are an employee's personal asset for which the employer has no responsibility. But why does overservicing happen in the first place? Being able to identify and label the practice is evidence of managerial systems that are strong enough to prevent such practice. The reason lies elsewhere — power relations in the agency-client relationship. As we have seen, the relationship is enacted in the conditions of cut-throat competition between suppliers of PR services, virtually non-existent industry or professional regulation, and the considerable cost of obtaining new clients as well as the possibility of cutting the cost by obtaining more work from existing clients. It appears that these conditions give the upper hand in the relationship to the client.

[I]n client-consultancy relationship you never get to debate who's right, who's wrong. It's simple: consultancy is always wrong, because it's the client who's paying the cheques. And you've got to start from this point of view. (Interview, 4 February 1997)

However, the straightforward financial aspect of the relationship may not be the entire explanation of the client's power:

Service we deliver cannot be extracted from the client. He is as much involved in delivering the service as we are. (Interview, 4 February 1997)

If the service delivered is dependent on the client's involvement, managing the relationship becomes not just a question of earning a fee from the particular account, but of longer-term reputation building, which as we have seen is an important factor in gaining new work.

How is the relationship managed, then? Although it is focused on delivering the 'tangibles' such as the product or service (i.e. the agreed programme), the process is dependent on building into the relationship a number of inter-linked characteristics: reliability, responsiveness, managing the client's expectations; confidence and trust.

To my mind...reliability, performing dependently and accurately is more important than anything else. You can be the best PR adviser in the business, the most brilliant seller of stories to the media, but if the client doesn't know if you are gonna bother to turn up to a meeting, he is going to start doubting whether you are gonna bother giving him decent advice. (Interview, 4 February 1997).

The relationship is fashioned with the use of account management skills:

- ...use any excuse to keep in touch, have regular team meetings, diarise monthly client meetings, use contact reports, memos, keep track of hours spent.' (Training session, 22/7/98b)
- I always try to deliver in advance of when a client is expecting something. Part of the process of being able to deliver in advance [...]is being able to manage expectations of when a client needs it in order to set a deadline. Some clients want everything tomorrow so you have to prod them : prioritise...which of these can wait till next week... set out some sort of disciplined timetable for the client...as long as you deliver the day before [...], you build an atmosphere of willingness and that again helps build confidence and trust in the relationship. Doing these things makes delivering the actual work so much easier. (Interview, 4 February 1997)

Although formal evaluation can track the delivery of the programme, it is the quality of the relationship that may be the key to getting repeat work and to the reputation that an agency acquires.

- It's about relationships, feeling the programme is working. This is not about hard evaluation.'

(Training session, 22/7/98b)

- Almost all my clients judge on feeling. I had a client for whom we'd done a great job [but] the client wanted to terminate the relationship because it "didn't feel right". These things are very instinctive...

(Training session, 22/7/98b)

This trainer, a successful financial PR specialist, was very clear in distinguishing between the 'tangible' and 'intangible' elements in the public relations consultants' work. Paradoxically, 'intangibles' are given a very tangible recognition in PR practice in the form of 'restrictive covenants' in employment contracts in consultancy which prevent employees from poaching clients and setting up in business for themselves. A good example is offered by Shandwick Consultants and a breakaway firm, the Hogarth Partnership, set up in 1997 by 'four board directors led by chief executive Chris Matthews' (Bevan, 1997a). The speculation at the time was about the number of key accounts which Shandwick might lose, a possible compromise arrangement of sharing accounts in view of the contractual constraints on ex-Shandwick Hogarth founders, and the impact on the share price following a profits warning issued by Shandwick in August 1997, a few months after the split (Garside, 1997c).

Analysing client relations has highlighted the importance of those characteristics of such relationships that tend to be difficult to unpack and measure meaningfully. The importance of 'intangibles' in the practice appears also to differ depending on the level of analysis. For an individual practitioner, intangibles reflect a constant and important part of their professional lives which is not captured directly by standard business or professional measures. For PR businesses, intangibles are key assets protected by employment contracts. At the level of the industry or profession, they become an embarrassment, a rallying point for a campaign of self-improvement. The late 1990s saw an industry campaign to improve the standards and practice of evaluation.

## Jurisdictional security

So far in the chapter, we have focused on what happens close to the ground: how practitioners routinely go about and think about what they do, for example, pitching or dealing with clients. This section is concerned with the industry and the occupation, rather than individual practitioners. What was going on at this level? Why? How should we understand such developments? Two key issues have been selected for analysis: evaluation and regulation.

### Evaluation

Evaluation was by no means a new issue in the 1990s. Industry and professional bodies, as well as individual players had tackled the problem of how to measure, and how to do so, in order to evaluate PR effectiveness before. In one *PR Week* Platform column, a respected practitioner reminded readers that the debate,

[...] has rumbled on among practitioner circles for more than 20 years [...] Going back further, to 1984, Burston-Marsteller dealt with the questions of evaluation in an excellent paper entitled 'What's the Impact?'. Walter Lindenmann, vice-president of research with Ketchum PR in New York, has also discussed the topic exhaustively over the years. He is now working on yet another taskforce on evaluation with the Public Relations Society of America.' (White, 1999)

In fact, one gets a distinct impression that not much new could be added to the debate and that there is possibly an element of ritual in the periodic resurfacing of such public discussions and initiatives. The account presented below covers the debate in the years 1996-2000 and is organised around four questions: What was the debate about? Why was it necessary? Who were the most active participants? What were the key moments?

In the late 1990s, the debate about evaluation focused on developing a standard system of measuring public relations effectiveness that would be understood by clients and acceptable from the PR expert point of view. Although *PR Week* ran a big feature on evaluation earlier in 1996 — hanging it on the hook of a survey showing that PR providers lagged behind other marketing disciplines in that respect (Rogers, 1996a) — the debate was ignited by the public launch of the 'industry evaluation plan' in July 1996 at a conference organised by an evaluation company Cutting Edge Software. The proposal was to create a service calculating the proportion of the 'target population exposed to coverage' based on the existing audience and readership data from bodies such as BARB, NRS, ABC, and RAJAR ("Crowe and Bell Launch Industry Evaluation Plan", 1996). The service appears to have been a commercial venture (viable for £250 a year at 400 subscribers minimum), but the reporting downplayed the commercial aspect, framing this development as an industry response to a public/client need

The plan was developed in response to client interest by a working group consisting of Crowe [marketing manager, National Dairy Council] and Bell [former PRCA chairman], Norwich Union communications director Raymond Wilson, and *PR Week* editor Stephen Farish. ("Crowe and Bell Launch Industry Evaluation Plan", 1996)

Although the initial focus was on media analysis — thus simply equating evaluation with media evaluation only — quite soon the discussion acquired a wider scope thanks to a reader's letter:

[...] measures of content and potential audience reach won't satisfy more demanding users of public relations [...] Equally, they won't be much use for programmes (of which there are many) which don't have media relations as their prime focus. Something is needed to measure the results of PR in terms of attitudinal and even behavioural change on the part of audiences. Surely with the industry's considerable combined purchasing power, it shouldn't be impossible to devise a series of standard, low-cost research packages to track the effectiveness of PR campaigns rather than simply analysing the techniques used. (Knight, 1996)

By late 1998, the topic had evolved to that of industry initiatives in developing not just a standard measure but an accessible evaluation toolkit, eventually launched in April 1999 under the auspices of the IPR, PRCA and *PR Week*, offering a practical illustration of a range of methods to be understood as best practice in the area.

There is one main reason why this debate and these industry initiatives to improve evaluation took place: the need to shore up public relations' position in relation to clients and competitors. Following *PR Week's* coverage, we can identify various factors, the main one being the client demand for measurement:

[...] There does indeed seem to be an industry-wide acceptance that those who judge [PR] activity demand increasingly objective and professional measurement of achievement (Rogers, 1996b)

Others invoke 'respect', by which is meant 'a fairer share of the budgets and the ear of decision-makers at board level' (Richardson, 1996); and a range of applications of research in planning work (Philips, 1996).

The leading participants in this evaluation round were the main industry and professional bodies in the UK (IPR and PRCA) as well as the International Committee of Public Relations Consultancies Associations (ICO), media evaluation companies, and *PR Week*, which participated in and reported on the developments at the same time. The magazine took a strong campaigning stance: for example, a minority of respondents to one particular survey who claimed that evaluation was 'irrelevant' were blasted in an editorial as 'living in cloud cuckoo land' ("Evaluating the Strength", 1996). In the week when the proposal for the standard unit of measurement was launched, the editorial proclaimed that it was of vital importance:

Evaluation is too important to the future of the PR business to let this opportunity go, which is why *PR Week* is putting itself firmly behind the campaign. [...] We want to hear from you. ("The Final Analysis", 1996)

Indeed, readers did write in and over the following three years the magazine published a number of their contributions.

If one is to write the story of the evaluation debate in the late 1990s, it is useful to start by recognising the commercial impetus behind it. Convincing and commercially viable evaluation methods were needed to attract custom; the participants in the debate all had a more or less directly commercial interest in evaluation being used and sold to customers. As we have seen above, the debate kicked off with a call for an industry-wide common evaluation standard and one industry body to deal with evaluation. Initially, the 'industry' here meant the 'media evaluation industry', effectively around ten companies offering cuttings and media content analysis (see Rogers, 1996b). Despite the talk about the standard public relations measurement unit — referred to as Public Relations Point (Nicholas, 1996) or Media Relations Point (Wilson, 1997) — no common standard appears to have been adopted; while a single body for media evaluation companies, the Association of Media Evaluation Companies (AMEC), was formed quite quickly and appears to have embedded itself firmly amongst the important trade bodies in the area.

If we treat the Cutting Edge conference, mentioned above, as the first in a chain of initiatives, the next one was the meeting in November 1996 of the international media evaluators, including the recently formed AMEC, under the auspices of ICO. The meeting led to the production of a guide on the setting of measurable objectives and a consultation paper on the future of the evaluation industry to be presented to both ICO and IPRA boards during IPRA's conference in June 1997 (Nicholas, 1997b) — the connection between sound PR practice (objective setting) and its evaluation was thus re-affirmed.



That same year saw the publication of two practical guides, which could be seen as setting evaluation standards: AMEC's *The Power of the Media* (dealing with media evaluation techniques); and ICO's *How to Get Value From Public Relations* (dealing with measurable communication objectives and also suggesting that 12% of a PR budget should be spent on evaluation). The context to these initiatives was explained by the outgoing president of ICO in terms of jurisdictional competition: 'If we don't move then other types of consultant will take work away from us' (Darby, 1997).

In 1998, *PR Week* turned up the pressure by conducting its own Proof Campaign, aiming 'to encourage practitioners to allocate ten per cent of their PR budget to research and evaluation' (France, 1998, p.11). The campaign was launched in February and developed through a combination of straw polls on relevant topics such as research and evaluation spend by different categories of clients; a discussion amongst a number of key practitioners on best evaluation practice (France, 1998); readers' letters; and later in that year, a joint initiative with other bodies to launch the industry guide to evaluation practice. The IPR launched its own Evaluation Taskforce in August 1998, and the discussion on the pages of *PR Week* quickly turned to the need for unity, both in terms of a common industry body and industry-wide consensus,

The most important prerequisite is that the PR industry is seen to be totally united in its efforts to prove the worth of what it does [...] This means that any differences in approach or vested interests on the part of IPR, PRCA and other interested bodies need to be put to one side and a single, common standard agreed upon. (Fairchild, 1998)

In 1999, *PR Week* published the results of the Proof Survey (Cowlett & Nicholas, 1999), a commissioned piece of research attempting to quantify the extent of the evaluation practice and factors shaping it. The survey was conducted on a 200-strong sample of the magazine's readers and followed up with a number of qualitative interviews. Some of the key findings were: first, a sizeable minority of practitioners (around 20%) did not believe that their work could be evaluated; second, media content analysis and press cuttings were by far the most used measure (61% of respondents had actually used it, the next category, OTS<sup>3</sup> was 27%, roughly half the size); third, the two main reasons for research and evaluation were to prove the value of PR (48%) and to show if the objectives had been met (38%); finally, the two main obstacles to planning and evaluation activity were difficulty in securing budgets (38%) and lack of definable measures (30%) (CARMA, 1999).<sup>4</sup>

These main findings are interesting if put in the context of the somewhat ambiguous identity of the public relations profession. They offer clear numerical evidence of the importance of the 'intangibles' discussed in the previous section: one in every five practitioners thinks it is impossible to evaluate PR work. Consequently, we could say, they prove that the occupation's identity was not settled, and that it refused to be configured in purely rational, measurable terms, despite an outspoken industry-wide campaign.

The Proof Survey was swiftly followed by the publication in April 1999 of the Research and Evaluation Toolkit, representing the joint effort of the main industry players, reportedly 'IPR, PRCA, AMEC, the Public Relations Standards

Council, plus research company MORI, in-house practitioners and Michael Fairchild, author of ICO's publication *How to Get Real Value From Public Relations*' (Leavy, 1998, p. 12). By 2001 the Toolkit was in its second edition and the industry had continued these joint efforts, having launched another initiative in October 2000:

PRE-fix, the all industry initiative promoting the benefits of planning, research and evaluation as an integral part of PR programmes [...] is aimed at building on existing initiatives such as PR Week's Proof campaign and the Research and Evaluation Toolkit. [...] Initially this will be in the shape of a website [...] a complete listing of services of various R&E providers and a handful of case studies, [the] aim is to provide PR decision-makers with guidance on which methods suit which situations at which point in time... (Cowlett, 2001)

However, in 2003 PRE-fix was cancelled and it seems that the industry had come full circle: the enthusiasm of the wide consensus dissipated under the onslaught of the economic downturn of the early years of the 21st century:

No doubt, the PRCA and IPR will continue to undertake sterling work individually, but the failure of the industry to continue this campaign sends out an unfortunate message about its ability to co-operate on key issues. As in-house departments and agencies come under pressure to cut budgets to the bone, we are seeing a resurgence of the use of spurious methods such as AVEs.<sup>6</sup> It would seem that the need for initiatives such as PRE-fix has never been greater. ("The Demise of Pre-fix", 2003)

To conclude, let us reflect briefly on the significance of this campaign. It is difficult to be precise about what was achieved by the campaign: although the Toolkit was noticed by practitioners<sup>6</sup>, and remains an important statement by the profession about good practice, the extent of its impact in practice has not been assessed. The set of initiatives recounted above is significant as a way of making a public claim to professional jurisdiction on the basis of values such as: rational action, professionalism, business acumen shown through responding to client needs, and accountability to clients in measurable, ideally, financial terms. At the same time, we see how the effort was counteracted by a number of factors, such as the fragmentation of the industry between work settings (in-house vs. consultancy; public sector vs. commercial sector) and disciplines (for example financial PR specialists seem to hold the strongest allegiance to the belief in the 'intangible', immeasurable nature of PR); commercial competition between PR companies; and weak governance due to a number of different industry bodies. In crude terms, the professionalisation of public relations is constrained by competition between practitioners, which in turn is influenced by macroeconomic conditions: as the market for PR services shrinks or grows, competition is more or less tough.

## Regulation

Evaluation was an important issue for the PR industry in the late 1990s, but there were others, notably the regulation of lobbying and financial public relations — the subject of this section. The debates and events relevant to these issues can be told as two separate stories connected by time, some of the major actors, and above all by the key dilemma of whether to support self-regulation of the industry, or to push for statutory regulation by an outside body. Regulation, like evaluation, had been something of a perennial issue; the story told below covers 1996-2000 and is therefore just part of a longer story.

The way in which PR practitioners debated the regulation of lobbying and the specific decisions they made about how to deal with the issue needs to be set against the backdrop of fairly recent events in the UK, specifically the Nolan Report; the continued work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (for a discussion see Schlesinger, Miller & Dinan, 2001 pp. 189-194); the concurrent regulatory developments in the European Union; and devolution in Scotland, promoting a discussion about regulation in the devolved Parliament.

In September 1996, Ian Greer and Neil Hamilton abandoned their libel case against *The Guardian* over allegations published by the newspaper on 20 October 1994 accusing Ian Greer Associates (IGA) of acting as conduit for cash payments from Mohamed Al Fayed to MPs Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith for asking Parliamentary questions. The 'cash for questions' affair, as it came to be known, had a number of important consequences.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) was set up in October 1994 by the Prime Minister, John Major, to deal with the affair. Initially, the remit of the Committee did not extend to investigating individual allegations of misconduct (Nolan, 1995, p.1). Instead, the focus was firmly on public life and public opinion. Crucially for this story, the Nolan Report made no recommendation on regulating lobbyists. The job of investigating allegations of individual misconduct was carried out in 1996-97 by the newly appointed Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Sir Gordon Downey, and made public in July 1997 in what is commonly referred to as the Downey report (Sheldon, 1997). The collapse of Greer and Hamilton's libel case was crucial as the evidence was now available to the Parliamentary inquiry enabling its completion. On publication of the report, *PR Week's* front page claimed 'Report says Greer "not guilty" of cash for questions' (Garside, 1997c). The article gave a rather misleading impression that Ian Greer was exonerated by the inquiry. Firstly, the remit of the inquiry did not extend to non-MPs, such as Greer; secondly, although no evidence for cash payments was found, even *PR Week* was forced to admit that on other aspects of Greer's activity the report 'was less conclusive' (Garside, 1997c). The affair cost Greer the collapse of his well-established company — in January 1997, the liquidators were finally called in.

In 1994, again in response to the cash for questions affair, a number of consultancies specialising in lobbying came together to form the Association of Professional Political Consultants (APPC) (Schlesinger et al., 2001 p. 205). The newly-formed association immediately became an important player in issues relating to the regulation of lobbying. APPC gave evidence to the Nolan inquiry alongside other established bodies, PRCA and IPR. This, as well as the tone and the shifting substance of the views expressed by APPC, drew angry responses from some quarters, as evidenced by two letters published in *PR Week* on 25 October 1996. Responding to a statement made in a feature on lobbying (Beenstock, 1996), Shandwick's vice-chairman wrote angrily:

- It is untrue that the [APPC] is 'the regulatory body to which most lobbying companies belong'. It is this kind of clap-trap which has caused APPC to do so much damage in its very short life. Its pretentious evidence to the Nolan Committee sent that rather naïve body scurrying down the wrong track. We continue to read and watch APPC spokesmen making statements as if they were a long standing professional body rather than a recently plucked fig leaf.

- It is perhaps noteworthy that it is two APPC members (IGA and GJW) who have attracted media attention over cash for questions and work for Libya respectively. Instead of self-appointed individuals claiming powers beyond their capacity, let us, for all our sakes use the present mood to insist that Parliament implements a fully transparent register of lobbyists... (McNally, 1996)

A director of Grandfield Public Affairs joined in, and it is worth quoting this letter extensively too:

Lobbyists and public affairs specialists who are not members of the APPC will take grave exception to the claim from Michael Burrell of Westminster Strategy that 'in pitching blue-chip clients are now careful to accept proposals only from APPC members'.

This can only add to the growing suspicion that the APPC is an exclusive club with a veneer of self-regulation.

[...] As your editorial points out, APPC may well be 'found wanting' partly because of the 'cash for questions' shadow but also no doubt because of the exclusivity and lack of broader appeal to the industry as a whole. Reporting the APPC's 'emergency meeting' The Times on 18 October said that the Association now 'wants regulation by Parliament'.

At last. [...] But if it has abandoned the claim to be a self-regulator, what is the APPC for? (Kelly, 1996)

The letters highlight a number of important factors in the debate related to the depth of divisions in the industry and the potential commercial value of navigating the right course through these troubled waters. The industry was divided in its views toward regulation. If the need for regulation to signal transparency and respectability was understood, the extent and shape of the regulation was under discussion: some lobbyists thought statutory regulation the right solution, others were rather wary of solutions imposed by outsiders in the form of legislation, the prospect viewed by Bernard Ingham as 'regrettable' (Beenstock, 1996). Another rift in the industry was caused by the question of representation: both IPR and PRCA claimed the right to represent the industry, and the swift rise to prominence of a new small body (APPC) was resented. Moreover suspicion arose that the newcomer represented not the industry as such but rather a promotional strategy adopted by a small clique of companies.

Perhaps the speed of events and the intensity of public attention on lobbying helped to build consensus. The Ian Greer affair was in the public eye between 1994 until July 1997. Its legacy to the industry was the establishment of two voluntary codes of conduct for lobbyists — one by IPR the other by APPC — as well as a vigorous debate between supporters of self-regulation and those in favour of statutory regulation. In July 1998 another scandal brought lobbyists back to the front pages and under the renewed scrutiny of the Committee for Standards in Public Life — Cronygate or Drapergate, focused on Derek Draper, described by the Observer as 'Labour insider-turned-lobbyist' (Palast, 1998). The essence of the Observer investigative feature that sparked the renewed debate was the revelation that lobbying firms employing well-connected consultants boasted of having insider access to sensitive policy information. Derek Draper, ex-aide to the then all-powerful Peter Mandelson, at the time employed by GPC Market Access, was featured alongside the three founding partners of a lobbying consultancy, Lawson Lucas Mendelsohn, all of whom had previously worked for Tony Blair. For the Observer, the point seemed to have been as much about the ethics of lobbying as it was about the morality of New Labour:

Do any of these young men harbour misgivings about renting out their contacts? They see no reason for apology. It's their world after all. They are convinced they crafted New Labour and now they are merely charging admission to the show they produced. (Palast, 1998)

The furore led to the sixth CSPL inquiry chaired by Lord Neill, Reinforcing Standards, which reported in January 2000 (Cm 4557-I). As the inquiry was proceeding, IPR, PRCA and APPC came to a shared view that statutory regulation of lobbying in the form of a public register policed by an independent body was desirable. IPR, PRCA and APPC agreed a shared code of practice for lobbyists. Interestingly, in *PR Week's* portrayal of the interaction between the lobbying industry and the State, the lobbyists appear to have been kept at 'arm's length', the Parliament being unwilling to legislate despite calls from the industry for regulation ("Lobbying Laws", 1998). In the end, Lord Neill followed the line taken by the Nolan report in deciding not to impose regulation on lobbyists.

Should we take *PR Week's* interpretation of these events at face value? How genuine was the appetite for regulation in the PR profession? Let's look at another regulation debate — regarding financial PR — which ran in parallel to that about lobbying. Like the question of regulating lobbying, the need to engage publicly with the issue of regulation over financial PR was also brought about by a scandal. In December 1995 the Takeover Panel rebuked Financial Dynamics for disclosing to analysts sensitive information while acting for Amec, defending the company against a hostile takeover bid from Kvaerner (Bevan, 1996c). This prompted the IPR's City and Financial Group to start a consultation process with a view to presenting recommendations to the Securities and Investment Board, the regulator of financial markets. The position was to create a clear system of self-regulation in order to fend off the danger of statutory regulation:

Statutory regulation would be unwieldy, and possibly unenforceable. A form of self-regulation must be the way forward, although none of the existing industry bodies seem ideally positioned to make it work ("Time for Clarity", 1996).

As with lobbying, there were voices within the industry arguing that sufficiently clear rules of conduct already existed — laid down in the IPR Code of Conduct, or 'Stock and Exchange's Listing Rules (Yellow Book), Takeover Code, (Blue Book), Criminal Justice Act 1993, Financial Services Act 1986 and Companies Act 1985' (Gray, 1997) — and what was required was simply policing of the existing rules. But when in February 1997 another PR agency, Citigate, was reprimanded by the Takeover Panel for leaking sensitive information (Rogers, 1997), it was clear that action was needed. A sense of urgency was injected into this debate by the new Labour government's plans to reform the regulation of financial services (Gray, 1997). The reform took over three years to complete. It started with the announcement in May 1997 of plans to create a new regulator with combined responsibility for banking and investment sectors. In October 1997 the Securities and Investments Board became the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and by June 1998 banking was subsumed into its remit. The regulator was given statutory powers by the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, implemented on 1 December 2001 (Financial Services Authority, 2004). In the summer of 1998 the FSA published its draft code of conduct for the London financial markets, proposing to regulate financial PR — with the powers of imposing fines for misconduct. The reported reaction of the IPR's City

and Financial Group was that of endorsement and willing co-operation (Darby, 1998; "Writing the Rules", 1998). However, four months later *PR Week* reported that the IPR's submission to the FSA did not request 'specific regulation of financial PR', but that there was an initiative underway to 'examine the possibility of a voluntary, cross-industry financial PR code'(Greene & Garside, 1998). The chair of the IPR City and Financial Group was quoted as saying:

There is no guarantee that a voluntary code would prevent scandals, but we need to be prepared due to the increased interest the Government is showing' (Greene and Garside, 1998).

On the one hand, the statement could be read as a straightforward support for commercial freedom, and self-regulation as a defence mechanism against the threat of outside regulation. On the other hand, the statement is not straightforward at all. How serious was the threat if, as in this instance, the profession was effectively invited to write the rulebook? It also appears that there were no illusions about the effectiveness of self-regulation. It seems that the only way to interpret this statement is that it was asserting that the ultimate value is the freedom to act in the ways most advantageous at the time, while regulation, in any form, can only be disadvantageous.

These two regulation debates taken together lead to a similar conclusion — when all is said and done, above all else the industry values having the flexibility of a practice unconstrained by statutory regulation. But the price for this freedom is evidently paid in the reputation granted to the public relations industry. Bernard Ingham in one of his *PR Week* columns penned during Lord Neill's inquiry came down on the side of statutory regulation, arguing that it 'would cement lobbyists into the fabric of public life' (Ingham, 1999). So far, however, the PR profession has opted out. Although at times it conducts itself as if seeking the status of a public institution, in reality it gets along well enough most of the time without having to assume the burden of being one.

## Public Image

Debates about evaluation and regulation in this period evidently revolved around the key issue of the occupation's public image. Individual practitioners and the various trade bodies were keenly aware of the need to appear respectable: being able to evaluate one's contribution (together with the knowledge and skills required to effect this) would build respectability in relations with clients; showing appreciation for the world of social values and public interest would provide respectability in the public sphere. But however hard the occupation tried to live up to this image, the old demons of lies and dubious morals could not be exorcised. In the UK in the late 1990s, the PR occupation's crusade to dissociate itself from Max Clifford was the most potent manifestation of this symbolic struggle.

## Masters of Hype

The UK's most high-profile PR man dismissed suggestions that as a senior industry figure he had a responsibility to set an example to younger PROs on the importance of telling the truth. 'Anyone who says that must know nothing about PR,' he claimed. Launching an attack on industry figures whom he described as hypocrites, Clifford said: 'Most in the PR industry lie through their teeth but don't admit it'. ("Clifford and Responsibility", 2000)

This excerpt contains all the staple ingredients of the story: Clifford's cheerful admission to lying; his insistence on lies being routine PR practice; his dismissive attitude towards the industry, which he sees as hypocritical and ineffectual, as well as his taste for controversy and the limelight. Clifford has been in business since the late 1960s doing publicity and media relations (Goddard, 1996). Many of his clients were famous or became well known as a result of Clifford's involvement, and scandal has been a staple ingredient of the cases he has handled. For example, in 1992 he represented an unknown actress who shot into the headlines when the story of her affair with a government minister, David Mellor, broke (see Davis, 1992); in 1996 he worked for OJ Simpson when the latter visited the UK on a five-day tour.

Clifford expressed his view on PR and lies consistently and publicly throughout the 1990s, most importantly in two live appearances in the mass media (a BBC Radio Scotland programme 'Who does he think he is' in January 1996 and a BBC TV chat show 'Kilroy' in January 1997). In both programmes Clifford was confronted with a representative of the PR industry: Quentin Bell in his capacity as PRCA chairman; and Rosemary Brook, past IPR president, respectively. On both occasions, Clifford's views on PR and lies drew a furious response. The tactics adopted by Clifford's critics were twofold: distancing routine PR work from the type of publicity work carried out by Clifford,

[...] there is more to PR than the lurid '20 per cent' of Clifford's work that involves selling kiss-and-tell stories to the media ("Bell Tussles with Clifford", 1996)

and a direct attack on his ethics, 'Abortions are doctors but similarities with GPs [General Practitioners] begin and end there.' (Dowman, 1997) The industry's fury was sparked by Clifford's undermining of the basis of their claimed professional standing (ethical behaviour and public interest), but it was intensified by Clifford's being identified with the PR industry in the popular imagination: rightly or wrongly, in the public perception Max Clifford was what PR was all about. In fact, even the PR occupation was not as clear in its condemnation and exclusion of Clifford as one might by now expect. David Wynne Morgan, a veteran political activist turned PR consultant, wrote a *PR Week* Comment column lamenting the fact that PR practitioners increasingly put themselves in the limelight: 'it is happening from the openly scurrilous Max Clifford, the self-professed master of hype, to the eminent Sir Tim Bell.' (Wynne Morgan, 1997). A black sheep, no doubt, but a sheep none the less.

## One of the boys: Networks of respectability

For the PR occupation, Max Clifford became the embodiment of everything that was wrong with the profession and its image; at the same time, other practitioners came to symbolise the opposite: social and professional achievement, high status and power.

### PR Barons

On 14 August 1998 *PR Week's* Diary contained a short item entitled 'Bell faces a Baron future in Belgravia' which began as follows:

Sir Tim Bell was formally created a life baron last week. Following consultation on his nomen dignitatus with the Garter King of Arms and a rubber stamp from the Great Seal, he is from now on Baron Bell of Belgravia in the City of

Westminster. Although Bell was made a peer some time after fellow Tory image consultants Peter Chadlington and Maurice Saatchi, he has the consolation of being baron of by far the most glamorous territory. ("Bell Faces a Baron Future", 1998)

Indeed, the magazine has always faithfully noted awards of high honours such as peerages, OBEs or MBEs to PR professionals. It was front page news when Peter Gummer, Shandwick's Chairman, and Maurice Saatchi, of Saatchi and Saatchi fame, were made life peers in 1996 (Dowman, 1996a), and front page news again when Gummer adopted the title of Lord Chadlington of Dean ("Gummer Adopts New Title", 1996). On both occasions *PR Week* was expansive in discussing Gummer's business achievements, his insightful views on the PR profession, his role in public life, and his personal modesty and charm (Farish, 1996a, 1996b). The peerages were seen by the industry as excellent news, but drew public criticism from the Labour party, then in opposition, which dubbed the new peers 'Lords of Lies' for their role in the Conservative negative advertising campaign in the run-up to the general election the following year.<sup>7</sup> In fact, looking at the various honours awarded to PR practitioners around that time (1996-1998), the furore appears to be political point scoring, as the practice of awarding such public recognition for service to a political party or cause seems to have been well established. For example, a number of PR practitioners featured in John Major's resignation honours list. There were MBEs for Jonathan Haslam and Sheila Gunn (Major's chief press secretary and press secretary respectively), and George Bridges, Major's assistant political secretary; Charles Lewington, former communications director at Conservative Party Central Office, was given an OBE. Others were rewarded on other occasions such as New Year's Honours Lists or Queen's Birthday Honours Lists, for example: a CBE for Jean Caines, former director of communications at the Department of Trade and Industry; an OBE for Sandi Rhys Jones of Rhys Jones Consultants for her work on the Construction Industry Board's Working Group on Equal Opportunities ("Caines and Rhys Jones", 1998); and an OBE to Angela Heylin, Charles Barker chairman, for her contribution to the Citizen's Charter scheme (Murphy, 1997). At least three Liberal Democrats were made life peers while Conservatives or the Labour party were in government: Tom McNally (1995, Shandwick, previously Hill & Knowlton); Dick Newby (1997, Matrix Communications Consultancy), and Tim Clement-Jones (1998, Political Context).

In prestige terms, such awards clearly symbolise not only the social acceptability of the public relations occupation, but also its ability to connect with political elites. The symbolic role of the PR barons is well illustrated in this excerpt:

Last month the Institute of Public Relations awarded Bell their President's medal for distinguished service to public relations. 'Certainly, he's the closest thing we have to an industry champion and a very welcome antidote to Max Clifford,' says Kate Nicholas, editor of *PR Week*. 'He has shown that our industry is more than media relations...'  
(Sanghera, 2001)

However, the extent to which such eminent practitioners influenced, rather than symbolised, the profession is less clear. Although Lord McNally did take a strong position in the lobbying debate, speaking for statutory regulation both through *PR Week* and in the House of Lords, he seems to be an exception. There does not appear to exist a very strong allegiance to, or sense of, a common professional identity among high-status PR practitioners.



## The circuit of power: media, PR and politics

In the section above, a peerage was treated as a symbolic representation of the position PR holds in public and political life. In this section, an attempt is made to look behind such symbols and sketch out the underlying careers and professional networks. Three distinct groups constitute this circuit of power: journalists, elected politicians, and public relations experts.

## Public relations practitioners and journalists

The connections between journalism and public relations have a long lineage, going back to the early days of the PR occupation. A range of studies have shown that the two occupations have been connected by their tasks — provision (i.e. the supplying as well as the withholding) of information into the public domain, their fundamental activity — engagement with public opinion, as well as by the flow of practitioners from journalism into PR (see L'Etang, 2001, pp. 28-48; Davis, 2002, pp. 19-41). The tense relationship between the two has also been noted before (for example L'Etang, 2001, pp. 117-122; DeLorme and Fedler, 2003) and it appears not to have changed much over the years, as shown by this contemporary picture of PR practitioners in a *Financial Times* feature on Tim Bell and the PR industry:

Lord Bell [...] is the interviewee from hell. He's not difficult in the way that most PR people are difficult — he doesn't write rambling, illiterate press releases, for instance, or get my name wrong or make annoying, pointless calls — but he's difficult because he knows every trick in the media handbook... (Sanghera, 2001)

The reason for this tension, expressed here in the image of a PR practitioner as an incompetent and pushy peddler of his master's goods, stems partly from the fundamental difference in the professional identity of journalists and public relations practitioners. Journalism textbooks are quite unanimous in their explanation of the fundamentals (Randall, 2000, p. 3; Harcup, 2004, pp. 2-3; Sanders, 2003, p. 161) expressed most succinctly as:

[T]he purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing. [...]

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power. (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 12)

These principles are also treated as universal, recognized by journalists all over the world (Burns, 2002, p. 10), and they serve to differentiate journalists from PR people:

Are public relations practitioners also journalists, because they are employees whose work is published in newspapers and magazines? The occupational group that is journalism, as represented by unions and associations, argues that these writers are not journalists, because their text is a form of advocacy, intended to persuade, rather than an articulation of the facts. (Burns, 2002, p. 17)

The professional identity of public relations practitioners is a more complex matter: it is a question of finding a compromise between serving the client and serving 'the Truth'. L'Etang (2001, pp. 63-68) shows the importance of the concept of the truth in the early years of the IPR when it was searching for the occupation's identity. Nowadays, while the practice is defined in various ways — for example, with reference to reputation, relationship or communication management — values such as honesty, truth and public interest tend to be articulated in codes of conduct and understood as a framework within which a set of technical, expert activities is conducted. Although PR is guided, at least in principle, by the same respect for the truth and public interest as journalism (see for example the IPR Code of Conduct), in practice these values may be refracted through the prism of client interests. These different frames of reference mean that on occasion journalists and PR practitioners clash over access to facts: where access is denied or manipulated through selection and presentation, journalistic hackles are raised.<sup>8</sup>

Here the relationship between the two occupations is tackled selectively by focussing on mentions of career moves between the two found in *PR Week*, in 1996-1998, and in some cases followed up in other print media. The magazine's reporting puts a premium on changes in high level jobs, unexpected moves or well-known personalities. As such, the source is not useful in showing the full extent to which practitioners move between the two professions, but it is helpful in drawing a picture of movements of people in prestigious jobs.

It is quite clear that people move between the two occupations predominantly in one way: from journalism, or more accurately, jobs in media organisations, to PR, both in-house and consultancy jobs. There is also a clear pattern of journalistic specialisms translating into PR specialisms.

News, political reporting, and senior editorial roles in national newspapers or broadcast newsrooms are a path to PR jobs focused on media relations for political parties, government or large organisations. For example, Conservative Party Central Office made a number of such appointments in 1995-1999, starting with two directors of communication: Charles Lewington (1996-1997; ex-*Sunday Express* political editor) and Amanda Platell (1999-2001; ex-*Sunday Express* executive editor). *PR Week's* article on changes at Conservative Central Office commented on Lewington's appointment as the Tory response to the role played by another ex-political journalist, Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's press secretary at the Labour Party, before going on:

The new-look press office team — Sheila Gunn from the Times dealing with the lobby, Paul Hooper from the Sun handling the tabloids [...] has been less than entirely successful.[...] One thing Sheila Gunn will have learned is that the skills of a good journalist do not automatically translate into good PR handling. (Bevan, 1996b)

Other political parties continued to mine the same field for media relations expertise: for example, Jeff Postlewaite, local government correspondent for the *Evening Standard* was reported as moving to a press secretary job for John Prescott, the Labour Party deputy leader (Rogers, 1996a); while, almost at the same time, Jane Bonham-Carter went from a career in current affairs (as producer and editor of well-known current affairs programmes for the BBC and later Channel 4) to head communications for the Liberal Democrats (Gray, 1996a). She became Baroness Bonham-

Carter of Yarnbury in 2004. Such career changes were by no means a new development, as David Walker reminded *Guardian* readers by pointing out that ex-journalists had served as press secretaries to a number of previous Prime Ministers (Francis Williams, Joe Haines and Bernard Ingham working for Clement Atlee, Harold Wilson and Margaret Thatcher respectively, see Walker, 1998).

Expertise gained from covering the City or business beats appears to have been a well-established route to financial PR. A number of such career changes were reported, for example: in 1996 Mike Tate, ex-city editor at *The Times*, which he had left in 1992, joined Ludgate consultancy from the *Observer* ("Tate Takes on Account Director Role", 1996); Marc Popiolek, former editor of the *Daily Telegraph* Questor column, moved to Gavin Anderson after more than two years with Financial Dynamics (Dowman and Bevan, 1996); John Eisenhammer, financial editor at the *Independent*, was recruited by Lowe Bell Consultants; in 1997 Allan Piper joined Citigate Communications from his job as the news editor of the *Financial Mail on Sunday* (Garside, 1997b); Peter Rogers, the *Independent* financial editor, was appointed chief press spokesman at the Bank of England (Kavanagh, 1997); and in 1998, Michael Walters joined Square Mile Communications from the city editor job at the *Daily Mail*. Again, career changes from business journalism to financial PR were nothing new in the 1990s: in the first generation of financial PR specialists, those who went into practice around the late 1960s, many were ex-journalists, such as Roddy Dewe, one of the founders of Dewe Rogerson; and John Coyle, billed by the *Observer* as 'one of the founding fathers of financial PR' (Coyle, 2004).

However common such career changes might have been, there is evidence to show that they could be difficult for the people involved. For many ex-journalists, it did not take long to beat a retreat from PR back into journalism. For example, Jeff Randall moved to Financial Dynamics in 1995 from the post of city editor at the *Sunday Times* and then, after only six months, back to the same paper as assistant editor, reportedly taking a pay cut (Bevan, 1996a). As careers of others show, the door between PR and journalism could swing both ways: Andy Cornelius left the *Daily Telegraph* (city news editor) for Dewe Rogerson in 1996, then he went to the *Independent* as business and city news editor, only to leave after eight months in 1999 for a directorship at Citigate Dewe Rogerson ("Cornelius Quits Independent", 1999). Another financial journalist who moved between the two occupations, Peter Krijgsman, offered this explanation of his brief tenure, of a few days only, at Gavin Anderson in 1988:

Gavin Anderson was a pretty small agency at that time and was struggling to make itself felt [...]. 'Essentially I was joining a marginal agency from a marginal trade magazine [Corporate Money] and it wasn't serving either of us well. If I had been a heavy hitter from the Sunday Times I might have been able to build up business. (Joyce, 1997)

This is a clear indication that the value of journalists to a PR company resides in their business contacts as well as in their knowledge of the media.

## Public relations practitioners and politicians

If movements between journalism and public relations were, and judging by more up-to-date reports, still remain, based on media expertise, jobs in public relations and politics were swapped on the basis of expertise in policy making and (political) campaigning. Following career developments mentioned in *PR Week* in 1996-1998 which spanned the worlds of PR practice and national politics reveals a number of jobs which seem to draw on the same expertise: politicians, i.e. elected Members of Parliament (MPs); PR consultants, described either as lobbyists or public affairs specialists; PR specialists working for the government (permanent civil servants); special advisers<sup>9</sup>; researchers, working for MPs or for political parties; and PR practitioners, usually described with labels using the term 'communications', working for political parties, trade unions or other organisations. In comparison with media relations and journalism, there is less of a sense of one route in the world of careers in politics and PR. It is possible to build up the required expertise in any one of these jobs and exploit it in almost any other. Let us follow a few such career routes.

A career in the world of politics and communication could be based on expertise developed in-house working for a trade union and then gather momentum moving through public affairs consultancy and/or other high-powered in-house jobs. Chris Savage's professional history since the late 1990s is a good example: in 1997 he left the Trades Union Congress (TUC) where he was a senior policy adviser (head of the industry policy unit) to join a lobbying consultancy called the Public Policy Unit (Macrae, 1997). After roughly a year, he joined Shandwick ("Savage Moves from PPU", 1998) where he stayed until his next move to Central Railway (a railway company) in 2001, before he went back into consultancy, at Foresight Communications, in 2004 (Chandiramani, 2004)<sup>10</sup>. His work in all of these jobs revolved around transport, regulation and competition, utilities, and defence — all on his beat while at the TUC.

The CV of another successful PR practitioner, Colin Byrne, shows that well-rounded experience of politics and campaigning is also a solid basis for a career in public affairs, and that strengthening such credentials with personal ties to powerful individuals can only help. Byrne's career started in 1981 at the Automobile Association and subsequently encompassed PR jobs for the National Union of Students, the Prince of Wales's business leaders' forum, and the National Union of Farmers, before a five-year period in the Labour Party's press office, from where he moved into consultancy life, becoming a director of Shandwick in 1996, managing director of Shandwick Public Affairs in 1997, joint CEO of Weber Shandwick in 2001, and in 2003, CEO of Weber Shandwick UK and Ireland (Freedman, 2003).

On at least two occasions in 2003 *PR Week* reminded its readers that Byrne had excellent New Labour contacts, notably Peter Mandelson, who had been best man at Byrne's wedding and who Byrne referred to as 'friend and mentor' (Freedman, 2003; "Paul Dacre ... you took hell of a beating", 2003).

Labour credentials were more than just a matter of the social circles in which one moved, they were an asset that rapidly appreciated in value in the run-up to and immediately following the general election of 1997. After three terms in government, the Conservative Party looked vulnerable and lobbyists and their clients were taking notice. Amongst references to new appointments and job changes, *PR Week* talked about 'an expected flood of former Labour researchers' moving into lobbying (Bevan, 1997c) and Labour 'front bench advisers and party workers looking to move into the commercial world following the election' (Nicholas, 1997a). Indeed a number did move, some in advance of the election, others in the immediate aftermath. For example, Anne Rossiter (researcher to Labour MP Glenda Jackson) joined Fishburn Hedges in 1996 ("News", 1996). In 1997, Pete Metcalfe (researcher to Labour shadow energy minister, John Battle) became a public affairs manager for British Nuclear Fuels (Bevan, 1997b). Another post-election appointment was that of Steve Barwick (adviser to Margaret Beckett while shadow Health Secretary and then Shadow Trade and Industry Secretary) to a job at GPC Connect, a public affairs consultancy. New Labour credentials and contacts were important not only for individual careers, but also for consultancies: Tim Bell's corporate and public affairs consultancies suffered 'a drop in business' around the time of the election (Garside, 1998b), the implication being that their past close association with the Conservative Party was to blame.

The changing political landscape in Britain in the late 1990s makes it a particularly interesting period for analysing public affairs networks. The strain put on the system through years of political sleaze and the public investigation of lobbying in the media and through CSPL inquiries and reports made lobbyists and politicians conscious of the need to tread carefully. Before the 1997 general election, there was an anticipation of imminent changes in the political culture, personalities, and policies, accompanied by some anxiety as to what the exact shape of these changes would be:

It is widely believed that a whole new climate of open government is about to sweep over Westminster and Whitehall and lobbyists who want to survive will have to adapt. Not only have some well-established figures — cabinet ministers among them — disappeared, but the composition of Parliament is younger and there are more female MPs. New relationships will have to be forged. (Lee, 1997)

The movement of people within the circuit, shown above, was one way in which the public affairs world was adjusting to the new political landscape. Another response to change, hinted at in an account offered by a practitioner, was to re-think, or at least to re-present, the expertise sold to clients:

These were heady days for lobbyists. The business community and other key sectors knew that change was about to happen but were uncertain about its nature. They needed advice on the likely policy agenda and help dealing with the key decision makers. The old days of lunch at the Carlton Club were to become as irrelevant to lobbying as socialism was to become to New Labour. (Bingle, 1997)

Lobbyists began to talk about 'ethical lobbying', 'strategic lobbying', 'new lobbying' or (new) public affairs: the industry was at pains to get away from the image of fixers selling access and contacts and to be seen as policy experts and strategists selling advice.

The industry as a whole needs to stress that while face-to-face access to ministers and their advisers can be important [...] it is not central to public affairs. What really matters is knowledge of political processes and expertise in drawing up and implementing strategy. (Gray, 1998)

As in other matters, such as regulation, the reputation-building effort was publicly undermined by other, perhaps more pragmatic, views, such as:

[t]he process hasn't changed. What has changed is access. Those lobbyists who can't get access talk about strategy. (Garside, 1997a)

Interestingly, this opinion was offered by the same practitioner, Peter Bingle, who two weeks after this quote appeared in print was explaining on the pages of *PR Week* 'Why it's goodbye lobbying, hello new public affairs' (Bingle, 1997).

Elected politicians, whether at the national level, serving as Members of Parliament, or at the local level, serving as Councillors, are key elements of what is here referred to as the circuit of power, i.e. a network of prestigious jobs in the media, public relations and politics. Politicians as decisions makers are the lobbyists' targets, but some of them are also lobbyists themselves. A year ahead of the election, *PR Week* commented on 'the lure of Parliament' estimating that the Conservative Party alone had more than 20 prospective parliamentary candidates for the next election who 'currently work in public affairs or communications' (Gray, 1996b). Immediately after the election, a headline in the magazine claimed that 'PR proves fast track to Parliament' reporting that 'at least 16 new MPs come from PR and lobbying backgrounds', nine of them sitting on the Labour benches (Bevan, 1997b)<sup>11</sup>. A lobbying consultancy, Rowland Sallingbury Casey, had employed three of the new MPs. This was not a coincidence; equally there could not have been many organisations that could boast to have had one, let alone three MPs, among its employees.

The relationship between lobbyists and politicians could be seen as that between suppliers and purveyors of political influence. Viewed in the context of individual careers, it is more a matter of acquisition and exploitation of the key resource — political influence — consisting of knowledge of the political processes and personalities, as well as an ability to read the prevailing political climate, policy initiatives, and the ebb and flow of power through political networks. One way in which this expertise could be acquired and used across various jobs is demonstrated in the CV of John Bercow, MP for Buckingham (Conservative) in the House of Commons since 1 May 1997. His official political biography ([www.dodonline.co.uk](http://www.dodonline.co.uk)) suggests that he went from student politics in 1984-87 into local politics (Lambeth Borough Council, 1986-1990), and then consultancy — six years with Rowland Sallingbury Casey — before becoming a special adviser to Virginia Bottomley, Heritage Secretary, in 1995. He left in 1996 to work part-time as a consultant for Westminster Strategy and to campaign in his prospective constituency (Dowman, 1996b). Bercow had contested two general elections (1987, 1992) before being elected to the House of Commons, where he joined the front benches in 2001 as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury and then Shadow Secretary for

International Development (2003-2004). Should his party win an election, a CV like Bercow's makes him a potential candidate for a government post. Here we have an example of the same expertise being used, without any apparent difficulty or conflict, in different jobs — public office and commercial consultancy. Bercow's career choice seems to have been politics, while consultancy was a useful sideline. Jack McConnell, MSP, Scottish First Minister, is another politician who used a job in lobbying as 'a staging post', to borrow a phrase from *PR Week*, in his case to the Scottish Executive. After years of leading the Scottish Labour Party (1992-98), McConnell became the Chief Executive of Public Affairs Europe (1998-1999), a lobbying consultancy, a joint venture between a successful Scottish PR consultancy (Beattie Media) and lawyers Maclay Murray and Spens ("McConnell Quits Scottish Labour", 1998). In this case, the lobbying job proved more problematic when in 1999 a sting operation by the *Observer* led to an expose, similar to that of Drapergate, of lobbying in Scotland. Lobbygate, as it came to be known, focused on a Beattie Media employee, Kevin Reid, son of the then Secretary of State for Scotland, John Reid, apparently trading on this connection. This raised concerns about close links between lobbyists and politicians in Scotland, and McConnell's name inevitably came centre stage (for a detailed account see Schlesinger et al., 2001, pp. 226-244).

Connections between journalists, lobbyists and politicians have been treated as a threat to standards in public life both in institutional and critical terms. It has been argued in media comment, in official inquiries and in critical analysis (Franklin, 2003, 1994, 1997) that standards are being eroded. In the 1990s, the attention focused on spin, particularly on the way in which the Labour government managed media coverage of its policies and personalities; on the politicisation of the Government Information and Communication Service; and the weakened boundaries between public and private interests, which lay at the heart of the lobbying scandals. At the same time, however, the movement of people through the circuit continued, and if anything, the tracks were getting deeper. This raises a question about the actual, practical value of public image to an occupation. Whatever might have been said about PR, there is no evidence that fewer people work in it, fewer organisations use it, or that there is a long-term trend of diminishing expenditure on such services. Judging by the place communications specialists routinely occupy at the high table — whether in politics, business campaigns, or public feasts of honour, as we have seen looking at PR barons — the precise damage, if any, to the occupation resulting from its poor public image seems rather difficult to locate.

## Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, a question was asked about the main factors which influenced UK public relations practice in the late 1990s. As has subsequently been shown, there have been a number of interlinked influences, which could be summarised as clients, competition, and public image.

The relationship practitioners build with their clients appears to be critical in establishing a consultant's security that goes beyond contractual commitments. This may in turn bring more work without the need for expensive pitching. Another outcome of good client relations is felt in the reputation the consultancy acquires, which circulates through recommendations. Client relations are managed by recognised account management skills (for example,

accounting for decisions made, work undertaken, time spent on tasks, results achieved). At the same time as shaping routine, daily work, client relations are partly responsible for overservicing, which in turn is a hidden cost, possibly borne mostly by the consultancy juniors. In this way, client relations may influence the economic basis of the business and its labour market.

Key to understanding client relations is the notion of 'chemistry', by which practitioners mean intuitive judgements — made by both partners — and the ensuing level of trust and comfort in the relationship. Studies of management consultants (discussed in Chapter 4) have problematised both the concept of knowledge and of the professions. For example, Reed (1996) showed that there are different ways in which the knowledge base, occupational power strategies, and organisational forms are interrelated. Fores, Glover and Lawrence (1991) pointed out that traditional approaches to the study of professionalism foreground one side of the professional practice — that based on abstract knowledge — at the expense of another, 'the more important qualities of skill, creativity, judgement, and *savoir faire*, and the constructive response to the uncertain and unprogrammable.' (Fores et al., 1991, p. 97 cited in Alvesson, 1993, p.999). A similar distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge has also been made in studies of organisational knowledge (see Tell, 2004, pp. 443-445).

In public relations consultancy both types of knowledge (formal or professional; personal or intuitive) play their part. While chemistry is emphasised in dealing with clients, evaluation, and the technical knowledge of quantification associated with it, becomes important in competitive situations where other occupations such as marketing or advertising might be involved. Evaluation is also an important image building tactic directed primarily at potential clients. As we have seen, in the debate discussed in this chapter, evaluation was clearly perceived as a tool of persuasion, and, perhaps less explicitly, as a way of obscuring the uncertainty involved in the highly complex contexts for PR work.

Competition between providers of PR — which hardly gets a mention in standard PR textbooks or academic research — is nevertheless fundamental to any explanation of the state of the occupation. Competition appears to be the constant factor undermining all attempts at professionalisation. We have seen the role it played in the institutional efforts at standardising evaluation practice; we have all seen competition at work in the efforts aimed at improving the public image of public relations. The occupation's stance on regulation articulated how the occupation perceived its public image and the ambitions it harboured in this respect — becoming a public institution. The ambition was frustrated by disagreements rooted in the positions occupied in the competitive market by practitioners.

The importance of the symbolic representation of public relations, underscoring its public image, was made clear in the publicly articulated endorsement or rejection of values represented by well-known individual practitioners. Names by which the practice should be known were another site of this symbolic effort. A range of terms are used routinely in PR practice, for example a lobbyist may go as a public affairs specialist, but would bridle at 'public rela-



tions'. Wood & Higgins's (1999) survey of Scottish organisations showed a range of departmental titles given to the function, for example, communications (& media/public affairs), public relations, corporate communication, corporate affairs, internal communication, press office, and publicity. The occupation's well demonstrated awareness of how such denominations function could be observed early in 1996, when Burson-Marsteller re-named itself as a 'perception management consultancy', rather than a public relations one (Bevan, 1996d) — *PR Week's* editorial was critical of the move ("PR shouldn't be a shameful term", 1996).

The public image and status of the occupation are constantly under attack, but at the same time there is a clear elite of practitioners who receive public signs of respect and recognition. It seems this paradox can be explained with a reference to a classic profession, medicine, that is invoked by all aspirants to the title. Instances of poor practice by individual doctors are often reported and there are abundant media stories about them. At the same time, nobody would seriously suggest that the institution of medical practice is of dubious value to society. It seems that the opposite happens in public relations: the practice — there is no 'institution' — is seen as highly suspicious, but individual practitioners may command recognition and trust.

