
8 Conclusions

I have only just recently been exposed to this (increasing number of women in PR). At a recent course I conducted for the PRIA there were only 12 women. So I asked them why there were no men, and they replied that they ‘were much cheaper than men’. They went on to explain that at the top end of town, in financial PR, however, most, if not all the practitioners were men. But I don’t know if that was just “gender-talk”. I have no evidence to back it up (Male university lecturer in Sydney).

If only it was that simple. However, the reasons for the growing number of females, and decline in males, can not be simply attributed to one simple reason. There are numerous factors – some more obvious than others.

From the literature, the following findings emerge:

1. The changing nature of our society, from industrial to information-dominated, ideally suits the infusion of women into knowledge-based industries such as public relations
2. That women numerically dominate in all areas within the industry
3. They are ideally suited to roles within public relations as a result of sociological and psychological factors.

However, the literature (particularly the PR literature) falls short when trying to fully explain the reasons for women’s rise to prominence within PR. The public relations industry should (if it’s doing its job) be able to reflect many of the changes in gender relations and roles affecting society; particularly as immense changes in gender are sitting right on its doorstep. Accordingly, an important, but unrelated, finding from this literature review is that the field of gender and its relationship with PR provides an opportunity for the advancement of knowledge within an important but relatively uncharted field.

When I began this study there seemed to be little information. On conclusion of the literature review, I have found that still to be true. The lack of material certainly lends credence to the notion that PR does not lend itself to being studied.

It's difficult to study the careers of women in the field because public relations careers are not high profile. The role of PR in fact often requires avoiding the spotlight. The result is that public relations history has only produced a few identifiable personalities (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004, p38).

Certainly, from the literature (and as you will read later, from the opinions of professionals and students) women seem better suited emotionally and psychologically to work in public relations. This may explain the high proportion of women in the field. Men, perhaps, have yet to grasp and use the qualities which seem to have put women at the forefront of the profession. "The next generation of public relations workers will see a leveling of perceived differences between how men and women public relations workers think and behave" (Mackey, 2003). This may then see a more even spread of males and females in the profession. As Indian and UK professional Prema Sagar, of Genesis PR, said: "Public relations is still a field that is looked down upon. The simplest example of this is that there are very few men doing this job" (Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2000). Sagar, the first Indian to be inducted into the International Communications Consultancy Organisation's (ICCO) International Hall of Fame, reflects on a pessimistic future for the industry if it remains unbalanced:

Many public relations practitioners fear that the presence of increasing numbers of women in the field is already causing corporate "layering" that lowers the status of the PR function on the corporate ladder. Others believe that, in a global society where women have lower status than men, delegating the PR function to women will denigrate the profession. Few critics are brave enough to voice these concerns loudly, but their murmurings can be heard.

In her 2005 survey of PR professionals in northern England, Hall recommended that it was most important an investigation be undertaken into

why the profession remains so attractive to women, to encompass the current and future impact caused by the feminisation of the field. “The argument is that this is important if the industry wishes to maintain its growing reputation and continue to be taken seriously in future” (Hall, 2005). Has feminisation brought about collaboration, sensitivity towards audiences and better two-way communication? Certainly PR has become more open and two-way. But perhaps this may be just a result of media fragmentation and the development of the Internet, which encourages PR practice to be more “in tune” with its target audiences.

While it may be the opinion of most writers that women seem more suited to a career in PR, I do not believe this to have been scientifically justified. Much of the limited amount of industry-specific research was conducted at a time when currently outdated perceptions of males’ and females’ roles, and of the way males and females think, held sway.

