

# **THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CONFERENCE**

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Because of formatting issues, it has not been possible for all papers to be presented in the same editorial style. In a few instances, the paper has been only marginally edited or not at all in order to preserve its visual integrity. For one paper, a Supplementary Proceedings has been created which sits alongside the main Proceedings. Where possible, the presentations that illustrated Papers and Abstracts are included in a PowerPoint Proceedings.

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## ABSTRACT

### PR-HISTORIOGRAPHY, A FUNCTIONAL-INTEGRATIVE STRATA MODEL AND PERIODS OF GERMAN PR HISTORY

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Important questions and problems of a single country-related, but also internationally comparative PR historiography are, among others: when, under what conditions did Public Relations emerge? Is the line between prehistory and history of Public Relations (Broom 2009) defined precisely enough? Which criteria can be given to distinguish between historical periods of PR history? Are these criteria valid in a global context or only in a mono-cultural context (e.g., USA, U.K. Germany)?

Analysing the writing of PR history (e.g. L'Etang 2008) two different approaches, two general directions can be distinguished in the last 45 years: a) the fact- and event-oriented (FEOT) type and b) the model-and-theory oriented type (MTOT) of PR historiography. Whereas the FEOT-approach (cf. Cutlip 1994, 1995; Oeckl 1964, Kunczik 1997, Avenarius 2000) describes facts in an historical order and, interpreting them, often focuses on certain personalities and their activities (Hiebert 1966, Tye 1998, Mattke 2006), many of those examples of PR research don't have a conceptional, social theoretical foundation. The MTOT approach (Bentele 1987, 1997, Grunig/Hunt 1984, Grunig 1987, L'Etang 2004) reflects the conceptual basis, uses models and/or theories and is doing more than giving descriptions. This type of research gives social explanations for the described developments. Because the MTOT approach uses theories, some of the questions, asked in the beginning, are easier to answer.

To propose solutions and answers concerning the questions, asked in the beginning, a theoretical approach, the functional-integrative strata approach is proposed. Functional means that PR historiography should be developed in a context of superordinated societal subsystems like politics, economy, culture, etc (cf. Habermas 1991). Integrative means, that it should be developed in a context of neighbouring fields of public communication (journalism, advertising). Strata models (which are well known in philosophy, biology, psychology and the theory of knowledge) are models, which can be used to describe different developmental and/or historical processes. The theses can be formulated, that a historical grounded strata model can be used to describe the evolution of communicative structures, means and procedures. It is suggested, that the evolution of PR can be seen as a succession of developmental strata (interpersonal communication, public communication, organisational communication, PR as an occupational field, PR as so social subsystem) in a global perspective. Each stratum contains important elements from the earlier strata, no stratum ends, but passes over to the next stratum. The 5th historical stratum, in which an emerging PR as an occupational field with specialised departments and typical instruments, has been developing in Germany since the beginning of the 19th century. The 6th historical stratum (PR as an emerging social system, beginning with the sixties in the 20th century) is described more detailed. The 5th and the 6th stratum together show seven historical periods of PR history in Germany (cf. Bentele 1997, Bentele & Wehmeier 2003), which can be separated by political, sociological and technical parameters.

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# CAN THERE BE A CO-EXISTENCE OF PROPAGANDA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS?

## The case of ‘Socialistic Public Relations’ in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) from 1965-1989

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### 1. Social context and public relations

Since the end of the 1960s, individual aspects and themes of ‘public relations in the GDR’ have mainly been covered in theses and dissertations authored at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, mainly in the faculty of journalism, albeit somewhat biased ideologically.<sup>1</sup> There has been a deficit of sustained, systematic analyses of this subject since 1989. Possible exceptions are the Leipzig Conference of 1997, which dealt with some of the most fundamental elements of this issue (Liebert 1998), or short, comprehensive overviews of general aspects (Bentele 1999a, Bentele 2008) and a series of descriptions detailing individual aspects of the topic. A comprehensive and methodical study of GDR public relations that engages critically with the term and its ideology has long been overdue. The topic of public relations in the GDR is made more complex by the fact that surveys produced during the GDR by no means concur with contemporary perspectives — an issue that is not present in studies produced in other nations that deal with the history of the profession.<sup>2</sup> These are primarily political and ideological differences, which is evident in the varied definitions, interpretations and connotations of key concepts such as ‘Public Relations’ and ‘propaganda’.

Post-war practitioners of PR in the former Western Germany have time and time again put forward the opinion that there was no such thing as public relations in the GDR, “only propaganda”. This notion, which represents the “blackout theory” pertaining to the Third Reich, ignores the certifiable existence of public relations within totalitarian regimes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1970s, a series of doctoral dissertations and theses were published in this faculty that provide an interesting insight into the profession of public relations. See, for example, dissertations by Merkwitschka (1968), Poerschke (1972), Wöltge (1973), Liebold (1974), and Schmelter (1972).

<sup>2</sup> Sriramesh/Vercic (2003) and Ruler/Vercic (2004) have recently provided the first systematic approaches with regard to global and European contexts respectively.

<sup>3</sup> See Lange 2010. In his Masters theses, for which he was presented with the award of the Albert Oeckl prize of the German Public Relations Society (DPRG), Marius Lange highlights continuities and ruptures in German

Moreover, this conceptualisation presupposes that propaganda and public relations are entirely separate entities and tangible phenomena. However, this approach makes little sense and is not a view that is widely propounded in the international academic study of the topic. Indeed, such a position appears inherently self-contradictory.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, in this paper it is argued that public relations — here understood as the management of communication with internal and external publics by organisations — is an *organisational* phenomenon occurring at the social *meso-level* (organisational level) that is (and can only be) realised in various forms and diverse corporate structures. We draw clear distinctions between social structures at the *macro-level*, the *meso level* and at the *micro-level* (social interaction amongst individuals). Relationships exist between these different levels: for example, the *political system*, *economic system*, *media system* (whose various forms and scope are strongly determined by the political system) and *technological development* in societies (macro-level) all influence the organisational structures, scope, resources and regulations of communications divisions within organisations (meso-level).