## Notes

- <sup>1)</sup> On 23 August 1996, *PR Week* printed a letter from Colin Thompson, a PRCA Financial Consultant, reminding readers of the PRCA guidelines on charging for creative pitches introduced in 1993. The only statement that can be read as a comment on the actual practice was "While the majority of consultancies are not members they are in essence averaging small incomes, with obvious expectations, even so the PRCA represents 80 per cent of the fee income for the industry. The cost of creative pitches can be very expensive and to expect consultancies invited to pitch as one of five, or even more, with odds of 5:1 or worse, can be a major strain on profitability which is one reason why so many consultancies who are here today will not be here tomorrow". The letter seems to hint that bigger, more powerful agencies do follow the guidelines. On balance, however, the extent of this practice remain unclear.
- <sup>2)</sup> Fairchild, Michael, *Research and Evaluation Toolkit*, IPR, PRCA, PR Week, London, 1999.
- <sup>3)</sup> OTS stands for Opportunities to See.
- <sup>4)</sup> The reported margin of error (7%) does not change the suggested reading of the key findings. More detailed breakdown figures, however, had an even larger margin of error 10-15%, making them effectively useless in terms of providing a clear picture of the practice.
- <sup>5)</sup> AVE stands for Advertising Value Equivalent, a measure which relies on calculating the value of the coverage in terms of how much it would cost to pay for the same space if bought in as advertising. The measure, despite its strong condemnation by the industry, remains in use. See *PR Week Platform* column on 18 October 1996.
- <sup>6)</sup> The IPR website accessed in March 2004 showed that the Toolkit was in its third edition (<http://www.ipr.org.uk>).
- <sup>7)</sup> The phrase came from Frank Dobson, Shadow Environment Secretary and was widely reported on 21 August 1996, see for example example Peston, R. 'Maurice Saatchi among 14 New Working Peers.' *Financial Times*.
- <sup>8)</sup> An insider's view of the relationships within the circuit of power is offered by Jones (1997) who gives more detail on the work of some of the personalities mentioned here.

▪ The role of special advisers became particularly controversial during the first years of the Labour government and was eventually dealt with by CSPL in its Ninth Report, *Defining the Boundaries within the Executive: Ministers, Special Advisers and the permanent Civil Service*(Cm 5775). Special advisers were defined as government servants, i.e. paid out of the public purse, but temporary — their appointment is tied to the tenure in office of the appointing minister. Although their actions are governed by some of the same principles as those applying to Civil Servants, their role is a political one.

<sup>10</sup>There is a discrepancy in the two *PR Week* reports of Savage's career referred to here in that the later one, dated 1 July 2004, has him joining Shandwick straight from the TUC.

<sup>11</sup>In fact, cross checking information provided by *The Times Guide to the House of Commons 1997* and *The Vacher Dod Guide to the New House of Commons 1997* showed that 41 MPs had had a job in public relations or communications. It's interesting to put this figure in context: 70 of the new MPs were lawyers, 57 declared their profession as teachers and had worked as teachers for more than four years at some stage in their careers.

## CHAPTER 3: THE INDUSTRY AND THE LABOUR MARKET

This chapter is primarily concerned with the economic and structural factors of the public relations consultancy industry. The importance of consultancy to the public relations occupation is discussed in Chapter 4. Briefly, consultancy can be seen as a 'concentrated form of the practice' and a 'standard-bearer' for the occupation (L'Etang, 2001, p. 105). The lack of systematic knowledge about public relations consultancy, especially its economic side, discussed in the following chapter, is another reason for the focus of this current chapter. Finally, if public relations is an expert service bought and sold in a market, a better understanding of how that market functions is necessary. This involves an examination of who supplies public relations services and how the supply is organised:

- What is the economic basis of the suppliers' activity?
- What types of actor are active in the market?
- How have the market dynamics and actors' competitive behaviour created a recognisable and relatively stable pattern of activity — the public relations consultancy industry?

Findings of the analysis are organised into two sections: the first, 'Consultancy industry', examining the public relations company as part of the consultancy industry; the second, 'PR labour market' focusing on individual practitioners, their careers, and the labour market in which their work and expertise are bought and sold. This part of the thesis combines re-analysis of secondary data, and examination of the material drawn from trade magazines and fieldwork (see Chapter 5: Methodology for more detail).

Providing an analysis of the PR consultancy industry involves piecing the picture together from different sources using a range of measures, and therefore a brief explanation of the measures adopted both by the original sources and by this analysis is needed here. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses turnover as a measure of output; employment figures; and approximate Gross Value Added<sup>1</sup>. The information is generated through the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) survey applied to a sample drawn from the Inter Departmental Business Register (IDBR)<sup>2</sup>. Measures produced in the trade magazine league tables, a major source of industry data in this chapter, are broadly similar in using turnover and employment (without a precise definition of the exact meaning of the employment figures). Additional information provided by *PR Week's* tables includes fee income — which measures the value of what might be called pure consultancy — and the number of clients served. Given this information, it is possible to offer a rough measure of productivity: ONS calculates the Gross Value Added per job (Daffin & Lau, 2002); a similar calculation is possible for the league tables (average fee income per employee). Consequently, measures used in this chapter are: fee income, turnover, staff numbers, number of clients, and productivity.

*PR Week*, *Campaign* and *Marketing* magazines, as well as annual reports of publicly owned PR consultancies, were scanned as a source of insight into the changes in the industry and strategies pursued by PR companies. Finally, interview data from fieldwork conducted in 1997 and 1998 have also been utilised where appropriate to complement the picture of PR consultancy industry in the late 1990s.

## Consultancy industry

### Economic basis

The economic basis of the PR consultancy is selling expertise parcelled in time units, in other words 'selling time [which is] the basis for all our costing systems' (Interview, 4/2/97). This practice is common to other consultancy services such as accountancy, law and management. Attaching a financial value to a unit of expert work is an operation that takes account of a number of factors:

...the fee you charge is a factor of the salary of the individual, plus the overhead, plus the profit margin. (Interview, 4/7/1997).

In fact, the calculation may start with time physically available to be sold, i.e. number of hours a day and working days in a year an employee can work, but it also incorporates more subtle judgements about the market. Well-connected, powerful consultants could command rates well above the rest: for example, *PR Week* printed a story, in which Sir Tim Bell refuses to comment on the allegations that he had charged a client £750 an hour, over 'three-times the average rate for agency heads involved in crisis management work' (Gray, 1997a). Further on in the story, the PRCA chairman is quoted saying that rates between £350-500 may not be unusual for top practitioners. It also appears that at least some financial PR work (takeovers) might be priced on a different basis: 'fees proportional to the transaction' (Training session, 22/7/98b). As takeover deals tend to be substantial, PR fees are also in that category, for example;

- Citigate ...may have made a great deal of money from its role in Granada's takeover of Forte. But if it netted a £1 million fee, that would represent less than one per cent of Granada's total outlay on advisers and underwriters of the bid. ("Quantifying the cost of success," 1997)
- PR programmes for flotations are fairly standard. The fee depends on the proceeds of the quotation. (Training session, 22/7/98b)

In 1998, a PRCA survey revealed that the charge-out rate for a board director averaged £140 per hour, while that of an account manager averaged £80 per hour, compared to management consultants commanding between £79-£164 per hour, for a seven-hour day (Beenstock, 1998).<sup>3</sup>

There are two more factors relevant to the discussion of fee levels: assumption about the proportion of available time that is successfully sold; and other sources of income. Consultants' time is either classified as client work, and that time is charged out to a client; or taken up with 'company business', time devoted to 'training, development,

staff meetings, marketing, new business proposals [...] This will vary according to the seniority of the person.' (Interview, 4/2/1997)<sup>4</sup>. In other words, more junior ranks may be expected to charge out the highest proportion of their time. Although fees are the main source of income for a consultancy, there are others, most notably 'mark-up', i.e. percentage added on to the cost of services bought in on the client's behalf, for example printing. The industry recommended mark up level, 'normal' in the words of one of the trainers, is 17.5% (Training session, 6/8/98a). PR Week league tables are based on fees, defined as fee plus mark up.

Thus expertise and its financial value are inextricably linked in the typical structure of a PR consultancy, with a scale of charge-out rates and equity ownership corresponding to the professional/management hierarchy (see Figure 1).

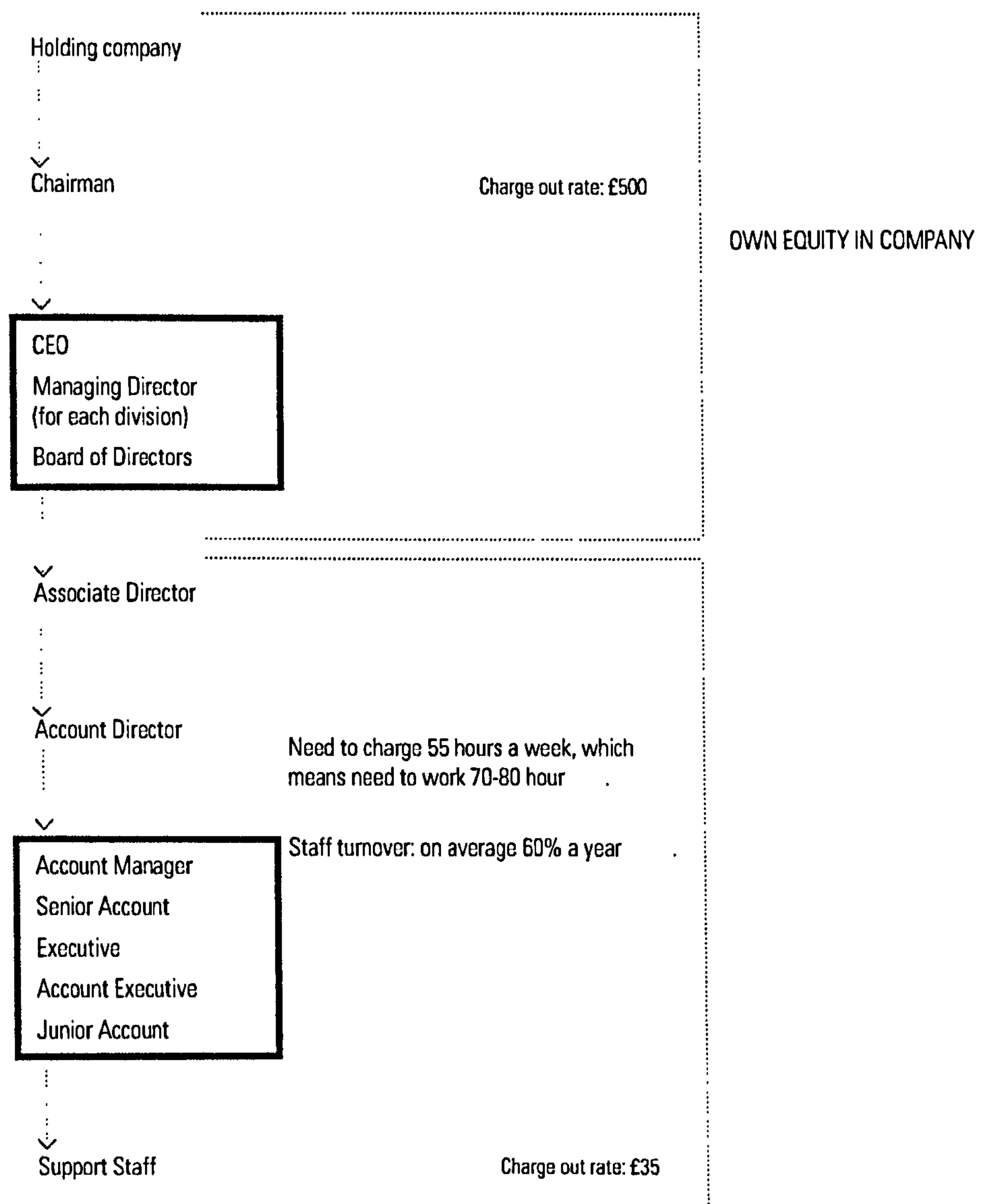


Figure 1: Consultancy Structure

## Structure

The British public relations consultancy industry in the late 1990s comprised five types of actors: international groups (such as Hill & Knowlton or Burson-Marsteller), substantial independent operations (in the UK employing 30-40 people), networks of independent businesses (e.g. Worldcom), smaller specialist operations, and independent practitioners with associates (Training session, 6/8/98a). Taking *PR Week's* Top 150 consultancies as the most extensive sources of information on the consultancy sector, Table 1 below offers a description of the sector covering years 1995-1999.<sup>5</sup>

| Year | Fee income (£) | Clients | Staff | Productivity (£) | Turnover (£) |
|------|----------------|---------|-------|------------------|--------------|
| 1995 | 291,591,159    | 7,863   | 4,901 | 53,751           | 476,990,887  |
| 1996 | 340,412,213    | 8,663   | 5,446 | 55,393           | 582,994,646  |
| 1997 | 366,082,241    | 5,793   | 5,780 | 56,686           | 645,158      |
| 1998 | 437,629,497    | 6,110   | 6,646 | 57,457           | 825,405,141  |
| 1999 | 496,325,806    | 6,466   | 7,147 | 59,959           | 910,913,376  |

Table 1: Top 150 consultancies: economic measures. Fee income means fee for public relations services + mark up. Turnover denotes PR fee income and income from non-PR activities. Source: *PR Week*

First of all, let us put the figures offered in Table 1 in perspective by comparing the biggest ten PR, advertising and management businesses. The top 10 PR agencies' income in 1997 was £141,942,909 and £189,394,439 in 1998; the ten top advertising agencies earned £412,587,000 according to a combination of 1997 and 1998 data (see Tables 2 and 4 in the Appendix). In other words, the biggest PR players earned less than half of what the biggest advertising companies did. In 1999, the top management consultancy earner, Andersen Consulting, had a fee income of £609 million (see Table 3 in the Appendix) at the same time as International Public Relations, the top PR earning consultancy, earned just £38.6 million in fees ("Top 150 PR consultancies", 2000). In that year the top ten PR consultancies together earned £197.8 million; the figure for the top ten UK management consultancies was £1,769 million — nearly nine times as much. In relative terms, then, PR consultancy appears to be a small industry.

Further analysis of Table 1 reveals a number of clear features of the PR consultancy sector in the late 1990s. First, there was an enduring structure to the PR consultancy industry: a small number of very big players, a very large number of small players, and a thin middle layer. The structure is clear and consistent across criteria such as fee income, staff and client numbers and is illustrated below in Figure 2 (see Table 4 and Figures 3 and 4 in the Appendix for the distribution of staff and client numbers across the sector).

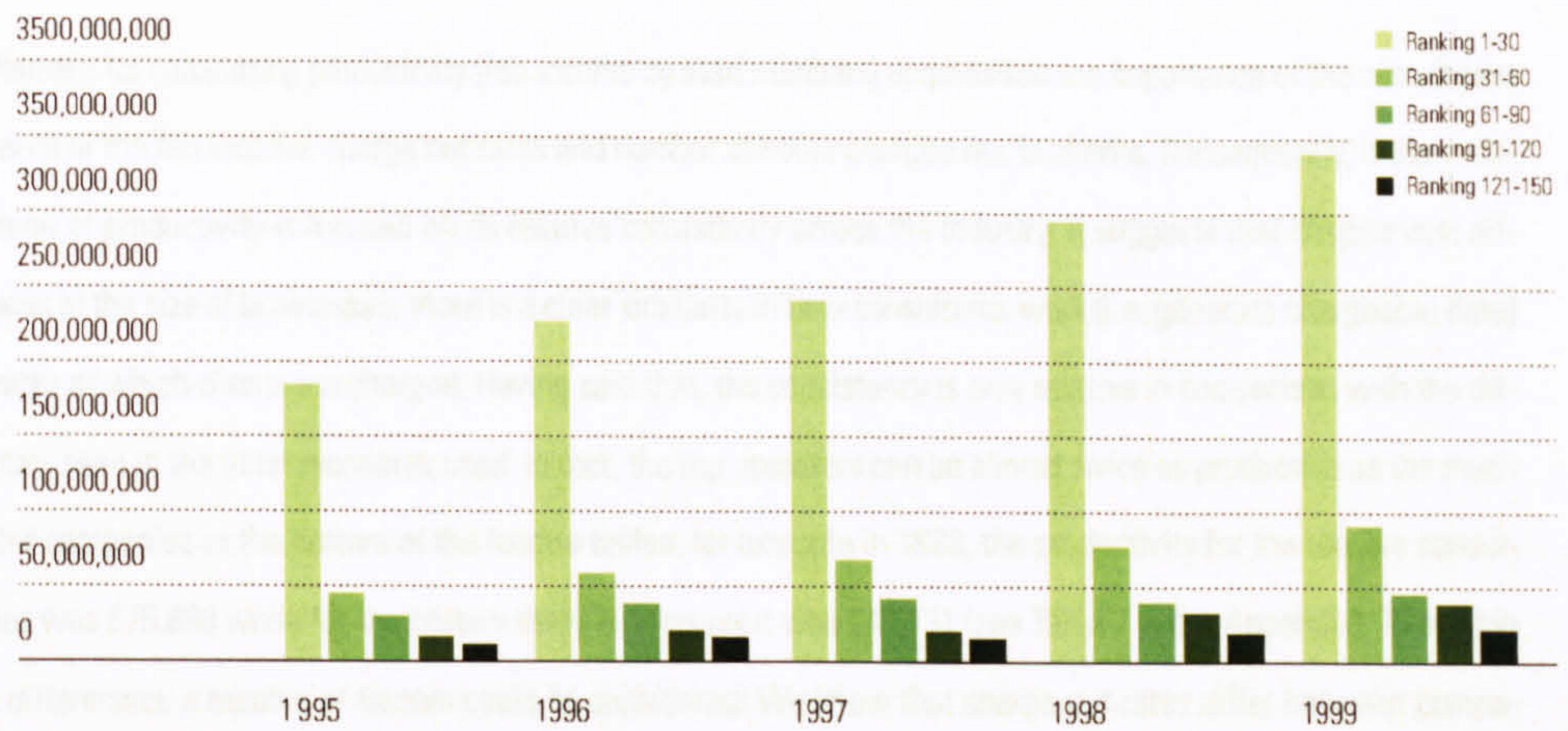


Figure 2: Top 150 consultancies. Fee income

The top 3% of consultancies accounted for around 30% of the total fee income earned by the top 150, while the bottom 60% companies struggled to share 20% of the market, as shown below in Table 5.

| Year            | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Ranking 1-5     | 27%  | 27%  | 27%  | 31%  | 30%  |
| Ranking 1-10    | 40%  | 39%  | 39%  | 43%  | 42%  |
| Ranking 1-30    | 64%  | 63%  | 64%  | 67%  | 66%  |
| Ranking 31-60   | 16%  | 17%  | 18%  | 16%  | 17%  |
| Ranking 61-90   | 9%   | 10%  | 10%  | 8%   | 8%   |
| Ranking 91-120  | 6%   | 6%   | 6%   | 5%   | 5%   |
| Ranking 121-150 | 4%   | 4%   | 3%   | 4%   | 3%   |

Table 5: Proportion of fee earned by consultancies grouped in rankings.

Second, the dominance of the big league is less pronounced if one looks at a different measure — productivity. There is a degree of consistency across the sector, as illustrated below by Figure 5, not present in fee income, staff and client numbers.

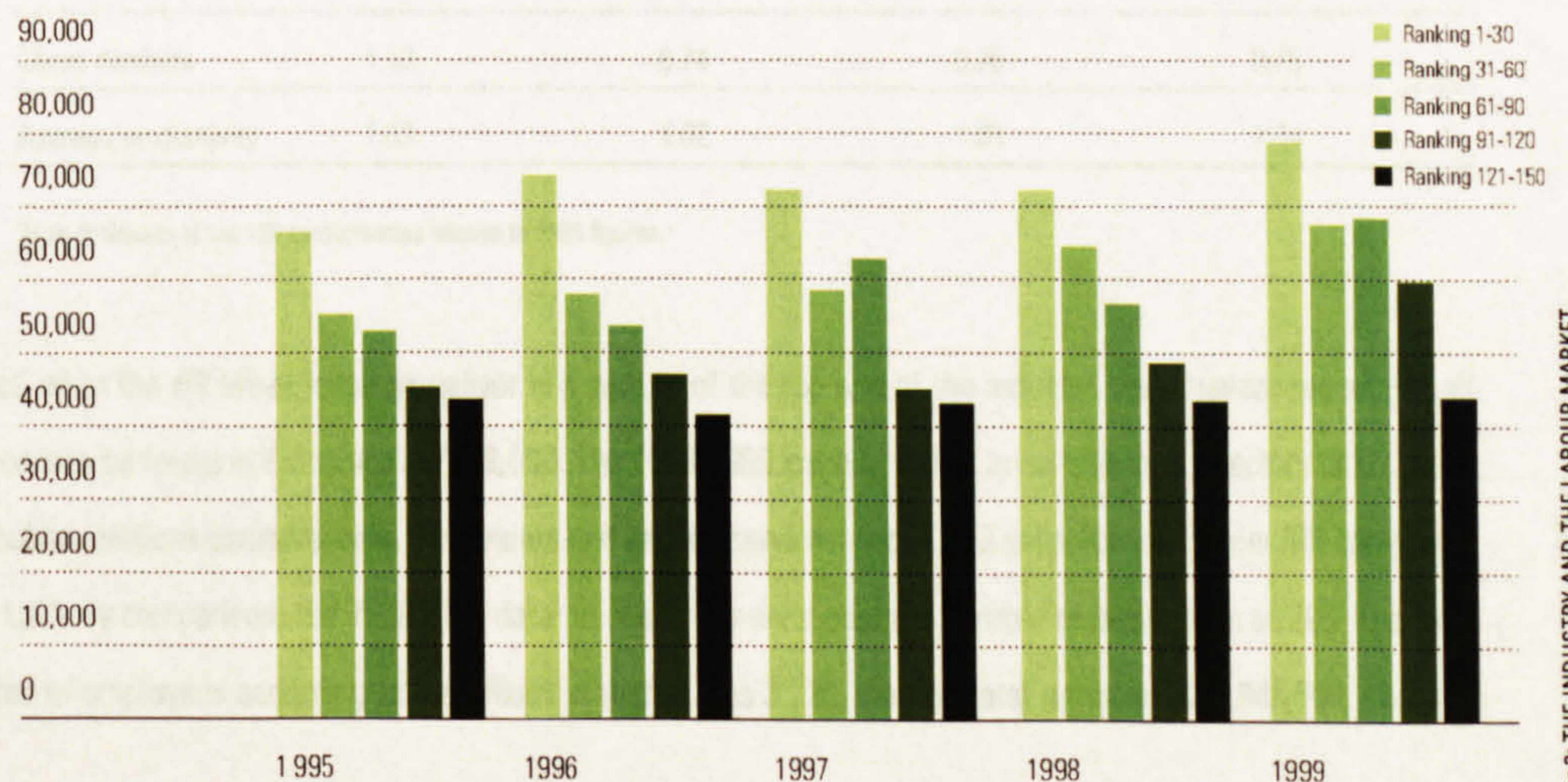


Figure 5: Top 150 consultancies. Productivity (£)

The formula for calculating productivity (fee income by staff numbers) emphasises the importance of the constituent elements of the fee income: charge out rates and number of hours charged out to clients. Consequently, if the interpretation of productivity is focused on its relative consistency across the industry, it suggests that despite vast differences in the size of businesses, there is a clear similarity in how consultants work (i.e. generate chargeable time) and rates at which clients are charged. Having said that, the consistency is only relative in comparison with the differences seen in the other measures used. In fact, the top operators can be almost twice as productive as the much smaller companies at the bottom of the league tables: for example in 1998, the productivity for the top five consultancies was £75,698 while for the bottom thirty businesses it was £43,131 (see Table 7 in the Appendix). To explain such differences, a number of factors could be considered. We know that charge out rates differ between companies and the differences may reflect the company's standing in the market as well as the type of work provided. The number of hours charged out to clients will depend on how many hours individual consultants had worked but, perhaps more importantly in a very competitive business, larger companies may be able to increase productivity by offering better support (standardised ways of delivering elements of work, better training, more IT support).

The third characteristic of the consultancy industry in the late 1990s was its growth. Table 8 below summarises growth rates of all the measures used relative to 1995. Fee income, turnover and staff numbers grew steadily from 1995 to 1999, but the faster rate of growth for turnover in comparison with the fee income suggest that businesses were more aggressive in exploiting other sources of revenue in addition to pure consultancy. Another change of business strategy may be represented by a decrease in client numbers relative to 1995. Since this change is not accompanied by shrinking of the business in terms of other measures used in this analysis, it must mean a more strategic approach to taking on more profitable accounts, for example bigger accounts which decrease business development costs for the consultancy and consequently improve the ratio of chargeable hours. Finally, the small gains in productivity suggest that no fundamental changes were made to ways of working.

|                      | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Fee income           | 1.17 | 1.26 | 1.29 | 1.46 |
| Turnover             | 1.22 | 1.35 | 1.73 | 1.91 |
| Staff numbers        | 1.11 | 1.18 | 1.36 | 1.46 |
| Client numbers       | 1.10 | 0.74 | 0.78 | 0.75 |
| Average productivity | 1.03 | 1.02 | 1.01 | 1.04 |

Table 8: Growth of the 150 consultancies relative to 1995 figures.

In fact, what the *PR Week* rankings deliver is a picture of the top end of the industry: the smallest fee across all the years to be found in the tables is £318,000. The 1998-1999 issue of *Hollis*, an established directory of UK press and public relations consultancies, freelancers and related services, lists 2,453 consultancies under 'PR consultancies: UK'. By comparison, the 1998 ONS data on public relations puts the number of businesses at 295. The total number of employees according to the official statistics was 3,720, and the total turnover £453,946,000, showing



a more conservative approach to generating such figures in comparison to *PR Week*. It also has to be remembered that the ONS statistics by definition cut out the smallest operators, which is the most likely explanation of the discrepancy between the trade directories and the ONS information<sup>7</sup>. It seems reasonable to conclude that the vast majority of PR businesses are likely to be small. If we took those into account, the bottom division in the league tables would become even bigger, with the effect of further accentuating the lead of the first division, i.e. the top thirty or even the top ten companies. However, as there are no published figures available on the entire consultancy sector, including the small players, this analysis can only suggest the overall pattern of the consultancy sector.

The picture presented so far has focused on the industry rather than on individual players. The following section attempts to re-dress this balance.

## Consolidation

In the mid-to late 1990s, the sector saw a high level of consolidation of ownership, effectively squeezing the independents out of the top end of the market. The pace of change as well as the tactics commonly used by the players require a more detailed analysis here.

The 1996 *PR Week* supplement The Top 150 PR consultancies wrote:

Although 1995 didn't quite produce the spending spree of the indulgent 1980s, mergers and acquisitions were definitely in vogue last year after the belt tightening of the early 1990s. Not a month went by in 1995 without a PR consultancy changing hands.

The most active shoppers by far were Citigate and Lowe Bell Communications. Between November 1994 and March this year, Citigate acquired Scottish agency Dunseath Stephen, Westminster Strategy (the first stage in the eventual 100 per cent acquisition of the company), South African investor relations and PR firm Greg Kukard Corporate services, design print and advertising agency Campaign Communications, and Leeds based PR agency BKW.

Sir Tim Bell's quoted company Chime Communications kicked off its expansion in October last year with the acquisition from the receivers of healthcare PR company MC<sup>2</sup>, which now trades as Green Moon Healthcare. A month later, Chime snapped up KBH Communications for £500,000, merging it with Lowe Bell Good Relations. (Izatt, 1996, p. 8)

The ten biggest UK consultancies of 1995, judged on fee income, are shown in Table 9.

| Consultancy                   | Fee income (£) | Staff | Owned                           |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Shandwick                     | 22,430,000     | 391   | Independent                     |
| Lowe Bell Communications      | 18,780,000     | 209   | Independent (Chime Comms)       |
| Countrywide Communications    | 13,507,826     | 213   | Omnicom                         |
| Hill and Knowlton             | 12,094,000     | 189   | WPP                             |
| Burson-Marsteller             | 11,010,475     | 147   | Young and Rubicam               |
| Dewe Rogerson                 | 10,726,000     | 143   | Independent                     |
| Financial Dynamics            | 8,316,295      | 53    | BDDP Advertising (51%)/FD (49%) |
| Citigate Communications       | 7,275,249      | 94    | Independent                     |
| Euro RSCG International Comms | 6,087,997      | 132   | Havas                           |
| Charles Barker                | 5,452,267      | 75    | Independent                     |

Table 9. Top Ten PR consultancies in 1995. Based on *PR Week*, 26 April 1996.

By the end of 1998, the picture has changed as Table 10 shows.

| Consultancy                    | Fee income (£) | Staff | Owned                 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| International Public Relations | 36,649,000     | 514   | Interpublic           |
| Bell Pottinger Communications  | 30,085,000     | 333   | Chime Comms (30% WPP) |
| Citigate Dewe Rogerson         | 26,532,536     | 311   | Incepta               |
| Hill and Knowlton              | 23,295,000     | 320   | WPP                   |
| Burson-Marsteller              | 17,917,000     | 173   | Young and Rubicam     |
| Countrywide Porter Novelli     | 17,912,610     | 266   | Omnicom               |
| Charles Barker BSMG            | 9,627,095      | 115   | BSMG                  |
| Ketchum                        | 9,607,929      | 136   | Omnicom               |
| Edelmann PR Worldwide          | 8,933,832      | 96    | Independent           |
| Euro RSCG International Comms  | 8,834,437      | 152   | Havas                 |

Table 10: Top Ten PR consultancies in 1998. Based on *PR Week*, 30 April 1999.

Although some of the consultancy names look familiar, the reality, as summarised in the 'owned' column, is different. In 1995, half of the top ten agencies were independent; in 1998 the only independent consultancy is down in 9th place. The comparison of the two tables reveals something of the story of frenzied acquisition deals in the industry. The sheer amount of detail involved in the narrative of this consolidation makes it hard to follow, but in this it offers a good reflection of the nature and the feel of the changes. Let us go through the ownership column of Table 10 from the top down and unravel some of the detail.

International Public Relations is a parent company created by the Interpublic Group to manage a range of different well-known brand names in the PR consultancy business acquired by Interpublic between 1996 and 1999: Weber PR (acquired Dec. 1996); Ludgate (bought by McCann-Erickson, part of Interpublic, in March 1997); Shandwick, and Golin/Harris, a Shandwick brand (acquired 1998) are the most significant names to mention here. The Interpublic Group, originally an advertising company quoted on the New York Stock Exchange in 1971, was by 2000 a vast marketing services group, comprising advertising, marketing, sports marketing, a range of public relations services, and events and meetings company.

Bell Pottinger Communications is the rebranded Lowe Bell, the main public relations business of the Chime Communications group, which changed its name in 1997 after 'The Lowe Group decided to exercise its rights under the name licence agreement we had with them, and ...withdrew our rights to use the name Lowe' (Chime Communications, Annual Report and Accounts 1997, p. 2). The company's equity was split among a number of shareholders: at the end of 1997 the company directors held approximately 11% of ordinary shares, but the single biggest shareholder was WPP which acquired 29.9% of stake in 1997 at the time when Chime acquired the advertising agency HHCL and Partners. *PR Week* reported the deal as being worth £20 million, and the £15m which WPP paid for the stake in Chime apparently made it possible for Chime to finance the acquisition (Nicholas, 1997c).

Citigate Dewe Rogerson is the rebranded Dewe Rogerson, an independent financial relations specialist agency after it was acquired in 1998 by Incepta. The Incepta group itself was created in 1997 from a merger of Citigate Communications and Incepta, sales promotion and publishing group. The deal, described by *PR Week* (Bevan, 1996f) as 'a reverse takeover' brought a range of successful PR companies into the publicly quoted Incepta thus allowing Citigate to pursue its acquisition plans in North America, Singapore and Malaysia. At the same time Incepta's profit after tax quadrupled from £9.9m in 1997 to £39m in 1998 (Incepta Group, Annual Report 1998, p. 57).

Burson-Marsteller at this stage was still owned by an American marketing and communications group, Young & Rubicam. In 2000 Young & Rubicam became part of WPP, adding Burson-Marsteller to the stable of strong PR interests already owned by the company, such as Hill & Knowlton, one place above B-M in this ranking.

Countrywide Porter Novelli is the old Countrywide Communications given a new name in the rebranding of the Omnicom's Communications International Group into Porter Novelli International in an effort to 'improve recognition of the group as an international player' ("Paul Vosloo", 1996).

Charles Barker, an independent consultancy created in a management buyout in 1992 when Corporate Communications was folding, was acquired in 1997 by an American PR agency Bozell Sawyer Miller, changing its name to Charles Barker BSMG. Its parent company, Bozell Worldwide was acquired in 1997 by True North Communications, an advertising group, which itself was acquired by the Interpublic Group in 2001 having been in trouble since it lost a \$1.5bn billing account in 2000 (MacMillan, 2001).

Ketchum was acquired by Omnicom in 1996, but retained its brand name, alongside other PR interests such as Porter Novelli International or Brodeur Worldwide.

Edelman is the UK arm of the Edelman PR Worldwide, the only independent agency in this ranking. Founded in 1952 by Daniel Edelman, the company opened its London office in 1967.

Euro RSCG International Communication is owned by the French advertising group Havas. In 1998 the company had three agencies in UK: Greenwood Tighe, Biss Lancaster and its subsidiary, Sandpiper.

The comparison of the ten top consultancies in 1995 and 1998 illustrates not only the extent of the acquisitions and mergers activity in the industry but also allows us to pinpoint some of the dynamics accompanying the changing market. We have seen that consolidation of ownership requires the holding groups to manage the new acquisition not only as businesses in terms of their structure and reporting lines, but also as known players in their markets — brand names. This can become rather confusing as well-known names disappear or reappear in new combinations.

### PR Brands

Shandwick offers a good example how acquisition and branding strategies intersected.

Founded by Peter Gummer (Lord Chadlington) and Richard Sermon in 1979, in 1986 Shandwick was listed on the London Stock Exchange. The company went through a period of extensive acquisitions in the late 1980s and ended up operating as a 'multitude of businesses and brands' one of which was Shandwick Consultants (Garside, 1998a). Like the rest of the industry in the UK, in the early 1990s Shandwick went through a difficult time: in 1993 the company's income fell by 3% and 'cost cutting was still the name of the game' ("Mixed fortunes", 1994). Acquisitions activity stopped in 1990 for several years. It seems that for some five years from the mid-1990s Shandwick was engaged in a process of brand management and consolidation. For example, it acquired PR Consultants in 1989, in 1995 its name was changed to Shandwick as part of the 're-branding exercise Shandwick is undertaking in its UK regions and international offices' (Garside, 1997e).

At its height Shandwick had 13 companies, but only two had the Shandwick name. Now there are eight companies, six of which carry the Shandwick brand. ("Survival guide", 1997, p.7)

The group, Shandwick UK, had been rebranded to Shandwick Public Relations in 1996 ("Dunn to depart Shandwick", 1996) then to Shandwick International, and in February 1998 to Shandwick International Public Relations ("Top 150 ups and downs", 1999). Indeed, 1998 was particularly important in this story: in January an announcement was made that the UK business was to be organised under two brands, Shandwick and Paragon, while Welbeck Golin/Harris was to become Shandwick/Welbeck. While the latter was confirmed, the first tactic was abandoned when Lord Chadlington announced his own plans to keep just two brand, Shandwick and Golin/Harris. At the same time operating costs were trimmed as a number of senior people left, a move seen as

preparation for the sale of the business. After the sale of the company to the Interpublic Group in 1998, Shandwick, and Golin/Harris were kept as separate brands, but in 2000 Shandwick was merged with another Interpublic brand, Weber, into Weber/Shandwick.

Brands, therefore, need to be managed to reflect the ownership, for example Miller/Shandwick, or Brodeur A Plus. At the same time a big company will retain a stable of brands to reflect its internal 'Chinese walls' for the purposes of managing client conflict:

[...] the separate, independent identities of BBDO Worldwide, DDB Needham Worldwide, TBWA International, the independent agencies within DAS Group and Communicade, and the other independent agencies have enabled the Omnicom Group to represent competing clients (Omnicom Annual Report 1996, p. 4).

Another point to make here is that the process of change in the consultancy sector was by no means begun and completed in the three-year period this analysis has focused on. Some of the big acquisitions, such as Young & Rubicam's takeover by WPP, or Interpublic's acquisitions of the True North Communications, fall outside the time period of this analysis. By the same token, acquisitions and mergers on a smaller scale have continued since. For example, in 2001, widely accepted as an exceptionally bad year for the industry, Incepta made twelve acquisitions in five countries (Annual Review 2002, p. 48); WPP's website (<http://www.wpp.com>) lists 31 acquisitions, described as 'key' in order to achieve the objective of positioning 'our portfolio in the faster growing functional and geographic areas' (WPP Annual Report and Accounts 2001, p. 12); Omnicom explained its acquisitions strategy in that year as follows:

Most of our acquisitions in 2001 were of small or medium-sized companies, operations that complement our existing businesses. [...] we found it more prudent to purchase companies whose clients are shared with other Omnicom operations. (Annual Report 2001, 'Letter from the President').

In brief, although mergers and acquisitions have been an important and constant feature of the consultancy sector, they were particularly prominent in 1995-2000, leading to a fundamental reshaping of the sector, which promises to endure for some time due to the more recent economic downturn affecting marketing services.

Now, it looks as though consolidation is moving towards its end game. [...] A new global communications skyline has been created. It will be dominated by the "supergroups" — WPP, Interpublic, Omnicom, Publicis — with Japan's Dentsu, ever eager to join the global dance but nervous about slipping up, emerging as a significant bankroller. (Tylee, 2002)

### Reasons for consolidation

The main reasons for the consolidation of ownership in the public relations lie outside PR itself, in the behaviour of advertising agencies adapting to changes in the market for advertising services. On the face of it, the late 1990s offered a favourable economic climate for advertising: generally strong, growing economies; client confidence and increased communication expenditure; clients' own growth strategies such as expansion into new markets; fairly

strong privatisation and demutualisation activity, as well as consolidation and growth in other industries. Below the surface, however, the advertising industry had to absorb the consequences of changes going back to the 1980s: proliferation of new media and fragmentation of the mass media market; pressure to change the traditional revenue basis from 15% of media costs to a more flexible fee system, for example reflecting results achieved; rapid changes in clients' advertising budgets; media costs increasing ahead of inflation; high interest rates demanding strong cash management; and agency mergers in order to match resources with requirements of multinational clients (Tinkelman, 1997). According to a *Campaign* comment, by mid-1990s 'geographical expansion [was] all but at an end'; advertising networks were casting around for new sources of revenue (Reid, 1996). What we observe in the public relations consultancy sector in the late 1990s was the consequence of strategies followed by the advertising industry globally in order to maintain an attractive rate of growth:

Revenue for ad agencies has kept pace with total spending by advertisers only by the infusion of non-advertising related functions, namely direct marketing and sales promotion ... In the '90s, agency heads rushed to acquire faster growing but still related communication industries such as public relations, brand consultancies, event marketing, health-care, and Web services firms. (Benza, 2003, p. 33)

These dynamics are clearly reflected in the following statement from Omnicom's Annual Report 1998, ('Letter from the President'):

We have achieved [...] record performance against the backdrop of economic and industry change. Client consolidation has created global brands that, accordingly, require global agency networks capable of providing an array of corporate communications services. The continuing fragmentation of media means more choices for consumers, more ways for advertisers to reach their target markets and more opportunities for companies with a full complement of communication services. [...] in anticipation of those trends, we have strengthened, restructured and added to our portfolio of agencies.

The same point about global clients requiring global agencies was expressed again in the context of globalisation of services in general by David Wright, chief executive of Incepta: 'It's just like banking, broking and everything else' (Tomkins, 1999). The fragmentation of mass media and mass markets mentioned by Omnicom, coupled with the rising cost of traditional advertising are seen as perhaps the key factors in the changes within the public relations sector:

If you look at the big marketing services groups, they are looking to buy where the growth is: and increasingly, as the rate of growth in above-the-line advertising slows, they are looking more below the line [...]. Financial [PR] consultancies make especially attractive acquisitions because, during high levels of corporate activity, their regular fees from retainer work are supplemented by big pay-outs for advising on bids and deals. And their much-envied access to clients' top management makes them tempting targets for advertising and marketing groups with other services to sell. (Tomkins, 1999)

In 1999, *Campaign*, the advertising trade magazine, commenting on the rush amongst advertising groups to buy PR agencies, stated:

The most compelling reason [for acquisitions] is the intoxicating smell of money. Faced with an advertising market that is growing 5 per cent a year, the quoted communications groups have been drawn to the PR business which, by contrast, is enjoying growth rates of around 14 per cent... (Hall, 1999)

The trail of acquisitions across a wide range of communications specialisms can be seen in annual reports of the big groups such as Omnicom, WPP, and Interpublic throughout the late 1990s. Table 11 below shows the pattern of acquisitions made by the big holding companies and the range of services targeted.

|  | Omnicom                | Interpublic    | WPP            |
|--|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Advertising  | 95; 96; 97; 98; 99; 00 | 96; 98; 99; 00 | 97; 00         |
| Corporate: identity/branding                           |                        |                | 99             |
| Customer loyalty                                       |                        |                | 99             |
| Design   | 96                     |                |                |
| Entertainment (content/technology/management)          |                        | 97             | 00             |
| Events   |                        | 99; 00         | 99             |
| Financial: public relations/services marketing         |                        | 97             | 99             |
| Healthcare: marketing/PR                               | 97; 00                 |                | 99             |
| Information and management training                    |                        |                | 98; 99         |
| Internal communications                                | 96                     |                | 97             |
| New media: internet/interactive services/digital media |                        | 99             | 97; 00         |
| Marketing:   | 00                     |                |                |
| consulting & research                                  | 99                     | 00             | 97; 98; 00     |
| direct & sales promotion                               | 95; 96; 98; 99         | 99; 00         | 97; 98; 99; 00 |
| relationship   |                        |                | 99             |
| sports   | 96; 00                 | 97             | 00             |
| youth  |                        |                | 97             |
| Media: planning/buying/research                        | 96                     | 95             | 97; 99; 00     |
| Online home shopping                                   |                        |                | 97             |
| Publicity  | 00                     |                |                |
| Public: affairs  | 99; 00                 |                |                |
| relations  | 96; 97; 98             | 98             | 00             |
| Reputation management                                  | 96                     |                |                |
| Technology:  |                        |                | 98; 99         |
| marketing/promotion/PR                                 | 95; 96; 97             |                | 98; 99         |

Table 11: Range of acquisitions made by Omnicom, Interpublic, and WPP in 1995-2000. 95-00 stand for years 1995-2000. Dates represent one or more acquisitions made in that year.

This table offers some insight into the diversification strategy: advertising acquisitions continued throughout the period, but marketing and public relations disciplines (financial, IT and healthcare in particular) emerged as big growth areas. However, it has to be acknowledged that the picture presented in the table may be affected by the rather fluid terminology used to describe the specialisms of the new acquisitions: for example, a company referred to as public policy specialist in one place in an annual report is labelled as reputation management specialist in another. It should also be stressed that the table does not present diversification achieved through investment in setting up new companies, which was also a notable tactic used.

The pattern of acquisitions followed a clear strategic objective of diversification of services offered and geographic markets served. Diversification was noted in Omnicom's Annual Report 1996 as a stabilising mechanism: 'our revenues are far less dependent on the business cycles of any one country or line of business' ('Letter from the President'). Below an attempt is made to pull together relevant data from annual reports to illustrate the diversification trends. This has to be treated with some caution: comparisons are presented in the terms chosen by the companies themselves and therefore represent their accounting practices and preferred narratives for the figures presented. Secondly, the ease of access to the relevant information has also shaped the extent of the comparison attempted.

By following acquisition strategies of the big companies, we have already glimpsed the range of marketing communication services brought under one roof (and profit and loss account). Broadly speaking, the trend in the late 1990s was to balance advertising with other disciplines. The most striking example of this strategic change was offered by Interpublic:

In 1994, advertising represented 95 percent of our business. In 2000, for the first time, our business was almost evenly balanced between advertising and other marketing communications and services.' (The Interpublic Group of Companies Annual Report 2000, p. 3).

For Omnicom, advertising and media services decreased from 70% to 44% of revenue in 1999 while at the same time non-advertising marketing communications increased from 30% up to 56% (Omnicom, Annual Report 2000, 'Letter from the President'). The same change can be observed in Incepta and WPP. Public relations does appear a clear winner: a clearly labelled, coherent area showing steady increase in its contribution to consolidated revenue (see Table 12 and Table 13 below).

|      | Advertising | Public relations | Marketing communications | Marketing services | Design and publishing |
|------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 2002 | 20%         | 50%              | Does not appear          | 30%                | Does not appear       |
| 1998 | 28%         | 37%              | 18%                      | Does not appear    | 17%                   |

Table 12: The Incepta group gross profit by discipline.



|      | Advertising<br>& media investment<br>management | Information<br>& consultancy | Marketing<br>& public affairs | Branding & Identity<br>healthcare and<br>specialist communications* |
|------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 2001 | 46%   | 15%                          | 12%                           | 27%   |
| 2000 | 47%   | 17%                          | 11%                           | 25%   |
| 1999 | 47%   | 19%                          | 8%                            | 26%   |
| 1998 | 50%   | 19%                          | 7%                            | 24%   |
| 1997 | 52%   | 17%                          | 7%                            | 24%   |
| 1996 | 54%   | 16%                          | 6%                            | 23%   |

Table 13: WPP revenue by discipline. Percentage (source: WPP annual reports). Revenue denotes turnover (gross billings) minus cost of sales. It represents fees and commissions earned. \*Labelled "specialist communication" in years 1996-1998. For actual figures see Table 14.

As far as geographic diversification is concerned, a similar balancing act was attempted: the United States on the one hand; UK, the rest of Europe, and other parts of the world on the other (see Table 15 and Table 16 below).

| Revenue | US  | UK  | Euro<br>Denominated | Other<br>International |
|---------|-----|-----|---------------------|------------------------|
| 2001    | 54% | 12% | 21%                 | 14%                    |
| 2000    | 53% | 13% | 21%                 | 13%                    |
| 1999    | 49% | 14% | 23%                 | 13%                    |
| 1998    | 49% | 15% | 26%*                | 9%                     |
| 1997    | 52% | 11% | 27%*                | 11%                    |
| 1996    | 52% | 10% | 28%*                | 9%                     |

Table 15: Omnicom's revenue by geographic region. Percentage. (source: Omnicom annual reports). Revenue denotes turnover (gross billings) minus cost of sales. It represents fees and commissions earned. \*This figure was calculated as a sum of revenue reported for Germany, France and "other Europe". The reporting practice seems to have changed in this respect in 2001. For actual figures see Table 17 in the Appendix.

| Revenue | US  | UK  | Continental<br>Europe | International |
|---------|-----|-----|-----------------------|---------------|
| 2001    | 44% | 16% | 22%                   | 19%           |
| 2000    | 43% | 18% | 20%                   | 20%           |
| 1999    | 42% | 20% | 20%                   | 18%           |
| 1998    | 40% | 20% | 19%                   | 21%           |
| 1997    | 40% | 19% | 21%                   | 19%           |
| 1996    | 39% | 19% | 21%                   | 21%           |

Table 16: WPP's revenue by geographic region. Percentage. (source: WPP annual reports). In 1999 figure was reported for North America, from 1999 Canada is included as 'International'. Revenue denotes turnover (gross billings) minus cost of sales. It represents fees and commissions earned. For actual figures see Table 18 in the Appendix.

This strategy is particularly clear for WPP: US business increased as the UK's contribution came down. Nevertheless, WPP remained less dependent on the US than its main rival, Omnicom, showing perhaps its British roots.

It is worth pointing out that geographic diversification could also be used by smaller, specialist players. For example, the financial PR consultancy Dewe Rogerson expanded internationally to make up for the lean times at home during the early 1990s recession, while at the same time cutting UK staff numbers from 214 in 1990 to 152 in 1991 ("Survival guide", 1997 p. 8).

We have already seen the importance of brands for marketing services businesses, now we have also commented on the economic importance of diversification of specialisms/practices operated by one company. These two factors can be seen as fundamental to how big companies are structured and how they operate: for purposes of client interaction, promotion and visibility in the market companies operate vertically organised brands (Hill & Knowlton, Weber/Shandwick, Burson-Marsteller, etc); practice (or discipline) is employed to manage risk and growth by identifying new markets and opening them further through improved salesmanship (new product to old clients, for example).

Big companies, traditionally advertising companies, buy their way into a new discipline, such as public relations, and then into more specialist areas such as healthcare, IT, or public affairs. Let us look at just some of Omnicom's acquisitions to illustrate this strategy. Omnicom itself was created in 1987 in a massive merger of three advertising agencies: Batten, Barton, Durstin and Osborne (BBDO); Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB); and Needham Harper Worldwide (Wells, Bennett, & Moriarty, 1989 p. 105). In 1996 Omnicom acquired Ketchum Communications, a large US independent company with advertising and public relations interests. These were split: advertising was subsumed within Omnicom's TBWA network, while public relations became a self-standing worldwide PR brand, ranked at no. 16 in *PR Week's* ranking for 1996 ("Top 150 PR consultancies", 1997, p.16). (In fact the brand name used, Scope Ketchum Communication, reflects a recent merger with a successful consumer PR consultancy Scope.) Another worldwide brand, Fleishman-Hillard, was acquired in 1997. Acquisitions in specialist practices include: GPC International (public policy and government relations, its European arm created out of the 1994 acquisition of European Political Consultancy Group); Capithome & Bellows (technology) in 1995; Smythe Dorward Lambert (employee communications) in 1996; Gavin Anderson & Company (corporate and financial PR) probably in the early 1990s.

It is also important to notice that separate brands can be maintained in specialist practices, for example Omnicom's Annual Report 1997 shows that the technology practice was worked by Copithome & Bellows, and Brodeur Porter Novelli. Substantial subsidiaries or brands may conduct their own acquisitions, for example in 1997 Brodeur, an independent high-tech specialist acquired by Omnicom in 1993, acquired 80% of stock in a UK high-tech agency, A Plus (the remaining 20% had been bought by Omnicom in 1996). This last fact brings us to a larger issue of risk associated with growth and diversification into new markets. We shall comment on the tactics employed to manage this risk later in the section devoted to networks.

The reasons spurring the big holding groups to expand through a combination of organic growth and acquisition — the driving force of the change — and those motivating smaller companies to sell were different. So far we have focused on the first; now let us see the change dynamic from the perspective of the smaller players in the market who became targets for mergers and acquisitions. There are four main reasons which motivated smaller companies, usually owned by their founders with some equity in the hands of directors and possibly other investors, to become a subsidiary of a big international group: (i) access to capital for necessary investment; (ii) access to the benefits derived from a large well-resourced network and a strong well-known brand name, such as: access to clients, new skills, staff motivation as a big company offers more chances for promotion; (iii) the need for a 'trans-Atlantic tie-up' as more business was driven out of the US; (iv) or for consultancy owners, an opportunity to command a good price in a favourable market (Gray, 1998a).

Access to capital as a reason for selling out was quoted by Citigate in its takeover by Incepta and by Charles Barker when it sold out to BSMG (see above). Charles Barker, like Smythe Dorward Lambert, needed a stronger presence in the markets they were increasingly working in but which they themselves were too small or too specialised to achieve: 'As we grew and increasingly worked in North America and the Pacific we realised that we had to link up with someone. An organisation like Omnicom can take the brand worldwide' (Dorward in Rogers, 1996c). Being part of a company well represented globally both in terms of physical presence and a recognised brand name was seen as a solution to the limitation of Smythe Dorward Lambert's size. A need for international presence as well as an awareness of professional benefits for the staff were referred to by Scope when it was merging with the Omnicom-owned Ketchum in 1996: 'With the sort of multinational clients we work for our lack of international presence may have counted against us. It's a great chance for our people to cross borders' (Goddard, 1996b).

The last of the reasons listed above, opportunity to make money, is very rarely expressed in a direct way, but given the sums involved, merits serious consideration here. For example, Citigate bought a public affairs agency Westminster Communications (in fact a group of agencies) in 1996 paying £2.1m for 79% of the stake it did not own at the time. The main beneficiaries of the deal were believed to be the two managing directors of the group who together owned 66% of the stake (Murphy, 1997c). The Charles Barker deal mentioned above was worth £10.5m. The consultancy was owned 45% by investment firm Ormonde, 50% by five directors, the remaining 5% split between other directors and staff. The five main shareholding directors stood 'to gain up to the equivalent of £1m in the deal' (Farish, 1997). When Dewe Rogerson was sold to Incepta in 1998, 77% of its equity was divided between the two founders, Roddy Dewe and Nico Rogerson, and the executive chairman, Tony Carlisle. The remaining equity was divided between senior managers and a number of original investors (Joyce, 1997b). The deal was reportedly worth £26m (Darby, 1998b); the three main shareholders should therefore be receiving around £6.6m each. However, as the two final examples will show, equity owners of PR businesses do not tend to walk away from acquisitions with bags of cash. Aurelia PR, luxury brands consumer agency, owned by its founder Aurelia Cecil, was bought by Abbot Mead Vickers in 1997 for £4.25m. Cecil received £300,000 in cash and £240,000 in AMV loan notes; the rest was to be paid 'in six annual payments dependent on Aurelia Public Relations performance' (Garside, 1997c). If this is seen as a typical example, Freud Communications is interesting because of its high profile and unusual story.