The rise in the number of females in PR may simply reflect the changing nature of the Australian education system. Maushart (2005) outlines the way that the system has, in the past 10–15 years, been designed to even the imbalance in the system, which favoured boys. What is happening now is that females are playing catch-up, and, it seems, surpassing boys’ academic achievements. Some academics believe education, like PR, has been feminised. Others argue it has been ‘verbalised’, with a growing emphasis on self-expression, verbal analysis and information-processing. Certainly the two of the key competencies necessary in PR – written and verbal expression – favour women. According to Maushart (2005): “It is true that females hold a slight edge in these areas. On average, Australian boys do not perform – and never have performed – as well as girls in any of the main literacy strands, especially writing and speaking . . . yet perform no worse than their peers in comparable countries.” So it seems that what holds true in Australia, in education and PR, would also apply in the US, the UK and Canada, where the same trends are evident.

One of the more practical explanations of the rise of women is that simply because there are more women studying the subject, there are more entering the profession. It may well be that simple. However, that does not explain why there are so many women (and so few men) studying the subject. As Brown, 1998 said: “Maybe public relations is merely the first portion of that industry to witness some gender equity. In an information economy, where communication is increasingly vital, perhaps that’s not such a bad place to start.”

With regard to the subject of brain differences, I can not see that this has a much influence on whether males or females would choose PR, other than to generalise and say that because language (written and verbal) is such a major component of PR, it naturally follows that females would be better suited and/or more attracted to the subject, given that the research in this area shows that females are predisposed to language skills. But that is clearly a nonsense because “if boys are more able in mathematics and girls have a greater verbal ability, it is hard to see how men can be better fitted for political life and their dominant role there” (Sayers, as cited in Bland, 2005).

In summary, there seems to be little consistent evidence for significant differences between men and women in ability to nurture, communicate, or in the way brain patterns function. As Kimmel (2004) so succinctly put it: “In most cases, brain researchers (like many other researchers) find exactly what they are looking for” (p. 32). Or, as (Bland 2005) said:

It is suggested that men and women may tend to think in different ways, but every individual thinks in his or her individual way. Let us not come to believe that all women think in one way and all men in the other.

As with all findings, some are more relevant than others.

Salary certainly could not be considered a reason for more women than men studying PR, as this study found little difference in salary between men and women. This is supported by Hutton (2005) and Hall (2005). Hutton stated: “Detailed statistical analysis of a major salary survey and a review of

existing studies both indicate that there is no empirical reason to believe that there is gender-based salary discrimination in the PR field” (pp. 73-83). Hutton’s findings were based on a 2001 study on salary by *PR Week* which showed “there is little or no gender-based salary discrimination”. Hall’s survey of PR professionals in northern England produced a similar result to mine: that there was little difference in earnings between males and females. Hall said: [There was] “only a minor discrepancy in salary . . . possibly around £500–£1000 (\$1000–\$2000) per annum (if this can be classified as minor). Female practitioners seem to be earning slightly less than male public relations professionals, despite the fact they appear to hold more qualifications (both industry and non-industry-related).”

Despite some of the negative comments with regard to hours, the issue of a balance between family and work as a reason for the number of women in PR, indeed, in any occupation, can not be dismissed. American psychologist Steve Pinker says economists who study employment practices have long noted that:

Men and women differ in what they state are their priorities in life. Men, on average, are more likely to chase status at the expense of their families; women give a more balanced weighting. Once again: think statistics. The finding is not that women value family and don’t value status. It is not that men value status and don’t value family. Nor does the finding imply that every last woman has (Pinker, 2005, np).

In line with that train of thought, Pinker also raises another aspect (related to the above) that was mentioned by women practitioners in surveys and focus groups. “There are some things in life that the females rated higher than males, such as the ability to have a part-time career for a limited time in one’s life” (Pinker, 2005). Female practitioners mentioned this (in PR) being a flexible occupation and allowing them to have children, then perhaps work from home. Several (male) consultancy principals also discussed this aspect of the profession, which is covered elsewhere in the thesis. This aspect is raised by many scholars, and most recently by Walters (2006) in *Business Review Weekly*, which looked at the decline of women in IT; for those very

reasons. “IT does not attract females because of its culture, in which long hours are the norm. This in turn “means giving up an active social life, forgoing hobbies and delaying marriage” (p. 31).

In Germany, studies have shown that cultural professions (for example, journalism and design, “might serve as a model for less gendered forms of work and work and life arrangements [and that] it is more likely that we find women making the trade-offs between work and family in the sense of ‘dual earner/female part-time career’ or ‘dual earner and marketised career’ patterns, a finding similar to studies of professionals in other countries” (Gottschall 2002).

The gap in the three main areas chosen by respondents as the reason they work in PR – variety, creativity and mental challenge – (Figure 28) show that women may possess a more ‘creative’ bent toward the profession, as indicated by Cline (as cited in Aldoory, 2001) who said: “Women’s interest in more creative pursuits are examples of socialization.” This brings into play the notion of whether PR is still seen as a ‘soft social’ discipline, in which creative concepts are more favoured than hard-nosed business skills. This may have its roots in the fact that many PR courses are embedded into university social science departments, rather than business schools and/or faculties. Does this fact simply attract more women, who are attracted by the “social” side of PR? In the analysis of surveys, some respondents raise this aspect. (Folmar, 2005) points to this. Results of my surveys prove that 72 per cent of the women surveyed listed creativity as why they choose PR as a career.

Evident in extensive research is the perception that the female majority in the field of public relations ‘softens’ the image of the field and causes it not to be seen as a legitimate, management-driven profession. Noted public relations practitioner Philip Lesly (1988) noted that the impact of a largely female field would have such consequences as lowering professional aspirations because women wanted to perform technical rather than managerial duties, lowering income levels because fields that became “female” experienced such losses, and creating the image of public relations as a soft, rather than “heavy-hitting top management function (*Sha, 2001, p. 5*).

One of the most relevant ‘snippets’ to shed light on the theory (as cited by Folmar, 2005) was written by Linda R. Silver, who in 1988 speculated:

The reason feminised professions are often seen by social scientists and the public at large as ‘semi-professions’ can be attributed to the differing goals male and female professionals have in regard to relationship management. While male professionals work to advance themselves through their professional lives, using their knowledge to define their clients’ needs and hence to place themselves above their clients, women professionals place primary importance on filling the needs of others (p. 26).

Most importantly, according to Silver, is that “this difference in management style manifests itself in the perceptions people have of certain professions”, which is what I have argued in this study. It also holds that it is not just the perception the public holds about PR, it is also the perception that the industry, and those about the industry, have about PR.

From comments from males and females in this study, the industry view of the industry says that the profession is full of “fluff” (both in looks and content). From my perspective, I think the issue of image is more than “skin deep”. I believe the industry as a whole suffers from lack of credibility because its image is still one of being gimmicky, rather than offering substance. This, in part, is due to the early days of PR, when it was long lunches and parties – a fact well known by any journalist or PR practitioner who has been around for more than 20 years (this includes myself). In the wake of the Brian Burke lobbying scandal in WA, Stewart (2006) looked at

lobbying and also PR (as many PR firms have specialist lobbyists). He refers to the “guns for hire provided by dedicated PR and lobbying firms”, and interviews Adam Kilgour, CEO of the PR and lobby group, CPR. “The work of most lobbyists is far less exciting than the public perception. ‘Instead of lunches of Cristal and Krug in Italian restaurants in Perth, lobbying mostly involves research, strategy, analysing data, turning it into digestible messages and sharing it with governments’,” Andrew Parker of Parker and Partners says (p. 27).

I and many others believe the issue of the perception and image of PR is more than “skin deep”. I believe the industry as a whole suffers from lack of credibility because its image is one of being gimmicky, rather than offering substance. This, in part, is probably a ‘hangover’ (no pun intended) from the early days of PR, when it was long lunches and parties.