The company was founded in 1985 as Matthew Freud Associates, with one client, Clannad, an Irish folk band. By the time it was sold for £10m to Abbott Mead Vickers (AMV) in 1994, Freud Communications had been adding work on consumer brands to its show business clients. Freud was tied to the company by a five-year earn-out condition, while at the same time reportedly granted 'more autonomy than many acquired firms' ("Take heart", 2001). The brand was kept separate from other AMV, or for that matter from other Omnicom PR interests. In July 2001, a management buyout worth £10m returned the business into Freud's control (51% of share), the rest being divided between 11 directors. The *PR Week* editorial commented:

Those who regret selling to large quoted conglomerates are legion — tales of unachievable target-setting and interference in day-to-day management decisions make this a problem unlikely to go away soon. Successful buybacks are rare indeed ("Take heart", 2001)

The same kind of acquisition mechanism discussed above had been routinely used by WPP for the small companies acquired in 1986-1990: five-year earn-out agreement meant a down payment of five to ten times the prior year's earnings and significant future payments over five years dependent on meeting profit targets (Tinkelman, 1997, p. 469)<sup>8</sup>. The main point here is to ensure that the expertise possessed by the senior staff members of the acquired consultancy will remain in-house and guarantee further business success. *PR Week* commented:

... takeover success may ultimately come down to financial detail — the length of earn-out period or bonuses offered against targets. PR is a people business. The acquirer is not buying clients but the people who service those accounts and these individuals must be kept aboard. (Rogers, 1996c)

## Ownership

The big companies we have examined here are publicly owned. A stock exchange listing for public relations companies seems to signify ambition, success and maturity. Having said that, it is a controversial growth strategy:

The jury is still out on the benefits of floating,' says the head of a medium-sized financial consultancy. 'Companies based on people are not good long-term investments. Investors look for continuing growth and increasing dividends every year and there's very little understanding of the cycles experienced by people-based businesses. (Joyce, 1997c)

Very few PR companies have ventured onto the stock exchange mainly because they have tended to be too small. In 1997 *PR Week* named only five listed PR consultancies:

| Company                 | Floated     | Market | Market cap. |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------|-------------|
| Shandwick International | Oct 1985    | LSE    | £78.5m      |
| City of London PR       | June 1988   | LSE    | £6.6m       |
| Chime Communications    | March 1997  | LSE    | £22m        |
| Citigate Communications | March 1997* | LSE    | £50m        |
| Text 100                | March 1997  | OFEX   | £6m         |

Table 19: Listed PR Consultancies. Source: *PR Week*, 7 March 1997, p.7.

\*This is not strictly accurate, Citigate took over Incepta's (quoted company) as a way of joining the Stock Exchange.

PR Week gives three different dates for when the first PR company went public in the UK (1974, 1981, 1983), but is consistent about Good Relations being the pioneer, followed by Valin Pollen (1984)<sup>9</sup> and Charles Barker (1985). It seems that the 1980s saw an unprecedented level of flotations in the PR industry, with ten companies listed by 1987 which were either exclusively PR or had a PR component. After the recession of the early 1990s and the subsequent acquisition frenzy, only two of those companies were left by 1999 — Lopex and WPP (Benady, 1999). Good Relations had been acquired by Lowe Howard-Spink Bell in 1986 (leading to the formation of Lowe Bell Communication). Valin Pollen collapsed in 1989. Charles Barker PR (parent Charles Barker plc) was sold to Corporate Communications in 1989 after its share price and profits slumped. In 1992 Corporate Communications collapsed with bad debts and Charles Barker was sold in a management buyout.

In December 1999, Text 100 entered the LSE, prompting this comment from *PR Week*.

Previous public listings by PR agencies have not been as successful. Shandwick, for example, was sold to Inter-public after facing pressure to change its management and seeing its share price fall to 7 dollars on the London stock exchange. (Shelton, 1999).

Two points suggest themselves here. First, while important in giving access to capital, a public listing brought its own pressures for public relations businesses. Like Shandwick, Chime Communications had to sell equity, although only 30%, to finance an important acquisition in order to improve its profile among city investors (see “The attraction of opposites”, 1997). For big holding companies, public ownership could be seen as the driver for diversification and acquisitions, thus one of the important factors in the reshaping of the marketing services sectors, and consequently of public relations consultancy sector.

The second point is to do with the extent to which ownership changes influenced the practice in its management and expertise base. Comparing the *PR Week*'s top ten consultancies for 1995 and 1999, we noted decreasing numbers of independent, that is privately-owned consultancies. Ownership information has not been included in the *PR Week*'s league tables, nor has it been part of *Marketing* magazine's PR league tables since 1999. The information published in 1998 (effectively covering 1997) shows that out of 127 companies included, 101 were privately owned, 20 were publicly owned, and 6 were subsidiaries of other companies whose status was unclear. It is also important to point out that the publicly-owned companies clustered at the top end of the table (17 of the top 30) (see Gofton, 1998). By 2000 a few more consultancies would have lost their independent (private-ownership) status, but that would not have dramatically altered the overwhelming dominance of private ownership in terms of number of competitors in the market; and the economic dominance of the publicly-owned companies in terms of the revenue share in the consultancy sector.

However, there are other possibilities for ownership, for example joint ventures, minority stakes taken by publicly-owned companies in privately-owned businesses; as well as another institutional form of existence — the network. For example, Omnicom's Annual Report 1995<sup>10</sup> lists 509 subsidiary companies, in 175 (34%) of which Omnicom

owned 100% of voting shares. Omnicom's share of the remaining companies ranged between 1-99%. Looking specifically at a public relations example, Gavin Anderson & Company Worldwide was the holding company for a global network of public affairs consultancies. The holding company itself was 100% owned by Omnicom as were the US, Australian and Hong Kong members of the network, but Omnicom held 80% of Gavin Anderson & Company in France; 92% in Germany and 90% in the UK.

The following sections, therefore, will contribute to the unravelling of the relationship between ownership and expertise by analysing the role of networks, as well as small independent suppliers of public relations services.

## Networks

The term 'network' is used to describe a number of agencies spread across one or more geographic regions, and connected through work for the same clients. The term can be used to describe a network of agencies fully or partially owned by the same owner; more interestingly, however, it also refers to a co-operation agreement among a number of agencies rather than to a more formal structure based on shared ownership and brand name.

Owned networks are primarily the big marketing services companies examined in this chapter. They are also known as integrated agencies (Wylie, 2003), or Global Network Communication Agencies, GNCA's (Tharp & Jeong, 2001). Looking at the top ten, we come across many familiar names: Omnicom, Interpublic, WPP, Havas, Dentsu, Bcom3; Young & Rubicam, Grey, True North Communications, and Publicis (Tharp & Jeong, 2001). The ranking is based on 1999 gross income figures giving the top ten's combined income of \$28,439.5m. (It is important to bear in mind major later changes, such as Y&R's takeover by WPP, or True North's takeover by Interpublic.) Tharp & Jeong's discussion, written from the perspective of the group, and advertising as its income engine, revealed some interesting features of this new type of companies. These vast multinationals were organised in ways that mirrored their clients', also large multinational companies', structures and needs. The key conceptual tool behind the integrated practice was the brand. Advertising was increasingly augmented by a set of other marketing or below-the-line practices. Tensions between centralisation and decentralisation, standardisation and differentiation were managed by, effectively, building them into the *modus operandi*. While planning and client accountability were managed centrally, culture-specific skills important for delivery of services were brought in at the local level. Similarly, standardisation of delivery was achieved by the use of 'branded' tools, that is solutions developed by the branded agencies or networks, helping to differentiate them from their competitors. Ability to share knowledge across the network and the use of technology underpinned global networks' existence.

The second type of network is perhaps a little more elusive. There does not appear to be one institutional form these networks take. For example, among the thirteen European networks listed by *PR Week* ("Casting nets wider", 1999), Worldcom (no. 1) and International Public Relations Network (no. 4) were associations of independently-owned companies, bound together by an elected board, and a certain level of common strategies and standards.

- 'WORLDCOM is the world's largest consortium of independently owned public relations counselling firms. Comprised of some 100 partner offices, and growing, WORLDCOM has offices in some 35 countries on six continents, more than 1,700 employees and revenue in 2002 of more than US \$176 million.
- WORLDCOM was formed primarily to serve national, international and multi-national clients needing in-depth marketing and communications support and expertise from professionals who understand the language, culture and customs of the domestic and foreign arenas in which they operate. WORLDCOM is governed by an elected board of directors and three regional boards, with support by a Chief Operating Officer.' (<http://www.worldcom-group.com>. 7 July 2003)

Another network, Pinnacle Worldwide (no. 6), describes itself as a corporation, with the principals of Pinnacle offices as shareholders, but its members are also independently-owned public relations firms. (<http://www.pinnacleww.com>. 7 July 2003). Similarly, Entente International (no. 2), owned by four shareholders, successful independent businesses (The Communication Group, UK; Francome, France; Barabino and Partners, Italy; Van Luyken, Holland) was set up in 1991 in Brussels for the purposes of co-ordination of pan-European business (Bevan, 1996d). On the other hand, Trimedia (no. 7) in its ownership structure is more like the big groups, with a string of owned and affiliated offices, except that it appears to be privately owned:

Trimedia Communications is the only independent management owned communications agency group in Europe. Founded in Switzerland in 1981 Trimedia moved on to form an integrated network of subsidiaries across the major Continental European markets with strong affiliates in the other territories.

To clarify the terminology, GNCA will be used here for the first type of companies; while the second type will be referred to simply as networks. Both GNCA's and networks rely on knowledge sharing and skills training as the integrating force. What appears to differentiate these types of organisations is their self-identity, and with it possibly the organisational culture: partnership is the key for networks. At their most flexible end, a consortium of member companies, networks emphasise openness (although restricted by membership conditions). As the members are independent companies, their affiliation to the network may change depending on other strategic developments. This seems to offer smaller players some of the advantages of a big, global company while allowing them to retain their independence and local expertise. What, therefore, is the advantage for a big company of operating like a network?

On its list of networks, *PR Week* ("Casting nets wider", 1999) includes Brodeur Worldwide and GPC Euro, both owned by Omnicom. Both of these networks were specialists, hi-tech and public affairs respectively. They illustrate how different forms of association and ownership were used as risk management tactics for entering new or difficult markets. An American independent hi-tech agency, Brodeur, was acquired by Omnicom in 1993. In 1996 it entered the European market, initially with the acquisition of a 20% stake in a UK independent hi-tech consultancy, A Plus, giving it 'access to A Plus's Euro Plus network, which includes seven agencies in Europe and PR firms in Israel, the Middle East and South Africa' ("Omnicom share deal", 1996). In 1997, A Plus became wholly-owned by

Omnicom. In 1999, commenting on the network's recent growth strategies, Jonathan Simnett, director of corporate development for Brodeur EMEA, explained, '[i]n South America and the Pacific rim we are now mirroring the same affiliate-to-ownership model we used in Europe' ("Casting nets wider", 1999).

Similar tactics could be observed in the public affairs practice. In 1994 Omnicom acquired European Political Consultancy Group (including Market Access and Connect), and 20% of GPC International, the leading public affairs consultancy in Canada. In 1996 Omnicom restructured its various assets in European public affairs practice, merging Market Access International with GPC to form GPC Market Access Europe based in Brussels (Beven 1996b). In 1997, GPC Market Access launched a pan-European network 'formalising an existing relationship with affiliates across the continent [...] Affiliates will continue to operate under their name locally but may also adopt the GPC brand' ("GPC strengthens network", 1997). Later that year, GPC Market Access agreed 'an association deal' with an Indian political affairs agency, its 'first foray into Asia' ("GPC's passage to India", 1997).

How this kind of an arrangement worked could be gleaned from PR Week's letters page (Hadden, 1997),

Edelman has maintained a regional UK network for over a decade. We do not own our regional partners but do work openly and honestly with them. We provide total access to all our ways from technology and training to specific consumer capabilities in China. /We regularly win business because we provide client service benefits in terms of regional expertise [...]. An excellent partnership [...].

It is worth noting that this know-how in locating possible additions to the network and gradually tying them in with the holding company can work in the reverse direction. For example, following the economic downturn in Asia in the late 1990s, Burson-Marsteller lightened its presence in Hong Kong and Malaysia by cutting down on staff numbers, and also by reversing its full ownership into an affiliation agreement:

Burson-Marsteller has sold its Malaysian office in line with a strategy of pulling out of small emerging markets. Kuala Lumpur managing director Karen Hoh has taken 100 per cent ownership of the Malaysian office. She will continue to run the office as an exclusive B-M affiliate, but will change its name to Rii Burson-Marsteller. B-M is negotiating a sale with the managers of one other office in Asia... ("Burson-Marsteller sells Kuala-Lumpur," 1998)

'Small markets' mentioned in the story means markets with too small a number of accounts bringing a fee income of £50,000-£75,000 apparently needed 'to produce a top-quality programme' ("B-M makes cuts to Asian offices," 1998) — B-M's way of explaining its strategy to get rid of accounts, and markets, deemed to be too small and therefore too expensive to service.

In summary, the network was used both by big multinational and smaller, national/regional companies. Its basic function was to extend the company's reach in terms of markets and capabilities. While small companies used networks to be able to work with big clients on regional/global projects, to gain access to expertise not available in-house, and to give themselves the clout of a much bigger company; for GNCA networks were a way of managing



entry into new markets, and of lightening the burden of a big, multinational corporate identity with a local image, contributed by subsidiaries and affiliates.

The network phenomenon is by no means exclusive to public relations. As one might expect, there was a parallel development in advertising. Agencies started forming partnerships without a shareholding parent company initially to share knowledge, later developing closer co-operation. The European Union provided an important impetus for the formation of European networks and entry of American ones, often linking them into complex international chains (Yates, 1998).

To sum up, the PR consultancy industry in the late 1990s consisted of a small number of vast, global marketing services companies present in the UK and a large number of small, local operators. An important feature of this industry in the period under analysis was fast consolidation of ownership, especially among middle and large consultancies, driven by strategies pursued by advertising companies and the process of globalisation of marketing communication services. The use of brand names and their management in the process of acquisition was also noted. Networking, a flexible strategy of bringing consultancies together in a more or less rigid institutional structure, was seen as supporting the global expansion of PR consultancies and compensating for the inequalities resulting from the difference of size and reach of large and small consultancies. Finally, the importance of individual practitioners to the success of PR businesses is demonstrated by the use of earn-out agreements, binding key individuals to the business for a number of years, as a standard mechanism in takeovers.

This part of the chapter has provided a description of the market for public relations services, specifically its supply side, taking individual public relations firms and the consultancy industry as two different levels of analysis. The second part of the chapter extends this analysis by examining the public relations labour market to draw a picture of the ways in which the delivery of the services is enmeshed with supply and organisation of the labour force and expertise to be found there.

## PR labour market

Describing and analysing the PR labour market is an exercise similar to the analysis of the consultancy industry: the lack of good sources of information makes it necessary to rely on estimates — the best guess possible on the basis of fragmentary information. This section tackles the subject by aiming at the best possible answers to a number of straightforward questions:

- How big is the PR labour force?
- Who works in PR? Where do they find employment?
- What are the work conditions for PR practitioners?
- Finally, what were the important issues relevant for the PR labour force in the late 1990s?

## Size and composition of the labour force

There is no reliable information publicly available on how many people work in public relations. Two main explanations can be offered for this state of affairs before some attempt is made at a description of the PR labour force.

First, until recently the way in which the ONS gathered information on occupational groups made it impossible to extract information on public relations with any degree of accuracy. The Standard Occupational Classification 1990 (SOC90) used throughout the period in question, did not have an occupational category covering public relations. Information on PR practitioners was gathered together with information on people engaged in similar types of activities. The revised classification (Standard Occupational Classification 2000) introduced a clearly defined group Public Relations Officers (3433), as part of a minor group called Media Associated Professionals (343). The group is defined in the following way,

Public relations officers promote the image and understanding of an organisation and its products or services to consumers, businesses, members of the public and other specified audiences (ONS, 2000, p.130)

The relevant job titles for this group are: information officer, press officer, public relations consultant, and publicity assistant (ONS, 2000, p. 131). Although this may still exclude some practitioners, for example those considered part of 1134 Advertising and Public Relations Managers — advertising managers, media directors, public relations managers and publicity managers (ONS, 2000, p. 45) — in principle SOC2000 offers a way of gathering and analysing statistical information about the occupation of public relations, although it still fails to capture this information in a precise way<sup>1</sup>.

Here we reach the second reason for the lack of publicly available data on the PR occupation: the policy operated by the ONS on how statistical data and analyses are released. Information available from the ONS on public release is of more general nature than that required here, i.e. it works with larger occupational groups than the level at which public relations is defined. Thus two obvious sources of information which could be consulted here — Census 2001, and the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) — display information collated for major occupational groups, for example major group 3 Associate Professional and Technical Occupations, and consequently are of no use in this analysis. Although more detailed analysis can be conducted, it has to be bought from the ONS (personal communication, 2 November 2004), and so far there is no evidence to suggest that any of the professional bodies which might be expected to have an interest in this knowledge have commissioned such analysis.

An alternative route to extracting information about the extent of an occupational practice might be offered by employment data from the relevant industry sector. In the case of public relations, however, this solution has already been shown above as unsatisfactory. The PR consultancy industry includes a large number of small businesses, which due to their size may be excluded from the Annual Business Inquiry. This methodological problem applies more broadly to the study of cultural occupations and is responsible for the lack of data on self-employment and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the cultural and creative industries in general (DCMS, 2004b). Consequently, the

ONS figure of 3,720 for the size of PR consultancy industry (employment) in 1998 underestimates PR consultancy and must be significantly smaller than the actual figure of all PR practitioners, particularly if in-house specialists were to be counted too. The same approach, i.e. focusing on the numbers employed in enterprises counted as belonging to a particular industry, was used to describe employment in management consultancy in that year and produced the figure of 108,566 (ABI, personal communication, 24 June 2004).

The only clear and reliable figure on the size of PR occupation is the IPR membership, which in 1998 stood at 5,500 according to the 1998 membership survey. There are a number of employment figures that can be found, although it is difficult to gauge their accuracy or to extract precise information from them. For example, on the basis of a survey conducted in 1993, the IPR estimated that approximately 48,000 worked in public relations (Harrison, 1995, p. 7). Employment in the creative industries, specifically in advertising, which included PR workers, stood at 212,700 in 1998 (DCMS, 2004a, p. 7). It appears that the only conclusions supported by the data in regard to the size of the occupational group in 1998 is that it was larger than 5,500 but not bigger than around 200,000. The consultancy sector employed probably a few thousand practitioners in addition to 6,646 derived from the *PR Week's* top 150 consultancies for that year.

Public relations is perceived as dominated by women. The available data offers some support for this belief. Although the IPR membership in 1998 consisted of 52% men and 48% women; other sources tell a different story. Freelancing in the communications and events industries showed that women were in the majority — 70% in 2000 and 2001 (Fawkes, Fielden & Tench, 2001). PR salary surveys consistently show that women dominate at lower level jobs, which one would expect to be more numerous than higher level jobs, offering further support for the view of PR as a feminine occupation. At the same time, women are a minority in higher level jobs. This picture could be seen particularly clearly in the *PR Week* salary surveys in 1995, 1997 and 1999. (The judgement is more difficult to make for 1996 and 1998 due to the way in which the survey findings were presented in print.)

In 1997, for example, there were more women than men in every job category both in-house and in consultancy, except for the top jobs. Over 70% of Account Executives were female, and the figures go down as the jobs get more senior (60% of Account Directors; 31% of Chairmen/Managing Directors). In-house, approximately 68% of PR Officers were female, but only 47% PR Directors (France, 1998, pp.13-14). The dwindling representation of women as one moves up the hierarchy as well as consistent salary differences between the genders are a well recognised problem. However, there appears to be a degree of uncertainty about the extent of the gender discrimination: *PR Week's* line seemed influenced by the picture painted by each separate annual salary survey. As there were obvious fluctuations, so the comment varied, for example between 'Genderbased pay is on the way out' (2001), and the more measured assessment:

PR seems to be a predominantly female environment, apart from in-house side, public affairs and finance [...] In line with other areas of the marketing mix, there is still a gender differentiation with salaries of different levels on the in-house and agency side. However, it is good to see that the glass ceiling within PR is practically non-existent in comparison to other industries (Gray, 2000, p. 12)

It is true that in comparison with female managers, women in PR were in a much stronger position in 1998. According to the Chartered Management Institute only 18% of all managers were female, and only approximately 4% occupied top level jobs (Director), with 22% in the lowest occupational rank (Section leader) (CMI, 1998). However, in advertising agencies 48% of staff, 21% of board directors and 41% of heads of departments were female (IPA, 1998). Consequently, the comment about the excellent position of women in public relations has to be treated with caution, and comparisons should focus closer on practitioners doing promotional work and be more sensitive to patterns of gender distribution specific to different industries. For example, within management, the most feminised specialisms are personnel and marketing (CMI, 2003); in advertising agencies, females dominated areas such as TV production, finance, and administration, but were a small minority in creative jobs, for example as copywriters or art directors (IPA, 1998).

In terms of education, 56% of IPR members had a postgraduate or first degree (increasing steadily from 35% in the 1987 membership survey, 43% in 1991, and 53% in 1994). For 1999, the *PR Week* survey had 59% of respondents with a first degree and 'and another ten per cent having achieved an MA or PhD.' (Gray, 2000, p.15). The survey of freelancers found approximately 42% first degree holders; 11% with postgraduate diplomas, 6% with Masters degrees and 3% with doctorates (Fawkes, et al, 2001). How well educated, therefore, is the PR workforce? As the study of cultural occupations based on the LFS data from 1997-2000 shows, professional occupations such as architects or librarians were characterised by very high levels of educational attainment — over 80% with levels NVQ4 or NVQ5 qualifications (see Davies & Lindley, 2003, pp. 8, 11-13)<sup>2</sup> Translating the PR data into NVQ levels means that between 56, 69 and 62% of PR practitioners achieved NVQ4 or higher level of attainment in the respective surveys mentioned above. These figures are comparable with educational attainment for groups such as writers (which includes journalists), visual artists, industrial and clothing designers (64, 55, 52 and 62% of NVQ 4 or higher level respectively). In short, in terms of educational attainment the PR occupation appears to be clearly lagging behind traditional professions, but is certainly not unusual in terms of the grouping identified in SOC90 as Associate Professional and Technical Occupations.

## Work conditions

As with the consultancy league tables, *PR Week's* annual salary surveys prove a useful source of basic information about public relations practitioners. In reporting the results of each annual survey, *PR Week* placed a major emphasis on the differences between in-house and consultancy, suggesting — without showing the appropriate statistical analysis — that the site of practice is a statistically significant factor in explaining the differences in conditions of work, such as salary, and other work benefits. At the same time, it is quite clear that the two major sites of public relations practice are different, as illustrated most clearly below by the difference in career structures. Although the main interest of this work lies in analysing the public relations consultancy industry, a broader view is taken in considering its pool of labour. Both PR consultancy and in-house practice draw from the same pool of labour and influence it by contributing practices, training, standard expectations of work conditions as well as demand for specific skills.

## Salaries

In 1998, the average salary in PR was £35,788 compared to £37,086 in marketing as shown by the Marketing salary survey (Bainbridge, 1999). Figure 6 below (see also Table 20 in the Appendix) compares average salaries in PR consultancy and in-house between 1995-1999, illustrating their continued increase, but perhaps more importantly the consistent difference between the two in favour of the consultancy sector

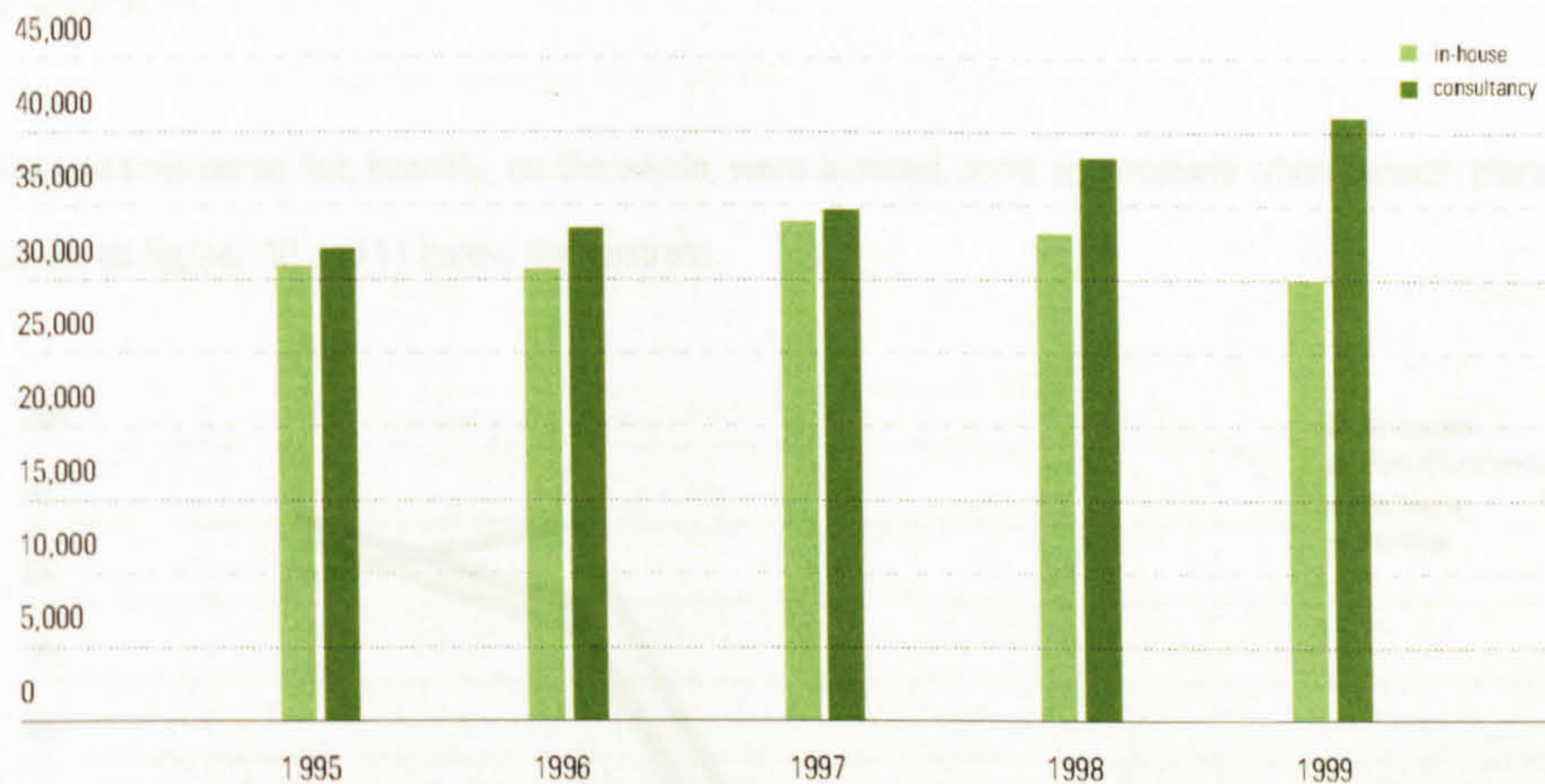


Figure 6: Average salaries (£). In-house and consultancy compared. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

Looking beyond the average values to the differences between pay levels linked to seniority (Figures 7 and 8 below, see also the accompanying Tables 21 and 22 in the Appendix), it is clear that over the five-year period the salaries remained rather flat, and the differences between levels of pay also remained stable, with the exception of the top consultancy jobs, which became established as another clear level.

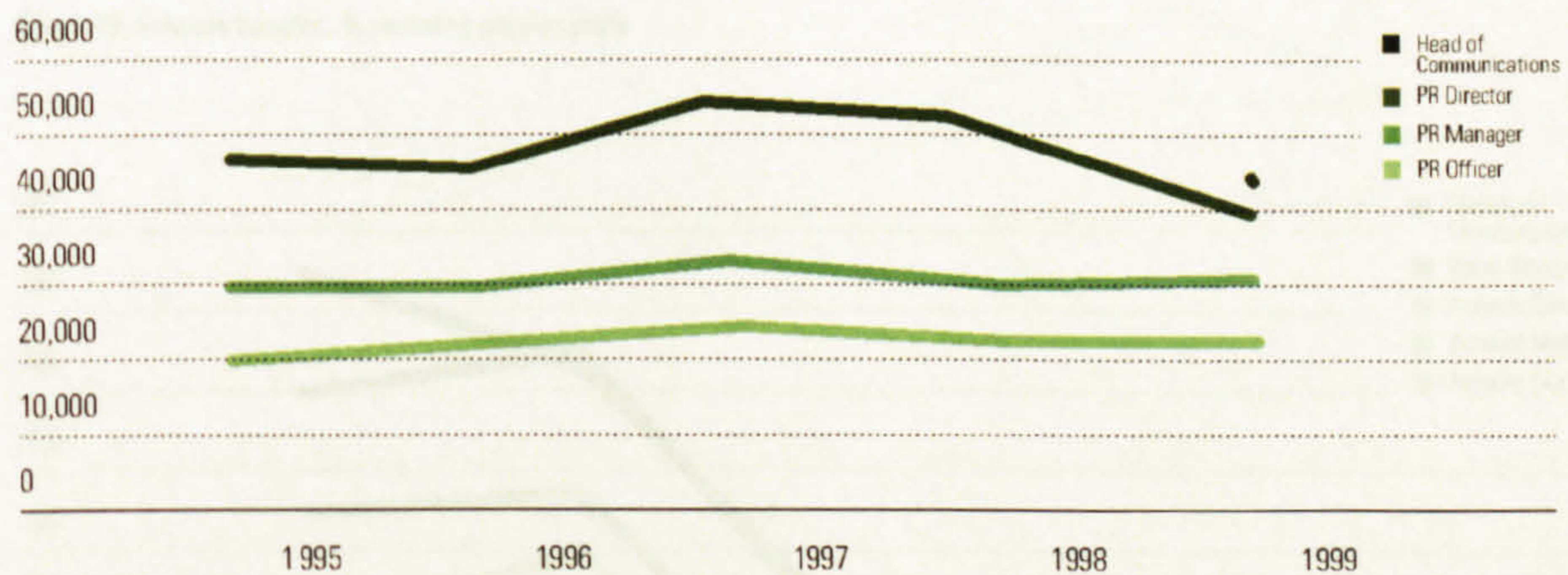


Figure 7: Average In-house salaries (£). Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

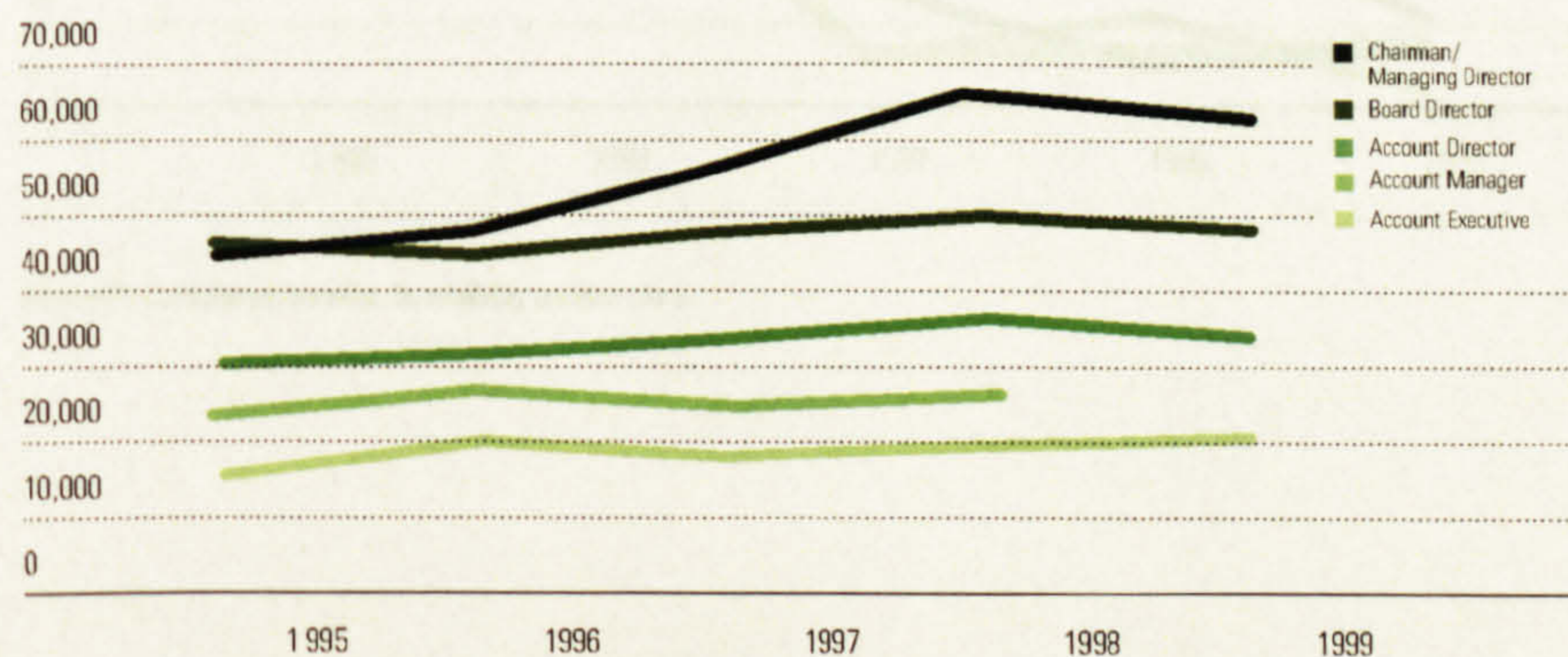


Figure 8: Average salaries in consultancy (£). Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

The distribution of salaries reported by the IPR members peaks at the £25,001-£30,000 bracket thus showing a measure of central tendency lower than the mean of £35,788 (see Figure 9 and Table 20 in the Appendix). As the data in the *PR Week* salary survey and the IPR membership survey are technically of different nature (continuous vs categorical measurement level) and consequently analysed differently (mean vs. frequency distribution), without access to the raw data no proper comparison can be offered, except for a broad confirmation of the contours of the salary range in PR.

If the salaries remained flat, benefits, on the whole, were trimmed, most aggressively when pension plans were concerned, as Figures 10 and 11 below demonstrate.

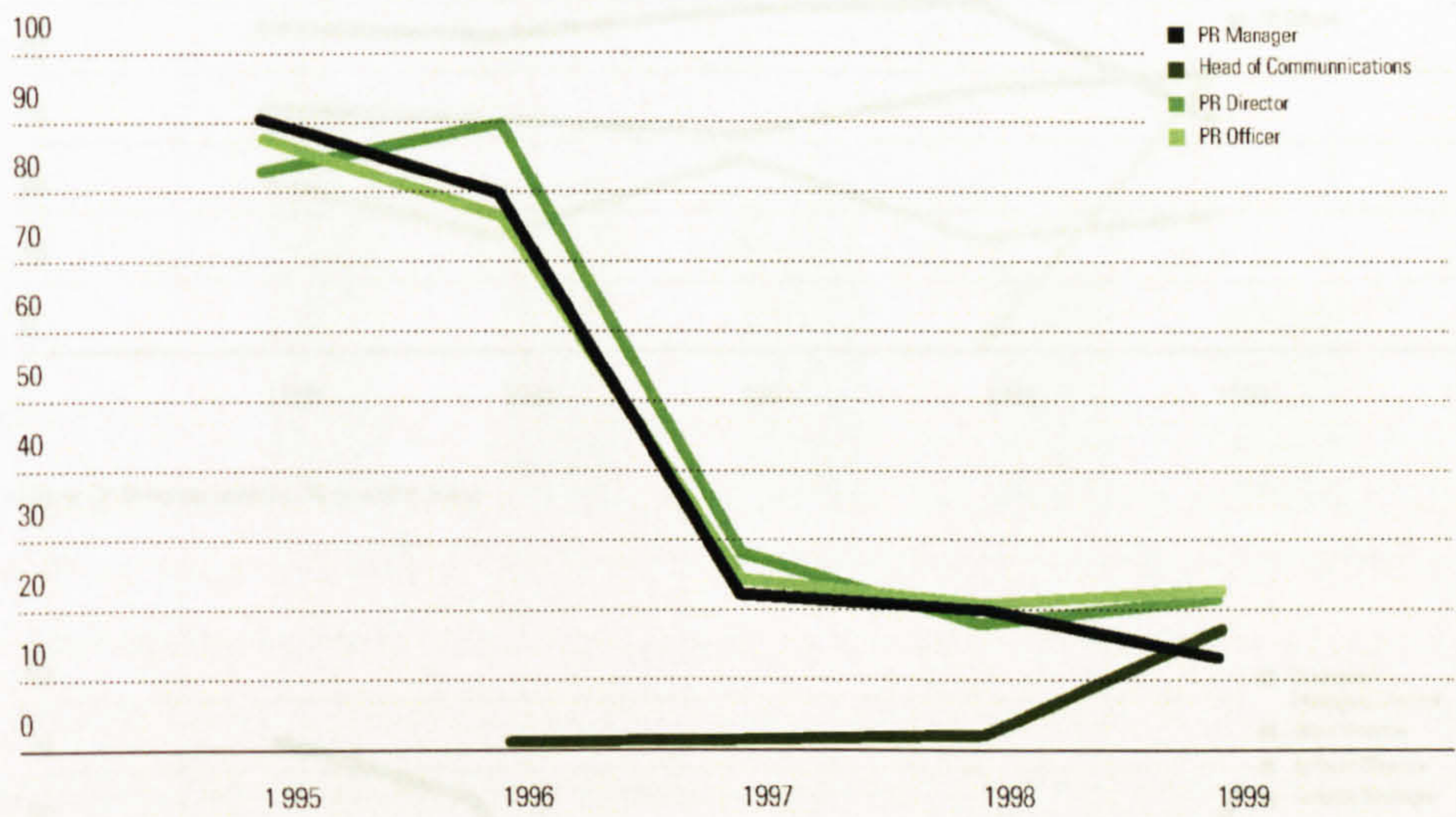


Figure 10: In-house benefits. % receiving pension plans

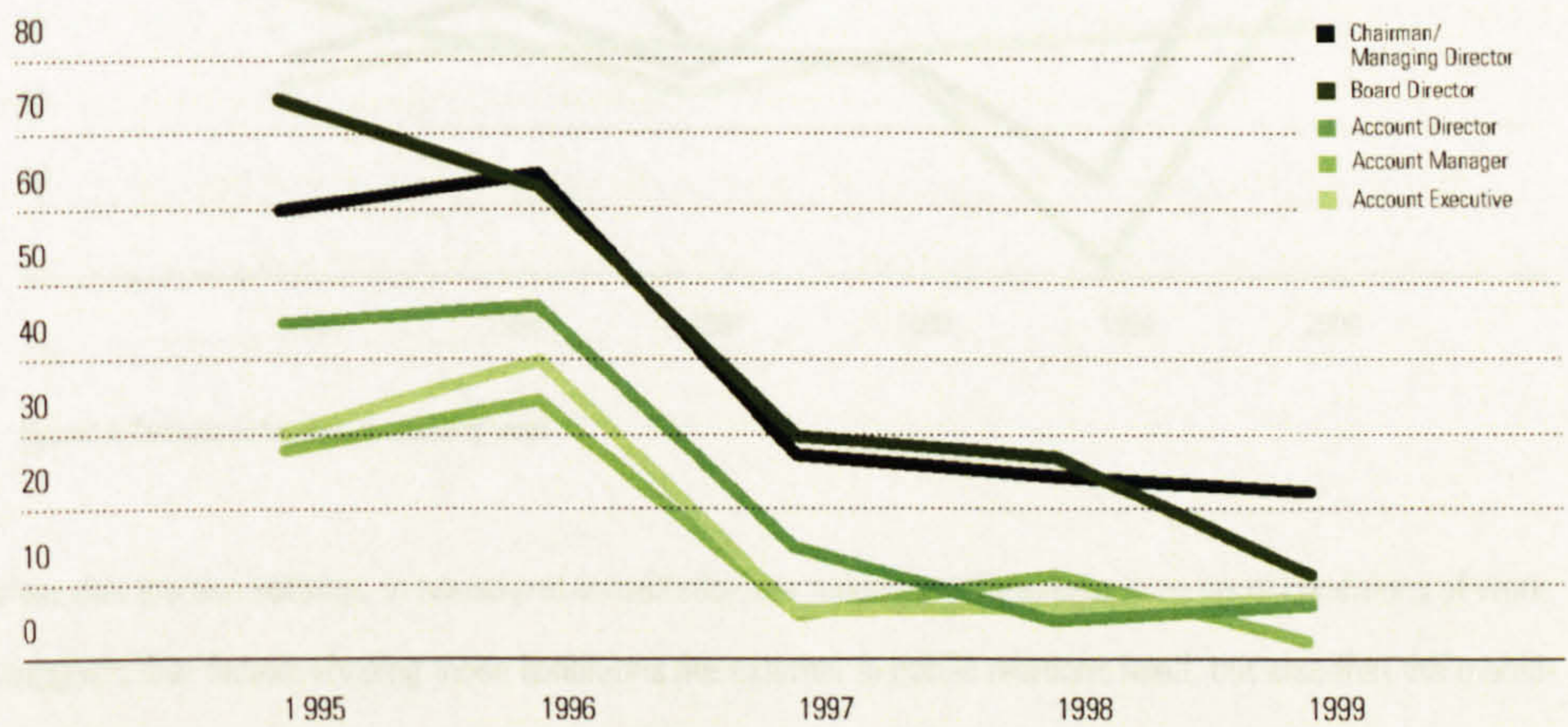


Figure 11: Consultancy benefits. % receiving pension plans

A decline in other benefits offered, such as company cars and health plans, was less dramatic (see Tables 23-28 in the Appendix). Average holiday entitlement in 1998 was five weeks for in-house practitioners and four weeks in consultancy, and it got longer with time (see Tables 27 and 28 in the Appendix). Finally, an interesting difference can be noticed in how employers used bonuses: for in-house practitioners changes in bonuses received are comparable to changes in salaries (see Figures 12 and 13 below); in consultancy, however, there was a period of turmoil: 1997 represented a common low point for all levels of professionals. After that bonuses increased, by 2000 returning to a similar structure as that observed in 1995. (Data for 2000 was added to the consultancy chart to compensate for the lack of information in 1999 for Account Managers).

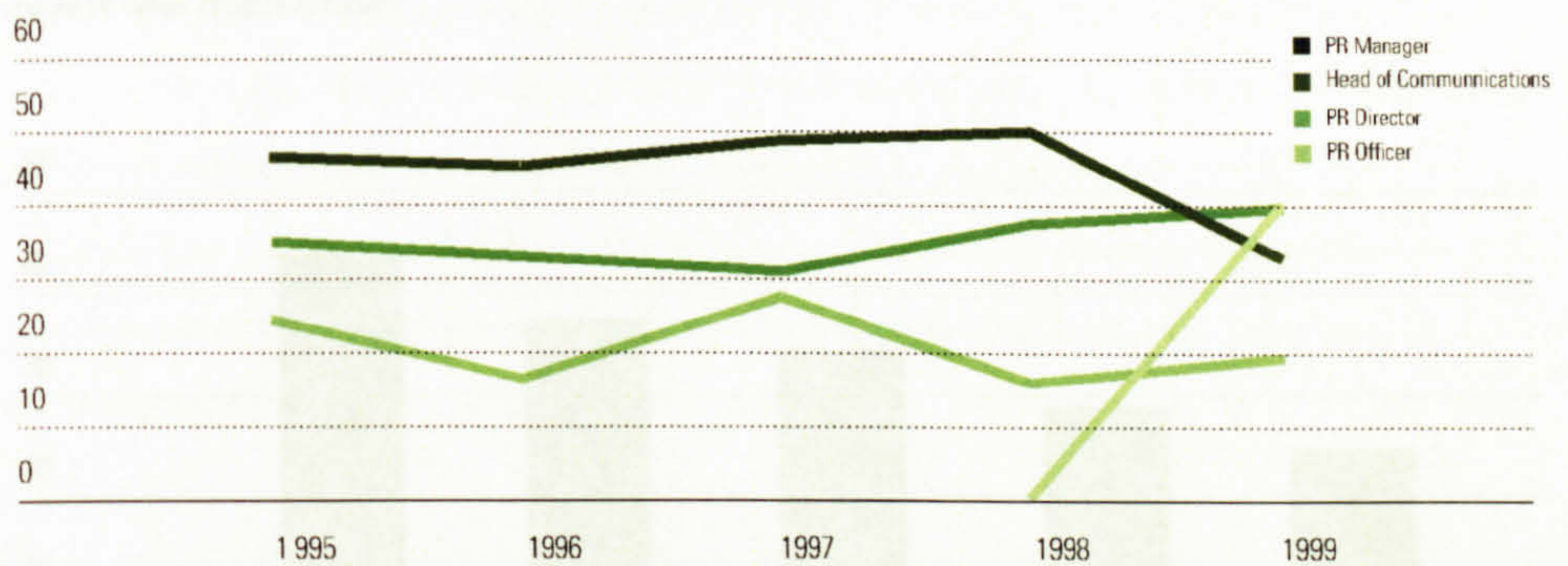


Figure 12: In-house benefits. % receiving bonus

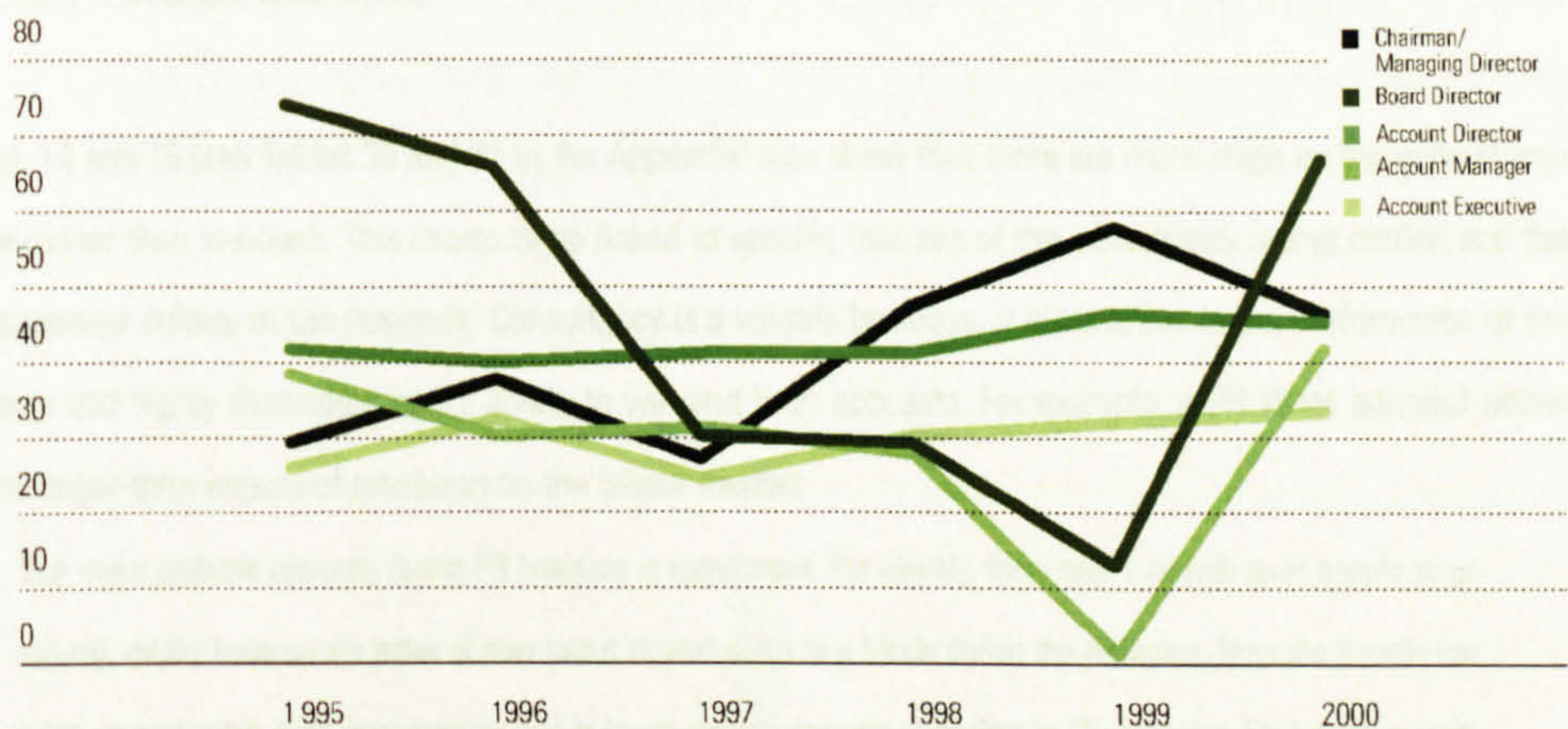


Figure 13: Consultancy benefits. % receiving bonus

It is clear that the two settings, in-house and consultancy, are fundamentally similar in terms of conditions of work. This suggests that factors shaping those conditions are external to public relations itself, but also that the mobility between jobs and settings within the occupational group might contribute to the setting of shared standards.

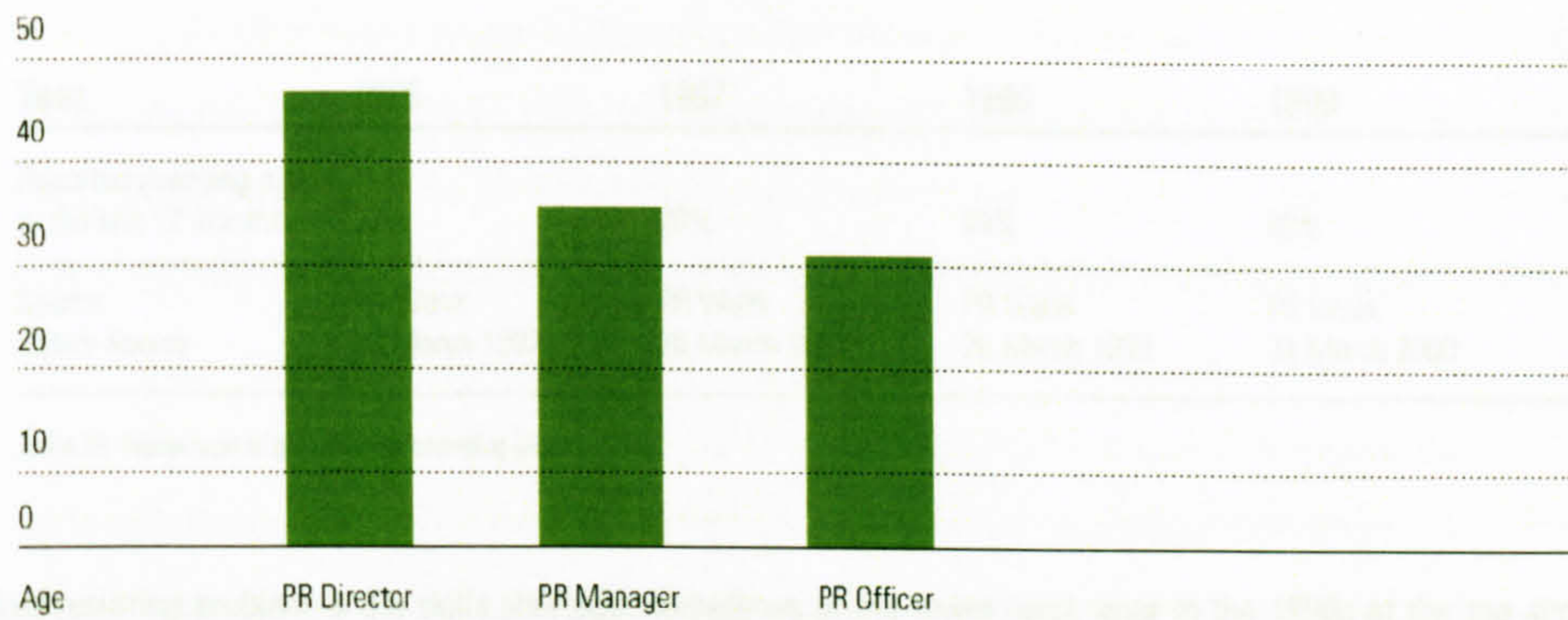


Figure 14: Career structure in-house

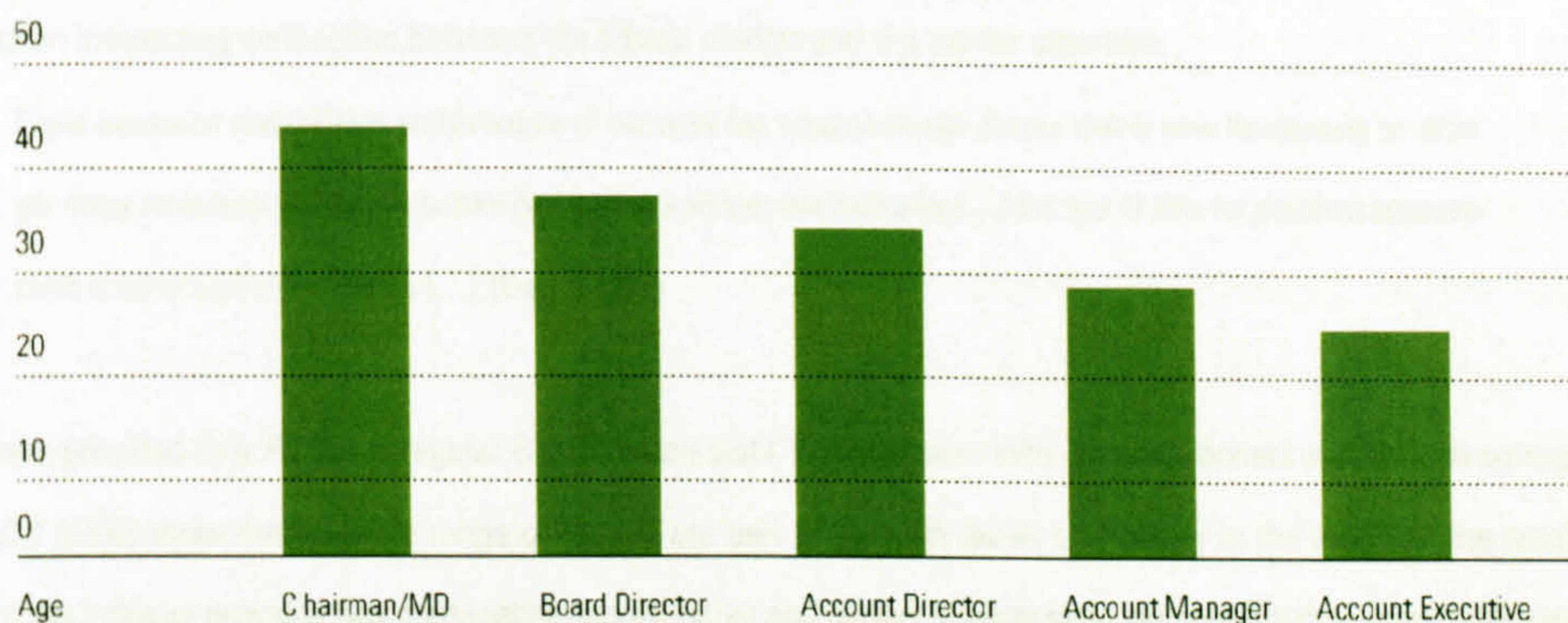


Figure 15: Consultancy career structure

Figures 14 and 15 (see Tables 30 and 31 In the Appendix) also show that there are more steps on the consultancy career ladder than in-house. This seems to be linked to specific features of the consultancy labour market and the organisational culture of the business. Consultancy is a volatile business, it is sensitive to the performance of the economy and highly dependent on its ability to win and keep accounts. For example, a *PR Week* editorial below shows longer-term impact of recession on the labour market:

The major problem currently facing PR business is recruitment. Put blankly, there aren't enough good people to go around, chiefly because the influx of new talent slowed down to a trickle during the recession. Now the throttle has been opened again, both consultancies and in-house departments are struggling to fill vacancies. So it is not surprising that many are mounting raiding parties on the fourth estate. ("The search for talent", 1996).

Perennial features of the consultancy labour market, as the editorial suggests, are its openness to entrants from other fields, especially journalism, and, more importantly, the volume of movement, 'the two-year employment cycle' as a *PR Week* contributor put it (Dyson, 1997). Pulling the information together, we can see a fairly consistent picture across the five-year period (see Table 29):



| Year   | 1996          | 1997          | 1998          | 1999          |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Reported changing jobs in the last 12 months | 22%           | 20%           | 23%           | 60%           |
| Source                                       | PR Week       | PR Week       | PR Week       | PR Week       |
| Salary Survey                                | 28 March 1997 | 28 March 1998 | 26 March 1999 | 24 March 2000 |

Table 29: Percentage of practitioners changing jobs.

Another recurring problem is the skills shortage, sometimes at the lower level, later in the 1990s at the top and middle level, often in specialist areas such as IT, with the result of inflated salaries — ‘overpromoting and overpaying’ as the 2001 salary survey refers to the phenomenon (Pawinska, 2001, p.14). A *PR Week* contributor suggested an interesting connection between the labour market and the career structure:

Rapid expansion and the high profile nature of our work has created an ego culture that is now threatening to strangle many consultancies. Such a culture has fuelled a title-driven mentality [...] the use of title for personal appeasement is not a sign of confidence [...]. (Dyson, 1997)

Answers provided to a *PR Week* regular Big Question slot (“Big question: Why do practitioners switch jobs so regularly?,” 1996) show that a whole range of factors are tied to the high levels of mobility in the industry: the small size of the industry provides few managerial opportunities and allows idiosyncratic, personality driven management cultures to flourish; small pool of available workforce; changing culture in which inflexible demands and long hours are no longer seen as acceptable as they might have been; finally, poor training practices forcing employees to shop around for better employers.

As Figure 16 below shows, PR practitioners work long hours.

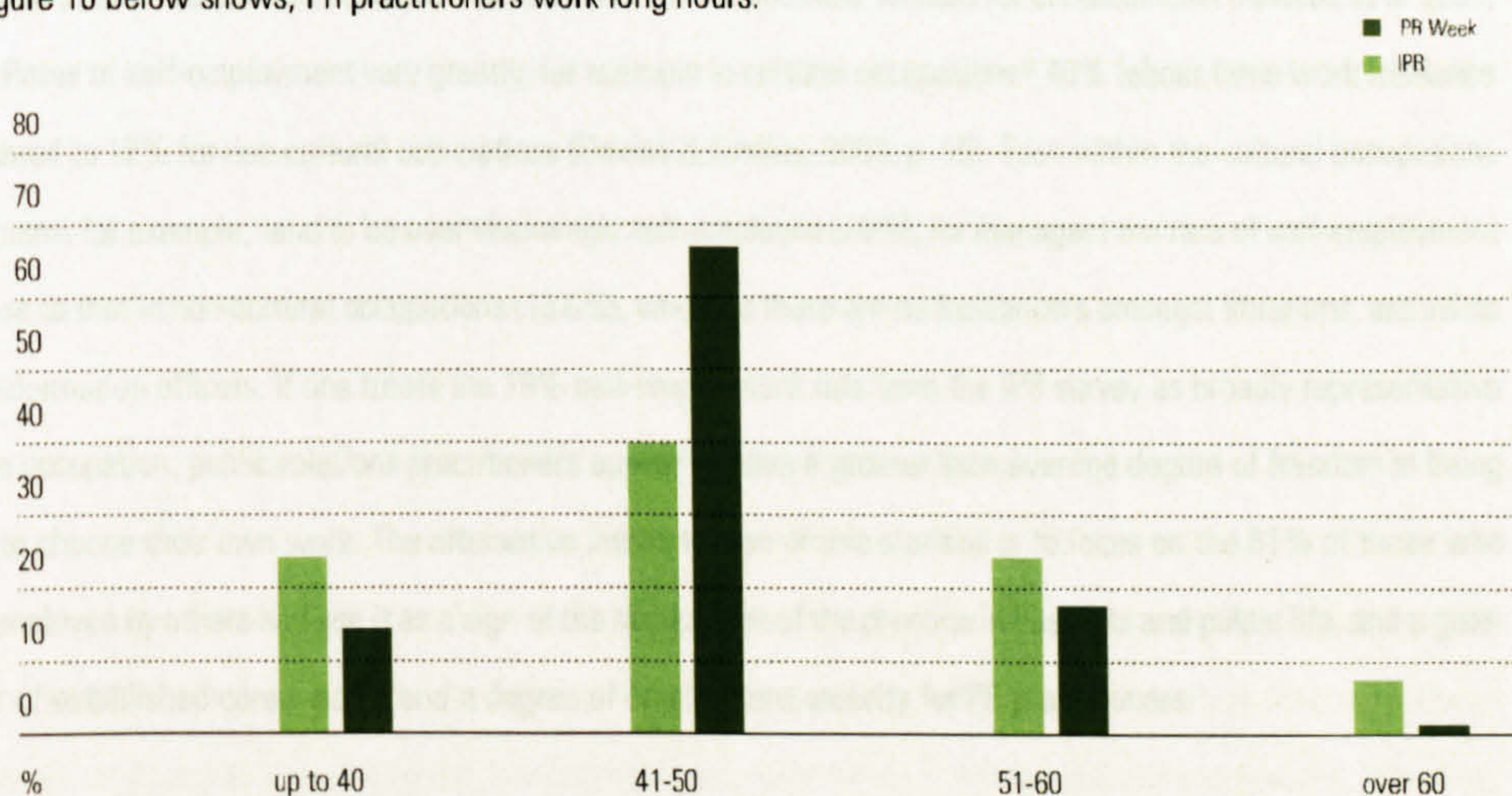


Figure 16: Hours worked in 1998

Anecdotal evidence suggests that long hours were particularly characteristic of the consultancy setting and an important reason behind moving into freelance work. According to Fawkes, et al (2001) freedom and flexibility,

understood as an ability to choose clients, hours worked, and a life style were given as the main reason for going freelance by 83% and 74% respondents respectively, the majority of whom were women (majority of the survey respondents were aged 31-35).

Another temptation for account directors is to go freelance. "West London is full of mothers who used to be account directors, but simply couldn't see a way forward, so left", says Brodeur A Plus director, Jonathan Simnett. [...] at this level, people have all the skills and contacts they need to set up as a one-man band. In addition, in many agencies any advance from this position means dropping direct client handling in favour of managerial responsibilities.

And, in what is clearly a client-oriented culture, many agencies are less than sympathetic about the lifestyle changes that often occur at the account manager or director level. Many employees require time off for raising a family, geographical flexibility and a way back into the market place for those that have opted out to go travelling or dip their toes into other industries. (Cowlett, 1998).

Working long hours appears to be part of UK business culture. According to The quality of working life surveys conducted on members of the Institute of Management, in 2000, nine out of ten managers exceeded their contracted hours and two-thirds explained that long hours were part of their organisation's culture (Worrall & Cooper, 2001). Findings showing that 8% worked over 60 hours a week in 2000, down from 12% in 1997, are comparable with the findings from the IPR survey (see Figure 16 above).

Freelancing appears to be a well-established choice in public relations, although rather difficult to capture in statistical terms. Approximately 19% of the IPR members in 1998 described themselves as 'self-employed'. With the exception of 1999, the average self-employed salary was higher than the average salary in-house or in consultancy (see Table 17 in the Appendix). Interestingly, PR consultancies are a major employer of freelance practitioners: 71% and 51% of freelancers surveyed in 2000 and 2001 respectively worked for consultancies (Fawkes et al 2001, p. 8). Rates of self-employment vary greatly, for example in cultural occupations<sup>19</sup> 40% labour force work freelance compared to 12% for non-cultural occupations (Davies & Lindley, 2003, p. 15). Even within the cultural occupations musicians, for example, tend to be overwhelmingly self-employed (76%); for managers the rate of self-employment is close to that in non-cultural occupations (13.6%); whereas there are no freelancers amongst librarians, archivists and information officers. If one treats the 19% self-employment rate from the IPR survey as broadly representative of the occupation, public relations practitioners appear to have a greater than average degree of freedom in being able to choose their own work. The alternative interpretation of this statistic is to focus on the 81% of those who are employed by others and see it as a sign of the acceptance of the practice in business and public life, and a guarantor of established career paths and a degree of employment security for PR practitioners.

PR practitioners are white: in 1998 both the IPR membership survey and the PR Week surveys show that 96% of respondents described themselves as white. This feature of the PR industry was noted by *PR Week* on a few occasions. Although it was not a major theme in the data analysed, the importance of the issue is clear from initiatives such as the establishment of the Diversity Task Force by the IPR in 2001 'to tackle under-representation of ethnic minorities across the industry' (IPR, 2002, p. 7).

In conclusion, the public relations labour force could perhaps be best understood as a series of comparisons: first, to its closest jurisdictional neighbours — advertising and marketing; then to the occupations classed by the ONS together under Media Associated Professionals. Public relations shows a clear pattern of gender discrimination in terms of pay and promotion. In this it resembles advertising and marketing; in terms of education and employment it fits with a broader category of the cultural occupations.

## Discussion

The picture of the consultancy industry that emerges from this analysis can be summarised by a number of keywords: consolidation, globalisation, and diversification. The most important point, however, is that the trends and the resulting structural and strategic outcomes are by no means unique to public relations consultancy. In fact, direct parallels can be drawn between public relations, advertising, accountancy and management consultancy sectors, the last two usually discussed together. Secondly, the three phenomena are closely interrelated, as demonstrated by the example of accounting and management consulting. According to Kipping (2002, pp. 30-31) the origins of management consultancy as a business in its own right can be traced back to the emergence of scientific management at the beginning of the 20th century.

The earliest consultants were engineers; the focus of their activity was efficiency enhancement. The enduring link of management and accountancy advice was established quite early on: in 1926, a Chicago University accountancy lecturer, James O. McKinsey, started a consultancy business which redefined the understanding of management away from the preoccupation with the production process and placed budgeting, i.e. financial control, at the heart of sound management (Kipping, 2002, p. 34). However, it was not until the late 1960s, when the traditional accounting and auditing business was stagnating that the importance of other types of management advice became critical for the accounting/management consultants.

They [the large Anglo-American accounting firms] responded by a series of mergers, which gradually reduced their number to eight at the end of 1980s and five at the end of the 1990s. The so called 'Big Five' are Arthur Andersen, Deloitte& Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PriceWaterhouse Coopers. They also expanded their services in other areas including tax as well as legal advice and consulting to management. (Kipping, 2002, p. 34)

At the same time, in 1991 (before the PriceWaterhouse and Coopers merger) the 'Big Six' accountancy firms had 87% of the world market for accounting services (Aharoni, 1999, p. 21). According to Wood (2002, p.55), '[t]he 20 largest UK management consultancy firms held 93% of the market share of the top 64 firms in 1994. The largest three held 40%.' What we observed here, the creation of huge global consultancies operating across a range of disciplines and a small number of big players dominating in the market, is similar to the changes in the advertising and public relations consultancy business as laid out earlier in this Chapter.

In advertising, the first step in the process of creation of megagroups was the merger of McCann-Erickson and Lintas under the umbrella of Interpublic, the first company in this field to run what Matterlart calls 'a double net-

work', two separately branded companies competing in the same market (1991, pp. 6-7). This idea, interestingly, was borrowed from car makers, specifically General Motors, 'who produced five different models with the same engine power, which they put on the market in artificial competition with each other' (Matterlart, 1991, p. 7). Saatchi & Saatchi started as an advertising company in 1970, went public in 1977 and grew rapidly through acquisition in the 1980s. Like Interpublic, it organised its advertising in a double network, but unlike the American group, Saatchi & Saatchi's acquisitions covered a much wider range of services.

They aimed to transform the advertising agency [into] an operational think-tank capable of intervening in every segment of what Saatchis, in its annual reports, calls the 'business culture' and to compete openly on their own terrain with the leading consultants, market research companies and accountants. (Matterlart, 1991, p.9)

Thus emerged the template which we have seen used by WPP and Omnicom. As we have seen, the expansion was fuelled by the need to keep up revenues in the context of the stagnating primary market (advertising).

Another shared factor in the development of consultancy was the globalisation of client companies. The resulting need for consultants to be present in the geographic markets where their clients operated is cited as 'a key factor in the development of modern accounting practice' (Aharoni, 1999, p. 27; see also Rose & Hinings, 1999). Historians of advertising make the same point (Matterlart, 1991, p. 30). As has been shown above, not only did the same trend apply to public relations, but it also produced essentially the same competitive consequence: 'once one big firm moves into a certain market other firms do so too' (Aharoni, 1999, p. 27). The latter applies to PR firms in terms of geographic and 'discipline' presence. Even the tactics used become standardised: earn-out agreements in acquisitions; a range of ownership-to-affiliation agreements in entering new geographic or discipline markets; and branding decisions. Finally, the resulting structure of the particular consultancy 'industry' is also similar. For example, the market research industry has gone through a similar process of consolidation as public relations in the late 1990s. As a consequence, the same big groups that dominate PR service provision dominate market research. In 2001 in the UK the top five market research consultancies had 40% market share and the top ten held 50% (Mitrano, 2002) — about 10% higher than the top five and ten in PR top 150 consultancies.

The similarities do not stop here. Aharoni (1999, p. 25) argues that consolidation squeezed out medium sized management consultancies, thus creating an industry split between 'huge or small' players. The same phenomenon was noted in advertising:

the structure has polarised into large networks and small independent shops [...] This means that the medium-sized agencies without international muscle are being squeezed... (Wood, 2002, p. 31 )

There are also a number of less striking, but still noteworthy, similarities, such as the role of IT for the changes in the PR consultancy sector, and the importance of image/brand for consultancies. According to Kipping (2002, p. 36) not only was much of the growth in management consulting services driven by information technology (supply and training in company-wide software), it also created new top players in the management consultancy league tables.

If initially accountants were well placed to offer IT services, soon large IT organisations entered the management consultancy market through acquisitions, for example Electronic Data Systems, acquired a well-established management firm, A.T.Keamey in 1995. The story of Cap Gemini illustrates that process; it also resembles corporate stories pursued in an earlier section of this chapter (see 'Consolidation').

Another company, which entered the outsourcing and consulting business on a very large scale over the last decade, was the French computer and software firm Cap Gemini. It grew almost exclusively through acquisitions. In 1990-91, it acquired the French consultancy Gamma International and the two US-based consultancies United Research and Mac Group, and combined them with its own consulting activities. Subsequent takeovers included the German consultancy Gruber, Titze & Partner in 1992, and in 1998 Bossard, one of the leading French service providers, which had only a few years earlier merged with the Swedish consultancy SIAR. In 2000, Cap Gemini merged with the consulting division of Ernst & Young, which propelled it into the top ten consultancies worldwide. (Kipping, 2002, p. 36)

In PR consulting, IT (that is providing public relations for IT company clients) was one of two or three major new disciplines in the mid-to-late 1990s. *Marketing* magazine saw it as 'the fastest-growing sector of the PR industry' (France, 1999). It could also be argued that the emergence of large PR companies, operating global networks of offices and affiliates was significantly aided, if not made possible, by the existence of company-wide IT networks.

In discussing strategies used by management consultancies to manage their reputation, Kipping starts from the general point about the intangibility of the consultancy service, the point discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. This leads him to the following interpretation of the importance of branding:

Consultants... build their credibility and reputation indirectly through the use of a wide variety of symbols. These include the qualifications of staff, the membership of a professional association and a list of well-known, reputable clients [...]. The brand name of the consultancy is usually the most visible and clear expression summarizing all these symbols. Normally this favours incumbents. (Kipping, 2002, pp. 39-40)

As this chapter has demonstrated, branding strategies, and their importance in the PR consultancy sector, are broadly in line with management consultancy. In his historical study of management consultancies Kipping (2002) argues that the development and changes in the types of consulting services changes over time:

[...] consultancy can be understood as a kind of reflection on prevailing managerial problems and definitions. Thus, when there was a major shift in the role of managers and in focus of their attention, the kind of consultancy they used also changed (p. 29)

A similar analysis of public relations consultancies might be helpful in drawing a fuller picture of the public relations jurisdiction. Another point, made about management consultancy, is worth pursuing beyond the current study. Wood (2002, p. 55) argues that the domination of the market by a small number of big consultancies helps to set standards for the entire practice in the absence of any formal regulation of management consultancy. Given the similar structure of the PR consultancy industry and a fair amount of mobility between jobs, one could ask if big PR firms play a similar role in their practice.

## Conclusion

This chapter started by defining the economic basis of the consultancy industry as a way in which expertise is transformed into a commodity that can be priced and sold. The transformation involves keen judgments about demand for a particular service and the cost involved in delivering such a service, which in this case means the state of play in the labour market as well as the organisation of suppliers, i.e. the range of PR businesses. These interests were followed up by bringing together a range of existing data on the industry and the labour force. The analysis took a comparative approach, which made it possible to interpret the data in a broader context. This has led to the conclusion that public relations consultancy in the late 1990s was shaped by factors such as globalisation — and the tactics used by client companies expanding or operating globally — and by the strategic expansion of advertising companies. This resulted in the reshaping of the PR consultancy industry in ways which echo similar processes in comparable industries, such as advertising and market research, as well as accountancy and management consultancy if one takes a longer historical perspective. From this point of view, there is hardly anything new about public relations, this relatively recent disciplinary offshoot in the division of labour in the area of promotion. Moreover, one can also point to a number of similarities between the different promotional occupations in terms of education, gender composition, and work conditions. One could, therefore, conclude that as an occupation and industry, PR consultancy is unremarkable: it fits well-established patterns of development.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For explanation of measures used by Annual Business Inquiry see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/abi/variable-info.asp>

<sup>2</sup> IDBR is based on HM Customs and Excise for VAT details and Inland Revenue for PAYE details. IDBR does not cover very small businesses (self-employed or very low turnover).

<sup>3</sup> In 1998, 67 (approximately 45%) of the top 150 PR consultancies were PRCA members.

<sup>4</sup> The same principles apply in any type of consultancy as can be seen, for example, in this advice offered by The inside careers guide to management consultancy:

‘A general rule of thumb in management consultancy is that you spend only 50-70% on your time on fees. The rest of the time is spent on selling, administration, holidays, courses/conferences and so on. This means that you will have 125-175 days per year to earn fees (and many sole practitioners note that they spend 100-140 days or less a year earning fees’.  
(Markham, 2003, p. 62).

<sup>5</sup> PR Week publishes its top 150 consultancies list on the basis of financial data for the year preceding the publication. For example, The Top 150 PR consultancies 1999 is based on figures of the year ending 31 December 1998. Here, references to the rankings are based on the year covered by the data, not the publication year. For example, fee income for 1995 can be found in the rankings published in 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Whenever possible separately listed subsidiaries or parts of bigger groups were not counted separately.

<sup>7</sup> Data for Standard Industrial Classification Subclass 74.141. (Source: personal communication, information commissioned from ABI, 24 June 2004).

<sup>8</sup> WPP’s chief executive, Sir Martin Sorrell, is credited with the invention of the earn-out acquisition mechanism during his time as the financial director with Saatchi & Saatchi in the 1980s when the company pursued an aggressive acquisitions strategy (Chase, 2004).

- Valin Pollen is something of an unusual animal. While concentrating on corporate and financial communications, it straddles advertising, public relations, marketing, research and design[...] Valin Pollen considers itself as the first specialist financial advertising agency [on the unlisted Securities market]...' (McEwan, 1984)
- <sup>10</sup> Omnicom's annual reports after 1995 do not include a full list of subsidiaries.
- <sup>11</sup> Both SOC2000 categories (1134 and 3433) mentioned here are used now to generate employment figures in advertising for the purposes of the Creative Industries Economics Estimates Statistical Bulletin, published by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- <sup>12</sup> NVQ4 level is defined as 'First degree and equivalent, HE below degree level, HNC, BTEC, and RSA Higher, etc, nursing and teaching qualifications', NVQ 5 stands for 'higher degree' (Davies & Lindley, 2003, p. 11)
- <sup>13</sup> Cultural occupations as defined by Davies & Lindley (2003, p.71) include: leisure and sports facility managers, architects, librarians, archivists, artists, authors and writers, dancers and choreographers, musicians, arts officers, producers and directors; graphic designers, product and clothing designers, journalists, photographic and audio-visual equipment operators, glass and ceramic makers, musical instrument makers, and goldsmiths.

## CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW: PROFESSIONALISM AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

This chapter presents the theoretical framework supporting the empirical and analytical work carried out in the thesis. (see Chapter 1: Introduction for more on the structure of the thesis.) First, a historical overview of the concept of the professions is presented. A special emphasis is given to the discussion of knowledge, a problematic concept, which nevertheless has consistently played a key role in definitions of the profession. The next section lays out the theoretical approach and conceptual tools employed. Finally, a broad-brush discussion of academic research in public relations is presented in order to situate this thesis in relation to themes present in published research in the field. This part of the discussion also serves as a brief outline of the process of production of abstract knowledge in public relations and the group of people involved in the process.

### Understanding the study of professionalism

Professions as a subject of study can be traced back to the late 19th century and the work of sociologists such as Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, but also economists, for example Cairnes (1887). A more systematic study developed in the 1920s and 1930s: the important early landmarks being Carr-Saunders and Wilson's study of twenty-seven occupational groups (1933) and Parsons' article on professions and the social structure (1939).

Like any field of enquiry, the sociology of the professions has been developing through a combination of slow detailed work of gathering all manner of facts, and theoretically driven work focused on interpretation and explanation. Thus looking back one notices more or less consistent lines of research effort, which sometimes may run in parallel sometimes in succession; one or two clear changes of direction, and the continuous chipping away at the problem and arguing about the merits of the various approaches. Underlying this diversity, however, the work of Durkheim, Weber and Parsons constructs the conceptual basis which has supported study of the professions from its early days. The concept of profession thus is anchored in the social division of labour, instrumental rationality, and the institutional structures through which these are articulated. In other words, the profession is inextricably linked with the rise of modern industrial society.

The history of this field is normally charted around the paradigm shift which occurred sometime in the late 1960s; on the one side lies the traits approach allied with functionalist sociology; on the other, the power approach, and its extensions, indebted to the insights offered by interactionism, but also to the revived interest in Marxism (for a detailed discussion see Macdonald, 1995; Freidson, 1986, 1994; Dingwall & Lewis, 1983; Abbott, 1988; Burrage &



Torstendahl, 1990). The following discussion will explore these different approaches before offering a view of the current thinking in the field of the sociology of the professions.

What the early writers and researchers agreed about, in fact took for granted, was the important, stabilizing role that professions play in the social structure (Durkheim, 1933, p. 24-31; see also Macdonald, 1995, p. 2). The view was succinctly expressed by Carr-Saunders & Wilson (1933, p. 497):

...professional organisations are stable elements in society...they engender modes of life, habits of thought, and standards of judgment which render them centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution.

As a result, researchers' efforts up to the 1960s were focused on cataloguing the traits that set professions apart from others in society and that accounted for their prominent role. A profession was thus defined by its dependence on a body of 'complex, formal knowledge and skill along with an ethical approach to ...work' (Freidson, 1986 p. 29). In fact, as Millerson's (1964) comparison of numerous definitions shows, a more detailed set of characteristics had been developed and well established in the field:

The list covers familiar ground – a specialised skill and service, an intellectual and practical training, a high degree of professional autonomy, a fiduciary relationship with the client, a sense of collective responsibility for the profession as a whole, an embargo on some methods of attracting business and an occupational organisation testing competence, regulating standards and maintaining discipline. (Elliott, 1972 p. 5)

A corollary of the efforts to build an 'ideal-type' definition of the phenomenon under examination was the realisation that a way had also to be found to account for the differences not only among the accepted professions, but also between different professions and occupations (for a discussion of definitions see Freidson, 1986, pp. 21-33). Terms such as semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969), paraprofessions (Freidson, 1970b) or status and occupational professions (Elliott, 1972) were introduced to deal with the differences in the autonomy and status different occupational groups possessed.

What thus seems to have emerged was a clear distinction between the static, descriptive nature of the traits approach, and the process approach which focused, as the name suggests, on the nature of the process by which occupations attain the status of a profession (see for example Vollmer & Mills, 1966). The process, called professionalisation, was proposed as a historical model of the development of professionalism. This so-called 'natural history of professionalism', developed in the work of Caplow (1954) and Wilensky (1964), consisted of five stages:

(1) the emergence of the full-time occupation; (2) the establishment of the training school; (3) the founding of a professional association; (4) political agitation directed towards the protection of the association by law (5) the adoption of a formal code. (Johnson, 1972, p. 28)

Professionalisation rendered itself to operationalisation — the traits and stages of development could be turned into variables and measured. The concept was therefore used in empirical work, for example dealing with structuration, such as Hickson and Thomas's (1969) study in which they establish a hierarchy of professions in Britain (for a critical discussion of traits and professionalisation see Johnson, 1972; Rueschemeyer, 1964; Spangler & Lehman, 1982; Abbott, 1988).

Presenting the first few decades of the study of the professions as driven purely by the trait approach and by functionalism is too crude. An alternative approach developed within the Chicago School by Everett C. Hughes was present from the 1930s onwards and became particularly prominent with the publication of his *Men and Their Work* (1958), and later *The Sociological Eye* (1971), and the publication of his students' work: a classic ethnographic study *Boys in White* (Becker, 1961), and Freidson's *Medical Dominance* (1970a) and *Profession of Medicine* (1970b). In theoretical terms, the difference between these two approaches can be explained with reference to their fundamental principles. The traits approach is underpinned by its normative stance shaped by the functionalist use of the key concepts such as the social structure and function: professions can be seen as determined by social structures and acting as guardians of social norms and values on which the system rests. The alternative view of professions sees them in a more dynamic way explained with using concepts of social action and interaction. The ethnographic approach used by the interactionist studies revealed aspects of professional practice and training which evaded other researchers, for example the fact that young doctors developed cynical rather than altruistic attitudes in the course of their professional instruction. The term profession thus came to be seen as a symbolic label used by an occupational group,

...ideal-typical constructions do not tell us what a profession is, only what it pretends to be... Everett C. Hughes and his followers are the principal critics of the 'trait' approach and ask instead what professions actually do in everyday life to negotiate and maintain their special position. (Larson, 1977 pp. xii, xiv; quoted in Macdonald, 1995 pp. 7-8).

and puts it in the context of theoretical and methodological changes within the social sciences beginning in the late 1960s, and perhaps even broader social and political trends of that time, one cannot avoid the impression of doors closing on certain ways of thinking and opening on others.

In the 1960s a shift in both emphasis and interest developed both in the United States and in the United Kingdom. The mood shifted from one of approval to one of disapproval, from one that emphasized virtue over failings to one that emphasized failings over virtues... This shift in evaluation and emphasis was reflected in a shift in conceptualization. The academic sociologists of the 1940s and 1950s were prone to emphasise one reads the early history of the sociology of the professions in the way presented above, hasize as the central characteristics of the professions their especially complex formal knowledge and skill along with an ethical approach to their work... Writers from the late 1960s on, however, emphasized instead the unusually effective, monopolistic institutions of professions and their high status as the critical factor... (Freidson, 1986, pp. 28, 29)

The new way of looking at professions came to be termed the power approach, where power is understood, broadly speaking, as ways in which professions win social approval to define and control their work and their relation-

ships with other actors, such as, for example, clients (Macdonald, 1995, p. 5). There is an influential body of published work which is either directly focused on various manifestations of professional power, or is regarded as an extension of such interests (Johnson 1972; Freidson, 1970a, 1970b; 1986; Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988). Although each of these authors developed a distinct approach, for the purposes of this review it is more useful to focus on what their work had in common in order to understand how the conceptual map of the field was shaped in the 1970s and 1980s.

The fundamental area of convergence between these authors has to be located in the theoretical sources on which they drew, or perhaps even more importantly, their preoccupation with theorising. The traits approach was atheoretical and Parsons's conceptualisation — which explains the place of professions in the social structure as defined by the special nature of the social functions they fulfil and by their 'collectivity-orientation' — came under attack. The theoretical inspiration for this renewed interest in professions came in the form of a number of concepts borrowed from Hughes's interactionism; Weberian ideas; and finally, Marxist modes of explanation.

The first contributed the concepts of licence and mandate, i.e. the idea that the profession depends on society's approval to carry out certain activities in exchange for money, and 'to define, for themselves and others, proper conduct in relations to work' (Dingwall, 1983, p. 5). Weber's social closure was introduced by Parkin (1974) and used subsequently by others. Another of Weber's ideas borrowed by the sociologists of the professions was the view that a profession represented an interest group whose actions are oriented towards common economic and social interests. Finally, Marxist influence raised questions about the profession's relations to the state and the position of professionals in the class system. It also produced a stream of work tracking the traces of proletarianisation of the professions (Hall, 1968; Braverman, 1974; Derber, 1982, Murphy, 1990), i.e. their alleged loss of autonomy to bureaucratic systems which increasingly controlled the performance of professional work (see Freidson, 1994, pp. 130-140).

The theorising effort was further enriched by the study of professions outside the Anglo-American system, particularly studies of the French and German professions (see Burrage, 1990, pp. 12-18). This Continental intervention highlighted the culturally specific nature of the concept by revealing a different model of the state's engagement with professions (Kocka, 1990; Geison, 1984; Jarausch, 1990). The differences begin with the semantics — both French and German lack the exact equivalent of the term 'profession' itself. Beyond the language, however, lie more fundamental differences of political culture:

...in the meritocratic ideology of 'classless' America, the professions have come to be seen as the most obviously 'legitimate' way to claim, attain, or retain elite status. In French (and German) political culture, the social standing of noncapitalist elites has had a less distinct connection with their occupational role, and the 'liberal professions' in particular have generally been perceived as much less important social and political force. (Geison, 1984: 5)

All these developments have contributed to a new, more complex way of thinking about the concept of profession. First of all, it comes to be seen as a special case of a more general type of occupation. The old traits are reworked into a dynamic model which places a profession in relation to the state, political culture, and social groups, be they elites, other professions or clients. Knowledge in this model may be seen as the basis on which the profession is built and as an instrument in its competitive positioning. It also becomes clear that the study of professions, or any profession for that matter, has to cover three levels of analysis: 'the level of general social change, the level of occupational organisation and the level of individual life-cycle' (Elliott, 1972, p. 5).

Two such comprehensive models which have been constructed and applied are known as the professional project (Larson, 1977) and the system of professions (Abbott, 1988; for a discussion of both see Macdonald, 1995, pp. 8-35). Larson's work is inspired by the Hughesian approach, but at the same time it rests firmly on the idea of the market as the focus around which economy, society and professions are organised.

Professionalization is thus an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources — specialist knowledge and skills — into another — social and economic rewards. ... The structure of the professionalization process binds together two elements...: a body of abstract knowledge, susceptible of practical application, and a market — the structure of which is determined by economic and social development and also by the dominant ideological climate. (Larson, 1977, pp. xvii, 40)

The professional project thus unfolds along two dimensions: market control and social mobility. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Bourdieu's analysis draws attention to the use individuals can make of their membership of a professional group in shoring up or improving their social position and thus highlights the importance of the symbolic value of a profession. The ultimate goal of the professional project is the complete social closure, that is achieving a position of control over entry to the profession as well as gaining monopoly over its knowledge. This, in turn, delivers control over the market for the profession's services on the one hand, and high social status on the other. Larson re-uses the old idea of professionalisation, but in her account it is the combination of economics and the ideological mechanisms, rather than the concept of social function, that supply the explanation. Professions are no longer neutral or detached from the class structure, they are very clearly lodged in it by their 'proximity to power' (1977, p. xv). There are two other features of her model important to this project: her understanding of the operations that are performed on knowledge in the process of professionalisation; and her understanding of the role professional training plays. The first is captured by the opposition of 'codification' versus 'indeterminacy' (Larson, 1977, p. 41). The first of the pair refers to the part of the cognitive base of the profession that can be standardised and mastered as rules; the second describes areas which escape codification and may be covered by explanations such as 'talent'. Freidson, who had used the idea of indeterminacy before in the context of medicine, explains it as the 'first hand experience' of the clinician as opposed to 'book knowledge' or science (1970b, p. 169). High indeterminacy helps to exclude competitors from the field and can, therefore, be expected to play an important part in professionalisation. Finally training is seen as,

the cooperative activity of instructors and students — appears indeed as the production of a marketable commodity, namely the special skill of the professional producer. (Larson, 1977, p. 211)

Abbott's work is founded on two points: 'the evolution of professions... results from their interrelations' (1988, p. 8); and professional work is constituted by tasks which the profession has successfully claimed for itself. The hold a profession establishes over a set of tasks is known as jurisdiction. Jurisdictions are maintained, extended and redefined on the basis of 'a knowledge system governed by abstractions [because only abstraction] can redefine [the system's] problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers, and seize new problems...' (p. 9). The new element is the concept of the system of professions, which introduces a level of generalisation above that of a single profession: thus, a change in one profession's jurisdiction effects jurisdictional changes for other professions. At the same time, his model includes the intraprofessional differentiation (by status, client, organisation of work, and career pattern); and a sensitivity to broader environmental factors which he considers under the labels of social and cultural environments.

It is near impossible to be entirely original and innovative in a well-trodden area such as the sociology of the professions. Abbott's work certainly draws on ideas we have seen elsewhere, for example Freidson's focus on work and knowledge as the starting point, but his definition of jurisdiction does stand out. Although on one level Abbott's theoretical effort may be faulted, for example for its neo-functionalism (Macdonald, 1995, p. 14); in another respect, it appears very attractive as a scheme for organising a research project due to its comprehensiveness and simplicity.

It seems appropriate to finish this historical review of the sociology of profession with Freidson, who occupies a rather special position in the field. Freidson has been publishing on the sociology of medicine since 1960 and since his *Profession of Medicine* (1970b) has developed a strong theoretical position in the sociology of the professions which has influenced writers such as Larson and Abbott. What is particularly valuable in his approach is both the reworked definition of the profession 'as an occupation which has assumed a dominant position in the division of labour, so that it gains control over the determination and substance of its own work' (1970b, p. xvii) and a more fundamental redefinition of the subject as the study of work based on application of knowledge to a variety of problems. The new element here is the retreat from the notion of objective knowledge to the notion of knowledge as a social construct (which for Freidson is not synonymous with extreme relativism).

The profession claims to be the most reliable authority on the reality it deals with.... In developing its own 'professional' approach, the profession changes the definition and shape of problems as experienced and interpreted by the layman. The layman's problem is re-created as it is managed — a new social reality is created by the profession.  
(Freidson, 1970b, p. xvii)

Although knowledge has been an important element in the study and definitions of the profession from the beginning, it has not been well investigated, not even after Freidson's interest in the sociology of knowledge problematised the concept for the sociologists of the professions. To study a profession, thus, means to study its pursuit of autonomy, and the relationship between the professional core (knowledge and procedures), the profession's own institutions, and 'the lay world' (1970b, pp. xvii-xviii). Freidson is most radical in his theoretical approach to the concept of the profession itself:

The future of profession lies in embracing the concept as an intrinsically ambiguous, multifaceted folk concept, of which no single definition and no attempt at isolating its essence will ever be generally persuasive... Thus profession is treated as an empirical entity about which there is little ground for generalizing as a homogeneous class or a logically exclusive conceptual category. (1994, p. 25)

Profession thus should be understood as a 'socio-political artifact' and a study of 'the role of the [official] title [of profession] in the aspirations and fortunes of those occupations claiming it' (1994, p. 26).

Looking back over the field, in the early 1990s, Abbott placed the study of professions within the broader field of the sociology of work, where it stands out as one of 'three or four principal topic areas largely disconnected from each other, each with its own speciality topics' (Abbott, 1993, p. 194). Profession is one such topic area distinguished from others by its preoccupation with theorising and, methodologically, by the popularity of case and comparative studies. It also has to be said that this topic area is not completely isolated, as the growing interest in gender research within it shows. Theoretically, there are, what Abbott calls 'three lines of attack' (1993 p. 203) emerging in the late 1980s and exemplified by the special issue of *Sociologie et Societes*: professions seen as labour markets (Paradeise, 1988); professions understood in Foucauldian terms of power/knowledge (Larson, 1988), 1990); and the relations between state and profession (Krause, 1988).

Abbott's assessment of the state of the sociology of the professions in the early 1990s suggests that despite intense theorising, the work in the field had followed fairly well established lines of enquiry, failing to produce studies sensitive to multiple levels of analysis:

The jurisdictional studies ... have not appeared; linear studies of professions continue to dominate... Moreover, recent studies have emphasised either the cultural... or the social structural... , and none systematically pursues multilevel analysis. (Abbott, 1988, p. 204)

As we shall see, a noticeable effort has gone into professionalisation in public relations. Educators and researchers have relied on the traits approach to guide institutional efforts and evaluate progress (Piecza & L'Etang, 2001). Historians of public relations have been less interested in the concept of professionalism, instead writing within broader social theories, or ideologies, such as liberal-pluralist, Marxist or critical approaches. L'Etang's (2001) is the closest to a multi-level, jurisdictional type of study of the public relations occupation we currently have. This thesis attempts to display sensitivity to multiple levels of analysis: the aim is achieved most clearly in Chapters 2 and 3 which combine analysis of individual practitioners or companies with that of higher level phenomena such as a labour market, an industry or a political system or an elite network, but can also be found in Chapter 7 where an analysis of a narrative genre used by practitioners in talking about their work is revealed as occupational discourse, the property of the group rather than an individual practitioner.

The nature of engagement in the field of public relations with the concepts of profession and professionalism is not helped by the strong influence in the sociological literature of case studies of professions such as medicine, law, and accountancy. The main problem lies with the professional knowledge and its relationship to the professional practice. Medical knowledge is scientific, its 'methods are epitomized by the natural and biological sciences' (Macdonald, 1995, p. 168). The legal profession's knowledge base is of normative character, 'concerned with matters of value' (Macdonald, 1995, p. 168). Accountancy is based on a body of technical, but not scientific, knowledge. In all three professions, the knowledge base is codified in textbooks and institutionalised through licensing of practitioners based on examinations and apprenticeship. Public relations, as we shall see, is still in search of its abstract knowledge base; consequently, it might be claimed, there are no restrictions on entry to the occupation. Attempting to understand public relations through comparisons with these classic professions is, therefore, bound to be frustrating, as there are more differences than similarities.

Profession, thus, covers not only different types of knowledge, but also different ways in which the knowledge base, occupational power strategies, and organisational forms are inter-related. On this basis, Reed (1996) differentiates between three types of expert groups: independent/liberal professions, organizational professions, and knowledge workers (see Figure 17). In this scheme, public relations seems to fall between categories. Although it most resembles the group of knowledge workers in its power strategy and organisational form, questions can be raised about the knowledge base category. In public relations, it seems, we may be dealing with both local, organisation-specific knowledge like that used by managers, and the 'highly esoteric, intangible knowledge base' (Reed, 1996, p. 585) characteristic of the entrepreneurial professions/knowledge workers who:

rely on a [...] combination of theoretical knowledge, analytical tools and tacit or judgmental skills that are very difficult, but not impossible, to standardize, replicate and incorporate within formalized organizational routines. (Reed, 1996, p. 585)

| Expert Groups                        | Knowledge base  | Power strategy | Organizational form | Occupational type   |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------|---------------------|---|
| independent/<br>liberal<br>knowledge | abstract<br>codified<br>cosmopolitan<br>rational          | monopolization | collegiate          | doctors<br>architects<br>lawyers  |
| Organizational<br>professions        | technical<br>tacit<br>local<br>political                  | credentialism  | bureaucracy         | managers<br>administrators<br>technicians   |
| Knowledge<br>workers                 | esoteric<br>non-<br>substitutable<br>global<br>analytical | marketization  | network             | financial/business<br>consultants project<br>R&D engineers;<br>computer/<br>IT analysis |

Figure 17: Expert division of labour in late modernity (source: Reed, 1996)

Whitley's work on management (Whitley, 1995) shows that it is possible for a profession to be fairly disconnected from a research-based, abstract knowledge. Focusing on the role that formal knowledge plays in supporting prac-

tical skills and jurisdictional control, Whitley identifies four dimensions for analysing 'links between research and training programmes and [...] ways in which academically credentialized skills are linked to labour-market boundaries and control over task performance and evaluation' (1995, p. 84). Key to this analysis — and the resulting typology of expert skills, and types of professions (see Figure 18) — is the distinction between highly formal, abstract knowledge dealing with idealised problems and situations, on the one hand, and concrete knowledge transmitted through informal language and apprenticeship, which is concerned with solving practical problems.

| Characteristics  | Craft Professional | Academic Professional                | Contested Academic       | Research Based                |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dependence on formal abstract knowledge                            | Low                | Considerable but not total           | Limited by lay audiences | High                          |
| Degree of academic control over skill definition and certification | Low                | Shared with practitioner elite/state | Considerable             | High                          |
| Extent to which skills control access to work jurisdictions        | High               | High                                 | Low                      | Medium, shared with employers |
| Extent to which academic credentials control work jurisdictions    | Low                | High                                 | Low                      | Limited                       |

Figure 18: Types of high-level, publicly certified skills (source: Whitley, 1995, p 89)

Setting aside the fact that public relations — not just in the UK, but all over the world with the exception of Brazil (Molleda & Athaydes, 2003) — does not operate a system of public certification of skills, PR skills fit best in the craft professional category. This type of skills is typically defined by

practitioner elites and, sometimes, employers. The knowledge base of these skills is typically derived from practice rather than academic research, and much instruction is concentrated in practical techniques of problem solving and codified 'best practice' (Whitley, 1995, p. 88).

Finally, the focus on rationality, abstract knowledge and predictability of outcomes, can be seen as a weakness in the traditional approaches to the study of professionalism foregrounding one side of the professional practice, at the expense of another: 'creativity, judgement, and savoir faire, and the constructive response to the uncertain and unprogrammable.' (Fores, Glover & Lawrence, 1991, p. 97). Alvesson's work on the Knowledge Intensive Firms (KNFs) shows clearly how problematic the concept of knowledge is for understanding professional work. Traditional definitions focused on formal, scientific qualities of knowledge appear to be too narrow to furnish a comprehensive explanation of the nature of professional work; broad definitions, including cultural, and even somatic, knowledge, appear to cover too much for making meaningful distinctions between professional and non-professional types of work. It also appears that formal knowledge plays a limited role in the work of knowledge workers, such as IT specialists, psychologists or management consultants, who instead emphasise other kinds of skills or qualities, such as flexibility and experience. Alvesson thus re-defined the role of knowledge in professional work,



[w]ithout denying that knowledge may be a functional resource that is directly applied in work [...] other functions of knowledge and knowledge-talk become central. Knowledge plays other roles such as (a) a means for creating community and social identity through offering organizational members a shared language and promoting their self esteem; (b) a resource for persuasion in, for example, PR work and interactions with customers; (c) providing the company with a profile (an intended image targeted at the market); (d) creating legitimacy and good faith regarding actions and outcomes, and (e) obscuring uncertainty ... (Alvesson, 1993, p. 1005).

If comparisons to classic professions are not very helpful in analysing public relations, drawing on the work done on managers, and more specifically on management consultants, can unblock some of the dead ends in the analysis. There are a number of significant similarities between public relations and management. The most striking similarity is the way in which the type of knowledge used by consultants requires extensive rhetorical work to legitimise claims to professionalism. It is argued that the management consultancy, as a practice and organisation, is 'beset by ambiguities' relating to what exactly management knowledge is, how consultants' work draws on knowledge, and what the work produces (Fincham & Clark, 2002, p. 7). Thus knowledge, effectiveness, and client-consultant relationship become inextricably linked and key to a more meaningful understanding of how management, and by analogy, public relations, constructs itself as a profession.

Clark and Salaman (1996) use the metaphor of story-telling to examine the nature of management consultants' expertise. Their argument focuses on the client-consultant relationship, as shaped by a number of structural features of the industry itself, such as low barriers to entry and the resulting heterogeneity of service providers.

For clients of management consultancy services this means that any assessment of a consultancy's quality and value has to be made once entry has been effected... Since there is no certifying body the responsibility for prejudging the value and quality of consultancy's service falls on the clients. (Clark & Salaman, 1996, p. 171)

Making this judgement is, however, made difficult by the specific features of the service itself — its intangibility, interactive character, heterogeneity, and perishability. In other words, the service does not tend to take the form of a physical product; it is delivered in the form of an interactive process involving the consultant and the client; it is difficult to standardise, as it is crafted around the client's specific requirements; finally, the service cannot be stored, it is created and consumed simultaneously. Under such circumstances, consultants focus their energies on

convincing the client of their 'know how' and that they have something valuable to offer. Indeed, he (Alvesson, 1993) suggests that their rationale for existing and their economic fortunes are dependent upon the extent to which they are able to successfully apply this process. (Clark & Salaman, 1996, p. 174)

In the absence of more objective criteria, clients pay considerable attention to the quality of the interaction process. Thus consultants' professional success appears heavily dependent on the quality of communication and the ensuing relationship between clients and consultants.

Academic interest in management fashions and management gurus (Abrahamson, 1996; Kieser, 1997; Legge, 2002) examining the role of discourse in the enactment of management consulting has led to the conclusion that rhetorical strategies do not merely help market the expertise, but are 'part of the process of commodification of knowledge from start to finish' (Fincham & Clark, 2002, p. 9). Consequently, it appears that to understand professional expertise, one must attempt to reconnect its discourse to the set of conditions from which it springs and to which it simultaneously addresses itself. This aspect of public relations expertise is addressed by the model presented in Chapter 6 and set against the backdrop of social, political and economic factors analysed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Another striking similarity between management and public relations consultancy is its poor public image created and sustained by popular journalistic criticism (Fincham & Clark, 2002, p. 7). Management consultants are consistently portrayed as expensive (charging exorbitant fees) and ineffective (their advice rarely works), as destroying organizations, as repackaging old ideas and developing empty buzzwords [...] as running amok if not controlled... (Fincham & Clark, 2002, p. 8) For Fincham and Clark the image results from the common news values privileging bad news, transgressions and drama over the routine; the enduring interest in this occupational group is ascribed to 'beliefs that their influence is concealed and unaccountable' (Fincham & Clark, 2002, p. 8). A number of analyses of media content have consistently shown that public relations too is presented as a shady practice (Spicer, 1993; Keenan, 1996; Henderson, 1998). For example, Spicer comments on the 'overwhelmingly consistent use of the terms "public relations" and "PR" to suggest an attempt to sidestep or manipulate the truth for some dubious end' (1993, p. 60). A study of UK broadsheets comparing the use of 'public relations' and 'spin-doctor' found a considerable overlap between the two, with public relations reflected in a broader thematic range (such as image shaping, advising, campaigning to shape public opinion, crisis management, media manipulation) and 'spin-doctor' more heavily shaped by association with manipulation (Lai, 2002).

The more recent fascination with political spin in the UK media and beyond (Schlesinger, Miller & Dinan, 2001; Jones, 1999; Palmer, 2002) has focused on powerful actors, such as Alastair Campbell, Director of Communication at 10 Downing Street, 1997-2003:

...the former political editor of the Daily Mirror – who joined Tony Blair's staff after he became Labour leader in 1994 — has become the center of criticism about the government's preoccupation with spin and media [...] A hardened political bruiser [...] Mr Campbell was often seen as the "dark side" of the more charming Mr Blair... (Tempest, 2003)

Commentators focused on unravelling the many threads of spin, such as the tactics and strategies employed to control media representation of the Labour government and its policies; the nature of the relationship between the media and the government; and the key actors and complex networks of personal and professional connections spanning politics, the media and public relations. A good illustration is offered by the career history of David Hill, Campbell's replacement: not a journalist, but a professional communicator, for most of his career working for the Labour Party (Director of Communications, 1991-1997); he also aspired to become a politician (stood unsuccessfully as a parliamentary candidate in Burton-on-Trent) and worked in a public relations consultancy (1997-2001, direc-

tor at Good Relations, owned by Tim Bell's Chime Communications see 'Profile: David Hill', 2003). In this light, explaining journalistic fascination with spin doctors as resulting purely from the way in which news values have put a premium on uncovering scandalous practices in public institutions seems somewhat inadequate. A more satisfying explanation, based on jurisdictional competition, will be attempted in a later section of this chapter (see also Chapter 2).

This section has offered a brief overview of the main concepts, approaches and problems in the field of the sociology of the profession as the theoretical framework for the empirical research project studying public relations. The following section deals with two questions about the approach to be taken in this study: What does it mean to apply the framework offered by the sociology of the professions to the analysis of an occupation? What could be gained from such an exercise conducted on the occupation of public relations?

### Applying the framework

As we have seen, there are a number of frameworks in the sociology of the professions, some of which are perhaps outdated, such as the traits approach; others — Johnson's, Larson's, or Abbott's — were advanced in the context of particular theoretical developments in the field. Having said that, it seems fairly clear from the range of existing work that a study of a profession can be expected to cover well-defined ground. Firstly, it means studying an occupational group which has laid a claim to the special title of the profession. An area defined in this way will encompass a study of how the occupation's work is carried out; how the definition of the work is controlled; who the clients are and how the professional relates to them; finally, a consideration of the settings in which the professional practice is carried out. One would also expect to find historical studies tracing the fortunes of the professional associations: the tactics they have used to achieve control over entrance to the profession, over standards for professional work and training; and ways in which exclusion of others from their territory was pursued. Overlapping with such studies would be an interest in the profession's relationship with the state, for example, as the source of legislative endorsement, or a major client for the professional services. Finally, one could also expect to see research dealing with the impact of professional work on social and political life, whether through the consideration of the role experts play in policy making or through the constitutive and controlling powers of professional discourses.

As we have seen, the terminology used carves up the territory in different ways depending on researchers' interests. A useful glossary should include such terms as: knowledge; autonomy, licence and mandate; jurisdiction, closure, exclusion; trust, prestige; and ideology. For the purpose of this study, these terms are seen to represent the main dimensions of the concept of profession and their application in different chapters of the thesis signals the particular theoretical interest pursued through an analysis on a set of empirical data. This does not mean a return to the traits approach, attempting to capture the immutable essence of the profession. On the contrary, the profession is understood as a dynamic, a force driving occupational groups to act in a range of ways seen as compatible with their currently espoused ideology and designed to deliver to the group the most advantageous social and economic position from which to lay claim to chosen types of work. The work, as well as the tactics used, do not remain stable; the process, therefore, is never complete.

Applied to the study of public relations as an occupation actively seeking the legitimacy of a profession, the framework can serve a number of purposes, such as reorganising the existing knowledge about the occupation and identifying gaps for future research; providing a framework for considering the public relations occupation in relation to other social actors which is not built from the dominant paradigm within the field itself (i.e. Grunig's models of public relations, see section below); finally, offering a meaningful way of linking public relations with broader issues of social change. This study will address such interests, but its main focus is elsewhere. Considerable attention in the discussion so far has been paid to the concept of knowledge: its key role for defining professions, but also the ambiguity of the concept, particularly when applied outside classic professions such as medicine, law, or accountancy. The main interest in this study is in investigating how knowledge is used in public relations: What is public relations expertise and how does it support the fortunes of this occupational group? Choices, therefore, have to be made about the depth of engagement with the whole range of relevant concepts.

## Definitions and delimitations

This study is based on a somewhat eclectic use of concepts from the sociology of the professions. Public relations will be treated as a profession on the strength of the claim it has made to this title. At the same time, however, it will also be referred to as an occupation, treating the terms as broadly synonymous, which is consistent with the definition of profession used in the study.

Profession is understood predominantly as a group project. The focus of this project, however, is not so much on the use professionals themselves make of the fact of being a member of a profession, but rather on how being a professional is constituted in everyday work activity as well as how a profession is expressed through actions of professional associations. Following Freidson and Abbott, professional work is seen as the application of knowledge to real cases.

Furthermore, it is also recognised that an expert or abstract body of knowledge is distinct from the activity of applying knowledge to practice. This distinction between knowing and doing is also reflected in the structure of a profession: there are people preoccupied with the production of knowledge — scholars, and those preoccupied with applying the knowledge to deliver a professional service — practitioners. This study is interested in practitioners and the knowledge they employ in the course of their work.

Another concept, key to this analysis, is that of jurisdiction defined as ties which bind a profession to the set of tasks it claims as its domain.

Since none of these links is absolute or permanent, the professions make up an interacting system... compete within this system, and a profession's success reflects as much the situations of its competitors and the system as it does the profession's own efforts. (Abbott, 1988, p. 33)

The model used here for the analysis of the application of knowledge is taken from Abbott (1988). At the heart of the model lies the recognition of a distinction between objective and subjective quality of problems, or real cases, professionals deal with. The first is shaped by the 'natural or technological imperatives', the second is 'imposed by the present or past culture' (Abbott, 1988, p. 36). The objective quality of problems, and professional tasks needed to deal with them, resists redefinition; whereas subjective qualities and tasks, are culturally constructed and can therefore be re-constructed as part of a different professional jurisdiction.

To investigate the subjective qualities of jurisdictions is thus to analyze the mechanisms of professional work itself. In their cultural aspect, the jurisdictional claims that create these subjective qualities have three parts: claims to classify a problem, to reason about it, and to take action on it: in more formal terms, to diagnose, to infer, and to treat. (Abbott, 1988, p. 40)

Diagnosis consists of colligation and classification. Colligation, defined as 'the assembly of a "picture" of the client' (Abbott, 1988, p. 41), is a selective translation of real life into the profession's language; while classification means 'referring the colligated picture [of the client's problem] to the dictionary of professionally legitimate problems' (Abbott, 1988, p. 41). Classification is based on the one hand on the scientific logic in the body of knowledge, on the other, it is influenced by the professional practice, i.e. problems might be grouped according to treatment which are administered to solve them.