Folmar (2005) proposes that it might be that males are simply ‘unattracted’ to public relations. Data from her survey of university students “reflected that students perceive a certain degree of ambiguity associated with public relations, because public relations does not have one definition by which it is known, which was evident in both of the texts analysed, the profession carries with it a stigma of being somewhat nebulous in nature. In other words, the very nature of public relations might be a turn-off for males” (p. pp. 88–89). This was in evidence in my interviews, with words like ‘soft’ and ‘fuzzy’ being used (by males) to describe the practice of PR. In general, male students see PR as being unable to deliver the necessary ‘business’ outcomes that can be achieved in subjects like marketing, which, as one student said, can be measured more effectively.

There’s a perception in PR that you are always only a spokesperson for whoever you work for, and that you never really get involved with driving the business. So that could be a disincentive for males not doing PR. I guess it gets back to me thinking that it’s an inadequate subject (Male student in 2006 interview).

This attitude, which seems to be prevalent among the wider number of male students (and it is difficult to ascertain, based on the relatively small sample in this study) ties in with the theory put forward by Game and Pringle (1983) who believe “Men who do ‘women’s work’ may be seen as weak, effeminate or even homosexual. Men’s work has to be experienced as empowering” (p. 16).

The image and perception of PR is considered by males to be ‘feminine’. The general consensus among males was that PR is a ‘soft’ subject. PR, it seems, does not suit conform to what male students’ perceive to be a business subject. Primarily this means that they do not see the value PR contributes to a business, and nor can they measure the outcomes of PR programs. As outlined in the interviews and in answers to my surveys, males regard the process and outcomes of PR as being intangible. Males continue to prefer what have traditionally been regarded as male business subjects, such as economics, marketing and advertising. There are numerous reasons for this. Principally, students are still socially-conditioned by the media, both news and entertainment, to view PR in a less-than-serious light.

If we use a feminine/masculine traits analysis on PR, we find that those skills and traits most people believe belong with PR are ‘feminine’. These include all those already mentioned, and then some. According to Deaux (1976): “studies show that women are much more willing to disclose information about themselves than men. . . . Men like other men who disclose relatively little information about themselves, whereas women consistently show a preference for those women who are willing to discuss personal information” (pp. 60-61). If so many women are working in PR may indicate that this “information-rich” nature of women may also be another reason why they may be ideally suited. As shown in this study, men do not perceive PR to be a ‘serious’ subject. In the business world, having a tendency towards self-disclosure (that is, being overtly verbose) would probably be seen by many men in management as a weakness; therefore

those entering PR could be seen as a vacuous or flighty and not possessing the competitive traits necessary for 'pure' business (accounting, marketing).

8.3 Conclusions from student surveys

While it is not documented, it is common in the industry that women have been allocated events organisation. This may be a hangover from the early days of PR when males dominated the industry and women were seen as only suitable for the "froth and bubble" aspects of PR (launches, lunches, concerts). The perception (there's that word again) among students that this is an important aspect of PR is worrying, and only serves to reinforce the stereotype. However, this phenomenon (along with the emphasis on media relations) may be a byproduct of the industry in Perth, which is small and does not attract the large corporates that are present on the east coast. This in turn leads to a "dumbing down" of the industry, which is forced to revert to gimmicks and media stunts to attract publicity.

Many of the small to medium-sized business in Perth either do not consider, or understand modern PR practices such as stakeholder relations, issues management and Integrated Marketing Communication. This simply compounds the problem of academics being unable to present the relevance of these aspects to students.

The way students perceive PR is, I believe, a worrying aspect borne out by this study. Students' perceptions is also the critical factor in helping to shape future directions for the profession. Today's students are tomorrow's practitioners. Many students (particularly males) initially perceive PR to be a "soft" option. This begs the question of whether universities are attracting the right type of person into the industry. This study has shown that PR attracts people (particularly students) for the variety, creativity, mental challenges and career path it offers. Money was a fifth choice. So while there may be negative perceptions of the profession as a whole, people are still drawn to it for reasons other than financial gain.

This study's surveys clearly show that men and women have different areas of interest with PR, and that they are utilised (by management) in different areas of PR. Women are still associated (whether by choice or management) to the technician-type roles (events, media and writing), whereas men are associated with manager-type functions such as project and reputation management, reputation management.

In her US study, Noble (2004) found most students "majored in public relations because [they] find it interesting". Students also agreed strongly with the following statements, indicating their focus on life after college: "I majored in public relations because this major will give me the skills that will lead to a job when I graduate"; "I majored in public relations because it combines creativity and business". Women (73.8 per cent) were more likely to agree they selected public relations as a major because of the creative aspects than did men (51.4 per cent). In my survey, the main reason for choosing PR was variety (53 per cent of respondents), followed closely by creativity 47 per cent). My survey also found that of those who listed creativity as a reason for working in PR, 72 per cent were women. The same applied to variety, with 63 per cent of those choosing it as their main motivation being women.

With imbalance being the cornerstone of my thesis, professionals' responses to questions relating directly to imbalance were critical. Despite the fact that 73 per cent of respondents said there should be balance in the industry, and that balance is necessary for a healthy industry, there were few concerns from those surveyed. This may reflect the attitudes of those in 'power', who probably do not see beyond today and the long-term effects imbalance may have. In many ways, PR professionals are no different from the general population when it comes to future thought. There was general consensus that imbalance in itself is not necessarily a good thing for any industry, and particularly PR, which is about promotion and providing a balance of views. If there was any concern, it was only by a few (and then from a literary research viewpoint) that salaries may decrease. This is what

has been shown to happen when an industry become predominantly female. In summary, there was quite an unreflective response from industry.

Is it merely that, despite PR's early beginnings as a male-dominated field, we have now come to recognise, through natural selection, because of our brain patterns (and differences), females are naturally more suited to PR? It may be that certain (more business-focused) sections of PR, such as investor relations and political lobbying, will remain in the male domain. This may eventually see PR split to produce separate fields in their own right, as we have witnessed in the case of Integrated Marketing Communication, which is now offered at one Australian university as a separate post-graduate degree. According to Moir and Jessel (1996): "the connection between masculinity, prestige and status is a dynamic one; when traditional male jobs come to be filled by women, the jobs lose their status in men's eyes" (p. 162). If this is the case, then here is another reason why men simply avoid entering PR.

For me, there were several important points raised by the literature that crossed over into the surveys and interviews and point towards the reasons why more women than men are entering PR.

It is clearly shown that the way our culture 'socialises' us (that is, imparts its morés, values and customs) is a crucial factor in developing our gender perceptions of all facets of our lives; from how we play to what we regard as male or female roles and careers. "Some experts, believe physical differences in the brain may not be there at birth but are gradually sculpted. This is because social conditioning begins from the first day of life" (Midgley, 2006). Our socialisation leads to the way we perceive things, including occupations. The media, in turn – also a product of our society – merely serve to reinforce these perceptions. In the case of PR, the media presents the profession in various negative guises, as dodgy, glamorous, flaky, secretive, fuzzy and unscrupulous – hardly the light a profession would seek to advertise itself. Yet this is how PR is being 'advertised' consistently.

Part of the perception is that PR is inherently 'feminine' in nature. This thesis has shown that PR requires certain basic skills, most of which appear to be better performed by women, and are shown to be aspects of work that women enjoy more than men. The study has presented evidence that shows women perform better than men in written and spoken English, and the ability to listen. These attributes are generally perceived by men to be 'female' subjects. This study's participants have also indicated in their responses that they perceive PR to be 'feminine'. It naturally follows that if women are proven better performers in these areas, they are better suited to a career in PR. Similarly, if the perception is that the industry is feminine, then it will remain that. This, I believe, ties in with evidence showing there has been a rise in the number of 'soft' industries, such as ecology and psychology. PR is simply just one more of those 'soft' industries experiencing large growth. Sue Webb, who is completing a PhD at ECU on the issue of declining female participation in IT, believes that the "biggest problem is misperception [about] the public image of IT jobs" (Walters, 2006, p. 32).