Treatment can be seen in some ways as the reverse of diagnosis. Rather than take the information from the client, it gives information to the client in prescribing the course of action. To ensure efficacy, treatment takes account of the individual client characteristics, which have been previously removed from the description of the client's problem by colligation.

Diagnosis and treatment are linked but sometimes the connection between them is not immediately clear and, therefore, it is difficult to decide which treatment is likely to solve the diagnosed problem.

Professional thinking resembles chess. The opening diagnosis is often clear, even formulaic. So also is the endgame of treatment. The middle game, however, relates professional knowledge, client characteristics, and chance in ways that are often obscure. (Abbott, 1988, p. 48)

Depending on the nature of the problem, inference uses exclusion or construction as its tactics. If the cost of making a mistake, or not solving the problem immediately, is low, the professional tactic used is that of excluding possible treatments until the right one is found. If, on the other hand, the professional only gets one shot at a problem, the tactic employed is that of construction — before the problem is treated, various scenarios are hypothesized until the least risky one is found. This model of professional work underpins the analysis of case studies offered in Chapter 7.

Jurisdictional security, or vulnerability, is affected by the professional inference. If the link between diagnosis and treatment is clear, the professional work is highly routinised and therefore vulnerable to being highjacked because the routine can be relatively easily learnt by outsiders. If professional work is too dependent on inference, the profession is also in a vulnerable position as it 'has trouble demonstrating the cultural legitimacy of the basis for the efficacy' (Abbott, 1988, p. 52).

Diagnosis, treatment and inference explain the mechanism of performing skilled acts. However, being able to perform such acts and to justify them cognitively through a body of abstract knowledge (provided by academic work) is merely a basis for claiming an exclusive right to deal with specific real life problems.

In claiming jurisdiction, a profession asks society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights [which] may include absolute monopoly of practice and of public payments, right of self-discipline and of unconstrained employment, control of professional training, of recruitment, and of licensing... Which of them are actually claimed depends in part on the audience. (Abbott, 1988, p. 59)

Jurisdictional claims are made in the areas of: the legal system in pursuit of the formal control of work; public opinion to establish the legitimacy of control over a particular kind of work (which is used to influence the legal system); and workplace, where the claim is articulated in terms of division of work, and control and supervision of work. This aspect of the analysis comes to the fore in Chapter 2 dealing with debates about evaluation and regulation.

Abbott's foregrounding of the concepts of work and social system at the expense of the social stratification or class may be seen by some as a weakness, particularly in a study of public relations often seen as nothing but servants of the powerful elites (Miller, 1998). Yet from the point of view of this project, it is an advantage. A relatively small empirical study with a very clear exploratory character is perhaps better served by a framework built around directly observable phenomena, such as work.

A limitation of the framework is that it was based on the medical profession and therefore its application to public relations may not so much explore it, as squeeze it into a pre-existing model. This danger is tempered by the fact that Abbott himself demonstrated how his framework is applicable to the information professions, such as journalism (Abbott, 1988, pp. 225-226), marketing, and advertising (Abbott, 1988, pp. 233-235), close jurisdictional neighbours of public relations. On balance, there is more to gain than lose from using this particular conceptual tool.

## Public relations and knowledge

The approach taken in this thesis places a heavy emphasis on knowledge and expertise as the basis for the construction of the occupation's identity, which is instrumental in its differentiation and competitive existence. Consequently, expertise offers a good access point for analytical work. Public relations expertise is here defined as

practical knowledge: knowledge used in practice, and possibly also constructed out of practice. Its connection to abstract, research-based knowledge is not straightforward (Alvesson, 1993). In the case of public relations, academic knowledge is clearly important at the occupational level as a legitimising mechanism (L'Etang, 2001, p. 187), but its role in practice is, at best, ambiguous.

This study is concerned with public relations practice and, departing from the traditional sociological approach to the profession, it excludes any systematic investigation of academic institutions and practices relevant to the public relations occupation. More specifically, no attempt is made to examine the following: a body of academic/abstract knowledge in public relation; academics as knowledge producers for the occupation, and the relationship between academics and practitioners, or education and practice.

The following section, therefore, offers a brief discussion of these points as a background to the study of public relations practitioners, rather than educators or researchers. The discussion is organised around a number of themes: systems and texts; work and workers; histories; and institutionalisation. The themes are not based on a systematic study, but on the researcher's judgement and experience of the field, as well as the broad brush picture attempted. (For a map of the academic research activity based on a detailed content analysis study of the American journals see Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzure & Jones, 2003).

### Systems and texts

This theme is designed to provide a brief overview of the main theoretical interests in the academic writing in the field of public relations: systems theory and rhetorical analysis. The existing body of abstract knowledge, such as it is, is heavily dominated by the work carried out by American academics. In theoretical terms, it is heavily dependent on functionalism; in institutional terms, it tends to have been carried out in departments of communication, usually mass communication and journalism (in the USA). Another important factor involved in knowledge production is a lack of distance between the academy and the rest of the public relations occupation: it is not uncommon for an academic career in this field to encompass a non-academic public relations career, and to combine lecturing and consultancy work. One of the requirements for the IPR's endorsement of a university course is that the teaching staff involved must have practical experience of working in public relations. A similar recommendation on the appropriate qualifications for the faculty members teaching public relations was made by the Commission on Public Relations Education (PRSA), part of the non-profit US educational body called the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

The most popular English-language academic journals devoted to public relations include *Public Relations Review: A Journal of Research and Comment*, published since 1975 (American); *Journal of Public Relations Research* (JPRR), published since 1992 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates for the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (for a history of the journals see Sallot et al., 2003, pp. 37-38); *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, (published in the UK since 1996, MCB University Press), and

*Journal of Communication Management* (Henry Stewart Publications, started in 1997) (MCB University Press adopted a new name, EMERALD in 2001. In April 2005 EMERALD acquired *Journal of Communication Management*, bringing the two UK-based journals under one roof).

Occasionally, articles dealing with public relations appear in other communication journals such as *Media, Culture and Society*, *European Journal of Communication*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, or *Journalism Studies*. This list helps to make the point about the historical dominance of American scholars, but also the academic field of public relations being worked, and defined, by different disciplines.

Public relations as an academic subject has been defined by the academics who identify their area of work as public relations rather than health communication, political communication, or media studies. An illustration of the jurisdictional competition can be found in the position taken by JPRR on what is and what is not public relations, expressed thus in the 'Guidelines for Reviewers',

All academic methodologies are appropriate for the Journal of Public Relations Research, including social scientific, historical, and critical. However, all articles must contain original data or observations and should contribute to the broad body of knowledge in public relations.[...]. Experiments on persuasion or critiques of government propaganda cannot be assumed to be relevant to public relations; authors must make a direct connection to the body of knowledge in public relations. (personal communication, 2003)

The disciplinary fragmentation might manifest itself in outspoken debates over definitions and ownership, for example between marketing and public relations (Special Issue on Public Relations and Marketing, 1991; Ehling, White & J. Grunig, 1992; Hutton, 2001), or in persistent disengagement, as observed by L'Etang,

Media sociologists tend to be broadly critical of public relations and do not engage with its literature. [...] the substantial critiques emerging from media sociology have not been addressed by the public relations discipline... (2001, pp. 9, 11)

The dominant paradigm in public relations is known as 'systems theory' or the 'systems approach'. It is based on a simple model: organisations are systems embedded in their environments, public relations is part of an organisational system, and one of its main functions is that of the 'boundary spanner', work designed to link the system with its environment, for example by importing and exporting information across the system's boundary (White & Dozier 1992; Hutton, 2001). This approach can be safely dated to at least the early 1980s (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; see also Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Its enduring influence over the field can be explained by a number of factors, such as the theoretical weakness of the public relations field; usefulness of the systems approach for pedagogy and professional positioning; inclusion in popular textbooks; and the intensity of citations: a bibliometric study found J.E. Grunig the most cited author and the textbook he co-authored (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) the most cited work in 1990-1995 (Pasadeos, Renfro & Hanily, 1999, pp. 37, 39).

Systems scholars, such as Grunig (1989), argue for a world view of public relations concerned with the solving of problems of the domain.... This problem-solving focus has meant that J. Grunig studies and others (see Dozier, 1990;



J.Grunig and L.Grunig, 1989; J. Grunig and L.Grunig, 1990) have presented findings that seek to explain and improve how public relations functions in organizations. J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) and J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1990) have established models that explain why public relations is practised differently in each situation or problem presented and also have argued for the ideal practice of public relations (J.Grunig, 1989). (Toth, 1992, pp. 3-4)

The critical debate about the substance and the dominance of these ideas has already taken place. Its main targets were the normative character of the proposed models of the public relations practice; the theoretical muddle in which the concepts of the two-way symmetrical communication and strategic public relations were collapsed into one (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996; Pieczka 1997; Holtzhausen, 2000; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; see also J. Grunig, 2001); and the overemphasis of the organisational level of analysis resulting in 'a certain myopia' in terms of theoretical perspectives and empirical interests (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, pp. 6-7). Finally, the universal applicability of Grunig's four models of public relations and the extension of these ideas into the model of excellent public relations — based on two-way symmetrical communication supported by a number of structural and institutional characteristics of the client organisation — was also critiqued (for example Sriramesh & Vercic, 2001). As Sallot et al. show, symmetrical communication, models of public relations and the concept of excellence do seem to travel together in public relations theory and are still the biggest subgroup (app. 20%) in the theory development category in their study (Sallot et al., 2003, p. 43).

[h]owever, it can be argued that no dominant paradigms per se have emerged. Of the 148 articles classified as theory development, the largest share — but still only 13% — were categorized as concerned with Excellence theory, arguably the closest public relations comes at this time to having a paradigm. (Sallot et al., 2003, p. 51)

While this may be numerically true, it does not seem to capture the pervasiveness of the systems worldview and its influence in defining research interests pursued in the field.

Alternative approaches, subsumed here under the theme of texts, come mainly from the tradition of rhetorical study at American universities (advanced as 'speech communication'), and its extension into a critical approach. Their bid to legitimacy in the field was made in 1992 with the publication of *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations* (Toth & Heath, 1992).

[The] systems world view and the distinct rhetorical and critical world views of public relations practice have been extensively contrasted by Trujillo and Toth (1987). However, recently, system and rhetorical/critical scholars... have begun finding complementary contributions to an understanding of public relations. (Toth, 1992, pp. 3-4).

This shift within the American academic field seems to have been achieved at the price of conceptual clarity: those fundamentally different approaches have come to occupy the same institutional space only when efforts have been made to show the possibility of conceptual convergence (for a discussion see L'Etang, 1996; L'Etang, 1997; Heath, 1997).

The rhetorical approach is focused on the analysis of corporate communication (Cheney, 1992, p. 169). The immediate focus of the analytical interest are texts and discourses which create and express corporate identities (the term here could be understood broadly as giving an identity to any kind of organised interest, no matter what formal shape it might take). If the systems approach is focused on an organisation as its level of analysis, the rhetorical approach takes a text, often defined as a campaign, as its unit of analysis. Such analysis can work critically if it sees the text as an intersection of micro and macro levels of action: of individual or organisational actors and of a higher, social, level of action and structure. The applied potential of this approach is derived from the well-established tradition of rhetorical instruction: practitioners learn from the dissection of rhetorical devices used by others. While there is a stream of such applied work, for example that known under the label of 'image restoration' (for an overview see Ihlen, 2002), critical work is more scattered, both in terms of its physical presence and empirical and theoretical approaches used (for example Berger, 1999). However, theoretical diversity is becoming more established as the critical voices gain more presence (see for example Heath, 2001). If the trend continues, the systems approach might loosen its grip on public relations research and theorising, which would perhaps give it more academic credibility.

### Work and workers

The most extensive engagement within the field of public relations with practitioners' work so far has come from research built around the concept of role (Broom and Smith, 1979; Broom, 1982; Broom and Dozier, 1986; Dozier 1992; Dozier and Broom, 1995). Theoretically, this stream of research utilises one of the fundamental sociological concepts — role; empirically, it has been advanced through surveys of American practitioners and the use of factor analysis.

The definition of role adopted in public relations research is drawn from social psychology, or, to be more precise, from the seminal work of Katz & Kahn (1978).

Katz and Kahn defined role behavior as 'recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome' (p. 186). An organizational role is an abstraction — a conceptual order imposed by the observer on the many different activities of individuals in organizations. As such, the abstractions of roles are created more than discovered; the value of these abstractions rests on their utility to help scholars make sense of organizational behavior, its antecedence, and its consequences. (Dozier & Broom, 1995, pp. 4-5)

Originally there were four roles: expert prescriber — 'Like the doctor-patient relationship, the expert prescribes and management obeys' (Dozier, 1992, p. 329); communication facilitator — 'a "go-be-tween", facilitating communication' (p. 330); problem-solving facilitators who — '...stand in contrast to expert prescribers. Whereas the expert prescriber's role leads to passive management involvement, the problem-solving process facilitator works carefully with the management to solve problems in a step-by-step manner' (p. 330); finally, communication technicians who merely provide a technical service. Survey work testing these roles eventually led to the creation of two roles only: public relations technician and public relations manager, the first taking over from communication technician, the second encompassing the remaining three of the original four roles.

The differences between these two new roles are explained by Dozier (1992, p. 335) in terms of three types of factors: research conducted by the practitioner; organisational factors such as its openness to the environment, degree of stability in the environment, and the management philosophy; finally, the practitioner's own beliefs about public relations work. Put together these factors seem to act as a scale of professionalism, and consequently, the technician role is seen as semi-professional, while the manager role enacts more appropriately a fully professional conduct. Although there has been some criticism of the roles research — notably Creedon's (1991) view of the false dichotomy created by the two roles, and Culbertson's (1991) objection to the indirect engagement of the research with its subject and a certain rigidity in how the public relations work is represented through the roles approach — it remains widely used in research and teaching.

From the very beginning the roles research was turning up evidence for gender discrimination in public relations: women reporting their work as more technical, men as more managerial; analysis of surveys conducted on the same population (PRSA members) also showed a difference in years of experience, and most significantly, a salary gap between the sexes (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2001, pp. 221-240). Thus public relations roles interlock with the excellence theory, on the one hand, and the feminist approach on the other.

Two points about this research, directly relevant to the project undertaken here, need to be highlighted. Firstly, the survey methodology used in the roles research does not allow the 'observer' any direct contact with the realities of public relations work. Secondly, the research excludes practitioners working as consultants:

Dozier argues that external consultants play different roles than practitioners inside organizations. In subsequent factor analyses, internal practitioners were studied exclusively because their roles were relatively enduring. External consultants likely shift roles for different clients. (Dozier, 1992, p. 333)

This study, like the roles research, is driven by the need to understand the work of public relations practitioners. Unlike the roles research, its focus is on understanding the nature of the expertise involved, rather than norms, expectations and behaviours connected with the concept of role. Consultants are not only included, but taken as a prime object of study. Firstly, studying public relations as a service based on expertise and sold in a competitive market to clients who need to be convinced about its effectiveness helps to focus on the expertise as knowledge and behaviour shaped firmly by market conditions. Secondly, generalising about the occupation on the basis of practitioners working in-house only and ignoring the large consultancy site must lead to partial or biased explanations. It is puzzling why so little attention has been given to public relations consultancy. Writing about the emergence of the sector in the UK in 1948-69, L'Etang commented on the 'noticeable silence' (L'Etang, 2001, p. 101) in the literature about how consultancy worked, and more generally, about its jurisdiction of work. At the same time, she pointed out the importance of the consultancy for the entire occupation:

Within the context of professionalisation the establishment of consultancy services is of particular interest because specialists who serve clients represent an essential and concentrated form of the practice. They could be seen as standard-bearers for the occupation and owners of the knowledge systems that underpin practice. (L'Etang, 2001, p. 105)

Both observations still hold. Public relations seems to have been studied either generically as 'practice' without clear distinctions being made between the two sites of work, in-house and consultancy, or by focusing on the in-house practitioners. The immense growth of the consultancy sector — Miller and Dinan's study (2000) showed the fee income of PRCA members rising 40 times in 1979-98 — and its implication in large scale economic and political phenomena, such as economic liberalisation and the penetration of the public sphere by the free market ideology, make it perhaps an even more urgent topic of study. This project aims to help redress the balance in our knowledge of public relations, most specifically in Chapter 3 devoted to the analysis of the consultancy industry and the labour market in the UK in the years 1995-2000.

### Histories

Histories of an occupation are important for its jurisdictional claim made in the public domain. History needs time: for a history to be written, some time must have passed in which events, a history's subject, could have unfolded. Time can also bestow at least some respectability: not a Johnny-come-lately, but a well-established character with a traceable ancestry. A history, whatever view it takes of its subject, gives it public importance: it is an act of acknowledgement of the subject's existence and a way of offering it up to public inspection. Finally, historical writing is a site where representations of the subject take shape and come into public circulation.

Fully-fledged histories of public relations written so far tend to be American (Hiebert, 1966; Tedlow, 1979; Olasky, 1987; Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 1996, Marchand, 1998). This lack of knowledge must be one of the reasons why the American history is taken to represent not a model, but the model of development and professionalisation of the public relations occupation (Harrison, 1995; Cutlip, Center & Broom, 1994, p. 120).

This problem is further compounded by the huge popularity of the four models of public relations practice (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, pp. 13-14) which were overlaid on this historical narrative:

We call the four models: (1) the press agent/publicity model, (2) the public-information model, (3) the two-way asymmetric model, (4) and the two-way symmetric model. These models have different objectives, generally are found in different organizational settings, and generally require different means of evaluating their success. The models help us understand different stages in the history of public relations, because public relations seems to have passed through stages that resemble the four models.

The somewhat circular logic of this argument did not seem to have detracted from its persuasiveness and the framework subsequently attracted innumerable followers who used it, with varying degrees of caution, as a basis for theorising about public relations (for a critical discussion see L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996). As L'Etang concluded,

[m]uch of the literature promotes the idea that this evolutionary model is universally applicable both as a historical explanation and as a typology that satisfactorily explains professional practice. (2001, p. 11)

The development of the American practice, and occupation, of public relations is, however, quite correctly understood as part of the social history of the United States. Its landmarks and periodization are not under dispute, but the underlying positions taken by the authors are different. Pearson (1992) explains these differences by suggesting a four-type scheme: progressive historians, such as Hiebert, and we might add Cutlip; anti-progressive historians, such as Tedlow; New Left historians, such as Smythe (1981) and possibly Ewen; and New Right historians, such as Olasky. Although the first two approaches differ in their assessment of the role played by business in the development of public relations, they are similar enough in other respects to be linked together, and what is more, Pearson claims (p. 129), to be seen as supporting the dominant discourse in public relations which favours structural-functional explanations of the role of public relations. The alternative position sees public relations as a tool of manipulation used by business and therefore acting in a special rather than public interest. Such a position might be supported either with the reference to concepts of hegemony or free market.

A good way of illustrating the difference between the dominant and the alternative paradigms is to contrast Cutlip's progressivist stance, which is in evidence in popular textbooks (Cutlip et al., 1994, p. 99; Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 1996, p. 36), with Ewen's critical position. The table below (Figure 19) compares the two different interpretations of the history of public relations in America: Cutlip's optimistic evolutionary account, tellingly labelled in the book as 'Evolution to Maturity', with Ewen's more critical stance, offering not a linear picture of the development, but a series of swings between pro-business and civic focus in discourses (pp. 399-414) used by public relations practitioners in different periods.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Seedbed Era (1900-1917)                      | 'The Crowd in the Saddle'<br>Progressive politics and the rise of public relations |
| World War I period (1917-1919)               |  |
| Booming Twenties Era (1919-1929)             | Changing rhetoric of persuasion  |
| Roosevelt Era and World War II (1930-1945)   | Battles for the 'American Way'   |
| Postwar Era (1945-1969)                      | Commercializing the Cosmos   |
| Global Information Society (1965 to present) |  |

Figure 19: Progressivist and critical periodization of the history of American public relations (sources: Cutlip et al, 1994 and Ewen, 1996)

Thus both positions acknowledge the development of public relations from big social issues or events, such as regulation of corporate accountability, social welfare, civil rights, and wars; yet, they come to very different conclusions about where those developments seem to have led to. Cutlip (1994, p. xii) states:

The public relations specialist contributes to the Miltonian principle of the self-righting process in a democracy, a principle embedded in historic decisions of the US. Supreme Court. The advocate's role is essential in a democracy that must be responsive to the public will and dependent on the reconciliation of public and private interests in a mutually rewarding manner.

Ewen views the relationship between professionally managed communication, private interests, and democracy in a very different way:

Present inequities regarding who has a say? who gets to be heard? need to be corrected. The vast power of the commercial communication system lies in its unimpeded control over the avenues of public discussion. For this situation to change, the public sphere — currently dominated by the corporate interests and consciously managed by public relations professionals — must revert to the people. (Ewen, 1996, p. 411)

L'Etang in her history of British public relations (2001, 2004) also links the development of the occupation to big social, economic and political issues: in this case administrative arrangements inside the country, war time propaganda, and after the war, nationalisation and decolonisation as well as the Cold War. However, her work paints the picture of the failure of the professional project of the PR occupation in Great Britain.

This brief discussion of histories of public relations helps to highlight the importance of the distinction between the private and public spheres. First of all, public relations practice is seen both by its critics and its supporters as a conduit linking the two domains. Secondly, in the public domain, public relations justifies its professional status with reference to the concept of public interest. Studying public relations' professional claim means engaging with the occupation's own efforts to find the basis from which to derive the legitimacy for its work, for example with references to concepts of democracy and dialogue.

### Claiming professional status

Occupations can lay their claim to a professional status in different arenas (legal system, public opinion, and workplace) and in different ways. When public opinion is concerned, histories are one possible strategy; education is another, much more important in fact. L'Etang's work (2001) offered a detailed historical analysis of the professionalisation of public relations in Britain following debates over definitions, expansion of the practice, and the development of training and education. The latter is particularly important in a number of ways: it produces practitioners; it creates abstract knowledge for the profession thus supporting jurisdictional claims and exclusionary tactics; it is fundamental for the public recognition and status of the occupational group. L'Etang (2001, pp. 163-193) chronicled the long history of the IPR's training courses as well as the establishment of the university level education in public relations. The 1990s saw an explosion of public relations courses in British universities. However, this fact cannot be attributed to the developing professionalisation of public relations. The university sector in the UK was fundamentally reshaped by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992: it grew rapidly, as did the competition for students and funding. Vocational courses, such as public relations, were one of the tactics used to attract students.

This section will, therefore, consider another aspect of this process: discourses used by the occupation to legitimise their claim. Both American and British public relations sources claim professional status for the occupation on the basis of Edward Bernays' work (see Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000, pp. 30-31). Specific emphasis is placed on the fact that as long ago as 1923 he ran the first course in public relations taught at a university level (New York University) and published *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, which introduced the term of a 'public relations counsel'. He is named as the first practitioner to claim the title of profession for public relations, the claim which he supported with the reference to a scientific body of knowledge (psychology) and public interest (social stability). Bernays' ideas and their influence offer a convenient launching point for our discussion here.

Bernays' most important work was done between the 1920s and 1960s and in many ways it was a product of the particular socio-historical circumstances. Intellectually he belonged to the era when the term 'propaganda' had not yet acquired its pejorative meaning, and Lippman's view that in a mass society government had to remain in the hands of elites supported by communication technocrats was seen as a credible response to change affecting the industrialised society (L'Etang, 2001, pp. 13, 36). Bernays' work is, therefore, a somewhat tricky inheritance to deal with and much can be learned about the professional ideology from the reception of Bernays' work presented for the consumption of the occupation. At a more critical end of the spectrum, the ethical ambiguities will be laid out for inspection (Pearson, 1992); at the popular end, which can be seen as providing the common cultural basis for practitioners, the emphasis is put on the traditional professional traits. A similar treatment can also be noticed in the presentation of Ivy Lee, another practitioner offered as a founder of modern public relations. While his 1906 Declaration of Principles is seen as the first step to developing ethical standards for the occupation, his nickname, Poison Ivy, which he was given for his controversial work during coal miners' strike in Colorado leading to the Ludlow Massacre, is forgotten (Ewen, 1996, p. 83). His professional involvement with the German Nazis is also not given much prominence although it tends to be mentioned. But then, Lee died in 1934 at the age of 57, whereas Bernays, Lee's junior by 14 years, was actively managing his reputation almost until his death at the age of 104 in 1995. For example, Bernays' view on what we would now call public opinion management could be absorbed rather uncritically into the discourse of legitimacy through public interest:

In 'Propaganda' [Bernays] emphasised the social responsibility of the public relations practitioner: 'The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country (Bernays 1928:9).' (Harrison, 1995, p. 19)

In other words, it is appropriate for public relations professionals to manipulate public opinion as long as they are aware of their responsibility to act in the public interest. The latter appears to exist objectively and is accessible to professionals, but not to all members of society. Critical reflection on this view must inescapably focus on dilemmas associated with defining and enacting common public interest in societies of the size, complexity, and structure of (post)industrial democracies. Paradoxically, this could also be seen as Bernays' legacy.

Classic Bernays, if one can put it this way, sought to legitimise the practice from a technocratic point of view in the climate of the intellectual and practical/policy efforts to grapple with the phenomenon of mass society. However, the discourse that might have resonated in the 1920s would simply not do in the late 1940s and early 1950s Britain. The social revolution delivered by the post-war Labour government through its programme of nationalisation and the establishment of the National Health Service, and perhaps more importantly 'a growing consciousness of the Cold War' (L'Etang, 2001, p. 64) produced a discourse based on values of truth, freedom, and civilisation (Western, naturally). One of the major themes of that period was the emergence of social corporate responsibility as the philosophical basis for the practice (L'Etang, 2001, p. 66).

The following years saw a growth of public relations in the commercial sector, as well as the establishment of the public relations consulting industry. L'Etang's chapter on the emergence of consultancy between 1948 and 1969 (2001, pp. 89-109) conveys an impression of a different discourse emerging: a narrow, instrumental view of the world driven by the need to appeal to managers/clients, and to carve out an advantageous position from which to sell the service. Like Bernays', this is a technocratic discourse, but this time it is the science and practice of management that are looked up to. Management as a discipline has the trappings of a science with its roots in bureaucracy and its facility with numbers. Equally important is the fact that in an organisation management is where power lies. Thus, presenting public relations work in terms such as 'bottom-line contribution' or 'effectiveness' may be seen as a good way of supporting the professional claim: the market for a service is created and defended in business/profit terms, while prestige is borrowed from the privileged position of the clients served.

Management science in Britain has never been so highly developed as in the United States but the pressure of declining profits made British industry during the 1960s pay more and more attention to the scientific aspects of good business management. The new thinking on management techniques and the strictest possible financial discipline have slimmed down the management team... however small the controlling group in a company, there should be room for an executive with public relations responsibilities. The role of the public relations member of the management team is that of innovator, catalyst, conscience and the inward and outward seeing eye... Production, sales and financial control are essential parts of management, but public relations tends to flow over the whole gamut of business and management. (Black, 1972, pp. 1-2)

This statement from a practitioner, a tireless promoter of the professional claim, should perhaps be read as expressing a particular occupational interest rather than a valuable contribution to management science. Legitimacy, and status, of public relations can now be drawn from 'management science' on the one hand, and proximity to power and money on the other. This is made abundantly clear by another practitioner:

Financial public relations has done more for the respectability of PR... than any other factor. The success of financial PR has forced many chief executives and their financial officers to reconsider the role of PR in their business and, in many cases, to accept that public relations today is as important a corporate weapon as media advertising, market research, or any other modern business skill. (Gummer, 1995, p. 50)

Its author, Peter Gummer, founded Shandwick, at one time the biggest consultancy in the UK (see Chapter 3 for more), and was knighted as Lord Chadlington in 1996. The fact that his brother, John Selwyn Gummer, was the Secretary of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in John Major's government seems worth noting here.

In conclusion, although discourses through which legitimacy is sought might change, the change itself seems to be contained between two poles: public interest and technical ability.



## Conclusion

This chapter offers a conceptual framework which underpins the empirical investigation of public relations practice that follows. Key concepts such as profession, professional jurisdiction as well as a model of professional work have been borrowed from sociologists of the professions. The review of the relevant literature leads to the conclusion that the meaning of the term profession cannot be taken for granted in the way it is in colloquial usage — we know it when we see it. It cannot be defined simply as a set of characteristics, but appears to be a tactic adopted by an occupational group in pursuit of a more secure position. The tactic can further be seen as a number of strategies employed by an occupation, for example statutory regulation, or formalisation of education and training, facing different audiences, such as clients, the state, or other occupational groups competing for the same work. At the heart of these efforts lies work — in other words, a range of tasks which are routinely undertaken by the members of the occupation and for which they are paid. Such tasks, monopolised by a professional group, are referred to as its jurisdiction.

Although much is made in the sociology of the professions of abstract knowledge as the basis for professional work and jurisdiction, the concept tends to be understood as 'formally rational abstract utilitarian knowledge' (Murphy, 1988, cited in Macdonald, 1995, p. 160) and rarely investigated in much depth. The inadequacy of such a definition is plain: it excludes professions based on normative rather than scientific type of knowledge, such as lawyers. The problem of knowledge becomes even more acute when contributions from critical research on management consultancy are considered. What it is that consultants know and how this knowledge is used in practice may be difficult to determine. Consequently, management consultants' jurisdiction requires other legitimising tactics. For this and other reasons discussed above, management consultancy rather than medicine, accountancy or law is proposed as an appropriate analogy in the study of public relations practitioners. Thus, the study is focused on investigating the nature of the expertise utilised in public relations, ways in which it is exploited commercially and the consequences such practices have for the occupational group and its economic existence.

## CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

### Approach

As explained in Chapter 1: Introduction, theoretical support for this thesis has been drawn from debates focused around the key concepts of profession and culture, with the first being of particular importance to the methodology of this research. This thesis is concerned with the existence of the commercial practice of public relations. The practice is viewed as a profession and consequently the conceptual framework for the study is derived from the sociology of the professions. The claim of professional status made by public relations is at the same time accepted and questioned in the approach taken in this thesis. The claim made by the practitioners is of importance in some of its consequences on actions of individual practitioners and professional associations. The claim and the theoretical framework are therefore accepted and incorporated into the thesis. On the other hand, the pursuit of professionalism in itself does not guarantee the existence of a profession. The process and its outcome may be seen as separate, as they are in this study, and it is the first that is of more interest here. The main question asked, therefore, is not whether, nor how, nor to what extent public relations is a profession, but rather how this group of practitioners goes about creating and selling services to its clients and competing in the communications services market. The professional claim is therefore accepted as an element in the continuing existence of public relations.

Public relations is seen as a practice, an occupational practice: it is constituted on the level of both individual and group action. The study will therefore attempt to maintain sensitivity to this dual level of action. As an established practice it is underpinned by a body of knowledge, its professional expertise; thus to understand the continuing existence of public relations requires an in-depth understanding of its professional expertise. For the purposes of this study, professional expertise is defined as a body of knowledge which makes it possible for the practice to exist. Practice is understood as both what an individual practitioner and the occupation do. Such a definition helps to focus on the mutual dependency of the individual and the group level action. How the occupational group behaves, for example in claiming real-life problems its expertise can solve, is constructed out of the work and knowledge of individual practitioners. Conversely, what individual practitioners do is directed by what is 'known' by the group. As such public relations is better understood more broadly as a cultural rather than professional practice. Consequently, the study needs to engage with the symbolic level of such occupational action.

This is not a historical study; the explanation of what currently exists is not advanced in terms of antecedents and advantageous conditions over long periods of time. Instead, this study attempts to offer an analysis of the current state of play by integrating diverse empirical material and a range of modes of explanation. This study investigates public relations within clear time boundaries—1995-2000—as will be explained below.

## Design and data

The subject of this study is public relations expertise seen through occupational and individual action.

The study takes a telescopic view by focusing on a particular point in time—1998—as closely to the present as could be achieved. At the centre of this study lies an analysis of public relations expertise (Chapters 6 and 7) telescoped into perspective by a discussion of important aspects of public relations, such as its economic or rhetorical practices in the years immediately leading to the chosen point in time (Chapters 2 and 3). The time horizon in the data is, with one exception (see ‘Published case studies’ below), never wider than five years. This is deemed a sufficient perspective to determine whether what was observed in 1998 was indeed an element of established practice or a freak occurrence, which in due time might become established practice. The five-year horizon is also judged sufficient to accommodate the lapse between a change in the environment and the ensuing modifications in the professional expertise.

There are three main types of data used in the study:

### Observation

- Participant observation of a three-week professional training course, the Senior International Public Relations Course, held in London, 20 July–7 August 1998. Data were collected in the form of field notes, lecture handouts, taped interviews with 13 trainers. This is one of the three major sets of data and its analysis constitutes Chapter 6.
- A two-week period of shadowing members of a Glasgow office of a big, international public relations agency, Countrywide Porter Novelli. The data were collected in the form of field notes, interviews with the 5 members of the office; and other materials such as information produced for clients (for example, newsletters). This element of the research was carried out between 27 January 1997 and 7 February 1997. Envisaged initially as a pilot for the participant observation element of the study, this set of data was later used for triangulation (mostly in Chapters 2, 3 and 6).
- One-day seminar Best PRactice organised by Haymarket Conferences sponsored by Durrants Cutting and endorsed by PRCA and IPR. The seminar was held in London, 28 April 1999. The aim of the seminar, according to the Conference Manager, was

[...] for delegates to become leaders in their field by listening to PR practitioners and winners of PRWeek and other prestigious PR industry awards. The presenters will be revealing how they put together the innovative campaigns that achieved top quality results (Fiona Fennell, presentation, 28 April 1999).

This event was observed to provide a different perspective on the published case study reports (see below). Of particular interest was the presentation of Lanson’s Communication case study, winner of the 1998 IPR Sword of Excellence (Appendix, Table 32: Case no 104). The presentation offered an opportunity to triangulate the formal written account of the work conducted, the case study, with a less formal, oral report.

## Published case studies

This is a set of 111 case studies, winners of the Institute of Public Relations best campaign competition, the Sword of Excellence, run since 1984. Cases were analysed for years 1984-1988 and 1990-1998. Attempts were made to retrieve the 1989 set of published cases, but were abandoned after an extensive search through the IPR's files produced no result.

In addition to the published case studies, the IPR kept some of the documentation submitted with the summaries as part of the required competition entry. To evaluate the potential usefulness of this material, in July 1998 a number of box files that could be linked to the published cases was retrieved and examined against the published texts. The files contained research reports, analysis of cuttings or press cuttings mentioned in the case summaries. As the files did not add any new material, and as the set of files kept by the IPR was an unsystematic collection with many gaps, it was decided to exclude this element from further analysis.

The summaries have all been written by the entrants to the competition according to the competition guidelines, and reproduced without any substantive changes in a special 'case history' publication published at the end of the annual round.

The format of the entries, and the annual publication, have evolved over the years. Although the process has shown a high degree of consistency, and is best understood as a series of incremental clarifications and improvements (for example, in the number and names of categories used), there is a noticeable watershed with a new format to the annual publication introduced in 1993 when the summaries were for the first time presented as a self-standing publication rather than an issue of the Institute's journal. This consistency seems to have been also supported by the fact that judges (experienced members of the Institute, except for the Chair, who may be a well-known business leader) routinely served on a two-yearly basis allowing for the judging expertise and consistency of standards to be maintained as each panel mixed old-timers and newcomers; finally, the long-serving Executive Director of the IPR, John Lavell, who retired in 1999, had been a member of the organising committee since 1984.

As an example of the format of the competition, in 1998 there were 11 categories: city and financial; internal communication; public affairs; consumer public relations; industry and commerce; issue and crisis management; not for profit organisation; low budget programmes (budget under £10,000); support of sponsorship; and use of new technology. Each category may or may not have a winner in any given year, as well as a number of Certificates of Excellence awarded. The best campaign in any given year is awarded The Sword of Excellence.

Entries must comply with the following rules:

Individuals or organisations are required to submit a summary no longer than three A4 pages (maximum 1500 words) to describe a programme and cover points that include:

- The information stage — analysis, research and definition of operational objectives.
- The planning stage — drawing up a strategy and costed plan of action.
- The action stage — communicating and carrying out the programme.
- The measurement stage — monitoring and evaluating process, results, and budgets; re-assessment and modification of programme as necessary. This should preferably include evaluative comment from the chief executive of the organisation for whom the programme was designed. (IPR, 1998).

Cases included for analysis in this thesis are only the category winners. A list of all such cases for 1984-1998 (except 1989) is included in the Appendix as Table 32: The Sword of Excellence Cases. Cases will be referred to by the number they bear in the table. Where quotations from the text are included, the reference will be made to the publication where the text appeared, an issue of the IPR's journal or, since 1993, a separate booklet produced annually. This data is analysed partly in Chapter 6 ('Problems'); and partly in Chapter 7: Expertise in Narrative Accounts, which is devoted entirely to the analysis of the case studies.

## Trade magazine

The main source of secondary data on a number of aspects of the public relations occupation was the trade magazine, *PR Week*, published by Haymarket Publishing. The Top 150 consultancies league tables compiled by *PR Week* annually were retrieved, entered into Excel spreadsheets, and re-analysed. The data covered the years 1995-1999, allowing tracking of some of the relevant industry factors in the years immediately preceding the participant observation period, and immediately following in order to follow trends in a more meaningful way. The league tables can be found in: *PR Week* Supplement: The Top 150 Consultancies 1996 (26 April 1996); *PR Week* Supplement: The Top 150 Consultancies 1997 (2 May 1997); *PR Week* Supplement: The Top 150 Consultancies 1998 (24 April 1998); *PR Week* Supplement: The Top 150 Consultancies 1999 (30 April 1999); and *PR Week* Supplement: The Top 150 Consultancies 2000 (28 April 2000). The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 3, in the section entitled 'Consultancy industry'.

*PR Week* has also published salary surveys (22 March 1996; 28 March 1997; 27 March 1998; 26 March 1999, and 24 March 2000). The survey, sponsored by Media Appointments, should properly be referred to as *PR Week*/Media Appointments salary survey. For reasons of convenience, a shortened version of the name will be used: *PR Week* salary survey. The surveys were compiled from questionnaires enclosed with *PR Week*. In the years 1996-2000, the survey received a large number of returns every year (1,500; 1,400; 1,097; 1,136; 946 respectively), however the self-selected nature of the sample needs to be taken into account as a limitation in drawing general conclusions about PR practitioners.

The results were also entered in an Excel spreadsheet and re-analysed. Analysis of the league tables and salary forms the basis of another section contained in Chapter 3 – ‘PR labour market’.

A systematic analysis was also made of *PR Week* issues published in 1996-1998, that is in the years immediately preceding the period of participant observation as a way of both triangulating that set of data, and extending it. This data set was analysed for information relating to the economics of the public relations business; currently debated hot issues, and the professional boundaries, specifically between public relations and journalism and politics. All information deemed relevant to these specific interests was marked up and entered into specially created databases. This material is used, in combination with other types of data, in chapters 2, 3 and 6.

Other trade magazines such as *Marketing* or *Campaign* searched through the Brand Republic's search engine as well as daily newspapers searched through Lexis Nexis were also used to verify facts obtained from trade magazines or as an extension of stories covered in *PR Week*.

As the study relies on *PR Week* for much information about the industry, some consideration of the context in which the information was produced is necessary here. Very little analytical or critical work has been conducted on business magazines so far in academic studies. Consequently, the most appropriate way to understand *PR Week's* editorial policy is to understand its commercial existence and to extrapolate points relevant to the material used in this study as a possible limitation.

*PR Week* was launched in 1984 as a private venture put together by Geoff Lace, who ‘saw a gap in the market ... in the early 1980s while working as executive editor of Haymarket-owned magazine *Marketing*’ (“Entrepreneur founds *PR Week*”, 1999). Lace was the biggest shareholder, while other backers included a financier, Anthony Freeland, and five directors of Dewe Rogerson. In 1988 the magazine was sold to Haymarket, who competed for the title against Benn's and Reed. *PR Week* became thus a part of a large magazine publishing company, founded in 1957 and still in private hands at the time of writing in 2004.

What happened to *PR Week* could be seen as part of a much larger reorganisation of the British magazine publishing industry in the 1980s and through the 1990s (Ekinsmyth, 2002, p. 230). The change led to the domination of large multinational companies—in the business sector, Reed Business Information or Emap Business Communications—owning a wide range of interests in addition to magazine publishing. According to Business Information Forum, an association of six UK business-to-business information and communication industry organisations (Dear, 2001), companies active in the industry sell four main types of products: publishing products such as magazines, newsletters, and reports; events: conferences, trade shows; list-based products such as directories, and electronic online services, e.g. internet sites. Haymarket Publishing is now active in all of these areas: it publishes 100 titles, (consumer, business, medical and customer); it owns websites such as BrandRepublic.com targeted at marketing specialist and based on Haymarket's relevant publications (*Campaign*, *Marketing*, *PR Week*, etc.); it produces directories (for example ‘Contact’ promoted through *PR Week*); and events, some of which are tied to specific publications, such as *PR Week* Forum.

At the beginning of the period analysed in this thesis, 1995, Haymarket was already well established in the area of advertising, marketing and public relations. PR Week, then as now without a direct competitor in the UK, had already instituted a number of its important activities, such as the league tables (1985), salary surveys (1987), and PR Week awards (1987), seminars and training events. By 1998 the publication was being expanded internationally with the launch of PR Week (USA) in November 1998, and subsequently PR Week Asia-Pacific by buying a stake in Hong-Kong based Media and Asian PR News in 1999, and PR Report in Germany in 2000. PR Awards and the Contact directory seem to exist in all of these regions.

According to the ABC Certificate of Circulation (1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003), PR Week had a circulation of 16,751 of which 79% (13,164) was controlled free circulation,

copies requested by PR professionals working in commercial and public sector organizations, and executives working in public relations agencies or consultancies. Also to individuals working in service industries which have an interest in public relations, and members of the Institute of Public Relations. (ABC, 2003, p.3)

This suggests a heavy dependence on advertising revenue, as is the case generally with the magazine industry, which derives 65% of its income from advertising (Dear, 2001, p.24). In the period analysed in the thesis, classified advertising seemed the mainstay for the magazine, which would regularly carry four to five pages of classified recruitment ads, three to four pages of ads for PR agencies, research companies, training services, etc., and around two pages of display advertising, often sold on the back of main features in the issue (education and training courses, or audio-visual services, or research/cuttings companies). The special issues containing league tables, on the other hand, would contain full- or half-page display ads from some of the companies featured, and also various providers of services to PR companies, including cross promotion for *PR Week's* own events.

What does this suggest in terms of editorial policy? News and features must attempt to reflect the range of readers, in this case be balanced between in-house and consultancy public relations. The issues covered must be of interest, and carefully chosen for purposes of campaigning. For example, evaluation and research (see Chapter 2 for details) appear a good way of being topical but at the same time, safe choices. Such a strategy could help to build a good reputation for the publication. The latter is important not only to attract readers and advertisers, but also as a platform for other products: for example, conferences and training, branded as *PR Week* events. In terms of editorial policy this means treading a thin line between appearing biased, or being too critical of the industry served by the magazine. *PR Week's* feature on its own history claimed that 'successive editors sought to hold the industry to account' (Gray, 1999, p. 4). Reviewing the coverage of Ian Greer's involvement in the cash for questions affair (see Chapter 2, 'Regulation' for a discussion), or the magazine's unquestioning admiration for the top professionals (see Chapter 2, 'PR Barons') suggests that editorial independence seems to operate within certain limits.

## Analysis

The first step was an analysis of each of the datasets separately, using in each case the most appropriate approach. In the second stage, connection and links were made across these sets as the structure of the thesis took shape.

## Stage one

### Observation

Field notes and handouts were subjected to the process of open coding. A number of categories derived inductively from the data was used: Picture of the world, Us and work, Sources of knowledge, Public relations knowledge, Skills, Analytical frameworks, Work frameworks (see Figure 20: Codes for participant observation notes, in the Appendix, for details).

Codes were applied to notes of each separate session (each trainer) and the result compiled in documents SS1-SS23, SS numbers corresponding to session numbers in the field notes.

The next step was to bring together the material for each coding category. Category summaries were produced as documents: Pow/SS, PRK/SS, P'le&Orgs/SS, SourceK/SS, Skills/SS, Anal.Fram/SS and Work.Fram/SS.

The two big categories required further work and re-ordering: Us&work was reorganised into 13 new categories (see Figure 21: Coding categories used to reorganise 'Us&work') and a new summary document was produced (Us&work/SS2). Public relations knowledge (PRK/SS) was reorganised as PRK/SS2 (see Figure 22: Codes for reorganising 'Public relations knowledge').

### Published case studies

Two different kinds of analysis were conducted on this data: (i) basic descriptive statistics used on some elements of the case studies (ii) narrative analysis of 50 case studies. This collection of case histories cannot be treated as a statistically valid sample of public relations campaigns. Instead, they are treated as rhetorical acts: publicly made narratives about work carried out, in which explanations and justifications are a post-fact construction presented so as to appeal to a particular audience (Sword of Excellence judges). Seen in this way, they present an insight into the 'collective wisdom', or acceptable practice, including judgements about effectiveness promoted by the professional association, while at the same time they are a mechanism for co-creating the expertise on which they pronounce.

- (i) The entire set was analysed for objectives and evaluation methods used in public relations work. For the purposes of analysis, the data were divided into 'operational objectives' and ways of evaluating work drawn from the 111 category winners as presented in the published case histories. All data were coded into categories derived inductively from within the set itself and reflecting the preoccupation of practitioners addressed by the campaign. Once the procedure was finished, the data were tabulated, first of all to show the frequency for each category and their relative sizes.



As far as the categories are concerned, they were derived through the process of open coding. Codes were then clarified, labelled, defined, operationalised, and applied to raw data (see Boyatzis, 1998). Problems thrown up in this process were resolved in operationalisation procedures before the whole set of data was coded twice at some distance in time by the same researcher. A consistent source of problems in coding was, surprisingly, not how to apply the categories, but identifying the set of objectives to be coded. The cases routinely contain two or three levels of objectives (overall organisational goals, goals for the specific programme, and specific objectives for elements of programmes) which are often not immediately identifiable. As far as evaluation methods are concerned, they were on the whole more straightforward to code.

Programme objectives were coded into the following ten categories: Awareness; Image; Knowledge; Credibility; Instrumental; Framing issues; Involvement; Action; Sales/financial; Professional (see Figure 23: Codes for campaign objectives for more explanation). Evaluation methods were coded into 15 categories, taking into account content and methodology wherever appropriate or possible: Professional; Media; Knowledge; Attitudes, Opinion, Behaviour; Image, Recognition, Financial (Media through to Behaviour were split into quantitative and qualitative (see Figure 24: Codes for evaluation)).

(ii) Narrative analysis: 50 cases (years 1994-1998) were analysed as narratives using a number of tools derived from narratology. The analysis was conducted in a number of stages; each of them focused on different conceptual tools from broadly understood theory of narrative.

The starting point in the analysis was the question about why such stories were told in the first place. Given the context—the rules of the competition, the judging process and public circulation of the winning case studies—each of the stories could be seen as a display of professional mastery. Its main purpose is to say: 'Look at me! Look at what I can do!'. The attention thus is focused on what is being done and how; on who the protagonist is; on what difference his/her actions make and to whom. Events and the character, both as an identifiable person and a moral actor, are therefore key to the analysis.

Propp's (1968, pp. 21, 26) function and initial situation were applied first in the analysis: summaries of the stories were produced to identify the basic structural building blocks (see Figure 25: Narrative functions, in the Appendix). Further work on functions understood as 'basic narrative units made up of events or actions' (Onega & Landa, 1996, p. 61) and on their ordering was helped by Bremond's (1980) discussion of narrative possibilities. Propp's work also inspired the identification and naming of the characters, or *dramatis personae*, in the case histories (see Chapter 7). Even though Propp's work can be seen now as old-fashioned and somewhat limited in its focus on one genre of narrative (folktales) and its taxonomic predilection in pursuing narrative functions and characters, the basic insights, absorbed into narratology via the French structuralists, remain unchallenged. I choose to refer to this classic text rather than its subsequent extensions (for example, Barthes, 1977) because I found inspiration in its seductive neatness and the fairy-tale quality seeping into the taxonomy.

The relationship between events as they happened and events as they are told in the narrative is an important distinction made originally by the Russian Formalists and retained by the structuralists using terms such as: *fabula*, *historie*, or *story* to refer to the former; and *sjuzhet*, *discours*, or *discourse* to refer to the latter (McQuillan, 2000, p. 4). This distinction, further re-examined by Brooks (1984) under the label of *plot*, inevitably leads one, as it did in this analysis, to question the relationship of reality and its representation (White, 1980; Harré, 1990). Reflecting systematically on who the narrator is and the point of view from which the account of the events is presented, as well as the discursive absences, offered further insights into the process of construction of the professional expertise. The ultimate point of this analysis is to identify narrative characteristics of this kind of public relations account of its own practice(s). These narratives are understood as transformations of the actual experience of practising. Consequently, the main interest in this analysis is to describe the nature of these transformations and to reflect on their relationship to the world of individual practitioners' work and to the occupational group's representational efforts.

### Secondary data

The handling of the numerical data has already been explained above; more detail is presented in Chapter 3.

### Stage two

The second stage of analysis in which data from across different sets were integrated is best explained by comparing it to a path constructed from the choices made in each chapter about the material to be dealt with and the way in which it is best handled. The different data types and modes of analysis are on the whole contained in separate chapters, but the continuity between the chapters, i.e. the direction of the path, is decided by the conceptual map drawn at the outset (Chapter 4). Thus the key focus falls on the concept of expertise: its origins, nature, and functions. Yet the 'telescopic' design of the thesis means that public relations professional expertise is approached slowly and comes into full focus only towards the end of the thesis.

Put simply, the first substantive chapters survey a range of factors and phenomena relevant to the way in which individual practitioners and the occupational group go about making money out of public relations expertise; the two final chapters examine the expertise itself as emerging out of the strategic needs dictated by the practice. At each stage of the analysis an effort is made to articulate connections between what happens at the level of individual practitioners and practice as a preoccupation of the whole group of practitioners. More detailed explanation of the main focus of each individual chapter is presented in the opening paragraphs of the chapters.

### Limitations

Following the theoretical framework set, public relations expertise is analysed as emerging from practice at ground level, but also as a shared resource of the occupational group which reflects its competitive positioning. As such the scope of this thesis is extensive, covering five years and attempting to re-connect meaningfully different levels

of analysis: that of an individual practitioner, a PR company, PR industry and the occupational group. Consequently, decisions had to be made about the best balance between the scope covered and the depth to which it was possible to follow up specific research questions. For example, the model of PR expertise offered in Chapter 6, could be strengthened by investigating further whether there are differences in expertise between different PP specialisms, for example lobbying or consumer PR. The same question could be asked in reference to different types of clients served, for example public sector and commercial organisations.

Another source of limitations in this piece of research is the fragmentary, and sometimes methodologically weak, nature of the secondary data utilised in the absence of better information. For example, the picture of the industry is derived from audited accounts provided by a self-selected sample of companies. *PR Week's* consultancy league tables, established since 1986, became sufficiently important to the consultancy sector to attract reliable participation, especially among the bigger operators. In a special issue of the magazine, its former deputy editor, Amanda Hall commented: 'The fact that only a tiny handful of significant agencies chose not to take part is an indication of the importance attached to this annual fixture [...]' (Gray, 1999). As a source of information, the league tables work in favour of big companies, who can afford to participate in such exercises and who, in terms of reputation, compete against a very small number of peers. When, however, we move down the *PR Week* league tables, more questions can be asked about how many smaller companies are missing from the list and what impact this has on the overall picture built on the basis of such tables. This and similar weaknesses are discussed at appropriate times in chapters making use of secondary data.

## CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERTISE

This chapter examines public relations expertise. It presents the results of an extensive empirical enquiry and is framed by the concept of profession and the sociological debates that surround it. Since my interest is not in ascertaining the status of public relations, occupation and profession will be used interchangeably. What is of central interest, however, is the role knowledge plays in the constitution of the profession and particularly the links between knowledge and professional practice. Abstract knowledge has been considered a defining feature of the professions by all schools of thought in the sociology of the professions. Here I follow Abbott's (1988) ideas, specifically his claim that professional work is constituted by tasks which the profession has successfully claimed for itself. 'The tasks of professions are human problems amenable to expert service' (Abbott, 1988, p. 35). The hold a profession establishes over a set of tasks is known as jurisdiction.

Given the fragmentary and poorly developed body of abstract knowledge in public relations and its weak institutional basis in academia, we need to understand more about the basis and nature of the expert services practitioners sell to their clients. If we cannot assume that public relations practice is based on the application of a body of abstract knowledge, what is it based on? What is public relations expertise? Here public relations expertise is defined as a body of practical knowledge which makes it possible for public relations practice to exist. Practice is to be understood both as what an individual public relations worker does and, perhaps more emphatically, as tasks and techniques shared by the occupational group.

I have excluded questions about public relations textbook knowledge, the formal education of practitioners, the status of the profession, and many others. Instead, I have followed the logic of its practice, to borrow a term from Bourdieu. If answering the earlier questions might tell us something about, for example, the bad press the profession consistently receives (at least in the UK) understanding the logic of its practice tells us how and why the occupational group is the way it is, how it manages to capture new markets, and why it survives.

In fact, the material presented in this chapter seems to lend itself to Bourdieu's ideas with some stimulating results. Public relations practice can be understood as emerging from a particular habitus, i.e. 'the system of structured, structuring dispositions' which is 'constituted in practice and which constructs the objects of knowledge' (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 52):

The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the habitus, acting as a system of cognitive and motivational structures, is a world of already realized ends — — procedures to follow, paths to take... (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 53).

But '[p]ractice has a logic which is not that of a logician', says Bourdieu (1992, p. 86) reiterating arguments made before by ethnomethodologists, and phenomenological thinkers before them (Piecza, 1997). By focusing on training and the transmission of expertise, this research deals largely with accounts of practice, which are possible only if they embody a certain level of reflexivity (absent from the practice itself) and a theorising effort. The latter here means a discursive practice of translating one order of things (direct experience) into another (descriptions of the former, which may be offered in more or less theoretical, abstract terms). And this is precisely what public relations training seems to do:

[...] in your job [...] you build up a huge knowledge of examples and in the examples come all kind of rules and ways of doing things. The hard thing in doing a presentation like this — I guess it is the reason why it's quite good for people like me to do it — is that it forces you to get it out, sit down and work out why it is you say all these things.

(Interview with trainer, 23/7/98a)

## Three components of public relations expertise

Professional expertise emerges from the analysis as a body of practical knowledge, diverse in its nature, and intricately structured. Its component parts are identified here as: picture of the world; conceptual frame; and working knowledge, which in turn is composed of problems, tools and truths. Together they provide the occupation not only with the knowledge of what to do and how to do it, but they also enable the occupational group to read the world in which they practise in a way that makes it possible for them to lay a claim to their own jurisdiction. The following discussion will therefore proceed to describe each of the component parts and explain the function they play in the overall architecture of public relations expertise.

### Picture of the world

'It's a changed world and it's a highly challenging world' (Training session, 23/7/98b). This statement is perhaps the best summary of both the picture of the world that emerges from the training observed and the reason for paying it the attention it receives here. As seen through the eyes of the trainers and as explained to the students, the world is being fundamentally reconfigured. The analysis shows this 'Reconfiguration' of the known world in its social, economic, technological and political dimensions before it proceeds ('Response') by focusing on a series of instrumental reinterpretations of problematic issues as well as a number of points which seem to contradict the grand narrative offered by 'Reconfiguration'. Finally, a fundamental unresolved tension at the centre of the occupational ideology is identified — 'Reason and emotion'.

### Reconfiguration

- So we have a backdrop of fundamental social, political, economic and technological shifts as a result of the digital revolution, broader social and environmental concerns, a convergence of values and globalisation which will change the corporate approach to major decision-making... (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- The advent of digital media and communications — and the Internet and the World Wide Web in particular — is changing the world in ways that were inconceivable just a few years ago. The shift from atoms to bytes, from real to virtual, challenges all our notions of commercial relationships as well as the role of public institutions and the individual in society. (Training session, 31/7/98a)

PR practitioners evidently believe that power in society is moving away from its traditional centres in government and business and spreading over a wider social base; national boundaries are reconfigured as regional and global at the same time; legitimacy is defined away from the narrow understanding of what is legal and increasingly in terms of what is moral; citizenship is expressed through consumership, and all this is fuelled by the technological changes in communication and the resulting changes of the mass media. The interaction of these changes is well illustrated in the following statement:

...as a result of digitalisation and the expansion of the Internet, individuals have become global citizens and consumers. [...] Companies now face a media environment shaping and determining the way they are perceived and evaluated on a global basis, twenty-four hours a day. [...] Active management of reputation, combined with relationship management of stakeholders... has become a strategic need, not just nationally, but regionally and on a global basis.

(Training session, 20/7/98a)

The world is seen as becoming more homogeneous: it shares 'increasingly similar political, civil and economic institutions' (Training session, 20/7/98a); it shares aspirations — 'international competitiveness and world class standards drive and shape the best national and international organisations' (Training session, 30/7/98a); and ideas of prosperity — 'virtually every country wants to get the same industries' (Training session, 21/7/98a).

In its extreme form, this world becomes the New Utopia where business works together with governments (whose role is declining) and with civil society to 'create a dialogue with a whole range of new stakeholders to find common ground' (Training session, 20/7/98a); where compliance with legislation is replaced by the prerogative of earning social trust and approval; where crises are avoided by successful anticipation of issues due to 'creative use of communications technology' (Training session, 20/7/98a), and where universities participate in the 'building [of] the shared planetary mind [sic]' (Training session, 20/7/98a). The New Utopia does not appear as mere wishful thinking but a reasonable, if perhaps rather optimistic, projection of present trends into the future.

If the future appears as an extension of the present; the present takes shape in opposition to the past. The theme of the Old and the New identified in the analysis is a mixture of data from research companies such as MORI or Gallup, and extrapolation of ideas from management gurus such as Charles Handy, Carl Naisbitt, Michael Porter, Tom Peters; sources such as the *Economist*, *Financial Times*, *Fortune* and, Reputation Management and business peers such as Michael Morley, Vice Chairman of Edelman; Jim MacNamara, CEO Asia/Pacific, Carma International; Chris Green, Campaign Director, Greenpeace. The exact provenance of the ideas is almost impossible to establish as the presentation conventions of training do not seem to require that sources be acknowledged. What occurs, effectively, is the production and reproduction of popular knowledge.

The juxtaposition of the Old and the New shows that people are becoming more pessimistic about the general standards of knowledge, honesty and health; more critical of big business in general with decreasing ratings for its ability to balance public interest with profit considerations; and more suspicious of the benefits of controversial indus-

tries such as the chemical industry. Perhaps the most comprehensive expression of the change over time was presented by an External Affairs specialist of a major oil company, under the heading of 'Public Attitudes to Corporate Power', as summarised in a table below:

| Then                                     | Now  |
|--|--|
| trust granted                            | mistrust, scrutiny, questioning; perceived behaviour, less tolerant, less respectful |
| ownership                                | stewardship, stakeholder expansion   |
| freedom within the law                   | licence to operate, responsibility   |
| economics of scale/integrated operations | disaggregation and market test. e.g. diversification, joint ventures, alliances      |
| big is best                              | big is too powerful, inefficient   |
| the big employers = people               | no accountability = systems  |
| confidentiality respected                | transparency demanded  |
| Governments' problem                     | industry's problem   |

Figure 26. Summary of public attitudes to corporate power (Training session, 23/7/98b)

This juxtaposition shows that the old structures of the social and economic world have been disappearing. Another element in the received wisdom shows the impact of new communication technology on the relationship of producers and consumers: from structured linear chain with producer and consumers at the two extreme ends linked by the product and pre-selected communication channels where producers control information; to unstructured, two-directional links over a central information sphere accessed and used by a number of stakeholders, undermining the primacy of producers (Training session, 31/7/98a). Thus the old certainties and controls have been eroded in the same way as the familiar structures.

Although statistics were quoted to substantiate this perception, there is also a certain element of nostalgia present in this evocation of the world where business was trusted and free to operate the most 'logical' economies of scale. It has to be pointed out here that it was precisely the wide public distrust of big business in the US in the late 19th century that gave the impetus for the development of corporate public relations, or perhaps even modern public relations as such (see Marchand 1998). This mixture of the historical, the nostalgic, and the wished-for is well illustrated by another chart used in training: 'External Affairs Role in Transition' (Training session, 23/7/98b) organised as Past (reactive, non-mainstream, separate from management), Present (moving to active role, taking place on management teams) and Future (integrated part of management team, creating competitive advantage, competitive tool, pool of expertise).

### Response

Whether or not factually accurate, this perception of change has produced a clear response in terms of business philosophy, or business' understanding of its own place in the social world, and with it, to use a grand term, of public relations' philosophical grounding:

Business today has a new bottom line — public acceptance' (Training session, 23/7/98b) It is seen as delivering [...] not just... economic but also environmental and social equity goals — the so-called Triple Bottom Line, (Training session, 20/7/98a).

The principle of public acceptance has given business the basis from which to re-establish its legitimacy. The process, in practice, is a continuous tense re-negotiation of areas of public and business life which require public acceptance, starting historically, according to one of the trainers, with the spectacularly controversial issue of nuclear power, but gradually including more and more areas.

I thought license to operate only applied to nuclear energy business, but with expectations of corporate behaviour and greater media capacity to focus in on the issues, increasingly food, pharmaceutical, hotels and financial services companies are under scrutiny. (Training session, 20/7/98a)

These areas of public life, called issues, are 'environment, human and political rights, animal rights, aid and economic development, consumerism, food safety, health, religion' (Training session, 3/8/98a). Risk has hardly been mentioned by the trainers, yet it seems that the principle of public acceptance is linked, on the one hand, to the gradual widening of the scope of risk and risk management; and on the other hand to a retreat from the worldview of watertight divisions between economic, moral and social spheres of public life.

Although the main line of response has been to accept the idea of 'licence to operate' (defined by one trainer as 'social acceptability of corporate action', Training session, 3/8/98a), attention to data in a more detailed way shows that there have been a number of other strategies in use which simultaneously limit and operationalise this principle in business practice. These strategies are a series of reinterpretations which can be labelled: instrumentalism and evasion.

The most obvious example of the instrumental approach to problems thrown up by the fundamental reconfiguration of the world is the introduction of a toolkit of ideas and tactics, such as: stakeholder, issues management, crisis management, social corporate responsibility. All of these appeared in the training either as separate sessions, or ideas used by trainers. Instrumentalism of these ideas and tactics is two-fold: they are there to be used as instruments; and the way in which these instruments work defines the nature of engagement with the issues. Let us take as an example social corporate responsibility (referred to as 'responsibility') and follow it through a number of statements made by the trainers. It is defined as 'the responsibility of an organisation to its stakeholders beyond its duties to its members ... [it] involves choices based on ethical and moral principles, not processes of accountability' (Training session, 30/7/98a). Thus social responsibility lies in 'our contribution to social/societal goals' (Training session, 30/7/98a) which is beyond and above the basic duties of profitability and accountability. It is also very clearly allied with the principle of freedom, fundamental to Western culture; and with the Western myth of growth and development:

[Is social responsibility] an issue for multi-nationals? Not if you want to be world class... Not if you want to compete in your own market... Not if you want national economic growth. [Yes] only if you enjoy decline or economic imperialism. (Training session, 30/7/98a)



The rhetorical 'you' constructed here is being presented with an apparent choice: to embrace social responsibility in the way in which the exemplars of business success, i.e. multinationals, do; or to turn your back on it, and thereby condemn yourself to inevitable decline and failure. Social responsibility is being bracketed with freedom and growth as attractive aspirations, in contrast to economic imperialism, commercial selfishness and decline.

Another, parallel type of alignment is being articulated in the above statement: if moral principles are evoked, so are pragmatic, business ones — competitiveness and reputation. Indeed, this pragmatic alignment takes over when responsibility becomes part of communication expertise claimed by public relations/communication management.

Why be socially responsible? Survival, recruitment, acceptability, motivation through the organisation, investment, secure support for the future change. (Training session, 30/7/98a)

Social responsibility gets operationalised purely with reference to the organisation's identity and technical issues of credibility:

Social responsibility should always relate to corporate goals, the business plan or operational objectives; [is] most effective at community level; involving employees and management secures commitment — an essential; need to be appropriate in scale to your organisation ...; initiatives must be monitored and evaluated. (Training session, 30/7/98a)

Thus through a process of reinterpretation we have been moved from a position of clear separation of different kinds of considerations (ethical and economic) to a position where the two are supposed to blend into one, but instead the ethical considerations seem to be circumscribed.

So, a Ford European environmental award needed to persuade the vehicle buying public that Ford Motor Company was more than a manufacturer of reliable cars and trucks, but also had a stake in the future of the environment and had the good of society at heart. To a certain extent it succeeded. Environment can equal responsibility in the public perception. [Emphasis added] (Training session, 31/7/98b)

The effect of this instrumental approach is double-edged: social responsibility is included in good business practice, but it is also made ambiguous by the mode of its inclusion. In fact, good business practice itself is a result of the same re-interpretation process whereby ethical considerations can be included in business thinking with no fundamental rethinking of business principles. To put it crudely, if you rename it, you do not have to re-think it:

Is keeping employees informed a moral issue? The majority view seems to be that it is a business issue. It is part of standard good ways in which to run business. (Training session, 23/7/98a)

The answer is evasive, but at least the question is asked. Evasion, however, can be extended further to the point where the need for any re-evaluation does not even arise. This seems to happen when problematic issues are evaded through the use of frameworks which are otherwise legitimate or comprehensive in their own right. For exam-

ple, seeing the world in terms of purely business relations or in purely economic terms helps to evade more troublesome ethical questions which could not be dealt with as 'good business practice':

- In China, government support is particularly crucial to the success of a foreign venture, since the government develops the policies and laws that rule an organisation's operation, controls the multitude of approvals that allow your business to operate day-to-day and is often your partner, customer and supplier [emphasis added] (Training session, 20/7/98b)
- As a reaction against increasing EU restrictions, tobacco companies are also going heavily into other markets — the Middle East, Far East and Africa — where markets are growing, not declining [emphasis added] (Training session, 31/7/98a)

Finally, the clearest evasive technique of all is that of distribution of responsibility:

- It is difficult to have a debate with stakeholders in tobacco industry or nuclear industry because it is such a polarised issue. [It is not the company's fault; it is the issue that society has to solve] (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- It's not for a single company to solve big governance issues for the whole society. (Training session, 23/7/98b)

### Which world?

So far, it seems that there is a fairly sharp picture of the world emerging together with a clear professional communication/management response to it. It would be wrong, however, to stop here: the picture may be sharp, but it is not without its own contradictions and tensions. This world seems to extend between the New Utopia and Dystopia.

In the utopian vision sketched above the various competing interests and actors become stakeholders with a shared interest in the world they all inhabit; responsible behaviour takes over from enforced compliance with laws, and education and knowledge lead to consensus. Yet, the 'sameness' of the world may not be making it any more predictable or easier to deal with:

...establishment and maintenance of trust and confidence is an increasing problem in a fast moving world where change is taking place all the time and people come and go and alter their loyalties as a matter of course. (Training session, 29/7/98a)

The unpredictability of the New World lies at the core of an alternative vision, the New Dystopia.

### Reason and emotion

At the foundation of the New Dystopia lies the old division between logic/reason and emotion.

- Public opinion is increasingly a part of what we do, so are the emotional factors. (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- You can't rely on the rational arguments only. (Training session, 21/7/98b)
- [In] a battle between facts and emotions, emotions usually win the day. Don't just count on logic. (Training session, 28/7/98a)

The division can no longer be denied; in the New Utopia, however, the split can be repaired. In fact, the ambition to reunite reason with emotion is a driving force in the New Utopia,

The old paradigm of defensive stance must be replaced by a high profile in public debate and facts and science working hand in glove with emotions and perceptions. (Training session, 20/7/98a)

Yet, as we have seen, people 'come and go' and routinely refuse to be locked into relationships with organisations. They may like what you do and yet not like you, as it was demonstrated to the trainees with a MORI chart showing that satisfaction with a company's service is not linked to favourable attitudes towards it. It seems that this unmanageable fracture in the world is the location of the near mythical status of pressure groups — Greenpeace either as itself or through references to the Brent Spar saga appeared in 7 out of 22 sessions (the next runner up was British Airways with four appearances). The New Dystopia is, therefore, the vision of the permanently fractured world, unpredictable, driven by emotion, and spinning around forever new issues.

Comparing the characterisation of pressure groups and companies produced by one of the trainers reveals the fault line:

| Pressure Groups   | Companies                                    |
|---|--|
| single issue driven but coalitions building   | driven by traditional market values          |
| intolerant, manipulative, unscrupulous, self-righteous  | tendency to decide-announce-defend policies  |
| driven more by values and emotions than facts   | understand science, understand relative risk |
| distrust of business (look for, enjoy conflict)   | becoming more aware of stakeholders          |
| well-informed, international networking<br>flexible, innovative, creative, professional,<br>self-perpetuating campaigners | still instinctively closed and suspicious    |
| news-creating, publicity-hungry, high PR skills   | tendency to over-claim problems              |
| search for simple solutions   | with projecting trust and values             |

Figure 27: Characteristics of pressure groups and companies (Training session, 3/8/98a)

The comparison, couched in loaded terms, sets emotion (pressure groups) against reason and science (companies); but it also reveals respect and recognition, if perhaps of a grudging kind, for qualities which would be praised in a public relations expert: well-informed, flexible, creative, professional, innovative, high PR skills. At least two other trainers who in the course of their sessions referred to pressure groups showed the same mixture of loathing and recognition. PR professionals recognise pressure groups as fundamentally like themselves in that they draw their power from the same source—their ability to impose discursive control over issues, sites of complex power struggles in public life. At the same time, practitioners recognise the existence of a fundamental difference, in the words of one of the trainers, 'I find that when I'm describing pressure groups, I could be describing one of the more extreme religions' (Training session, 3/8/98a).

Similar sentiments were expressed by another experienced professional in his 'Comment' column contributed to PR Week (Hamilton, 1998) almost at the same time as the training sessions was taking place:

Pressure groups derive their strength by tapping into people's worries and fears and promoting grass roots issues that strike deep chords in many of us [...] They have learnt about creating and refining messages [...] They often have a good, instinctive feel for [the] moral high ground. We are all at it.

Again, beyond the point of fundamental similarities, the world splits: on the one side lies the madness of 'screaming abuse, bullying and harassment'; on the other is a complex world whose ambiguity can only be negotiated by honesty and courage, helped by 'steady nerves and a clear head':

Cast the shadow of bedlam aside for an honest, balanced argument. Do not give up, fight back and become a responsible pressure group yourself. (Hamilton, 1998)

It seems that to PR professionals, pressure groups are in some ways twisted, frightening reflections of themselves. It is tempting to conclude that the difference hinges on the stance towards what constitutes true public interest. Yet, it might be too simplistic: such an explanation presupposes the existence of one, shared worldview within the occupation. As will be shown, examining the way in which the occupation defines its professional problems and its jurisdictional tactics necessitates a more complex explanation.

## Conceptual frame

If the picture of the world serves as the background, the conceptual frame pinpoints the space which the occupation calls its own and from which it gazes out into the world. The conceptual frame calls together ideas and concepts thus providing the occupation with a locus; it also directs the occupation's attention towards others and other conceptual frames in a bid to improve status and secure both existing and new markets for public relations services. One way to understand public relations expertise is by attending to its location in the world of action (see Figure 28 below ).

It is situated between client interests, whatever the expert's particular relation with the client might be (organisational sphere), and the sphere of public knowledge and opinion (public sphere). For the time being we shall refer to this domain as 'Effective messages' in order to reflect practitioners' understanding of their work as helping 'clients put their message across effectively' (Training session, 20/7/98b). 'Effective messages' straddle the boundary between the client and the general public. On the public side, public relations intervenes in matters of public knowledge and opinion, as seen in practitioners' explanations of their work as:

- ...The creation and distribution of public attention. (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- 'Public opinion is increasingly a part of what we do. (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- Changing attitudes ... is one of the most difficult parts of public relations (Training session, 21/7/98a)

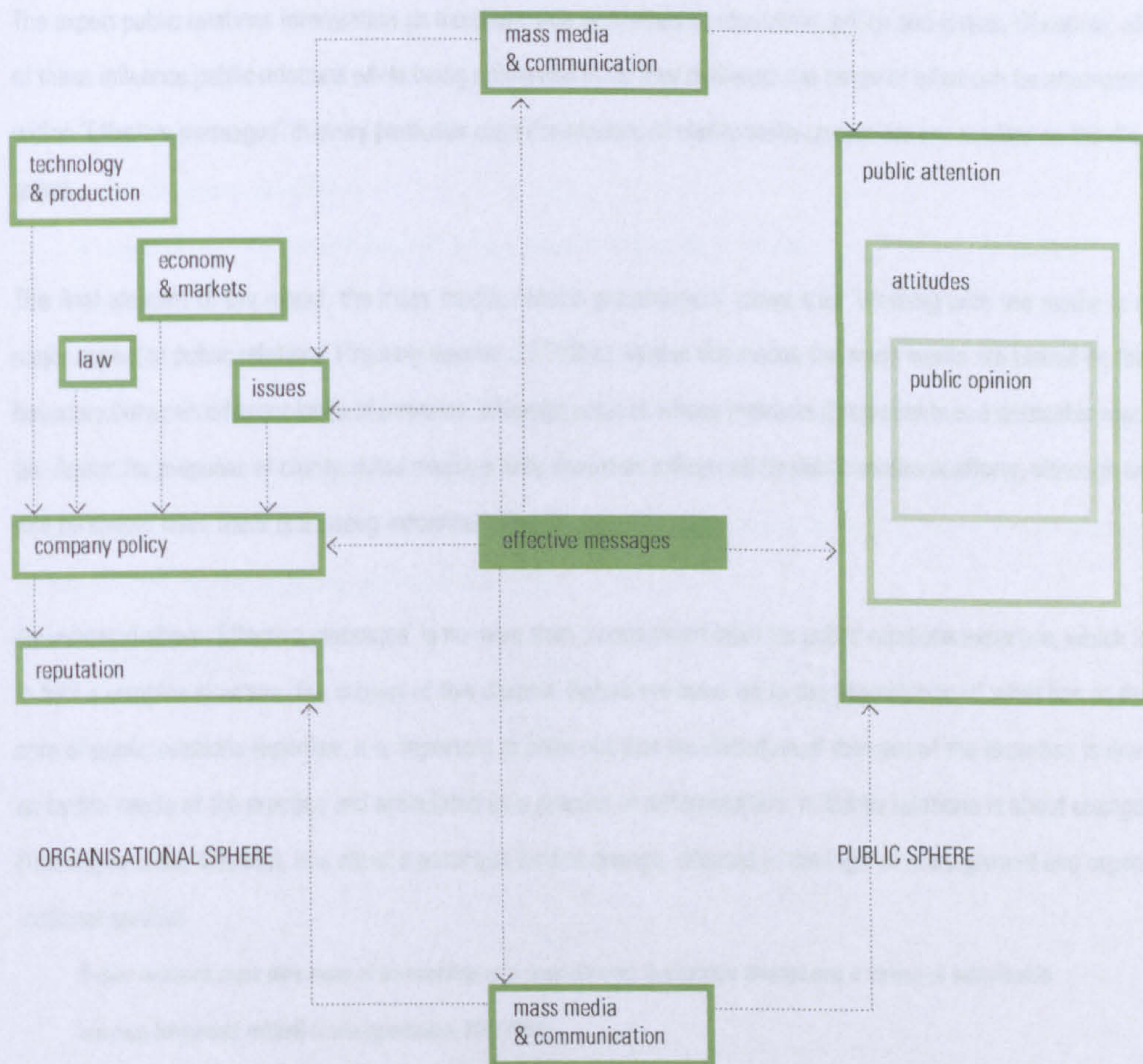


Figure 28: Public relations domain and lines of intervention

'Issues' come into the model to represent the area of debate and struggle between different interests in society; like public relations domain itself, issues straddle the boundary between the public and the client side of the diagram.

On the company side of the model, issues are taken up by companies under social corporate responsibility, or broadly under company policy. The ultimate direction of efforts, however, is reputation understood as a blend of business and non-business considerations (represented in the model by factors related to law, technology/production process; economy/markets; and issues). Practitioners, therefore, see their role in the following terms:

- Your responsibility is to advise your company... on the best policy (Training session, 21/7/98b)
- Our work is to make sure that we know what needs to be communicated to protect the company's reputation. (Training session, 27/7/98a)
- Stakeholder philosophy [requires] the public relations function [to act] not just in its traditional box, but in tandem with other functions and close to the CEO, to co-ordinate knowledge management, correlating shareholder value and other business performance measures, such as productivity, innovation, quality, customer satisfaction with reputation, and developing methodologies for linking issues impacting on the company to company's involvement in broader activities than its traditional capitalist role. (Training session, 20/7/98a)

The expert public relations intervention on the client side is directed at reputation, policy and issues. Of course, all of these influence public relations while being influenced by it; they delineate the range of what can be attempted within 'Effective messages' in every particular case (for reasons of clarity these arrows are not marked on the diagram).

The final element of the model, the mass media, reflects practitioners' views that 'Working with the media is a major aspect of public relations' (Training session, 27/7/98a). Within the model, the mass media are placed on the boundary between different kinds of interests, although what or whose interests it represents is a debatable matter. Again, for purposes of clarity, mass media is only shown as influenced by public relations efforts, although as will be shown later, there is a strong influence going the opposite way.

As indicated above 'Effective messages' is no more than a convenient label for public relations expertise, which is in fact a complex structure, the subject of this chapter. Before we move on to the examination of what lies at the core of public relations expertise, it is important to point out that the definition of the core of the expertise is driven by the needs of the practice and articulated as a process of differentiation. If 'Public relations is about change' (Training session, 4/8/98b), it is about a particular kind of change, situated in the logic of management and organisational survival

Public relations must play more of an enabling role, instrumental in strategic change and a source of sustainable success [emphasis added] (Training session, 20/7/98a).

It is not about being 'the organisation's conscience' (Training session, 30/7/98a), and

What we do is deal with communication aspects... [but] 'it's not my job to run the business' (Interview, 27/7/1998a);

Then again, if public relations is about communication, it has to be strategically understood communication,

One reason why PR people have not managed to ascend to the company heights is because they have been so locked into the communication process [emphasis added] (Training session, 21/7/98a).

At the core of public relations expertise lies an organisation understood as a sense of corporate 'self' which is articulated and maintained in the face of a world full of challenges. This direction in the structuring of the expertise privileges the corporate entity but at the same time foregrounds the importance of the boundary between the corporate entity and its environment. The key concepts in this conceptual frame are: corporate identity, corporate culture, corporate reputation, and corporate image. Although extensive literature about them, both of theoretical and applied nature, exists, such explanation did not seem of primary importance for trainers. Rather, systematic effort was made to link these concepts with others found in the managerial conceptual frame:

- Reputation management [is] the orchestration of discrete communications that are designed to protect your most valuable brand — your corporate reputation. (Training session, 20/7/98a)
- Management of reputation 'improves share value' and acts as a 'crisis shield'. (Training session, 20/7/98a)

- A strong sense of corporate identity is as important as slavish adherence to business unit financial results.  
(Training session, 21/7/98a)
- Nurturing corporate culture is useless unless the culture is aligned with a company's approach to competitiveness.  
(Training session, 21/7/98a)
- There is an almost straight-line relationship between product recommendation and excellence of corporate image... (Training session, 21/7/98a)

The dynamic interlocking of knowledge (as a conceptual frame), its location in relation to other kinds of knowledge, and of action (as professional tools) is illustrated in Figure 29. The model is by no means a comprehensive map of public relations expertise, or even of its conceptual framework, but it captures the relationships between some of the key concepts, public relations tools and their effects.

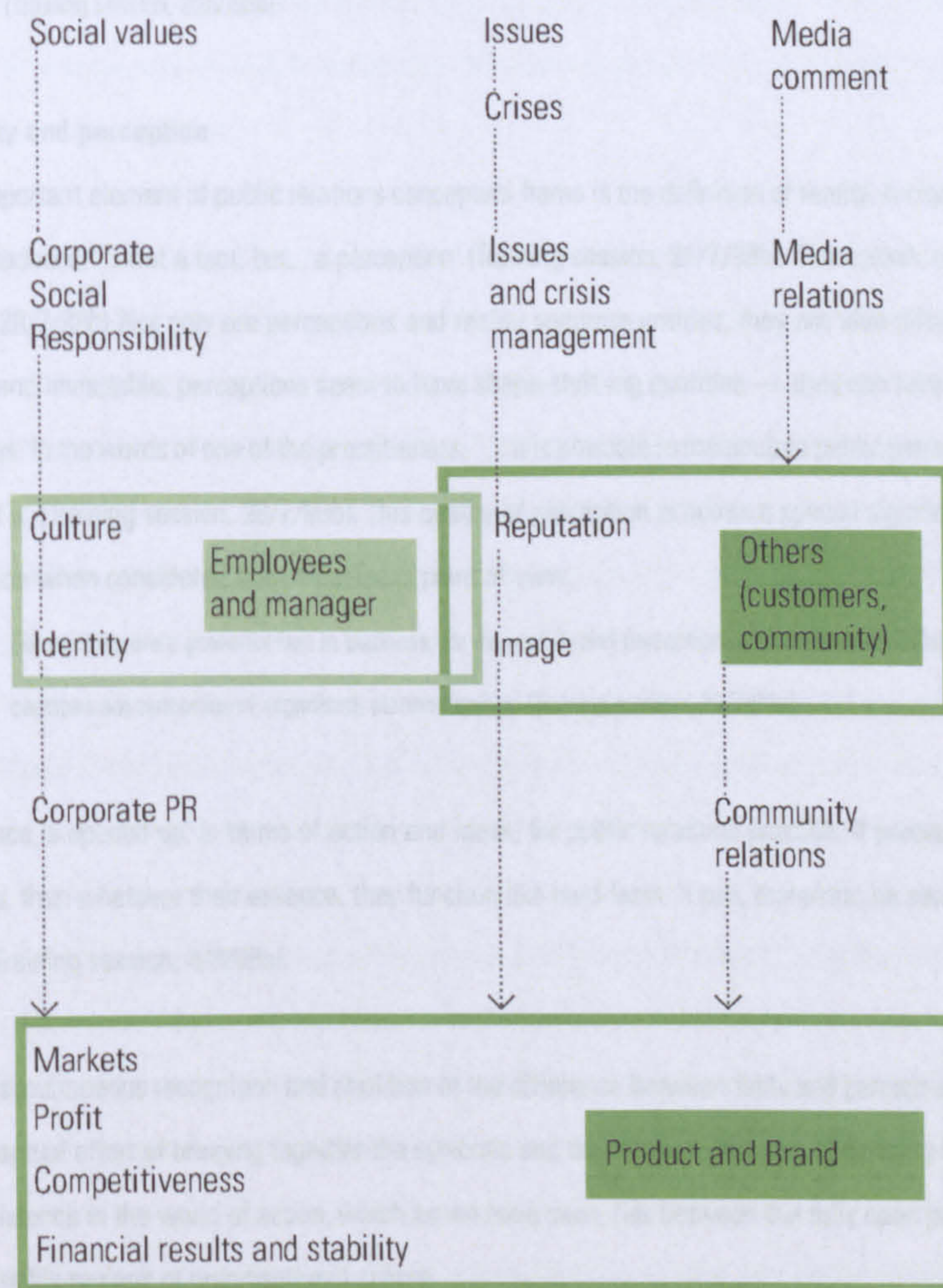


Figure 29: Public relations brings together the symbolic and the material.

### Working Knowledge

It is clear that the perspective adopted is that of looking from inside the company out towards others. Thus the company's core are its employees, and around them the corporate culture and identity, which do not just exist, but project towards 'others', i.e. stakeholders. They, on the other hand, have images of the company and form judgements about it, which are summarised as corporate reputation. In this symbolic realm, the organisational boundary is rather hazy, but it seems to lie somewhere where identity and reputation overlap.

The other revealing fact in the above statements is the systematic juxtaposition of concepts from two different frames, the first dealing with the symbolic representation of the world, and the other, focused on the measurable, which has traditionally provided the managerial/business *raison d'être*: reputation/ share value; identity/financial results; culture/competitiveness; product/corporate image; and culture/ brand. What this model also illustrates is the fact that this opposition is being abolished through expert action: the symbolic is stitched onto the material, with public relations tools being the metaphorical needle and thread in this process. We are, in effect, attempting to unravel the precise dynamics behind reputation strategy, explained by one of the trainers in the following way:

... the key notions are "thought leadership", "issue management", "share of mind" and "defining events" that are the building blocks of creating a reputation strategy. This thinking will be based on research among employees, customers, shareholders and "secondary" stakeholders. Phrases such as trust, responsibility, innovation, financial soundness, quality of products, vision of management and companies that other try to emulate.

(Training session, 20/7/98a)

### Reality and perception

An important element of public relations conceptual frame is the definition of reality. A clear ontological distinction is introduced: '... not a fact, but... a perception' (Training session, 21/7/98b); 'Perception, not reality.' (Training session, 28/7/98b) Not only are perceptions and reality separate entities, they are also different in nature: facts are hard and immutable; perceptions seem to have shape-shift-ing qualities — they can take on or be given different shapes. In the words of one of the practitioners, '... it is possible to manipulate public perceptions, there is no doubt about it' (Training session, 28/7/98b). This quality of perception acquires a special significance for public relations practice when considered from a business point of view,

perceptions are a powerful fact in business, for example brand perceptions. There are few CEOs who realise that perceptions are outcomes of organised, planned action. (Training session, 20/7/98a).

A space is opened up, in terms of action and ideas, for public relations practice. If perceptions matter in business terms, then whatever their essence, they function like hard facts. It can, therefore, be said that 'perception is reality' (Training session, 4/8/98a).

This simultaneous recognition and abolition of the difference between facts and perceptions not only underlies the conceptual effort of bringing together the symbolic and the material, but also of creating the space for occupational existence in the world of action, which as we have seen, lies between the fully open public sphere, and the less accessible regions of organisational sphere.

### Working knowledge

Abstract knowledge has traditionally been regarded as one of the distinctive features of professions, but as it has been pointed out in the introduction, a profession normally has two different types of knowledge at its disposal: abstract, book knowledge produced by scholars; and practical, working knowledge used by practitioners. Here we



are concerned specifically with the second type of knowledge, the everyday working knowledge of practitioners. In public relations, this knowledge is made up of three elements: typical problems the occupation recognises; the tools it applies to them; and, in the words of one of the trainers, 'truths which we hold to be self-evident' (Training session, 27/7/98a).

### Problems

An examination of real life problems to which professional knowledge is applied provides important information about the profession's jurisdiction as well as an insight into the process of professional diagnosis. The latter can be understood as a two-step operation of colligation and classification. Colligation, defined as 'the assembly of a "picture" of the client' (Abbott, 1988, p. 41) is a selective translation of real life into the profession's language — it therefore looks back to the conceptual frame; classification serves as a way of linking such pictures to professional solutions (treatments) by placing them in a category of recognised problems. As such, classification looks forward to, what we call here, professional tools. Although separated in this explanation, colligation and classification tend to be interdependent.

In order to reflect these different relationships between professional problems, knowledge and reality, a two-step analysis has been performed on the Sword of Excellence case studies. Firstly, objectives of work listed in each campaign were coded on the basis of the language used by practitioners (for details see Pieczka, 2000). The aim of such an analysis was to reveal the presence of conceptual dimensions in the practice. In the second phase, problems have been defined on the basis of the information contained in the introductory parts of the cases which precede the statement of objectives chosen for a campaign. Such background information usually deals with the industry background, relevant history of the organisation or issue that lies at the heart of the campaign, specific market, or legislation. Analysing this information in connection with the objectives that follow has revealed the main thrust of the public relations effort in each case. Consequently, a professional problem is defined here as practitioners' identification of the object towards which their overall professional effort is directed in a given case.

In theoretical terms, one could argue that in public relations case histories, colligation is achieved through the information presented in the background and partly through objectives. The latter, by focussing on what needs to be achieved — for example increasing knowledge or changing attitudes — hint at rather than name the professional problem and trigger the use of specific tools.

The analysis has revealed the existence of ten types of objectives: Awareness; Image; Knowledge; Credibility; Involvement; Action; Sales/Financial; Framing Issues: Professional; and Instrumental. Except for the Instrumental and Professional categories, the typology was driven strongly by the language used and consequently focused around concepts such as awareness, image, sales, and profit. Professional objectives — which include statements about 'launch[ing] the campaign to the general public', balancing 'a national media strategy with a regional programme', or ensuring that communication is timely (employees get the news first) and within the regulatory limits

set for mergers and takeovers — are concerned with the ways in which the solution is to be achieved, i.e. with the characteristics of professional tools used. Examples of the instrumental objectives include statements about the need to: 'promote the Commission's new policies', 'present strong factual arguments in favor of a tax freeze', 'demonstrate the advantages and application of the material', etc. Such objectives define action in local rather than abstract terms (e.g. awareness, attitude). As such, they fail to classify the problem (Pieczka, 2000, p. 227). There are a number of possible explanations of this practice: poor diagnostic skills on the part of the practitioner; poorly developed professional classification system; alternatively, instrumental objectives could be seen as the extreme end of the diagnostic process, leaning firmly towards tools to be used.

In terms of their prevalence, the most frequently set objectives are Professional; followed by Instrumental; Action; Image; Sales/Financial; and Awareness. The popularity of these types of objectives is even clearer when we look at the proportion of campaigns in which they are used: approximately a third of all the campaigns studied used Professional and Action objectives (31% and 30% respectively) around a quarter of the campaigns included Awareness and Image objectives (28% and 25% respectively). If campaign objectives refer to professional tasks, then the biggest task for public relations practitioners is to act professionally. Other sizeable tasks are the stimulation of desired behaviour, knowledge or symbolic representation of behaviour and public impression management shown by categories of Action, Awareness and Image, (see Pieczka 2000, p. 226-227).

The analysis of campaign objectives has thus revealed both the conceptual skeleton of the practice and the collaborative effort of the practitioners and their occupational body to construct the meaning of professional practice. Extending the analysis in order to find the focus of work in each case has revealed six types of broad problem areas tackled in public relations practice: product promotion; profile work; corporate identity and culture; lobbying; public or health information campaigns; and presentation of special(jst) interests.

Product promotion taken literally is a somewhat misleading label; in fact, it covers efforts directed primarily at commercial promotion, that is promotion with a financial gain in sight, of things conceived of as saleable commodity, for example: Magnesium-OK, a dietary supplement (case no. 33); independent financial advice as sold by members of the Independent Financial Adviser Promotion scheme (case no. 64); less familiar species of fish, in order to manage the market for cod and haddock while the fishing quotas were restricted (case no. 47); Smirnoff as a brand (case no. 94); Vodafone, as a new service provider, of a new service in an entirely new market — mobile cellular radio communications in 1986 (case no. 21). A clearly identifiable problem subset is represented by campaigns dealing with flotations (case no. 17), privatisation (case nos 10, 91) and share issues (case no. 90), i.e. selling a very particular kind of commodity (shares) in a tightly regulated market.

Profile as a kind of professional problem refers to efforts directed at shaping the way — the actual terms — in which a client organisation is perceived publicly. One of the most direct examples of such an effort is the sponsorship of pub theatre awards by Guinness, in which a key objective reads: 'to link Guinness with innovation and cre-

ativity, the key qualities of Guinness advertising' (case no. 100, Guinness plc, 1997, p. 43). Profile work, however, does not necessarily tie the client organisation in such a direct way to specified qualities. For example, in 1994 North West Water conducted a fund-raising campaign for WaterAid, the water industry charity engaged in supply of safe water and sanitation to communities in Africa and Asia. Although the only company-directed objective in the case was to do with encouraging teamwork, looking at the actual tools used (community outreach programme, appeal to customers, sponsored events) it becomes clear that, as it is stated in the final, evaluation section of the case, 'North West Water has benefited too, from ... the positive public relations generated from campaign activities.' (case no. 78, North West Water, 1995, p. 28). If these examples show how profile work may address itself to qualities the client organisation wishes to associate with itself, the campaign conducted by Barnardo's in 1995 (case no. 88) shows that profile work may also be used to inform the public about the organisation's core activities.

Fourth of July 1995 marked the 150th birthday of Thomas Barnardo: a unique opportunity to raise profile as well as a PR challenge. At the beginning of the year, six out of ten people thought — wrongly — that Barnardo's ran homes for orphans. The strategy was to use the birthday to close the chapter on the children's home and focus attention on Barnardo's modern work (Barnardo's, 1996, p. 30).

Finally, profile work is also used defensively and on behalf of not just individual organisations but wider, industry interests. A good example in hand is the 1986 campaign for the Chemical Industries Associations (case no. 22). Entitled 'Chemicals are good for you' the case narrative begins in the following way:

The chemical industry is one of Britain's most successful manufacturing sectors. [...] its products supply every other industry and are essential to modern society. Yet public evaluation of the chemical industry is poor in terms of both familiarity and favourability. [...] Industry Year 1986 presented the ideal opportunity for chemical companies to win the goodwill of their local communities by a programme of events linked with the year's overall objectives.

(Chemical Industries Association, 1987, p. 25)

The next problem area, corporate identity and culture, deals ultimately with employee motivation. The need for this kind of work may arise either out of structural changes which the organisation is undergoing, such as mergers, takeovers, and new business development; or it may be linked to a changes in work practices. An example of the first is the campaign prepared by public relations teams in Grand Metropolitan and Guinness when the two were merging to form Diageo (case no. 102). The campaign spanned six months from the time immediately preceding the public announcement of the proposed merger till the time when the merger was formally completed. The campaign was clearly aimed at managing attitudes and behaviour of 85,000 employees all over the world by providing information about the proposed change, dealing with feelings of job insecurity, managing share price sensitive information, and keeping the normal operations going under these special circumstances. A more straightforward example of culture re-engineering is illustrated by one of the winning campaigns of 1990, 'Focus on the Customer' (case no. 32). In the context of 'dramatic restructuring' of the paints market,

The only way ICI Paints can respond is to be better than them [competitors] at meeting customer needs. The broad objectives are: to bring about a service orientated culture [...], to ensure that employees understand and subscribe to the concept of "internal customer" and to recognise that the quality of service that reaches the customer begins with the quality of service that people inside the company give each other. (ICI Paints, 1990, p. 11).

Lobbying refers here to efforts expanded in the public and political arena in order to change or prevent changes in the law, for example regulating divorce (case no. 81) or taxation (case nos 20, 41); to influence government decisions about to be made, for example on the disbanding of a military regiment (case no. 50) or awarding of a big contract (case no. 65). Although the cases mentioned so far focused on the national level of decision-making, lobbying can also cut across the various levels of administration, for example the operator of the port in Ramsgate embarked on a campaign in 1993 (case no. 94) targeting local (Kent County Council), national (Westminster) and European (Brussels) levels of government, the first to seek a planning permission for building an access road, and the remaining two to attract funding for the project.

The remaining two problem areas are more difficult to define, perhaps because there was not enough information available to work from as they were the two smallest categories in this data set. Public information or health campaigns are represented by only six cases: two cases dealing with health issues, first aid (case no. 67) and breast cancer (case no. 109); the remaining four dealing with matters of public importance, or to put it differently, matters about which the public need to be informed. Out of the latter four, two are explained by the client organisation's statutory obligation to communicate — Cardiff Bay Barrage Act of 1993 in 'Groundwater Protection Scheme (case no. 80); Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in 'The Countryside Access Charter (case no. 15). The two remaining public information campaigns — informing the public about the introduction of a new coin (case no. 58) and recruiting members of Children's Panel in Scotland, a body which deals, instead of the Juvenile Court, with certain types of young offenders (case no. 8) — seem to have a very strong public expectation attached to them as far as the appropriate dissemination of information is concerned. The health campaigns, conducted on behalf of charitable organisations, could be partially construed as profile work; on the other hand, their interest in matters of public health makes them similar to government funded health campaigns (not represented in the data set). Thus the common denominator in these campaigns appears to be public interest.

The final category of professional problems identified, presentation of specialist interests, is even more tentative than health and public information, but important nevertheless. As a category, it is very small (four cases) and consists of campaigns that could not be easily identified with any of the above problems: a campaign to promote a breed of dogs (case no. 42), to raise awareness of Feng Shui (case no. 99), to generate more interest for the government's Investors in People scheme (case no. 73), and finally to raise money for a local hospital (case no. 110). Of particular interest are the first two: they can be seen as promoting a cause, that is aiming to make people take an interest in what is being promoted on the basis of its intrinsic values; they are broadly targeted, and there is no organisational muscle or financial resources behind the campaigns. Although in numerical terms, these specialist interest campaigns barely register in the institutional account of PR excellence, they are important as an illustration of the uses to which public relations expertise can be put.

Two concluding points can be made here. First of all, in broad terms public relations deals with discourse about commodities, identities and action, both on the level of the individual (customer, employee) and public institutions

(policy). As the same areas are worked by other occupations, for example marketing or advertising, professional problems on their own cannot function as the sole base of professional differentiation for public relations. Secondly, the institutional account presented through the winning case studies shows product promotion and profile work (70% of all cases) as the prominent area of work. At the same time we have seen how the Conceptual frame privileges an organisational perspective and concepts such as identity or reputation while attempting to imbue them with a commercial sense. It could be said that knowledge and work cannot be properly understood in separation from the markets in which they are sold.

## Tools

This element of public relations expertise can be understood as a repository of information about professional tools. It contains basic descriptions of all the tools as well as more detailed information about their structure, about how to apply them, and about the effects they may produce. PR tools appear to differ in their complexity and the types of outcome they are meant to produce. Thus we have a group of tools used to produce artefacts and events, for example: press release, pitch, press conference, photocall, corporate literature, speech writing. These may often be referred to as skills. Then there is a group of more complex tools labelled, for example, issue management, investor relations, public affairs, media relations, internal communication, reputation management, etc. These tools are other-wise seen as public relations specialisms, recognising the fact that they are larger structures, sold as programmes or campaigns in separate markets. Finally, there is a smaller group of tools used specifically for analytical purposes. These tend to have less standardised, more descriptive names, for example: 'prioritising stakeholder demands', 'reviewing internal tactics in issue management', 'What information do employees want?' 'assess your success', 'media will ask three questions', 'issue life cycle', 'examine corporate behaviour'.

Except for the analytical tools which serve as ways of organising information and illuminating problems, there is a strong common feature shared by public relations tools: they are understood and presented as a series of steps to be taken in providing a professional solution to a public relations problem. Their structure and application overlap with explanations given by the trainers, for example: 'media interviews preparation: know your messages, research the journalist, anticipate difficult questions, think about responses in advance' (Training session, 28/7/98b). Occasionally, however, there may be additional information available specifically about application, i.e. points to bear in mind while using a tool. For example, one of the trainers produced the following checklist for employee communication: 'senior management commitment; clear objectives and purposeful; honest, truthful and non-patronising; communication medium in tune with the purpose and the message; regular; is it working?' Although there is a sense of structuring still present, the central point of this statement focuses on the qualities which should be built into an employee communication campaign.

Searching for the common denominator, we can say that tools are not only sequences of steps, but largely the same sequence: situation analysis, objective setting, developing a strategy, and assessment of the work carried out (evaluation). This structure operates both for simple tools, like press releases, and for complex large programmes, like reputation management:

- Creating news releases: planning, content, style, checking. (Training session, 4/8/98b)
- Managing reputation consists of: understanding your environment, players, constraints/resources; setting goals (research); implementation, evaluation (research). (Training session, 20/7/98a)

Beyond structure and application, the tools repository also contains information about the effects produced by the tools. For example, the purposes to which corporate communication is put are listed as:

[to] increase awareness; correct misimpressions, project truths, establish links, create climate of opinion; increase new product acceptability; develop influence; enhance morale. (Training session, 28/7/98b)

Finally, public relations tools rely on what is known in marketing as segmentation and they aim at proactive management of the environment. Segmentation, more commonly known in public relations as ‘targeting’ is a technique of breaking audiences into a number of more tightly defined groups relevant to the problem at hand in order to craft communication so that it takes account of the specific characteristics of these groups. The pro-active approach to environment is aimed primarily at landscaping the organisation’s environment in order to gain more control over public relations problems it might face.

To see how this repository works, let us take one tool, issues management, and follow the different types of information available about it. First of all, the tool is identified as such

Issue management is something to have in your toolkit. (Training session, 3/8/98a)

and then defined properly,

Issue management is a disciplined business strategy to: identify and understand external factors that influence an organisation’s relationship with stakeholders; identify sources and audience concerns of these factors; adjust communication and corporate behaviour to protect/enhance corporate reputation with these audiences. (Training session, 3/8/98a).

Although there is a sense of structure already present in this definition, a more explicit step-by-step explanation is also available:

[Issue management] strategies: map the issues environment (understand the science); identify and prioritise publics; identify third parties, address internal processes and policies, prepare plan and timing, establish dialogue, communicate, monitor. (Training session, 3/8/98a)

Each of these steps is then broken down to another series of steps to be followed, producing, in effect, a very detailed manual. Additional information available to practitioners about issue management gives it an analytical framework for understanding the dynamics, or life cycle, of issues (‘potential, emerging, current, crisis, dormant’). There are also points dealing with application, not obvious from the basic structure of the tool, but crucial to the effects produced:

- Tactics: meet majority of criticism, satisfy moderate campaigners, isolate extremists. (Training session, 3/8/98a)
- Refocus the issue: challenge the emphasis, restate the problem, build new coalitions, help them to publicise their position, conduct research. (Training session, 3/8/98a)

## Truths

In addition to working knowledge contained in the typology of problems and the repository of tools, public relations professionals are also guided in their practice by 'truths which we hold to be self-evident' (Interview with a trainer, 27/7/98). These truths are about public relations work and its effects, about others and the world. As a category, they are therefore clearly connected to the picture of the world, and the conceptual frame; where they differ is in their form and complexity. Truths often sound like maxims, they are simple and so obvious as to be taken for granted: 'self-evident' as my informant put it. For example,

- Build goodwill before you need it. (Training session, 28/8/98b)
- Talk straight and simple. (Training session, 28/8/98b)
- Issues affect survival. (Training session, 3/8/98a)
- Green protesters can affect share price of companies they target. (Training session, 3/8/98a)

Both the picture of the world and the conceptual frame incorporate elements of argument, reasoning, or abstract thinking; truths do not. They represent the level of knowledge which is least open to reasoning, discussion or manipulation.

A way to understand the function performed by 'truths' is by analogy to Bourdieu's concept of practical sense (1992, p. 66) and its operation. Having given a rather difficult definition, he proceeds to offer an illustration from the world of sport — 'a feel for the game', which is

{p}roduced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense — a meaning and a *raison d'être*, but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake (this is *illusio* in the sense of investment in the game and the outcome, interest in the game, commitment to the presuppositions — *doxa* — of the game). And it also gives the game an objective sense, because the sense of the probable outcome that is given by practical mastery of the specific regularities that constitute the economy of a field is the basis for 'sensible' practices, linked intelligibly to the conditions of their enactment, and also among themselves, and therefore immediately filled with sense and rationality for every individual who has the feel for the game... (1992, p. 66)

The artifice of any sports game — its rules, its spatial and temporal characteristics — is quite clear to the players. Entering such a game is a conscious act. By contrast, in social fields the artificiality of rules, outcomes, etc. is invisible to the players because there 'one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game' (p. 67). The nature of social fields and the process through which one comes to inhabit one's native field obliterate the cultural distance needed to perceive its artificiality.

Being a professional can be compared to participating in a sports game: one is not born into it, one makes a conscious choice to join it and learn what it involves. Being a professional means making a commitment to the game. On the other hand, the profession is not quite like a sports game: it is embedded in the fabric of social life through

its history, its purposes, and the logic of its rules and practices: its ideology is constructed in relation to the predominant cultural values. The profession as a field is rich in displays of regularities that characterise it, offering rationality as the basis for action.

Looking at public relations professional training from this perspective allows us to reinterpret the various elements identified in the model of expertise offered in this chapter with reference to their subjective or objective roots ('sense'). The picture of the world, as a selective representation of the world experienced by practitioners and their clients, is where the artifice of the game resides. Within the working knowledge, professional problems make up the board on which the game is played: what is not identified as a professional problem cannot be played for. According to Abbott (1988, pp. 35-40), identification and capturing of problems by a profession for inclusion in its jurisdiction is accomplished on the basis of abstract knowledge (objective sense) but it also requires cultural work (subjective sense). Tools, with the knowledge inherent in them, secure predictable outcomes, and as such they must prioritise the objective structures of reality. Truths, on the other hand, are verbal teaching tools used to induce 'the practical belief',

the condition of entry that every field imposes, not only by sanctioning and debarring those who would destroy the game, but also by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of selecting and shaping new entrants ...are such as to obtain from them the undisputed, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presupposition of the field which is the very definition of doxa. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 68)

## Reproduction of expertise

So far, this chapter has been devoted to describing public relations expertise. This final section takes a step back to investigate the process which has delivered the expertise to the trainees and to the researcher. The argument developed consistently through this chapter is that professional expertise is a complex structure integrating professional group interests arising out of a combination of socio-economic factors, professional working knowledge, and the actual practice/work. So far this argument has been advanced by mapping out that particular structure in the way summarised briefly in the introduction to this chapter.

Further evidence to support that argument is garnered from thirteen interviews with the trainers. Our knowledge of public relations expertise will therefore be extended not only by reflecting practitioners' own understandings of what it is, but also by showing the role of reproduction in the actual production of the professional expertise. Reproduction here is understood as the process in which expertise is shared and passed on to other members of the occupational group. In training, professional expertise is employed for a different purpose than it is when sold to clients and, therefore, handled differently. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, training can be seen as formalisation of practical routines, the process which requires a degree of self-reflection. The specific areas of interest here are: understanding the meaning of the distinction between theory and practice clearly articulated by the trainers; understanding how trainers approach preparing for training, in other words, how they construct their sessions and therefore re-construct their expertise so that it can be packaged for and consumed by the trainees.



## Theory versus practice

In this section we return to the distinction made by theorists between professional knowledge and professional action. The body of abstract professional knowledge, i.e. its cognitive base, is codified in textbooks. However, the application of knowledge in professional practice is a complex operation. The discrepancy between knowing and doing in the professional context has been described as the difference between 'book knowledge' and 'first-hand experience' (Freidson, 1970a). If a profession is defined by its ability to apply abstract knowledge to real life problems, then the nature of connections between knowledge and action, as well as connections between abstract knowledge and real life situations, must be of crucial importance to the profession and its practitioners. Indeed, it comes out loud and clear from the way in which the interviewees consistently juxtapose textbook (theoretical) knowledge with operating in the 'real world' and being 'practical'.

The first crucial distinction to be made is that between knowing and doing,

we frequently deal with people who [...] can quote you theory after theory and all the book titles, but what they do not do is apply. (Interview, 3/8/98b)

Thus knowledge and action are not only different, but may be entirely disconnected. Knowledge (theory) is 'rigorous' and comprehensive, it speaks its own language and it also seems to describe the world in such a way that information crucial to actually operating in the world is lost. By contrast, practice, or 'the real world' of first-hand experience is shaped by time demands

we are not going to have some fancy textbook or chart, in the real world we don't have the time (Interview, 23/7/98a).

If there is no time to reflect, unambiguous direction for action is necessary, but

one of the difficulties [with] too many books is that you lose your sense of direction (Interview, 28/7/98a).