There is also the consideration of how the historical nature of communications (journalism and PR) is changing. As shown, PR initially was the domain of former journalists, mostly male. About 10-12 years ago, with the rise in communications courses and the changing nature of the workforce, more women entered the profession. PR has now turned almost completely around in its gender structure, and the signs are that journalism is not far behind. The conclusion is that the entire communications profession will become female-intensive.

8.4 Recommendations and observations

End of the road for top spin doctor ...

Paul Willoughby, one of the Government's highest-paid 'spin doctors', will leave the public service today, after his position at the Roads and Traffic Authority was abolished ... The Opposition Leader, Peter Debnam, has vowed to cut 75 per cent of spin doctors from the police media unit" (Dick and Kennedy, 2006).

PR's portrayal in the media is cause for concern; particularly if PR wants to be taken more seriously and the indications are that it is not – by both students and the public. The above example is typical of the way journalists perceive PR practitioners – until they become one themselves. How the industry deals with this is up to the industry. However, I believe the profession should look at ways of rectifying the misconceptions. An advertising campaign similar to the *Numbers* campaign conducted in late 2005 to early 2006 by Certified Practising Accountants (CPAs) may be warranted. However, this is probably not achievable, due to the high cost and the PRIA's low membership base, which (at the time of writing) is slowly being expanded. Certainly, the PRIA could be more pro-active in performing some 'PR for PR'.

From both a personal and professional viewpoint, I do not consider that a growing imbalance is necessarily a healthy thing. All the imbalance will do for the profession is simply attract more females (and deter males). Some may argue that the profession may be better served by people who are interested in it, and if they are females, so be it.

Other industries (notably, mining, engineering and IT) are concerned about male dominance and have actively sought to recruit females. The mining industry in WA, and the national IT sector, launched such campaigns in 2006. My view is that the imbalance in PR should be addressed by the PRIA and institutions by rectifying the false impressions of the profession among students and the public.

The IT industry has interesting parallels to PR, in that the percentage imbalance is roughly the same, but in reverse. The difference is that the IT industry seems to be taking strong steps to correct the imbalance (Hilderbrand, 2005). Australian IT managers and peak bodies are now calling for the industry to try to attract more females. The Australian Computer Society has taken the dramatic and controversial step of sponsorship the 2006 Screen Goddess Calendar, which depicts women

working in IT in various bikini-clad poses which replicate scenes from famous movies, such as an Ursula Andress scene from *Dr No* (pictured).



Writing in *The Australian*, the Society's president said:

Women are grossly under represented in the ICT sector and strong measures are required to attract more women into this industry ... the ACS Foundation has a number of scholarships designed to encourage women in to ICT. We are constantly looking for opportunities to promote the interest of women. My hope is that the maelstrom over the Screen Goddess calendar will at least stimulate some positive discussion that will lead to effective ways of addressing the ICT gender imbalance. (Argy 2006)

The CIO (Chief Information Officer) of the Executive Council (an organisation with offices in Australia, Canada and the US) is encouraging universities in Victoria, NSW and Queensland to standardise their courses. Writing in Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, Hilderbrand reports the courses will help reshape IT students' perceptions about the profession, particularly focusing on how IT contributes overall to how a business works. The [Australian] Council's executive director, Con Colovos, said:

Females are articulate, excellent communicators and very good at analysis. Without them IT will be without the balance that will be required for it to mature as other industries have. We do not want to see our industry be stereotyped as males doing geeky, nerdy work (Hilderbrand 2005).