Real life is also about 'commercial realities' and understanding 'what business is all about'. To sum up, being practical means possessing the ability to relate to the world through appropriate action. In a training situation, it is a source of trainer's credibility, as illustrated by the following mini-story about a trainer who was not being practical:

[...] and [I] said to them when he'd finished, 'What did you think of that?' [...] 'It's not reality.' 'It's not based in fact.' 'It's not what it's like in the real world.' [...] and he'd just died on his feet because they wouldn't believe him. His idea might be all right in the classroom, it might be all right on paper, it might be all right in a book — it just does not translate into reality. Can you take it back to the work place? (Interview, 3/8/98b)

Thus if action and abstract knowledge are to be linked at all, it is through heuristic strategies delivered in training which select and translate abstract ideas into 'handleable' tools. Training, however, is not conceived solely in these terms. In fact, trainers have given a whole range of objectives they planned to achieve.

## Constructing training

Figure 30 below shows the range of factors trainers routinely take into account while preparing to deliver a training session; the model also shows how these factors are connected in the planning process. However, it is important to state that for the process to work not all the factors represented in the diagram have to be taken into consideration by an individual trainer.

Some of the logic behind the factors shown on the diagram from 'Previous training or writing' through to 'Interactive character of session', as well as their sequencing is clearly explained by the following statement:

I started with the framework content which is fairly standard. I did an article a couple of years ago on the same subject. The subject area is one with which I'm extremely familiar. [...] but it was also very clear that part of what I needed to do was to set it up in such a way as to encourage interaction. [...] I sat down with that framework and argued with myself which were the best cases to use in order to get the maximum interaction. [...] It was just about finding the right illustration to get people to participate. (Interview, 27/7/98a)

Let us now follow the final, and perhaps the most important, link in our model, that of the interactive character of training and its practical relevance to trainees. Relevance is understood here as the immediate applicability of what is learned to the trainees' 'own experience or their own operation [organisation] or geographic context' (Interview, 30/7/97a). However, showing how general principles apply to particular situations is as much the trainer's as it is the trainee's job, with both sides actively participating in the process,

[...] you can put quite a lot of charts up until you go blue in the face with diagrams, principles, and so forth, but so much of it is actually thinking through problems. I must have mentioned common sense about sixteen times; it is actually about common sense being applied to problems. And therefore you have to encourage people to think that through for themselves... (Interview, 23/7/98a).

Participation may, therefore, also serve the purpose of inducing the commitment to the game.

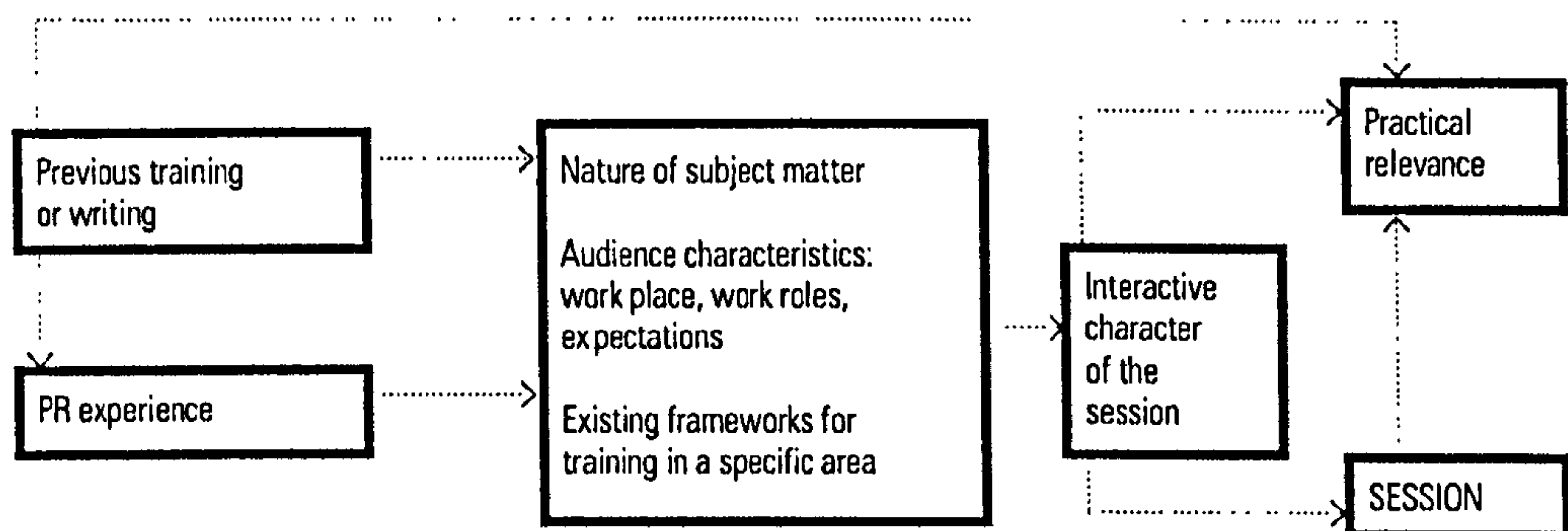


Figure 30: Model of trainers' approach to delivering training sessions.

Relevance and interactivity appear bound together in a kind of professional common sense which, in fact, is a joint effort on the part of the trainer and the trainee to redefine the world in terms of their specific professional expert-

ise and therefore make it amenable to expert intervention. As such, training is nothing like the conveyor belt of knowledge suggested by 'reproduction of expertise', rather it appears as a joint, creative effort in which the expertise is as much produced as it is reproduced. Put simply by one of the trainers, 'you often learn something yourself, which is quite fun' (Interview, 23/7/98a).

## Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter has been to unpack PR expertise by setting aside expectations of its scientific or rational nature. The model of expertise constructed here is organised not through scientific classification of problems and theories, as textbooks might do, but by attending to practitioners' needs and uses to which concepts, ideas, and practical schemes are put. Public relations expertise is constituted and transmitted through practice. It is a complex interactive structure organised through past experience and current exigencies, which exists and modifies itself through action, i.e. professional work and training. As such, it is strategic in its nature. Its conceptual frame includes concepts, not only because they might translate into useful tools, but also because they offer a professional/commercial lingua franca, a language understood by other important occupational groups, notably managers. It is supported by a broader and looser structure, the picture of the world, akin to a worldview. This is a more or less conscious reflection on the world as it presents itself to the practitioner. The picture of the world is thus a collage of ideas and facts already in public circulation, but equally importantly, accessible from the practitioner's location in the world of commercial interests. Truths, on the other hand, encapsulate values and norms as well as directions to appropriate professional behaviour. They, like Bourdieu's 'practical sense', spring from past experience and as such appear imminently sensible. In teaching others how to be a PR professional, truths are meant to act as triggers for appropriate attitudes and behaviours, cutting out the necessity for reflection in time-pressured daily practice.

Public relations expertise appears as practical knowledge, that is knowledge which resonates with the practitioner's experience. This working knowledge must offer structured ways of acting which appear rational and effectual. Its persuasiveness is a crucial feature: working knowledge must present a convincing potential for successful enactment of the professional role to practitioners and, through them, to their clients. If professional training is unambiguously concerned with the practicality of the professional expertise, it is quite opaque in the way in which it deals with other kinds of claims relevant to professional knowledge, for example its predictive nature. The role played by the esoteric, abstract knowledge is, as we have seen, not very prominent. The focus was on ready-made schemes and on finding ways to refashion reality so it can be manipulated with existing tools, and finally, on helping to make the profession's claim to its jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER 7: EXPERTISE IN NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

Chapter 6 aimed to describe and analyse what public relations expertise is. The objective was pursued through analysis of professional training which, it was argued, could be seen as one of the ways in which the expertise is created. Expertise was consequently seen as arising out of individual practice and group interaction at the occupational level. The objective of this chapter is to extend this analysis by examining how public relations expertise is built through institutional efforts focused on model accounts of (model) PR practice. The set of data for this part of the analysis is fifty winning case studies from the IPR's Sword of Excellence competition (1994-1998). The case studies here are treated as retrospective accounts of professional work presented by the practitioners themselves to meet the competition criteria and win peer approval. It can, therefore, be claimed that the case studies are co-authored by the professional association through the rules of the competition and the judging process. Collectively, they are read here as the model narrative about public relations professionalism in action.

The main instrument for the analysis is provided by the concept of narrative (see Chapter 5: Methodology for more) for the simple reason that each of the cases tells a story — a widely accepted meaning of the verb narrate (tell a story) and the associated noun narrative (story). Narrative is a form of discourse defined here as 'the representation of an event or a series of events' (Abbott, 2002, p. 12), emphasising the key importance of events (action) as well as their mediated, rather than immediate, presence in narrative. As a subject of study, narrative discourse has a long tradition which encompasses a fundamental philosophical debate about knowledge, communication, and action:

In the beginning was the word, or more accurately, the logos. And in the beginning, "logos" meant story, reason, rationale, conception, discourse, thought. [...] this was the case until the time of pre-Socratic philosophers and Plato and Aristotle. As a result of their thinking, logos and mythos, which had been conjoined, were dissociated: logos was transformed from a generic term into a specific one, applying only to philosophical (later technical) discourse. Poetical and rhetorical discourse were relegated to a secondary or negative status ... Poetic was given province over mythos; rhetoric was delegated the realm where logos and mythos reign in dubious ambiguity. [...] At issue in the story of the interrelations of logos and mythos is which form of discourse — philosophy (technical discourse), rhetoric, or poetic — ensures the discovery and validation of truth, knowledge, and reality, and thereby deserves to be the legislator of human decision making and action. (Fisher, 1987, pp. 5-6)

Literary criticism has furnished us with a range of technical terms and the concomitant differentiation between constituent elements of the narrative usually listed and discussed in textbooks. Rhetoric, on the other hand, focuses on the argumentation and persuasiveness of stories, relying on linguistics and psychology. Fisher's own approach,

the narrative paradigm, is primarily concerned with the question of judgement and value as constituted in narrative and reflected in action. His is a philosophical approach of a broad scope, attempting to reverse the separation of logos and mythos.

I propose (1) a reconceptualization of humankind as *Homo narrans*; (2) that all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories — symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character; (3) that individuated forms of discourse should be considered as “good reasons” — values or value-laden warrants for believing or acting in certain ways; and (4) that a narrative logic that all humans have natural capacities to employ ought to be conceived of as the logic by which human communication is assessed. The basic principles of that narrative logic are coherence and fidelity. (Fisher, 1987, p. xiii).

The explanation offered so far might suggest a scale of scope and introspection, with literary criticism being the most introspective and technically focused method; and at the other extreme, the philosophically-guided approach concerning itself with human life in its individual, social and historical dimensions. In fact, there are many interests that resonate across the different disciplines, for example: Barthes’ (1977, p. 79) often-quoted observation about the universality of narrative — ‘simply there like life itself... international, transhistorical, transcultural’ — or Lyotard’s preoccupation with forms of knowledge and forms of discourse — ‘narration is the quintessential form of customary knowledge...’ (1984, p. 19).

Narrative analysis has been applied to both fictional and non-fictional texts. Although studies of fictional narrative are abundant in literary criticism and film studies, it is the study of non-fictional narratives that is of more application to this analysis. In organisation studies narratives (stories told by organisation members) have been studied as cultural artifacts, or in a more critical vein, as processes through which power relations are sustained (Mumby, 1987) and meaning is constructed (see Czarniawska, 1998). In the legal context, attention has been paid to witness testimonies as narratives (O’Barr, 1982). Story telling has also been studied as a mechanism involved in the production of knowledge (e.g. Myers, 1990). In public relations, introducing narrative analysis to explain public relations strategies, Heath (1992, pp. 57-58) wrote,

Much of the discourse used by public relations relies on narrative — the story. [...] To explain an oil spill or development of a new technology, a story may be used. The story not only gives perspective to the facts, but also provides values that allow receivers of the message to judge those facts and draw conclusions.

This chapter will follow a somewhat different interest — professional narratives, or the use of narrative techniques in the course of acting as a professional, which encompasses not only actions, but also accounts of these actions, for example in social work (Hall, 1997) or science (Harré, 1990).

As explained in Chapter 5, this analysis employs a number of tools from literary criticism, since much of the analytical toolkit has been developed by the study of fictional narratives. Indeed narrative has often been identified exclusively with fictional content; yet careful students of both fiction and non-fiction have realised the

oversimplification of such a stance. Nichols, who in his study of documentary film defines narrative, in contrast to documentary, as a 'form of discourse' (1991, p. 34) identified with the world of fiction, or imagination, ultimately realises that such a watertight distinction is not observed in practice:

Narrative as a mechanism for storytelling seems quite different from documentary as a mechanism for addressing non-imaginary, real-life issues. But not all narratives are fictions... Documentary can depend on narrative structures for its basic organization... (1991, p. 6)

Lamarque introduces his study of fiction and narrative by arguing against the criterion of referential commitments as a sound basis for the distinction between the two:

Narrative per se is a formal feature of a text. It is indifferent to subject matter and to discursive ends. [...] Above all, narrative per se is indifferent to truth and reference. Narratives can be about real people or fictional characters and their descriptive content can be true or false. The relation between narrative and fictionality is complex. (1990, p. 132).

Both authors, independently of each other, propose that it is not through formal features of the text, but the mode of reading it invites, that a distinction can be made between fictional and non-fictional narratives:

The fictive stance is an invitation, contextually determined, for a reader to make-believe [...] the fictive stance involves an invitation to a particular response. An audience is invited by a storyteller not so much to believe the propositions presented in the narrative as to make-believe them. [That is] to play a kind of game with it. Part of the game is to act as if the standard speech-act commitments of the utterance were present, including referential commitments, while knowing that they are not. (Lamarque, 1990, p. 148).

Nichols, writing about a genre of documentary representation he calls 'expository mode', has this to say about the role of the reader in how the meaning of the film is constituted:

The viewers of documentaries in the expository mode generally hold expectations that a commonsensical world will unfold in terms of the establishment of a logical, cause/effect linkage between sequences and events. (1991, p. 37)

The case study narratives are ultimately treated here, rather as in an anthropological vein, as artifacts. Consequently, they are being read here in order to understand how they were made and what role they played for those who wrote and read them. The question about the relationship between the story told and its referential commitment (practitioners' work) remains central to the analysis presented below. This chapter focuses specifically on the following questions :

- What are the stories about? What events and characters are talked about?
- How are these stories constructed? How are they told?
- What do the narrative characteristics reveal about the aspirations and problems of the public relations occupation?

The results of this analysis are organised below into three main sections: professional action; professional legitimacy; and narrative transformations.

## Professional action

An analysis of the building blocks (functions) of the case study narratives (see Appendix, Figure 25) initially revealed a common structure consisting of the following sequence:

Initial Situation + Link + Action + Achievement

All stories open with an Initial Situation, which consists of the introduction of the Principal (50 cases), Challenge (46 cases), and Agent when an outside consultant is involved (34 cases). The core of these stories consists of Action followed by Achievement (both present in all 50 cases). Action is usually preceded by another function providing a link between the problem to be solved and actions undertaken to do so. The link is usually achieved by Objectives (27) and Planning (34), either separately or overlapping (19 cases). In the seven cases which had neither of these functions, the link was provided by Research (4 cases), or Idea (3 cases). A typical story might run something like this:

Over the last few years Goodworks, a middle-size company in the X industry, has grown steadily and expanded its range of products [PRINCIPAL]. At the same time the market has grown increasingly competitive and Goodworks realised that it needed to communicate its profile effectively to its many audiences [CHALLENGE] The Good Communications Company [AGENT] was brought in to advise on the strategy and to implement the programme in co-operation with the Goodworks in-house team. [INTRODUCTION]

- **Planning:**

Having conducted a media audit, a number of interviews with industry analysts as well as studying market research results, a number of issues were identified as fundamental to the communication campaign to follow [RESEARCH]: ...The following objectives [OBJECTIVES] were identified: ...Good Communication suggested the following strategy... [LINK]

- **Action:**

A research report on... was commissioned; news launch was organised; briefings with analysts were held; a number of regional stories were developed for the media; customer communication was completely overhauled resulting in a new newsletter and information pack [ACTION].

- **Results:**

All national newspapers covered the launch resulting in X articles; outside London the story was covered in X. X features appeared in the specialist sections of X as well as in all the trade magazines. Additionally the chief executive was asked to come on the following radio programmes... A consumer survey commissioned from X showed a considerable change in awareness levels... [ACHIEVEMENT]

Seen in this way, the narratives are about the logic of professional work, showing its grounding in 'objective' circumstances and professional knowledge, and its closure in professional achievement.

In fact, what we are dealing with is an attempt to 'narrativise' the work conducted by public relations specialists as 'professional work'. The structure of such a narrative is revealed in sociological models of professional work,

notably Abbott's diagnosis–inference–treatment triad, while its consistent enactment by the Sword of Excellence stories is ensured by the rules of the competition (see Chapter 5). The narrative model of professional work in public relations can therefore be re-written as:

Real-life Problem + Knowledge work + Craft work + Outcomes.

## Professional legitimacy

If the structure of the case study narratives is driven by the need to present what practitioners do as fitting this model of rational, professional action, other elements of these stories reflect other occupational needs and dilemmas. This section examines how the narrative accounts construct reasons for PR work and expertise, i.e. how they seek to present them as legitimate. To this effect, the role of narrative characters is examined and then followed by an analysis of the evaluation methods used in the campaigns.

### Do-gooders or master technicians?

One way in which the case study narratives attempt to justify experts' action is through the use of characters such as the Principal, Beneficiary, and Helper. Numerical analysis (see Appendix, Figure 31) suggests that the Principal (the one with the problem) and the Agent (the one brought in to deal with the problem) are the two main characters in these stories. Although the other characters appear less frequently, they are nevertheless very important as a symbolic reflection of tactics employed in pursuit of professional legitimacy.

Let us start with the Principal who, like the Action and Achievement, is a *sine qua non* of such professional stories. Principals may act themselves, but more commonly introduce an Agent to deal with the challenge on their behalf (38 out of 50 cases, see Figure 31 in the Appendix). One can speculate here about the reasons for this numerically strong presence of consultants: for example, there may have been more submissions from consultants because it is more important for consultancies to win such awards as a seal of professional approval; or it may be that projects for which consultants are normally employed tend to lend themselves better to the competition format; alternatively, there might have been a bias in the judging process. This analysis will not attempt to confirm or reject any of these possible explanations put forward. What can be said here is that such a strong narrative positioning of expertise (with a consultant/Agent) dissociates it from any specific interest and in this way endows it with objectivity and flexibility that gives it an appearance of a logical, self-contained system of professional knowledge which can be rigorously applied across a range of cases, circumstances and conditions.

The functional relationship of the Principal and the other characters reveals other, symbolic aspects of the case study narrative. Let us start with the Beneficiary (a character who benefits as a result of Action). Firstly, the Principal, who employs the PR expert (Agent) is almost invariably presented as benefiting from the Agent's efforts (48 out of 50 cases). In the two exceptions (cases no. 81 and 89, see Table 32 in the Appendix), the benefit accrues to public interest: the Solicitors' Family Law Association manages to influence the shape of new legislation on divorce; Guardian Insurance sponsors the World Transplant Games, but the public relations achievement is present-



ed as focused entirely on the Games and the social issue behind them rather than the sponsor's visibility. While the preference for showing the client as the one who benefits can be interpreted here as a demonstration of professional control over events and predictability of outcomes, the two exceptions remind us that it is possible to tell the story differently. In other words, who is shown to benefit may be a matter of narrative choices made, not a cause-effect inevitability of actions taken, although the effect of these narratives is to make it seem precisely the opposite.

Secondly, a number of cases with more than one Beneficiary: the client is served, but others may also benefit. For example, London Electricity's 'Londoners of the Year Awards 1996' (case no. 97) presents the outcomes of the campaign as benefiting both the Principal and the winners of the Awards:

Opportunities for relationship development with target groups were achieved for LE. Potential now exists to extend these beyond the confines of the Awards [...] Awards winners gained for their work and benefited from a larger prize fund than in previous years (£25 K as opposed to £10K). They were also able to network with influencers. (IPR, 1997, p. 34)

This is a different tactic: while effecting a desired change for the client shows professionalism as a purely technical skill; spreading the benefit wider presents the PR expert not just as a master technician, an efficient mercenary, but as someone with a moral sense, a true professional. The character of Helper fulfils a very similar function. Helper is a character who gives assistance by co-operating in Action taken but who does not receive financial compensation from the Principal or his Agent. A good illustration of how Helpers function in narrative terms comes from the 'Switch on the Wind Power Campaign' (case no. 98) run for the British Wind Energy Association to help improve the rate of planning permissions granted for wind farms. The campaign used media relations to reposition the issue in the public perception. Friends of the Earth was the Helper in the case:

The BWEA did not promote its cause in "splendid isolation". Every effort had to be made to work in tandem with partner organisations, particularly Friends of the Earth, to counter a perception that the protest group Country Guardian is the sole environmental conscience of the nation on wind farming issues. (IPR, 1997, p. 36)

Helpers thus provide evidence that the cause is just and the interest served legitimate, because there are other public actors who support it.

To sum up, there are two tactics present in these narratives which are designed to display the PR expert's legitimacy: technical proficiency and ethical behaviour, both of which are important elements in definitions of professionalism. The model accounts of PR work routinely employ both these tactics, although they may do so in different ways.

## Outcomes

Analysing the ways in which the model accounts choose to demonstrate outcomes of good professional practice is a straightforward route to understanding not only the value system invoked, but also the knowledge that supports such accounts. Here I shall make selective use of the findings of the analysis of campaign objectives and evaluation methods (see Chapter 5), which was presented in a more extended form as a journal article (Pieczka, 2000).

Case narratives routinely show that campaigns are evaluated in more than one way. On average there were six evaluation methods per campaign; with the vast majority of cases (68%) employing four to eight methods. Part of the explanation of this practice is the fact that multiple evaluation methods reflect the multiple objectives routinely set for campaigns. However, a clear pattern emerges from the comparison of the two: in general, a campaign will contain roughly twice as many evaluation methods as objectives. Far from being a sign of rigorous and well-triangulated evaluation, this abundance of proof revealed in the narrative accounts is driven by opportunism and, by what might be called, a dramatic, rather than social scientific, approach to evidence of achievement (see Table 33).

| Category        | Category code | Frequency | Use of QT<br>% rounded | Cases in<br>which<br>methods | present | % rounded |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------|------------------------|------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| PROFESSIONAL    | P1            | 24        | 4                      |                              | 30      | 18        |
|                 | P2            | 127       | 20                     |                              | 79      | 71        |
| MEDIA           | MQT           | 25        | 4                      | 4                            | 23      | 21        |
|                 | MQL           | 109       | 17                     |                              | 67      | 60        |
| KNOWLEDGE       | KQT           | 11        | 2                      | 2                            | 10      | 9         |
|                 | KQL           | 9         | 1                      |                              | 9       | 8         |
| ATTITUDE        | AQT           | 11        | 2                      | 2                            | 10      | 9         |
|                 | AQL           | 15        | 2                      |                              | 13      | 12        |
| OPINION         | OPQT          | 23        | 4                      | 4                            | 13      | 12        |
|                 | OPQL          | 8         | 1                      |                              | 6       | 5         |
| BAHAVIOUR       | BQT           | 45        | 7                      | 7                            | 37      | 34        |
|                 | BQL           | 32        | 5                      |                              | 29      | 26        |
| IMAGE           | IMA           | 27        | 4                      |                              | 20      | 18        |
| RECOGNITION     | REC           | 100       | 16                     |                              | 64      | 58        |
| FINANCIAL SALES | F             | 64        | 10                     |                              | 43      | 39        |
| TOTAL           |               | 630       | 100                    | 19                           | 111     |           |

Table 33: Evaluation methods, frequencies and cases (N=111, all cases from 1984-1998 as listed in Table 32 in the Appendix.).

The two most commonly used ways of evaluating the outcomes of PR work are clustered in two categories: defined as Professional P2 and Media MQL. These categories represent two types of judgements made: either in terms of practitioners' own reflection on the campaign (its design, complexity, cost-effectiveness, control of the budget or winning other work on the strength of the campaign, continuation or extension of the campaign); or judgements made in terms of the resonance of the work in media coverage (for example by the number of articles referring to the relevant topic, or range of the media, or range of media comment, or the tone of coverage). Roughly one in five justifications offered (evaluation methods) refers to such professional judgements. Judgements about the media resonance of the PR work appear almost as common (17%). These two types of justification become even more important if one looks at the proportion of cases which used these methods (71% and 60% respectively). The most frequently used evaluation methods are also consistent 'repeaters', i.e. the comparison between the frequency and the number of cases in which a category appears shows that the category is used more than once (repeated) in a number of cases. Professional P2 is repeated in 48 cases (43% of all cases) and Media MQL in 42 cases (38% of

all cases). Like Media MQL, the third largest category, Recognition, also reflects public resonance of the practitioner's work, but it does so in terms of signs of outside recognition other than by media comment; for example, awards the campaign or its element might have won; endorsements for the campaign and its issues; testimonials from clients; and others copying the work or expressing an interest in the work.

What emerges as the most prominent feature of evaluation is the combination of a strong introspective gaze (Professional categories) with high sensitivity to its opposite, public resonance of the work (Media and Recognition categories). The introspective gaze testifies to a clear preoccupation with the process of delivering the service. The first component (as explained above) is set by professionals themselves and thus can be seen as contributing to the creation of standards by their public reaffirmation. The second type of the Professional P2 judgements is dependent on the client's decision to re-appoint the consultant, or keep the services going in one form or another, showing client satisfaction and trust, important features of professionalism.

An effort was made in the analysis to attend to the type of knowledge used by practitioners and values implicit in that knowledge. This was achieved by differentiating in coding between quantitative evaluation methods (such as properly conducted media content analysis or opinion polls) and judgements which were more impressionistic or intuitive. As shown in the 'Use of QT methods' column, quantitative measures account for about 19% of all justifications offered. Although quantitative content analysis (MQT) was employed in 21% of all cases, public resonance of the work tended to be approached from a dramatic perspective (MQL and Recognition categories): presence on the public stage (in the media) and public accolade were prevalent (60 and 58% of all cases respectively).

It follows that practitioners value publicly visible or publicly significant measures over solely numerical expressions of achievement known to themselves and their clients only. While recognising the existence of scientific knowledge (represented by concepts of awareness, attitude and knowledge) and numerical measures, practitioners seem not to value abstract knowledge and quantification in explaining to others what they have achieved. In brief, scientific knowledge is not deemed the best way to justify public relations expertise and professionalism to clients and peers.

## Narrative transformations

Although Propp's ideas on narrative structure and characters have so far supported the analysis, there are limits to their usefulness. The stories for which Propp's scheme was created — folktales — are different to those examined in this chapter in a number of respects. Firstly, their referential commitments are different: unlike the Sword of Excellence case histories, Propp's folktales are not about 'real' things and events, they are make-belief and invite the make-belief mode of reading (Lamarque, 1990, pp. 147-150). Secondly, the case histories, unlike folktales, are authored; what is more, the events they talk about are meant to be of the author's/narrator's making. It seems appropriate, therefore, to compare these professional accounts with scientific, and to an extent historical, narratives. This section will focus on the key question of the verisimilitude of the case histories, by discussing the narrative transformations of the actual experience in the context of professionalisation of public relations. These transformations are presented as falling into four themes: control, facticity, time, and gender.

## Control

The daily work and triumphs of scientists, like those of public relations professionals, are narratively represented through a fairly rigid plot: hypothesis, results, and inductive support (Harré, 1990, p. 86); or problem, knowledge work, craft work, and outcomes, respectively. 'To achieve the story line, events as experienced within the framework of common sense must be edited' (Harré, 1990, p. 87). It is difficult to establish the exact extent of such editorialising of experience for the narratives analysed here. However, some insight can be derived from a comparison of two accounts of the same campaign (case no. 104).

It was possible to collect two accounts of a campaign conducted for the NatWest: a published account of the 1998 Sword of Excellence winner in the category of Public Affairs (Lansons Communications, 1998) and an oral account offered in the course of the 'Best PRactice' seminar devoted to presenting top public relations campaigns, winners of the various award schemes (see Chapter 3). The Principal in the case was a bank, NatWest. The aim of the campaign was to establish the company as the leader in the pensions market; the strategy used was extensive research and pensions policy proposals. Here is an extract from the published account of what was achieved by the campaign:

The project ran simultaneously with the last government's own review [of pensions policy] that culminated in Peter Lilley's [Social Security Secretary] Basic Pensions Plus proposals. During that process the NatWest Life team briefed Lilley himself and the DSS [Department of Social Security] team. ...Peter Lilley's own proposals were announced the day after the Changing Nation conference of 5 March [launch of the Principal's campaign]. This timing gave a major boost to NatWest's perceived position in the pensions industry. The two proposals shared several key elements...  
(Lansons Communications, 1998, p. 15)

Commenting on this element of the campaign in the seminar, the presenter said: 'To this day I don't know how things happened, but he [Peter Lilley] was aware of [us]' (Best PRactice, 28 April 1999). Editorialising in this case takes out serendipity and introduces control. The formal account is not made inaccurate by leaving out the 'I don't know' element, rather ambiguity is introduced: it is possible to attribute to the consultant more control over the events than was the case.

In the final remarks and the discussion following the presentation, the same speaker made a number of interesting points about 'good ideas', i.e. what has been referred to above as the link between Challenge and Action, or as knowledge work.

- Trying to draw lessons is always difficult because good ideas come from many sources.
- V...we believe that creative ideas rarely come from brainstorming meetings.
- I find that big ideas suggest themselves as the only way forward.

What the case histories present as an unproblematic feature of public relations work, a matter of thinking through the information gathered to produce strategy ideas before any other work is done, in practice appears a more messy

and longer process of elimination, involving also an element of luck or serendipity. By juxtaposing the two accounts, it was possible to peel back the story (sjuzet) to glimpse at the raw events (fabula). In all the other cases analysed, the attempt to prise sjuzet and fabula apart failed, leading to the conclusion that this impenetrable unity of events and their accounts should be regarded as an achievement of these case histories. This narrative achievement has important consequences for those reading and sharing such stories: it 'imparts an illusion of eventful serial movement to its constituent elements' (Reid, 1992, p. 24). The quotation is a definition of narrative discourse advanced from a position critical of the widely accepted privileging of action over its presentation in narrative theory. The point of this alternative definition is to emphasise the view that sequencing of events is 'largely a sediment of transformations taking place at the rhetorical level' (ibid.). In non-fiction, such an illusion serves to normalise the narrative account, to make it appear as the accurate, faithful account of the events and in this way to re-make the actual experience into what it ought to be.

## Facticity

Another point of comparison between scientific and professional narratives analysed here is 'deindexicalization',

a sequence of grammatical transformations through which the claims of the discourse attain something like 'facticity'. By that I mean an epistemic standing as existing independently of any human matters, practical or conceptual. [...]

Complementary to this ... is another stylistic device of elimination of pronouns (even the academic 'we') and the adoption of the passive voice. Everything that is personal is leached out of the discourse. (Harré, 1990, pp. 99-100).

Similar transformations are at work in the Excellence Awards narratives: an extensive use of the passive voice; a sparing use of personal pronouns; and a routine use of lists, for example, of campaign objectives, techniques, and outcomes.

The passive voice is commonly employed to show routine work: meetings are organised, briefing papers are circulated, press launches are held, posters and leaflets are produced, case study data bases are set up. What in practice demands substantial hands-on involvement is presented here as materialising almost without human agency being involved in the process. Sizeable chunks of these narratives are, in fact, lists of things, such as objectives; target groups; and outcomes (numbers of articles published relating to the campaign, results of opinion or attitude surveys, numbers of people who participated or asked for information packs, etc.). Choosing a list rather than a sequence of events to tell the story helps to further dissociate the work from practitioners' involvement in it. For example, this is how PR work is presented in one of the campaigns (case no. 74):

Methods used to reach audiences:

- Press and VIP guest launch in summer 1989
- Regular press visits to farm since then (all visitors put on the mailing list)
- Production and direct mailing to key targets of general information leaflets, progress bulletins and annual reports (4th edition in May 1994)
- Continuous programme of visits from interested parties (universities, schools, distributors, farmers, conservationists, politicians, media)

- Exhibition display panels (used at major agricultural exhibitions)
- Case study documentation and presentation to farmer and environmental groups
- Five year review of the project (VIP guests and media invited; an announcement of integrated crop management study in 1994)
- Regular issue of news releases on progress of various on-site research activities (BRAHM Public Relations, 1995, p. 14)

What happened in the campaign is thus presented as 'untouched by human hand', to use Harr 's phrase about the same feature of scientific narratives (1990, p. 99). This impression is strengthened by the use of yet another stylistic device: inanimate objects may acquire the power to act. In grammatical terms, they become sentence subjects: a 'survey generated media coverage'; 'research showed that...'; 'information packs generated business'; 'seminars prepared members for...'. This might appear a puzzling tactic: if the aim is to show the best professional practice, why should practitioners not be shown as acting directly?

In fact, there are a number of ways in which the connection between the narrator (the speaking voice), the hero (either the Agent or the Principal conducting the work), and the action may be presented in these narratives. The variety can be ordered along a scale of gradual dissociation of the three elements. At one extreme, there is the first person narrative with the active voice extending over the whole range of professional work: 'I used public relations [...] I devised [...] created [...] scheduled' (case no. 82). Then, there are stories with the 'we' narrator, for example in one section of the 'Breath of Life' campaign: 'We devised an internal communications strategy [...] We devised an external PR strategy...' (case no. 67, St John Ambulance, 1994, pp. 21-22). Actions shown as performed directly by the hero tend to be strategic, they relate to taking crucial decisions, for example: recommending or devising strategy; advising on the main aspects of the strategy; proposing a course of action, or taking a route; developing issues into a mission statement, deciding against holding a press conference, etc. However, there are also cases where the hero's hands-on approach extends to more routine work, for example: negotiating promotions; devising launch packs; or even creating videos, and writing, producing and distributing campaign materials. The 'I' narrative — there is only one example amongst the fifty cases analysed — is the most straightforward and convincing representation of the unity between the one who speaks, sees, and acts. The 'we' narrative begins to chip at this unity: by referring to a number of unnamed 'I's, invisible in the story, 'we' loosens the direct connection between the hero and the action.

Then come narratives written in the third person, mixing the active and the passive voice together with lists: 'Hill & Knowlton proposed...' 'meetings were organised...' 'Target audiences: government ministers...' (case no. 72). The use of the company name as the sentence subject, combined with the reader's knowledge that the same company authored the account of its own work, creates an impression akin to that of an out-of-body experience. The narrator appears to have acted in the story while at the same time standing on the sidelines and offering a view from which the story is told. Finally, at the other extreme, there are stories with no hero and told by a disembodied voice (for example, case no. 68). This account is told exclusively in the passive voice:

At the outset of the programme it was considered essential to develop a marketing plan [...] It was agreed that putting the first British woman on the summit of Everest would be the key focus while a number of secondary storylines was also pursued. [...] A sophisticated communications plan was also developed [...] A comprehensive media list ... was developed.. (Shadwick Sponsorship, 1994, p. 24)

We cannot see the people whose heads contain the knowledge that supported judgements about what should be done, who occupied the vantage position from which the field was surveyed, and who performed the actions. The effect produced by this narrative stance approximates 'facticity' as Harre has defined it. While this end of the spectrum offers objectivity and detachment, the other extreme (the 'I' narrative) brings the authenticity of firsthand experience and involvement. Depending on which narrative stance is taken and which stylistic features employed, each account chooses its own position somewhere between authenticity and impersonal rationality

The world of human preoccupation, i.e. of organisations and strategies, has not been erased from the stories, but it serves merely as a backdrop to the spectacle of magic in which PR work is transformed into the already-accomplished. While flocks of objectives or results take their turn in the show, occasionally a shadow of a human figure is fleetingly revealed. Despite the appearance of objectivity and accuracy, these are purely magical tales of control and illusion: the mailing lists and such like might appear to make themselves up, but it is the magician who will take a bow at the end.

## Time

Another area of consistent and extensive editorialising of experience is the treatment of time in the case narratives. The narrator of one of the campaigns observes that 'timing was crucial' (case no. 71, The Women's Royal Voluntary Service, 1995, p. 5). Yet the whole story does not include a single reference to time or chronology. There is no way of knowing either when the campaign was developed and implemented, how long the various tasks took to complete, or what the 'real' sequence of events was. 'Timing was crucial' suggests that the campaign team may have been racing against the clock to impose a particular order on the events: to sequence the events and fit them in a particular way around points identified in public measures of time, such as dates in the calendar. Here the key point must have been the date when the Home Office made its decision on whether or not to fund WRVS, but we are not told when that was.

'Timing was crucial' evokes other common phrases ('have time to', 'take time to', 'waste time'). They all retain a trace of an individual's experience of time captured in Heidegger's concept of 'within-time-ness' which

...possesses its own specific features ... not reducible to the representation of linear time, a neutral series of abstract instants. Being in time is already something quite different from measuring intervals between limiting instants; it is first of all to reckon with time and so to calculate. It is because we reckon with time and make calculations that we have the need to measure, not the other way around. (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 169)

Save for the one phrase, all direct trace of time experience is left out of the story. In fact, this story represents one end of the range of ways in which time features in these accounts. Not only is the sense of acting-in-time — to coin a term — lost, there is also virtually no sense of measurable, linear time. The only way in which temporality is retained in the story is through the use of the past tense and occasional sequence markers such as 'before' or 'the first'. The other end of the range is represented by a narrative such as an awareness campaign by Barnardo's (case no. 88) in which the account of the campaign is driven by chronology and organised into a sequence: April, May, June, July. In general, such case narratives can be said to offer occasional links to chronological time, and some overt sequence markers such as 'first' or 'after', as well as grammatical markers of temporality (tense). However, large sections of the accounts consist of bullet-point lists of objectives, techniques used, and evaluation methods. One could, therefore, argue that these accounts seem extremely successful at removing a sense of individual experience of time.

If, as Riceour claims, 'narrativity and temporality are closely related' (1980, p. 165), what should we make of the reluctance of these narratives to acknowledge temporality? Why should accounts of a practice in which the accounting for time (use of timesheets) and taking time into account (campaign design) are fundamental, be so consistent in editing out these features? Here a clue can be found in Riceour's observation that

...every narrative combines two dimensions in various proportions, one chronological and the other nonchronological.

The first may be called the episodic dimension, which characterizes the story as made out of events. The second is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. (Riceour, 1980, p. 174)

In its chronological dimension, a narrative can be compared to the act of threading beads (events) on a string (time). In its nonchronological dimension, a narrative is more like a puzzle, a pattern rather than a sequence — a 'thought', says Riceour (p. 175) — that will emerge when all the individual pieces have been laid down in place. The two narrative dimensions represent two dimensions of temporality in human experience: within-time-ness and historicity (understood as a retrospective act of configuring a meaning out of scattered events). The function of the narrative is to link the two temporal dimensions, 'to provide a transition from within-time-ness to historicity' (p. 174).

Although the analysed case narratives seem to privilege the nonchronological dimension, they cannot entirely escape the temporality inherent in the actual individual experience. One could argue, following Riceour, that the clash of the two dimensions in these narratives offers a transition. Time, however, is not the essence here; it merely acts as a symbolic marker. Temporality is an attribute of individual human experience; its opposite is an idealised, timeless model of action derived from the notion of professionalism. If so, the case narratives construct a bridge between an individual experience of practising and the model, timeless version of public relations professional practice; they show how one leads to the other.



## Gender

Gender is noticeable in the case narratives by its absence. The stories appear to be perfectly genderless. The main characters in these stories are either corporate bodies, or groups of people such as professional PR teams; but even when they are individuals, characteristics such as gender have been leached out of the account. This is yet another narrative transformation, which deserves consideration, especially given the well-known facts about gender discrimination in terms of pay and promotion in this heavily femininised occupation (as mentioned in Chapter 4 and pursued further in Chapter 3).

Definitions of gender explain it as a socially constructed, rather than a biological, differentiation between characteristics denoted by terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Gender is thus a set of 'norms and rules that define "appropriate" gendered practices and processes' (Barrett, 2002, p. 159). As a dimension in the study of professional groups, gender had not been present until the 1990s.

While important contributions have been made to our understanding of the character of professional practice, its historical and contemporary processes of regulations, comparatively little attention has been paid to professionalism in relation to gendered subjectivity and identity. Moreover, in the field of management and organization, notwithstanding laudable attempts to expose the 'man in management' (Collinson and Hearn, 1996), the apparent unity of men, masculinity and professionalism remains noticeably under-researched. (Kerfoot, 2002, p. 82).

Research on managers has helped to unpick that unity, showing how the traditional notion of professionalism, emphasising theoretical knowledge and technical expertise, has been overlaid with a notion of masculinity, understood as being powerful, successful, capable, reliable, and in control (Kimmel, 1994, p. 125). Thus, masculinity and professionalism both share a 'preoccupation with a form of instrumental purposive rational control' (Kerfoot, 2002, p. 84).

The overlapping of the discourses of professionalism and masculinity can be located historically in the institution of patriarchy, defined as 'a societal-wide system of gender relations of male dominance and female subordination, ...[and] the ways in which male power is institutionalized within different sites in society' (Witz, 1992, p. 11 in Macdonald, 1995, p. 124). Commenting on a rare example of an exclusionary tactic playing up female characteristics as indispensable for the work carried out by the occupational group in question, Macdonald (1995, pp. 154-155) shows how the most commonly used exclusionary tactics served men's interests:

The early efforts of nurses, led by Florence Nightingale, used a form of social closure that involved the high risk strategy of using gender as the principal basis for closure, not as one of several as men had done. This was successful, but only up to a point, because while it did facilitate the definition of the occupation that women could call their own, it also put them in a position of disadvantage by reason of the discourse of patriarchy, which axiomatically put them in position of subordination. Other groups within the occupation took a different line by emphasizing the need for qualifications and registration, the well-established strategies of professional projects, hitherto used by men.

Thus, the discourse employed by an occupation both in its everyday practice and organised efforts at group representation is an important arena in the struggle for power and status.

From this point of view, the 'genderless' appearance of these professional narratives is yet another illusion. The preceding sections have revealed an extensive rhetorical effort in the campaign stories to display rationality, control and objectivity. These features serve to inscribe masculinity into professional behaviour; they are an attempt at gendering the expert practice: an exercise not in excluding all gender references, but only the feminine ones. It could, therefore, be argued that what this body of professional accounts achieves is to position a masculine version of PR professionalism as the only possible professional behaviour. 'The masculine text stands for the universal text' (Lanser, 1997, p. 676), to echo the feminist charge laid against narratology.

This analysis has so far followed a strategy of applying tools originally developed to deal with narratives in the form of written texts to the material presented in such a format. It may be instructive at this point to imagine that these accounts were short documentary films, not written texts. After all, they seem to fit Nichols's definition well:

Documentaries take shape around an informing logic. The economy of this logic requires a representation, case, or argument about the historical world. The economy is basically instrumental or pragmatic: it operates in terms of problem-solving. A paradigmatic structure of the documentary would involve the establishment of an issue or problem, the presentation of the background to the problem, followed by an examination of its current extent or complexity... This would lead to a concluding section where a solution or path to a solution is introduced. (1991, p. 18)

We have seen a similar problem-solving logic and a broadly similar model, starting with a problem and concluding with a solution, used in the case studies. In a more general sense, if the purpose of the documentary is to offer a picture of the world, or present a proposition about the world, it is quite clear in my analysis that the case studies, particularly as a genre, do precisely that. It is from what is stated or read between the lines that practitioners develop 'picture of the world' and 'truths', two of the elements of professional expertise which I have described in Chapter 6.

More striking similarities can be found in comparisons of the case studies with the expository mode of documentary, which is close to 'the classic expository essay or report' (Nichols, 1991, pp. 34). Let us look at some of its characteristic features. The argument and persuasive needs dominate the structure of the text: indeed, the case study structure is dominated by the model of professional action, rather than temporal continuity as we have seen above ('Time'). 'The expository mode emphasises the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgement. (p. 35) The various techniques constructing the impression of objectivity in the case studies have been examined in the section of the analysis devoted to 'facticity'. Knowledge displayed in expository documentary, as in case studies, is of the 'epistemic kind' (p. 35), that is fitting the commonly accepted categories or regarded as common sensical. My analysis of the campaign objectives and evaluation methods has shown the importance of such categories used in explaining behaviour, as well as pragmatically driven judgements being seen as satisfactory for explaining the effectiveness of the work.

Finally, the texture of the case narratives discussed under 'Facticity' may be easier to understand if one thinks about it in visual, documentary-style terms. 'Expository texts take shape around commentary directed towards the viewer; images serve as illustration or counterpoint.' (p. 34) It is certainly easy to imagine the various bullet point lists as a fast-paced montage of illustration showing appropriate action/ work being carried out. The instances of action or explanation which work in a more timeless fashion could be imagined as the voice-over commentary.

## Conclusion

This chapter has taken a set of fifty stories, retrospective accounts of public relations work, and analysed them using concepts from the toolkit of narratology. The aim was to investigate the way in which a particular type of institutional effort has contributed to the process of creating PR professional expertise. The rules of the competition gave the basic shape to these stories: each of them presenting an account of a campaign or a programme of expert work, written to fit the expected format. The judging process, on the other hand, could be seen as rewarding the most successful accounts. Together, they have created an exemplar: this is what best professional practice is like, and this is also how you think and talk about it. The model was learned, performed and refined through the annual cycle of the competition. Ostensibly, the stories and the competition are about best practice; a closer analysis, however, shows that the narratives are about producing an account of the practice which suits the group's professional ambitions.

A number of narrative features have been identified and linked to the dynamics of claiming and maintaining a professional jurisdiction. The structure of the stories is seen as an attempt to narrativise professional work in public relations, that is to endow it with logic and closure. The narrative structure reflects the model of professional work through which professions define and claim problems for inclusion into their jurisdictions. It is, therefore, an important public statement for the benefit of the occupational group as well as outsiders, demonstrating that public relations work is professional work.

The analysis has identified other narrative and rhetorical tactics aimed at representing public relations expertise and practice in ways that fit the professional image. The practice needs to be legitimate, and its practitioners need to be trustworthy. As we have seen, the question of legitimacy is articulated partly by how the characters are constructed and the roles they play: the PR expert is revealed as technically proficient and morally attuned. The model of work, which is familiar and transparent, is another way of demonstrating grounds for public trust. The same objective is achieved by the artifice of facticity, i.e. showing the work as almost independent of human matters, judgements and agency.

This is one of a number of seeming paradoxes hidden in these narratives. It has been argued that the apparently puzzling tactical choices made in these representations of professional practice, such as the virtual obliteration of the expert as an actor and individual human being, serve an important purpose. Such choices mean these narratives can be seen as being directed at only one of their possible audiences — the practitioners — and showing them how to make sense of the immediate experience of work within a more abstract, and ordered professional framework.

This discussion has focused on only one out of a number of genres of case study widely used by public relations practitioners and educators — a competition case study. This kind of case presentation follows the 'RACE/ROPE formula' in which 'the story of the campaign moves calmly from research to objectives, planning, execution, and evaluation' (Pauly & Hutchison, 2001, p. 385). The genre is favoured in various competitions, such as the source of case narratives analysed here, the Sword of Excellence Awards, or its American equivalent, the Silver Anvil Awards run by the Public Relations Society of America. The narrative achievement of the genre is the representation of practitioners' work as 'well planned, task oriented, efficient, and systematic [...] even when the campaign itself stumbled in a panic from one deadline to another' (ibid.) The authors compare this narrative convention to the journalistic inverted pyramid convention, commonly accepted in that occupation as producing a 'straightforwardly factual account of reality' (ibid). This analysis has revealed both the artifice of this narrative convention and the purpose it serves.

## Notes

<sup>11</sup> I use here Ricoeur's interpretation of Heidegger's ideas, rather than refer to the original source, as it seems to have functioned as the key text on time in the field of narratology.

## CONCLUSIONS

The most important contribution this thesis has made is to offer a more rounded view of contemporary public relations in Britain, both at the empirical and theoretical level. As I argue in Chapter 1, the study of public relations has been dominated by two broad approaches: a liberal pluralist view which tends to view professional communication practices as unproblematic since the approach is insensitive to the question of power in society; and the critical view which assumes structural inequalities and sees public relations as a tool of domination. Although each of these approaches can make a useful contribution to the study of public relations, it was suggested that the sharp polarisation of research between the two has been unhelpful. Consequently, one of the aims of this study was to explore alternative ways of theorizing and researching public relations.

The approach taken in this thesis relies on key concepts and insights drawn from three sources: the sociology of the professions; Bourdieu's theory of cultural practice; and debates about the cultural/creative industries and professions. The analysis takes as its focus public relations work and the expert knowledge that underpins it and proceeds by bringing concepts of 'jurisdiction' and 'practice' to illuminate the empirical data gathered. The first, understood as a territory of tasks claimed by the profession together with the ways in which the claim is laid, views work and knowledge with reference to constant competition between occupational groups powered by social and technological changes. This approach takes the profession, not the professional, as its unit of analysis and emphasizes explanations based on the rational and strategic nature of action. Inevitably, a gap is opened up between the explanations constructed and the experience of work conducted as routine practice by an individual member of the professional group. It is at this point that insights from Bourdieu's theory of practice are introduced in order to return the individual practitioner to the centre of attention and question the often taken-for-granted view of professional knowledge as unproblematic both in its nature and the way in which it is related to routine practice. An analogy is proposed whereby public relations practice is treated as cultural rather than professional practice, offering a more satisfactory explanation of the economic and, to an extent, aspirational success of this professional group in view of the weakness of its abstract body of knowledge, and the relatively weak institutionalisation of education and professional training. If the first two theoretical frameworks help to analyse the profession of public relations per se, discussing public relations in the context of other cultural/creative industries and professions shifts the interest towards the macro level of social change associated with the rise and increasing importance attached to these industries. What such a pragmatic approach can achieve will be illustrated below in a discussion of the outcomes of the study.

There are three main conclusions to be drawn from this study. Firstly, public relations practice is poorly understood if it is considered in isolation from similar types of occupational practices. Secondly, a clear distinction needs to be articulated and maintained in analyses of public relations between: the industry; the profession; and finally the extent of public relations practice, in other words whether its practitioners see themselves primarily as public relations professionals or, for example, as activists. Thirdly, an examination of the relationship between the content and context of public relations work is a useful starting point for analyses of the reasons for and impacts of this communications practice.

Let us start with the first conclusion based most directly on the analysis of the public relations consultancy offered in Chapter 3 and the discussion of the concept of 'profession' offered in Chapter 4. It is proposed that public relations should be considered in relation to both its close jurisdictional neighbours, such as marketing or advertising, and occupations not in direct competition with it, specifically management consultancy, due to a number of similarities between the two, such as: the nature of expertise relied upon in practice, public image, and the structure and dynamics of the industry. The analysis of the public relations industry, interpreted in the context of communication services and traditional consultancy industries, broadly supports conclusions offered by others, notably Miller & Dinan (2000), as to the importance of globalisation for the development of the practice. This study has demonstrated how globalisation and consolidation of ownership in the PR consultancy industry indicates its increasing similarity to other business and promotional consultancy services, somewhat against the implied view present in much public relations literature, which is focused on claims about professionalisation and, consequently, differentiation from other practices. At the same time, a more nuanced explanation is offered by pointing out a specific reason why public relations consultancy changed in the way described: globalisation thus is seen as the background, while the specific cause for consolidation of the consultancy industry, previously overlooked, is located in the changes affecting the advertising industry. Another misconception this study has helped to correct is the exaggerated emphasis put on the global consultancy companies. As shown in Chapter 3, these companies may dominate the UK market, but such a view downplays the internal dynamics of the consultancy industry characterised by constant start-up and merger activity and the consequent flow of expertise, and possibly clients, between the big and the small consultancies. As I argue in Chapter 3, the lack of comprehensive and reliable data on the public relations industry has been a constant limitation even if not recognised as clearly as it should have been in previous research.

The second point to make here refers to the use of terminology and, consequently, theoretical framing of the practices discussed above. A relevant discussion of the problems involved in defining the creative and cultural industries has been offered in Chapter 1 and it is in this context that I draw attention to a related term, and set of ideas, namely, 'promotion' and 'promotional industries'. The work of sociologists and cultural theorists attempting to explain the nature of change in post-industrial societies has highlighted the importance of promotion, understood as 'an independently acting force in the social construction of commodities' (Wernick, 1991, p. 18). What is more, promotion which has originated in 'the money economy' has subsequently developed in other spheres of life, such

as 'electoral politics', eventually creating one 'grand, discursive space' (Wernick, 1991, p. 147). To put it simply, the same practices of imaging and circulation now apply to soap, politicians, and public health. As I have shown in my analysis of public relations' placement on the boundary between the material and symbolic domains (see Chapter 6, Figure 28), public relations fits Wernick's definition of promotion just as comfortably as advertising, his main focus of enquiry. It may, therefore, be helpful to regroup a number of professions which have either been seen as key cultural/creative professions, such as advertising, or mentioned in passing as related to them, such as public relations, and bring them into focus collectively as promotional professions. These professions share a preoccupation with imaging and circulating 'goods', understood here to encompass consumer and cultural goods, as well as 'abstract' goods, that is knowledge strategically parcelled and packaged for consumption.

Although theoretically compelling, such a change goes against the grain of both the practices inspired by the competitive needs of the various occupational groups and the academic division of labour up till now. The various occupational groups have fought hard to establish their distinct occupational identities: they differentiate themselves by their occupational associations; dedicated university courses; and, to an extent, by their ways of working and professional jargon. In academia, the study of the new intermediary occupations as defined by Bourdieu is split into often disconnected and discrete disciplines across arts, humanities, and social and health sciences. Even if one looks more narrowly at the promotional professions, i.e. those dealing with imaging and the circulating of the commodified goods (advertising, public relations, marketing, market and public opinion research, and journalism), their academic homes, and therefore likely originators of studies of the appropriate practices, can be spread across business, communication, and politics.

If finding a good theoretical handle on promotional professions and industries may have been difficult, on the ground the solution has already taken shape as a Global Network Communication Agency (see Chapter 3). These companies can be seen as giving an institutional form to the 'promotional complex'. Wernick used the phrase with reference to a set of intricate 'ties between advertising, commercial media and mass entertainment' (1991, p. 95); here I use it to refer to ties between practices such as marketing, advertising, public relations, branding, promotion, market and public opinion research, media buying and research, as well as other media services such as programming—in short, the kind of businesses owned by GNCA's. The term 'promotional profession', and by extension, promotional industries, allows us to bring together creative professions (based on exploitation of intellectual property) and professional services, such as marketing, whose work is based on exploitation of knowledge which is either publicly available (textbooks) or local, organisation-specific rather than protected by patent or copyright. Finally, it may also be helpful to view the range of specialist companies owned by a GNCA as indicative of the division of labour in the area of promotion.

This brings us to the second conclusion, namely the need to clarify distinctions between 'industry', 'profession' and 'practice'. If we follow the official ONS definition and data gathering practices, as explained in Chapter 3, we end up with a picture of the industry which is made up of bigger companies only and which ignores the economic value

of the public relations work created by jobbing practitioners. This approach also excludes public relations work conducted in-house. Important as it has been in this study for understanding public relations expertise, 'public relations industry' is ultimately a somewhat limited approach in which a degree of descriptive precision is offset by its narrow focus. Taking employment as a measure of public relations gives a reasonable approximation of the size of the occupational group, or the profession, and is therefore wider in scope. However, such professional identification relies on a labelling system, i.e. an occupational classification as discussed in Chapter 3, and raises questions about the extent to which such descriptions overlap with commercial and non-commercial activities based on the exploitation of public relations expertise. Put simply, is public relations what only public relations people do? Given the nature of public relations expertise, there is more than one route to its acquisition (see Chapter 2). As Jackall and Hirota (2000) argue, public relations is only one among a number of occupational groups based on expertise to interpret, i.e. to frame, lay, defend and negotiate public claims. Thus it follows that at times some, if not all, elements of this promotional know-how can be utilised by people whose occupational identification may lie outside public relations and whose motivation may not be aligned with any professional ideology whatsoever. Consequently, 'practice', is the broadest of the three terms, as it focuses on the work conducted, irrespective of who does it. Although one may legitimately assume a relationship between the phenomena covered by the three terms, as tends to happen in discussions about the growth of public relations, such a stance obscures many important questions about the nature of the expertise used, about its acquisition and exploitation, and finally about the division of labour and professional identity construction in the area of promotional work.

It is these questions that have been tackled through the analysis of professional training and the model of public relations expertise offered in Chapters 6 and 7. There are two points to re-iterate here. First, as shown in Chapter 6, public relations expertise is exclusive to this professional group only to a limited extent: much of it draws on concepts and approaches used by others while what is 'owned' by the group tends to be schemes for action and professional response worked out as tools and the taken-for-granted knowledge described by one of the informants as 'truths which we take to be self-evident'. Second, the model and its relationship to the circumstances of commercial practice over a long period of time, captured by Bourdieu's concept of habitus, offer a way to account for public relations practice in a way different to that favoured in much of the critical work and exemplified by Jackall & Hirota's description of professional tools as habits of mind, such as stigma removal or doublethink. Although the authors attend to the organisational factors relevant to the shape of the occupational practice, their description of tools seems to be derived from an analysis of the texts constructed by practitioners. One could argue that such analysis works backwards and reconstructs the means of professional work from its outcomes. As a result, a gap is created between a critical approach to the practice and the practitioners' own sense of what they do: practitioners do not sell doublethink to their clients, they package and present their expertise in very different ways.

Let us conclude this discussion by pointing out two main problems created by such divergent accounts of public relations. The first is their effect on the occupational group: the severity of the criticism of PR emanating from such explanations as well as the way in which they transform what practitioners recognise as familiar practice serves



to confirm the long-standing suspicion of academics and thus discourages the occupation from critical self-reflection. The second problem, more important in the context of this thesis, is the extent to which the practice is demonised by its academic critiques. Public relations, and more broadly promotion, appears as the Machiavellian combination of supreme technical ability and the underlying axiological atrophy. Such a stance, while raising important questions about the impact of professionalised promotional communication, ultimately appears too deterministic in its view of modern society as a runaway train of globalisation and greed, its wheels greased by the permanent professional deficiency 'of good faith', to return to Wernick's explanation. If such explanations are to hold with respect to professions and their practices, they must be confirmed by sociological analysis of expert work over long periods of time.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 2: Top 10 advertising agencies based on 1997 or 1998 figures**

| Agency                      | Year end | Gross income (£) |
|-----------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Young & Rubicam             | 31/12/97 | 56,370,000       |
| The Ogilvy Group (Holdings) | 31/12/97 | 54,989,000       |
| Saatchi & Saatchi Group     | 31/12/97 | 54,394,000       |
| J.Walter Thomson Group      | 31/12/98 | 42,407,000       |
| BMP DDB                     | 31/12/98 | 40,619,000       |
| McCann-Ericson Advertising  | 31/12/98 | 39,303,000       |
| D'Arcy                      | 31/12/97 | 35,639,000       |
| Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO    | 31/12/97 | 31,709,000       |
| Bartle Bogle Hegarty        | 31/12/98 | 31,133,000       |
| Bates Dorland               | 31/12/97 | 26,024,000       |

Table 2: Top 10 advertising agencies based on 1997 or 1998, last available full year figures (see Campaign, 16 October 1998).  
Gross income means revenue earned after the deducting external costs, such as media.

**Table 3: Top 10 UK management consultancies. 1999 Fee income**

| Consultancy                      | Total fee income (£m) | IT-based fee income (£m) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Andersen Consulting <sup>1</sup> | 609                   | 468e                     |
| Price WaterhouseCoopers          | 540                   | 261                      |
| KPMG 282 70 Cap Gemini           | 276e                  | 31                       |
| FI Group/DSI                     | 238e                  | 172                      |
| ICL Group                        | 212e                  | 164e                     |
| PA Consulting Group              | 176                   | 61                       |
| Ernst & Young                    | 174e                  | 14e                      |
| Deloitte Consulting              | 162                   | 85                       |
| McKinsey & Co                    | 135e                  | nd                       |
| Total                            | 1,769                 | 680                      |

Table 3: Top ten UK management consultancies: 1999 fee income and IT share.  
<sup>1</sup> As of January 2001 renamed Accenture; e = estimated; nd = non data. Source: Wood, 2002, p. 55.

Table 4: Top 150 PR consultancies. Fee income

|                 | 1995        | 1996        | 1997        | 1998        | 1999        |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ranking 1-30    | 185,821,821 | 216,156,591 | 232,808,852 | 291,986,917 | 329,052,890 |
| Ranking 31-60   | 47,939,388  | 57,048,151  | 64,903,834  | 71,426,653  | 85,400,304  |
| Ranking 61-90   | 27,058,762  | 32,368,726  | 34,957,787  | 36,578,186  | 40,937,111  |
| Ranking 91-120  | 18,094,481  | 20,318,799  | 20,682,437  | 22,255,561  | 24,611,788  |
| Ranking 121-150 | 12,676,701  | 14,519,946  | 12,729,331  | 15,382,180  | 16,323,713  |
| Total           | 291,591,159 | 340,412,213 | 366,082,241 | 437,629,497 | 496,325,806 |

Table 4: Top 150 PR consultancies. Fee income (£) Source: PR Week

Figure 3: Top 150 consultancies. Staff numbers

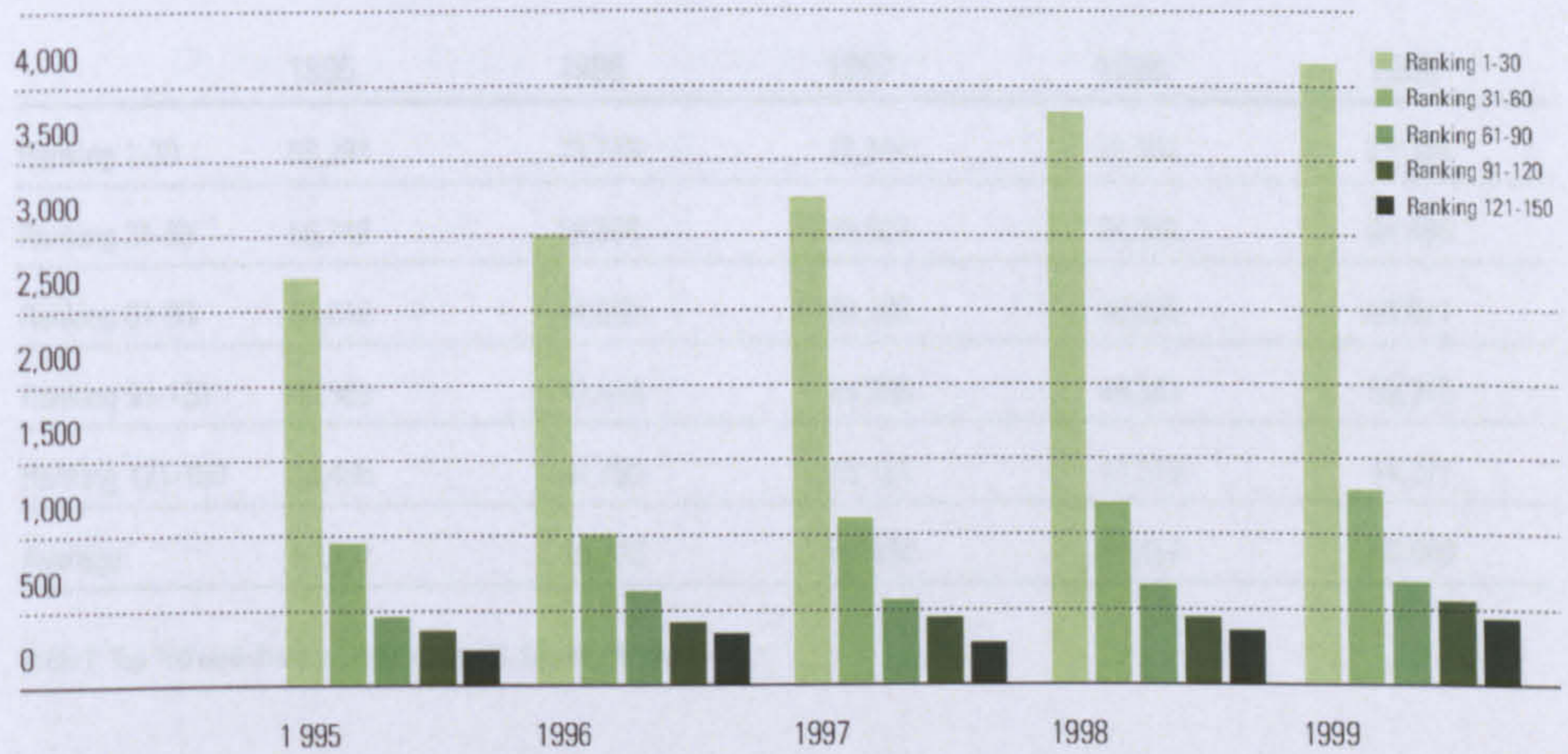


Figure 3: Top 150 consultancies. Staff numbers. Source: PR Week

Figure 4: Top 150 consultancies. Client numbers.

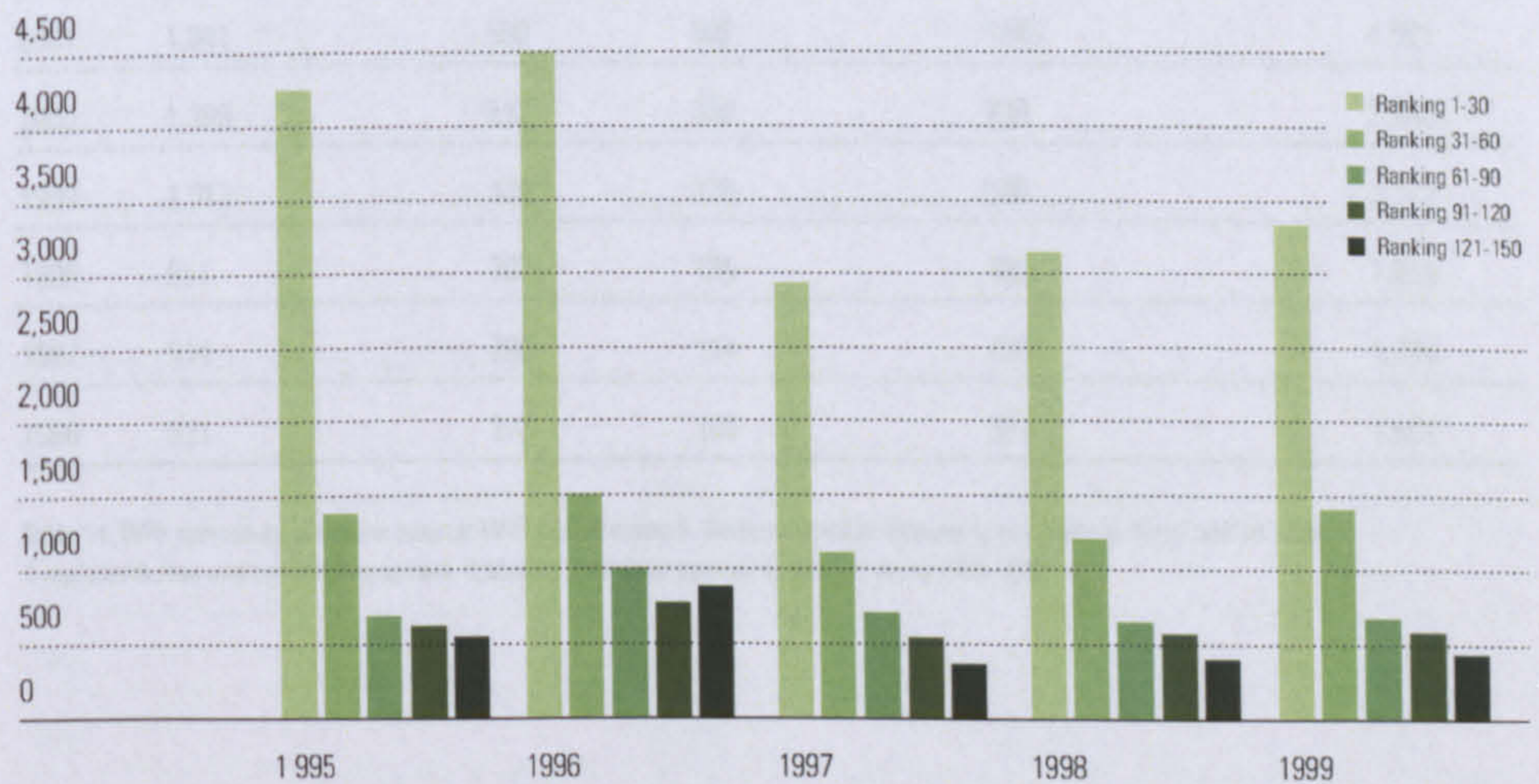


Figure 4: Top 150 consultancies. Client numbers. Source: PR Week

**Table 6: Top 150 consultancies. Staff numbers**

|                 | 1995  | %   | 1996  | %   | 1997  | %   | 1998  | %   | 1999  | %   |
|-----------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| Ranking 1-30    | 2,781 | 57  | 3,001 | 55  | 3,261 | 56  | 3,945 | 59  | 4,203 | 59  |
| Ranking 31-60   | 882   | 18  | 1,011 | 19  | 1,136 | 20  | 1,179 | 18  | 1,309 | 18  |
| Ranking 61-90   | 511   | 10  | 624   | 11  | 567   | 10  | 662   | 10  | 711   | 10  |
| Ranking 91-120  | 417   | 9   | 450   | 8   | 500   | 9   | 493   | 7   | 528   | 7   |
| Ranking 121-150 | 310   | 6   | 360   | 7   | 316   | 5   | 367   | 6   | 396   | 6   |
| Total           | 4,901 | 100 | 5,446 | 100 | 5,780 | 100 | 6,646 | 100 | 7,147 | 100 |

Table 6: Top 150 consultancies. Staff numbers. Source: PR Week

**Table 7: Top 150 consultancies. Productivity (£)**

|                 | 1995   | 1996   | 1997   | 1998   | 1999   |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Ranking 1-30    | 68,293 | 73,778 | 72,344 | 73,167 | 77,384 |
| Ranking 31-60   | 56,748 | 59,588 | 59,583 | 64,382 | 68,465 |
| Ranking 61-90   | 54,648 | 54,695 | 64,163 | 56,838 | 68,871 |
| Ranking 91-120  | 45,568 | 47,419 | 44,208 | 48,381 | 59,912 |
| Ranking 121-150 | 43,496 | 41,790 | 43,131 | 44,519 | 44,277 |
| Average         | 53,751 | 55,393 | 56,686 | 57,457 | 59,959 |

Table 7: Top 150 consultancies. Productivity (£). Source: PR Week

**Table 14: WPP revenue by discipline**

| Year | Advertising & media investment management (£m) | Information & consultancy (£m) | Public relations & public affairs (£m) | Branding & identity, healthcare and specialist communications (£m) | Total (£m) |
|------|--|--------------------------------|--|--|------------|
| 2001 | 1,841  | 590                            | 502                                    | 1,067  | 4,021      |
| 2000 | 1,399  | 512                            | 330                                    | 739  | 2,980      |
| 1999 | 1,013  | 419                            | 178                                    | 560  | 2,172      |
| 1998 | 951  | 367                            | 135                                    | 465  | 1,918      |
| 1997 | 914  | 298                            | 114                                    | 420  | 1,746      |
| 1996 | 921  | 273                            | 106                                    | 391  | 1,691      |

Table 14: WPP revenue by discipline (source: WPP annual reports). Revenue denotes turnover (gross billings) minus cost of sales. It represents fees and commissions earned. \*Labelled "specialist communication" in years 1996-1998.

Table 17: Omnicom's revenue by geographic region

| Year | US (\$000) | UK (\$000) | Euro denominated (\$000)* | Other International (\$000) | Total (\$000) |
|------|------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 2001 | 3,717,011  | 805,188    | 1,413,795                 | 953,412                     | 6,889,406     |
| 2000 | 3,258,193  | 819,081    | 1,407,238                 | 669,718                     | 6,154,230     |
| 1999 | 2,532,917  | 720,047    | 1,345,548                 | 532,033                     | 5,130,545     |
| 1998 | 2,098,220  | 659,658    | 1,134,053                 | 399,015                     | 4,290,946     |
| 1997 | 1,616,768  | 330,327    | 831,242                   | 346,676                     | 3,124,813     |
| 1996 | 1,384,424  | 277,208    | 729,544                   | 250,491                     | 2,641,667     |

Table 17: Omnicom's revenue by geographical region (source Omnicom annual reports)

Table 18: WPP revenue by region

|      | UK (£m) | US (£m) | International (£m) | Continental Europe (£m) | Total (£m) |
|------|---------|---------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 2001 | 627     | 1,763   | 760                | 870                     | 4,021      |
| 2000 | 532     | 1,273   | 588                | 586                     | 2,980      |
| 1999 | 434     | 915     | 396                | 426                     | 2,172      |
| 1998 | 393     | 764     | 364                | 396                     | 1,918      |
| 1997 | 334     | 700     | 375                | 336                     | 1,746      |
| 1996 | 317     | 667     | 354                | 352                     | 1,691      |

Table 18. WPP Revenue (£) by region.(Revenue=Turnover minus cost of sales.)

Table 20: Average salaries in PR

|             | 1996 (£) | 1997 (£) | 1998 (£) | 1999 (£) | 2000 (£) | 2001 (£) |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Freelance   | 41,340   | 37,880   | 26,250   | 33,100   | 34,500   | *33,000  |
| In-house    | 30,643   | 30,589   | 34,078   | 33,638   | 29,965   | 32,367   |
| Consultancy | 31,768   | 32,698   | 34,622   | 37,939   | 40,762   | 37,660   |

Table 20: Average salaries in PR.Source: PR Week salary surveys.\*Source: Fawkes, Fielding & Tench (2001).

Table 21: Average in-house salaries (£)

|      | Head of Communications | PR Director | PR Manager | PR Officer |
|------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1995 |                        | 44,500      | 28,000     | 19,430     |
| 1996 |                        | 43,620      | 28,324     | 19,823     |
| 1997 |                        | 50,678      | 30,716     | 20,841     |
| 1998 |                        | 50,201      | 30,067     | 20,645     |
| 1999 | 41,595                 | 39,310      | 29,670     | 20,915     |

Table 21 Average in-house salaries (£).

Table 22: Average consultancy salaries (£)

|      | Chairman/<br>Managing Director | Board<br>Director | Account<br>Director | Account<br>Manager | Account<br>Executive |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1995 | 45,524                         | 45,753            | 30,371              | 21,030             | 16,162               |
| 1996 | 47,280                         | 45,654            | 30,472              | 23,039             | 17,043               |
| 1997 | 54,668                         | 46,412            | 32,005              | 23,458             | 16,566               |
| 1998 | 64,613                         | 48,980            | 34,747              | 24,396             | 16,959               |
| 1999 | 61,463                         | 47,804            | 33,842              | -                  | 19,939               |

Table 22: Average consultancy salaries (£).

Figure 9: Salaries in PR. IPR membership survey

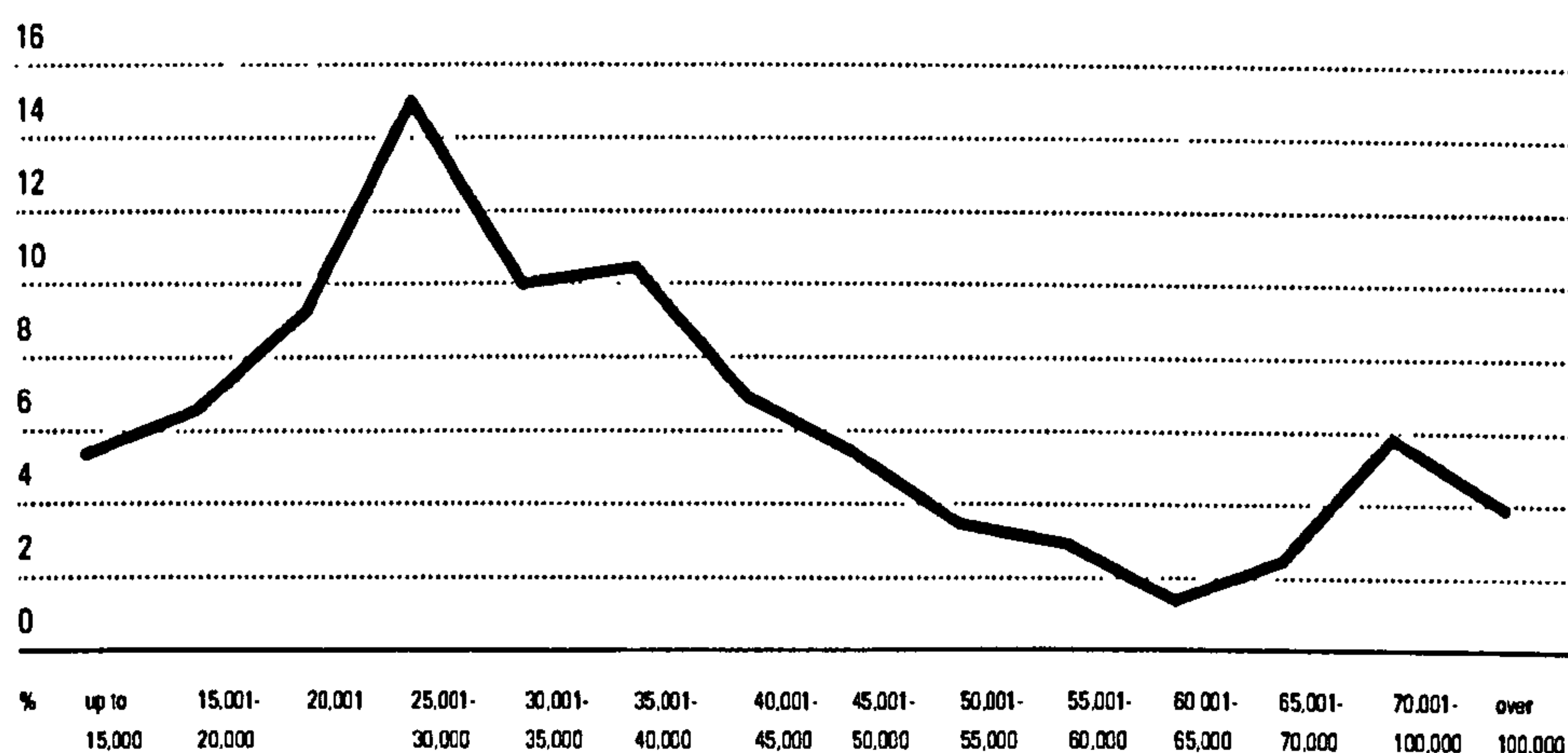


Table 9: Salaries in PR. IPR membership survey

Table 23: In-house benefits. % Receiving health plans

|      | Head of Communications | PR Director | PR Manager | PR Officer |
|------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1995 | -                      | 61          | 47         | 28         |
| 1996 | -                      | 60          | 41         | 21         |
| 1997 | -                      | 64          | 45         | 30         |
| 1998 | -                      | 58          | 42         | 22         |
| 1999 | 36                     | 33          | 42         | 18         |

Table 23: In-house benefits. % Receiving health plans. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.



**Table 24: Consultancy benefits. % Receiving health plans**

|      | Chairman/<br>Managing Director | Board<br>Director | Account<br>Director | Account<br>Manager | Account<br>Executive |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1995 | 51                             | 61                | 58                  | 50                 | 36                   |
| 1996 | 51                             | 63                | 57                  | 48                 | 36                   |
| 1997 | 56                             | 67                | 50                  | 43                 | 23                   |
| 1998 | 58                             | 62                | 39                  | 38                 | 24                   |
| 1999 | 43                             | 59                | 38                  | -                  | 26                   |

Table 24: Consultancy benefits. % Receiving health plans. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

**Table 25: In-house benefits. % Receiving company car**

|      | Head of Communications | PR Director | PR Manager | PR Officer |
|------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1995 |                        | 62          | 43         | 13         |
| 1996 | -                      | 51          | 41         | 12         |
| 1997 | -                      | 56          | 44         | 12         |
| 1998 | -                      | 54          | 36         | 10         |
| 1999 | 37                     | 33          | 30         | 14         |

Table 25: In-house benefits. % Receiving company car. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

**Table 26: Consultancy benefits. % Receiving company car**

|      | Chairman/<br>Managing Director | Board<br>Director | Account<br>Director | Account<br>Manager | Account<br>Executive |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1995 | 70                             | 69                | 41                  | 35                 | 14                   |
| 1996 | 69                             | 62                | 42                  | 27                 | 8                    |
| 1997 | 63                             | 61                | 12                  | 28                 | 7                    |
| 1998 | 70                             | 54                | 4                   | 19                 | 11                   |
| 1999 | 43                             | 45                | 5                   | -                  | 13                   |

Table 26: Consultancy benefits. % Receiving company car. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

**Table 27: In-house benefits. Holidays (weeks)**

|      | Head of Communications | PR Director | PR Manager | PR Officer |
|------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1996 |                        | 5           | 5          | 4.5        |
| 1997 | -                      | 5           | 5          | 5          |
| 1998 | -                      | 5           | 5          | 5          |
| 1999 | -                      | 7           | 7          | 6          |
| 2000 | 7                      | 7           | 7          | 7          |

Table 27: In-house benefits. Holidays (weeks). Source: PR Week's salary surveys

**Table 28: Consultancy benefits. Holidays (weeks)**

|      | Chairman/<br>Managing Director | Board<br>Director | Account<br>Director | Account<br>Manager | Account<br>Executive |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1996 | 4.5                            | 4.5               | 4                   | 4                  | 4                    |
| 1997 | 4                              | 5                 | 4                   | 4                  | 4                    |
| 1998 | 4                              | 5                 | 4                   | 4                  | 4                    |
| 1999 | 6                              | 7                 | 6                   | 6                  | 6                    |
| 2000 | 6                              | 7                 | 7                   | -                  | 6                    |

Table 28: Consultancy benefits. Holidays (weeks) Source: PR Week's salary survey.

**Table 30: Job titles and average age in-house**

|      | Head of Communications | PR Director | PR Manager | PR Officer |
|------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1995 |                        | 44          | 37         | 33         |
| 1996 |                        | 43          | 37         | 32         |
| 1997 |                        | 48          | 37         | 31         |
| 1998 |                        | 48.9        | 37         | 32         |
| 1999 | 41                     | 33          | 36         | 33         |

Table 30: Job titles and average age in-house. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

**Table 31: Job titles and average age in consultancy**

|      | Chairman/<br>Managing Director | Board<br>Director | Account<br>Director | Account<br>Manager | Account<br>Executive |
|------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1995 | 45                             | 39                | 34                  | 29                 | 25                   |
| 1996 | 45                             | 39                | 33                  | 29                 | 26                   |
| 1997 | 44                             | 38                | 34                  | 29                 | 25                   |
| 1998 | 44                             | 38                | 34                  | 29                 | 25                   |
| 1999 | 43                             | 35                | 33                  | -                  | 26                   |

Table 31: Job titles and average age in consultancy. Source: PR Week's salary surveys.

**Table 32: List of the Sword of Excellence Awards cases**

| No | Year | Title                            | Author                             | Source   |
|----|------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1  | 84   | The Centenary of STC             | Standard Telephones and Cables plc | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1984, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1984, pp. 3-4.   |
| 2  | 84   | ICI Dulux Paint Community Awards | Welbeck Public Relations           | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1984, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1984, pp. 14-15. |
| 3  | 84   | BET Financial Relations          | British Electric Traction Co plc   | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1984, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1984, pp. 19-21. |

| No | Year | Title  | Author                             | Source   |
|----|------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| 4  | 84   | Switch-on Ceremony to Blackpool Illuminations              | Wilson Brewery                     | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1984, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1984, pp. 27                   |
| 5  | 84   | Make Room for the Mushrooms                                | Roger Haywood Associates           | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1984, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1984, pp. 38-39.               |
| 6  | 85   | The Biggest Flotation in History                           | British Telecom                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1985, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1985, pp. 4-5.                 |
| 7  | 85   | The Buidling Design-Styrofoam Raft Race                    | Burson-Marsteller Ltd              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1985, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1985, p. 10.                   |
| 8  | 85   | Help Put Back the Pieces                                   | Strythclyde Regional Council       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1985, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1985, p. 14.                   |
| 9  | 85   | The Mike Spring Solo Atlantic Fund for Pain relief 1983/84 | 3M United Kingdom plc              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1985, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1985, pp. 17-18.               |
| 10 | 85   | British Telecom Flotation                                  | Dewe Rogerson Ltd                  | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1985, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1985, pp. 23-24.               |
| 11 | 86   | The Livewire UK Scheme                                     | PR Consultants Scotland            | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1986, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1986, pp.v-vi .                |
| 12 | 86   | The ICL's Retail Campaign                                  | Paragon Communications             | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1986, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1986, pp. vii-viii.            |
| 13 | 86   | New Smoking Cessation Aid                                  | Network Communications New Zealand | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1986, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1986, pp. ix.                  |
| 14 | 86   | Hospitals Can Damage Your Health                           | British Pest Control Association   | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1986, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1986, pp. x-xi .               |
| 15 | 86   | The Countryside Access Charter                             | Charles Barker Lyons               | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1986, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1986, pp. xii-xiii .           |
| 16 | 87   | From Two Exhibitors to 115                                 | Paragon Communications             | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 6-8.   |
| 17 | 87   | How 5 Million people Said 'Yes'                            | TSB Group plc                      | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 10-12. |
| 18 | 87   | Death of the Man from the Pru                              | Prudential Corporation plc         | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 13-14. |
| 19 | 87   | Around the World   | Paragon Communications             | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 15-16. |
| 20 | 87   | Face the Facts: Freeze the Tax                             | Daniel J Edelman Ltd               | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 17-19. |
| 21 | 87   | Introducing Voda   | Racal                              | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 20-23. |

| No | Year | Title   | Author                               | Source   |
|----|------|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| 22 | 87   | Chemicals Are Good For You  | Chemical Industries Association      | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 25-26. |
| 23 | 87   | A Short Break with Dracula  | Quality International Hotels         | Public Relations: the Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.6, no 1. Autumn 1987, pp. 28-30. |
| 24 | 88   | Seeing ICL as First Choice  | Paragon Communications               | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp. 2-3 .               |
| 25 | 88   | The Rolls-Royce Flotation   | McEvoy Wreford Bayley                | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp. 8-9.                |
| 26 | 88   | Caring for Conservation   | Anglian Water                        | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp. 12-13.              |
| 27 | 88   | Go to Jail,<br>Give Directly to Charity                           | Mason Williams<br>(Manchester) Ltd   | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp. 16-17.              |
| 28 | 88   | The Care in Winter Appeal   | North Eastern<br>Electricity Board   | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp.19-20.               |
| 29 | 88   | Ski the World   | Marian Edge, AMIPR                   | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.7, no 2. October 1988, pp. 23-25 .             |
| 30 | 90   | Learn and Live: Parents' Campaign<br>for Safe Driving Tuition     | Dewe Rogerson                        | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp.6-7.                 |
| 31 | 90   | Water Privatisation: The Marketing<br>and Communications Campaign | Dewe Rogerson                        | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp.9-10.                |
| 32 | 90   | Focus on the Customer   | ICI Paints                           | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp.11-12.               |
| 33 | 90   | Wassen International:<br>Magnesium OK                             | The Public Belations<br>Business     | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp.14-16.               |
| 34 | 90   | Commencial Union:<br>Communicating a Reorganisation               | Edelam Public Relations<br>Worldwide | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp. 17-19.              |
| 35 | 90   | Prince's Youth Business Trust                                     | Burson-Marsteller                    | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp. 20-21.              |
| 36 | 90   | Yorkshire Day   | Brahm PR                             | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp. 22-25.              |
| 37 | 90   | Euro Disneyland Pan-European<br>nvestor Marketing and Launch      | Valin Pollen International           | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.9, no 2. October 1990, pp. 27-28.              |
| 38 | 91   | Nova a Dull Moment  | Lynx Public Relations                | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 7-9.               |
| 39 | 91   | Opportunities   | Trusthouse Forte                     | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 10-11.             |

| No | Year | Title   | Author                                | Source   |
|----|------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 40 | 91   | Customer Care Campaign                        | Iceland Frozen Foods                  | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 13-14. |
| 41 | 91   | Tobacco Tax and the Tobacco Retailer          | Edelamn PR Network                    | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 15-17. |
| 42 | 91   | Renaissance of the Royle Gundog Breed         | James Darley                          | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 18-19. |
| 43 | 91   | Creativity in Concrete                        | Rex Stewart Grayling (West and Wales) | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 21-22. |
| 44 | 91   | The Art of Breguet                            | Ogilvy & Mather Public Relations      | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.10, no 2. October 1991, pp. 23-24. |
| 45 | 92   | Building on Strength                          | Forte                                 | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 4-5.   |
| 46 | 92   | Building on Strength                          | Forte                                 | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 7-8.   |
| 47 | 92   | New Fish on the Block                         | Paragon Communications                | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 9-11.  |
| 48 | 92   | British Midland 'A Fair Deal'                 | Charles Barker Corporate              | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 12-14. |
| 49 | 92   | The BP Discovery Programme                    | BP Exploration Europe                 | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 16-18. |
| 50 | 92   | Save the Royal Welsh Fusiliers                | Quadrant Public Relations             | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 19-21. |
| 51 | 92   | Milton Keynes: Seeing is believing            | Charles Barker Corporate              | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 22-24. |
| 52 | 92   | Public relations for Carrier Air Conditioning | Peter Sawell & Partners               | Public Relations: Journal of the Institute of Public Relations, vol.11, no 2. October 1992, pp. 25-28. |
| 53 | 93   | Making the Connection                         | British Gas North Thames              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 7-10.    |
| 54 | 93   | Turning Adversity into Advantage              | British Aerospace Defence Limited     | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 11-14.   |
| 55 | 93   | Bail Bandits                                  | Avon and Somerset Constabulary        | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 15-16    |
| 56 | 93   | The Ultimate Theme Park                       | Lynx Public Relations                 | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 17-19.   |
| 57 | 93   | The Launch of Classic FM                      | KBH Communications                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 20-23.   |

| No | Year | Title   | Author                                    | Source   |
|----|------|---|---|--|
| 58 | 93   | The Introduction of the New 10 pence Coin       | Shandwick Communications                  | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 24-25. |
| 59 | 93   | The UPS Europe Business Monitor                 | Edelman PR Worldwide                      | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 26-28. |
| 60 | 93   | View 92: A Business perspective                 | Anderson Consulting/<br>Burson-Marsteller | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 29-32. |
| 61 | 93   | The Kwik-Fit Six Years Campaign                 | Dunseath Stephen Ltd                      | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1993, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1993, pp. 33-35. |
| 62 | 94   | British Midland: Open Skies 1993                | Charles Barker                            | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 7-9.   |
| 63 | 94   | TaxAction: The war on wasted Tax                | Lansons Communications                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 10-12. |
| 64 | 94   | Spreading Marketing and Public Relations Skills | Brent Council                             | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 13-15. |
| 65 | 94   | Trident — Battle of the Dockyards               | The Rowland Company                       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 16-18. |
| 66 | 94   | Abbey National Insurance Checks                 | Cohn & Wolfe                              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 19-20. |
| 67 | 94   | Breath of Life Campaign                         | St John Ambulance                         | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 21-23. |
| 68 | 94   | DHL Everest 40 Expedition                       | Shandwick Sponsorship                     | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 24-25. |
| 69 | 94   | The Rice Campaign                               | Ogilvy Adamd & Rihehart                   | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 26-28. |
| 70 | 94   | Smirnoff International Fashion Awards 1993      | The Rowland Company                       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1994, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1994, pp. 29-31. |
| 71 | 95   | Making Someone's Day                            | The Women's Royal Voluntary Service       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1995, pp. 3-5.   |
| 72 | 95   | The Campaign for Market Rights                  | Hill & Knowlton (UK) Ltd                  | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1995, pp. 6-8.   |
| 73 | 95   | Investors in People Week                        | Northern Lights PR                        | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1995, pp. 9-11.  |
| 74 | 95   | Conventional and Organic Farming Systems        | BRAHM Public Relations                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1995, pp. 12-15. |
| 75 | 95   | Britain's Undiscovered Billions                 | Lansons Communications                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1995, pp. 16-18. |

| No | Year | Title  | Author                                      | Source   |
|----|------|--|---|--|
| 76 | 95   | ISA international:<br>Building a better Business...<br>and Having Fun Doing It | BRAHM Public Relations                      | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1995, pp. 19-22. |
| 77 | 95   | Making a Brand Out of Own Label  | Beechey Morgan<br>Associates                | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1995, pp. 23-25. |
| 78 | 95   | Thirsty World  | North West Water                            | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1995, pp. 26-28. |
| 79 | 95   | The ELPSA White Paper<br>On Computer Pornography                               | Firefly Communications                      | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1995, pp. 29-31. |
| 80 | 95   | Groundwater Protection Scheme  | Quadrant Public Relations                   | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1995,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1995, pp. 32-35. |
| 81 | 96   | Divorce: A Fair Deal for Families  | Fishburn Hedges                             | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 5-8.   |
| 82 | 96   | Public Awareness Campaign<br>—Extortionate Credit                              | Carlisle City Council                       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 9-11.  |
| 83 | 96   | New Year's Resolutions 96  | Lansons Communications<br>for IFA Promotion | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 12-15  |
| 84 | 96   | United Friendly: Rebranding<br>from the Inside Out                             | Fishburn Hedges                             | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 16-19. |
| 85 | 96   | Compaq — Bringing Cyberspace<br>Down to Earth                                  | The Red Consultancy                         | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 20-22.  |
| 86 | 96   | The KPMG Leadership Programme  | KPMG  | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 23-25. |
| 87 | 96   | The Esso Living Tree Campaign  | Scope: Communications                       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 26-28. |
| 88 | 96   | 150th Birthday of Thomas Barnardo  | Barnardo's                                  | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 29-32. |
| 89 | 96   | Guardian Insurance<br>World Transplant Games                                   | Staniforth Public Relations                 | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1996,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1996, pp. 33-36. |
| 90 | 97   | The Two-Minute Silence Campaign  | The Royal British Legion                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1997, pp. 6-9.   |
| 91 | 97   | The Deutsche Telekom IPO   | Dewe Rogesron                               | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1997, pp. 10-13. |
| 92 | 97   | The Football Fund  | Biss Lancaster Financial                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1997, pp. 14-17. |
| 93 | 97   | Think First  | Bass Brewers                                | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997,<br>The Institute of Public Relations,<br>London, 1997, pp. 18-20. |

| No  | Year | Title   | Author                          | Source   |
|-----|------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| 94  | 97   | Port Ramsgate Relief Road                                     | Westminster Advisers            | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 21-23. |
| 95  | 97   | TaxAction 96 for IFA Promotion                                | Lansons Communications          | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 24-26. |
| 96  | 97   | RAC Business Services for Fleets                              | OutRight PR/RAC                 | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 27-30. |
| 97  | 97   | Londoners of the Year Awards 1996                             | 3G Communications Ltd           | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 31-34. |
| 98  | 97   | Switch on to Wind Power Campaign                              | Harrison Cowley                 | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 35-38. |
| 99  | 97   | Feng Shui Awareness campaign 1994-1996                        | Feng Shui Network International | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 39-42. |
| 100 | 97   | Guinness Awards for Pub Theatre                               | Guinness plc                    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 43-46. |
| 101 | 97   | <a href="http://www.acorn.co.uk/">http://www.acorn.co.uk/</a> | Text 100                        | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1997, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1997, pp. 47-49  |
| 102 | 98   | Grand Metropolitan and Guinness                               | Diageo                          | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 5-8.   |
| 103 | 98   | New Deal for Life   | The NatWest News Centre         | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 9-12.  |
| 104 | 98   | A Changing Nation for NatWest Life                            | Lansons Communications          | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 13-16. |
| 105 | 98   | Tourer Marketing Bureau                                       | BRAHM Public Relations          | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 17-20. |
| 106 | 98   | The Age of Aquarius   | Shandwick                       | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 21-24. |
| 107 | 98   | Trees of Time and Place                                       | Scope Ketchum Communications    | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 25-28. |
| 108 | 98   | Nationwide 1997 Election of Directors                         | Nationwide Building Society     | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 29-32. |
| 109 | 98   | Focusing on Breast Health                                     | Breast Cancer Care              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 33-36. |
| 110 | 98   | Wrong Trousers Day  | JBP Associates Limited          | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 37-40. |
| 111 | 98   | Henman Serves up Bananas                                      | BMA Communications              | The IPR Sword of Excellence Awards 1998, The Institute of Public Relations, London, 1998, pp. 41-44. |



Figure 20: Codes for participant observation notes

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| PICTURE OF THE WORLD       | People and organisations invoked, references to trends, etc.   |
| US AND WORK                | Self-description and characterisation of 'our' work.   |
| SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE       | Acknowledgement of where specific facts or opinion come from.  |
| PUBLIC RELATIONS KNOWLEDGE | This is inspired by the Scots law concept of 'judicial knowledge', i.e. what courts accept that every reasonable person knows as true. In this case, what trainers present as true, or fact goes, as the intention is that trainees learn and accept this knowledge. |
| SKILLS                     | Hands-on things that people do which leads to a physical 'object' being created; for example, press release or annual report.  |
| ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS      | Frameworks helping practitioners to conduct their own analysis of problems.  |
| WORK FRAMEWORKS            | Frameworks ordering or linking sets of tasks and actions; single items of advice intended to give direction to practitioner's work.  |

Figure 21: Coding categories used to reorganise 'Us& work'

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| CORE 1                   | what PR works on (including tasks).   |
| CORE 2                   | manner in which the work is/should be conducted                                   |
| BOUNDARIES               | jurisdictional neighbours and relationships                                       |
| MARKET                   | market for PR services  |
| CLIENT RELATIONS         |   |
| EVALUATION               |   |
| RESEARCH                 | research not referred to as evaluation  |
| ECONOMICS                | economics of public relations business  |
| ETHICS                   |   |
| INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION | interprofessional differentiation; including by work site (in-house/consultancy). |
| ASPIRATIONS              |   |
| THREATS                  |   |

Figure 22: Categories for reorganising 'Public relations knowledge'

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| CORE                          | anything related to the company's sense of 'self', such as identity, reputation, brand, attributes |
| WORLD                         | deals with the world in general and its attributes; and others, specifically the media.            |
| COMMUNICATORS                 | descriptions and references to   |
| REALITY AND PERCEPTION        | definitions of   |
| REASON AND EMOTION            | definitions of   |
| COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES      | managing by manipulating the environment, segmentation   |
| DEFINITIONS, FACTS AND MAXIMS | the smallest unit of 'what we all know to be true'   |

Figure 23: Codes for campaign objectives

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>AWARENESS</b>       | Objectives referring to creating, building up, or changing awareness. <b>IMAGE</b> Objectives referring to profile, position, image, brand, reputation, perceptions, personality, placement, status, as in "define the..."  |
| <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>       | Objectives referring to understanding/knowledge.  |
| <b>CREDIBILITY</b>     | Objectives referring to credibility, commitment, confidence, goodwill, leadership, achievements, good standing).  |
| <b>INSTRUMENTAL</b>    | Objectives in which the operative part is a verb followed a noun phrase to reflect objectives seen in specific rather than generic terms (i.e. credibility, or reputation, etc.). The "instrumental" verbs might be: educate, ensure, inform, communicate, reassure, highlight, get on the agenda, link, create, project, tell, promote. For example, "to tell ...workforce the facts..." or "to promote the new policies". |
| <b>FRAMING ISSUES</b>  | Objectives referring to influencing the framework within which the issue is publicly debated.   |
| <b>INVOLVEMENT</b>     | Involvement/participation objectives expressed in terms of building involvement or motivation in specified stakeholder groups.  |
| <b>ACTION</b>          | Objectives expressed in terms of actions to be achieved or prevented in target groups.  |
| <b>SALES/FINANCIAL</b> | Objectives referring to increasing sales or financial gains.  |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL</b>    | Objectives referring to professional requirements of conducting the work, such as "to set objectives", "to identify the size of the problem", etc.  |

Figure 24: Codes for evaluation

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>PROFESSIONAL</b>       | P1: references to output of campaign material (measured or not, including pick up)<br>P2: practitioners' own judgments of their own work, for example: campaign design, campaign complexity; winning more work on the strength of this one or being re-appointed; cost effectiveness or control of the budget; continuation or extension of the campaign                               |
| <b>MEDIA</b>              | MQT: Any evidence of content analysis (systematic, numerical analysis of content)<br>MQL: "Qualitative" judgements about the media coverage, such as the range of the media reached, comments on the tone of coverage, and basic counts of numbers of articles, etc.   |
| <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>          | References to awareness or knowledge,<br>KQT: quantitative measures<br>KQL: qualitative assessment   |
| <b>ATTITUDES</b>          | References achieving specific attitude, or an attitude change, included also "support" if not understood in term of clear behaviour expected)<br>AQT: quantitative measures<br>AQL: qualitative assessment   |
| <b>OPINIONS</b>           | References to specific opinions or opinion change<br>OPQT: quantitative measures<br>OPQL: qualitative assessment   |
| <b>BEHAVIOUR</b>          | Behaviours or behaviour change attributed to the programme, includes expressing an interest by requesting information<br>BQT: quantitative measures (includes statistical results and raw numbers)<br>BQL: qualitative assessment (or when no clear reference is made to quantitative measures):<br>a one-off action such as change in legislation, also "improved work relationships" |
| <b>IMAGE</b>              | IMA: comments referring to positioning, image, identity, branding, may include references to trustworthiness etc.  |
| <b>RECOGNITION</b>        | REC: outside recognition, apart from opinions, such as awards for example for a film produced as part of the campaign, or endorsements for the campaign and its issues, or testimonials from clients, others copying the work, comments on who expressed interest  |
| <b>FINANCIAL MEASURES</b> | F: financial or marketing terms used in evaluation such as profit, share of market.  |

Figure 25: Narrative functions

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| PRINCIPAL   | Principal is the organisation or individual affected by the Challenge, the solution of which is narrated in the case. Principal is introduced either by name only or with a longer passage.   |
| AGENT       | Agent is a person or organisation brought in to deal with the challenge on behalf of the Principal.   |
| CHALLENGE   | Challenge is a change/development in the environment which puts the Principal at a disadvantage and requires action to remedy the situation. Challenges might be related to political/policy/legislative change either past or planned; market conditions; reasons inherent to the client organisation such as restructuring; located in social trends or characteristics; due to the Opponent's actions; or focused on the technical aspects of the campaign to be done. |
| IDEA        | Idea is an articulation of the main principle/approach to the campaign.   |
| RESEARCH    | Research is carried out to move from Challenge to Idea or Objectives.   |
| PLANNING    | Planning for the campaign is explained/or laid out.   |
| OBJECTIVES  | Specific outcomes to be pursued by the campaign.  |
| ACTION      | Action is an explanation of what has been done to meet the objectives.  |
| ACHIEVEMENT | Achievement is an account of what has happened as a direct result of Action.  |

Figure 31: Characters in case narratives

| No | Year | Title                                | Principal | Agent | Beneficiary                 | Helper | Opponent |
|----|------|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-----------------------------|--------|----------|
| 62 | 94   | Open skies 93 (SE) ✓✓                | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed     | •✓     | +        |
| 63 | 94   | TaxAction ✓✓                         | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed     | +      | •        |
| 64 | 94   | Spreading marketing and PR ✓         | +         | •     | Principal + not claimed     | •      | •        |
| 65 | 94   | Trident — Battle of... ✓✓            | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓✓+ | ✓✓+    | +        |
| 66 | 94   | Abbey National ✓✓                    | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 67 | 94   | Breath of Life ✓✓                    | +         | +     | Principal + other(s) ✓      | +      | •        |
| 68 | 94   | DHL Everest 40 Expedition ✓          | +         | •     | Principal + not claimed     | •      | •        |
| 69 | 94   | Rice campaign ✓✓                     | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 70 | 94   | Smimoff International... ✓✓          | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 71 | 95   | Making someone's day (SE) ✓          | +         | •     | Principal                   | •      | +        |
| 72 | 95   | The campaign for market rights ✓✓    | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓✓+ | ✓✓+    | +        |
| 73 | 95   | Investors in people ✓                | +         | •     | Principal + not claimed     | •      | •        |
| 74 | 95   | Conventional and organic farming ✓✓+ | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)        | •      | +✓       |
| 75 | 95   | Britain's undiscovered millions ✓✓   | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 76 | 95   | ISA international                    | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 77 | 95   | Making a brand                       | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | •        |
| 78 | 95   | Thirsty world ✓                      | +         | •     | Principal + other(s) ✓      | +      | •        |
| 79 | 95   | The ELPSA White paper ✓✓             | +         | +     | Principal                   | •      | +        |
| 80 | 95   | Groundwater protection ✓✓            | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓✓+ | ✓✓+    | +        |

| No             | Year | Title                                 | Principal | Agent | Beneficiary                | Helper | Opponent |
|----------------|------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------------------------|--------|----------|
| 81             | 96   | Divorce: A fair deal (SE) ✓✓          | +         | +     | Public interest            | •      | +        |
| 82             | 96   | Extortionate credit ✓✓                | +         | +     | Principal + other(s) ✓     | +      | •        |
| 83             | 96   | IFA promotion ✓✓                      | +         | +     | Principal ✓                | +      | •        |
| 84             | 96   | United Friendly: rebranding.. ✓✓      | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)       | •      | •        |
| 85             | 96   | Compaq: bringing cyberspace ✓✓        | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | +✓       |
| 86             | 96   | KPMG leadership ✓                     | +         | •     | Principal ✓                | +      | •        |
| 87             | 96   | The esso living tree ✓✓               | +         | +     | Principal ✓                | +      | •        |
| 88             | 96   | 150th Birthday of Barnardo ✓          | +         | •     | Principal ✓                | +      | •        |
| 89             | 96   | Guardian Insurance ✓✓                 | +         | +     | Public interest ✓          | +      | •        |
| 90             | 97   | The two-minute silence (SE) ✓✓        | +         | +     | Principal ✓                | +      | •        |
| 91             | 97   | Deutsche Telekom ✓✓                   | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)       | •      | •        |
| 92             | 97   | The Football fund ✓✓                  | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | +✓       |
| 93             | 97   | Think first ✓✓                        | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | •        |
| 94             | 97   | Port Ramsgate ✓✓                      | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓✓ | +      | +        |
| 95             | 97   | TaxAction ✓✓                          | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | •        |
| 96             | 97   | RAC business service... ✓✓            | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | +        |
| 97             | 97   | Londoners of the year ✓✓              | +         | +     | Principal + other(s) ✓     | +      | •        |
| 98             | 97   | Switch on to wind.. ✓✓                | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓✓ | +      | +        |
| 99             | 97   | Feng Shui awarness ✓                  | +         | •     | Principal + other(s) ✓     | +      | •        |
| 100            | 97   | Guinness awards ✓                     | +         | •     | Principal + other(s) ✓     | +      | •        |
| 101            | 97   | Acorn ✓✓                              | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)       | •      | •        |
| 102            | 98   | Grand Metropolitan & Guinness ✓✓      | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)       | •      | •        |
| 103            | 98   | New Deal for Life ✓                   | +         | •     | Principal                  | •      | •        |
| 104            | 98   | A Changing Nation for Nat West ✓✓     | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | •        |
| 105            | 98   | Tourer Marketing Bureau ✓✓            | +         | +     | Principal + other(s)       | •      | •        |
| 106            | 98   | The Age of Aquarius ✓✓                | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | +        |
| 107            | 98   | Trees of Time and Place ✓✓            | +         | +     | Principal + not claimed ✓  | +      | •        |
| 108            | 98   | Nationwide 1997 Election of Directors | +         | •     | Principal + other(s) ✓✓    | +      | +        |
| 109            | 98   | Breast Cancer Care ✓                  | +         | •     | Principal + other(s)       | +      | •        |
| 110            | 98   | Wrong Trousers Day                    | +         | +     | Principal + other(s) ✓     | +      | •        |
| 111            | 98   | Henman Serves up Bananas ✓✓           | +         | +     | Principal                  | •      | •        |
| <b>Summary</b> |      |                                       |           |       |                            |        |          |
| 50 cases       |      |                                       | 50+ ✓     | 38+ ✓ | 11 Principal + not claimed | 22+ ✓  | 15+ ✓    |
|                |      |                                       |           | 12•   |                            | 28•    | 35•      |

+ stands for presence of the character; • indicates absence of the character.