Hilderbrand's observations are backed by McCurdy (2005), who found in her survey of third-year Queensland PR students that 'communication' was listed by 12 per cent of women as the reason they were studying PR, while no males listed it as a reason. This may simply indicate that females like to communicate. While it may seem a blindingly-obvious question, it is, after all, the reason for PR's existence – to communicate. This theme was

explored further by Walters (2006). Writing in *Business Review Weekly* about the decline of women in IT, she said women have the skills that IT needs (communication, organisational and analytical ability). However, because of the 'blokey' culture of IT, the long hours and the nerdy image, they are drifting into other occupations. Certainly these qualities are essential in PR. It may be that many current PR graduates could be the very people the IT industry is letting slip through the net.

From an educational viewpoint, perhaps the way PR is taught and promoted may need to be addressed. Clearly, many students (and indeed, some professionals) have misconceptions about PR. A first step would be for educational institutions to correct the negative image PR has, particularly among males. This relates to the perceptions that PR is a 'female' profession, that is not 'serious' and is simply about spin. If balance is to be restored, or even slightly corrected, PR needs to be presented in a more serious light in order to attract more males. Educators may have to question the choice of materials (texts, in particular) that are being presented to students. Are texts mostly written by males for males in countries where the industry is male- or female-dominated? I believe universities may need to take a better look at the way PR is portrayed in promotional material. Rather than show females doing PR, why not show males, or at least a balance?

While students may soon discover that the study of PR is subject to most of the normal disciplines of any university course, the fact that many enter it with little knowledge (and some of that knowledge quite distorted) is a situation that needs to be addressed by universities, and by the industry, through the PRIA. Public relations could certainly do no worse than, at the minimum, supply career information to prospective students through a direct campaign at State education authorities. Beyond that, it may look at increasing its profile with another direct campaign aimed at leading businesses, which may highlight campaign successes. There is, however, a clear need for industry bodies, particularly the PRIA, to maintain a watch on trends.

There are several questions that arise from this research and which could be addressed by further study. The most important is: will this trend affect the way information is interpreted? In other words, is there a female bias that presents in PR communications? Other salient points are: will an imbalanced PR profession alter the public's perception of the subjects it seeks to promote, advertise and report on?

One of the main considerations is to consider whether the profession, and individuals, will be greatly affected by the change in gender construction. This study showed that 62 per cent of professionals are concerned about what effects imbalance may have on the industry, but none indicated what effects these might be. The inference is that while professionals are concerned, until the situation affects them directly, they are not worried about it.

Finally, is the PR industry even aware of the phenomenon of increasing numbers of females entering the industry? If so, does it at all care? I would answer, "yes", the industry is aware of the phenomenon, but, "no", it does not care enough to have it on the agenda for discussion at any official level. The profession should be asking itself if and/or how the increasing number of women in PR has impacted, or will impact, on the profession. And what are the long-term implications, if any, for the profession as a result of such an imbalance.

As shown, other industries are well aware of gender imbalances and possible problems that may arise from that. Some, notably IT and engineering, are taking steps to correct the situation. While many PR professionals (mostly from Queensland) have shown interest in this study, no-one from the national body, or academia, has come out and said "yes, there may be a problem and we should be analysing a response" – if one is necessary. Only time will tell whether this trend will have any effects on the industry. However, as someone who has observed the phenomenon over many years, at the very least, I believe the profession needs to be prepared for a possible

change in the way PR is practised. Whether this will be detrimental is hard to say at this stage.

The overall aim of my study was to examine the reasons for the growing number of women entering PR. Based on the evidence, I believe that while there are many factors which contribute to the predominance of women in PR, it is our cultural view of PR (our socialisation) which is the dominant force in determining whether males or females enter PR.

A growing female presence may serve to enhance or hinder the industry; although this will depend on the level of influence women will exert at upper management levels – something that seems not to have happened yet. Whatever the eventual outcome, the composition of the profession should be no different from what we seek to achieve in many aspects of life – balance.

As Dan Edelman said: “We need balance” (2002).