In dictatorships and *totalitarian* political systems, organisations such as the governing political party, state organisations, nationalised ventures, mass organisations and municipal cultural establishments must observe, inform, communicate with and, as is necessary in such systems, *persuade* their environment similar to democratic societies.<sup>5</sup> However, the individual agency of these organisations is strongly determined by the political system and its own organisations. Organisations have to implement the propagandistic directives of the political system whereby, in the totalitarian system, a *propagandistic style of communication*<sup>6</sup> amongst public communication outlets arises that is reasonably pronounced in the cases of journalism and public relations, but less so in advertising. Indeed, one might say that political PR only *becomes* propaganda in totalitarian societies in accordance the requirements of the political system.

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corporate public relations between 1929 and 1936. It becomes clear that public relations had solid foundations prior to 1945 that professionals in East and West Germany were able to build upon.

<sup>4</sup> See Bentele (1999a) and Bentele (1999b) for an in-depth study of this topic.

<sup>5</sup> See distinctions drawn between the four basic functions of PR (which are to monitor, inform, communicate, and persuade) in Bentele 1998c.

<sup>6</sup> We understand the terms *information* and *communication style* in public communications to refer to an empirically diagnosable *model of communication* that is composed of a deliberate *selection of content* and the use of certain *forms of communication* (linguistic and textual models, terminology, reasoning, etc.). See Bentele 1999b.

Propaganda or propagandist communication is (at various levels) the major (communicative) function of political PR in totalitarian societies. We therefore distinguish between a *societal organisation of propaganda* evident at the macro-level and a *propagandistic style of communication* analysed at the meso and micro-levels.<sup>7</sup> In this propagandist style of communication we might include normative paradigms of journalism, such as the rejection of the conventional separation of ‘news’ from ‘comment’ as well as concomitant ‘agitation via facts’, and also the use of language in phrases such as the ‘strong and unbreakable friendship’ with the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> That is not say, however, that both public relations and journalistic texts have to be propagandistic in every detail or expression.

The presence of a certain type of organisation at the macro-level is one of the prerequisites for a propagandist style of communication in public communications, by achieving a particular degree of stability and longevity within a society. This includes, for example, the subordination of local PR departments beneath a central mechanism of observation, control and censorship that is advocated by the political system. In the GDR, politics and public communication (macro-level) were organised into a ‘top-down’ model: power, control and information feeds led into one direction ‘from above to below’. The political party did not only control its own news and communications as is conventional in the political systems of parliamentary democracies; in addition, it also controlled the news and communications of the government, the mass media and many social institutions. The overriding principle of the *SED* – the East German Socialist Unity Party – and its information monopoly was not the division of powers, but rather their centralisation by the party.

Here, the ‘major players’ were the SED’s ‘Central Committee’ (ZK) and the committee’s private *Politbüro*. The Central Committee’s Secretary for Agitation – the principal office of the SED’s Department of Agitation (and Propaganda) – played an important role in steering political communications. Political directives were passed by the party’s *Politbüro* whereas the Secretary of the Central Committee, himself a delegate of

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<sup>7</sup> Modern *Propaganda* (understood as an *information and communication style* of public communication) is defined here as an unidirectional, influential type of communication in which truthful information is subordinated or consciously bracketed out, generally uses simple means of communication (saturation, repetition, stereotypes, simplistic assessment, a mixture of news and opinion), often sentimental, mindful of distinct antagonists, and only deployed within the parameters of centralised, non-democratic social model, i.e. in systems in where the media are controlled by the state. (cf. Bentele 1998b).

<sup>8</sup> More examples cf. Glück/Sauer (1990: 172ff).

the Department of Agitation (and Propaganda), was responsible for the public implementation of these directives.<sup>9</sup> The newspaper *Neues Deutschland* (ND), a central organ of the SED, and bloc party newspapers were ‘guided’ by executives of the Central Committee. ‘Guidance’ of radio and television was the responsibility of the State Committees for Radio and Television that were, like the Press Office, staffed by executive members of the Council of Ministers. The circulation of news by the German General News Agency (ADN), which was the most important institution of the news media in the GDR, by legislation was subject to the approval by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In practice, this function was delegated to the Press Office. Ministerial ‘guidance’ ranged from issuing directives on topics, articles, use of language, listing ‘taboo’ topics, to being prescriptive on matters of layout and timing. Alongside written directives there also existed oral instructions that were laid out at weekly briefings by the Central Committee — the so-called ‘Thursday conference’ — and which guaranteed that the entire East German press followed the official party line. ‘Akin to the Press Office, then, the ADN served in the first instance as the engine for the news policy of the SED leadership and as means of implementing the party’s monopolisation of opinion’ (Holzweißig 1997: 83, own translation).

## **2. Definitions of propaganda, public relations and related terminology in the GDR**

In the GDR, *propaganda* was generally understood as a parent term that stood for the ‘systematic circulation and in-depth explanation of political, philosophical, historical economic, physiological and technical teachings and ideas’ (KPW 1988, 795, own translation). In contrast to an ‘imperialist propaganda’ that

attempts to conceal the real intentions of capitalist domination and manipulates individual consciousness [...], Marxist-Leninist P. [Propaganda], which is based upon the objective stages of global progression from capitalism to socialism, mediates the objective social strategy of both the Marxist-Leninist party and the socialist state in order to fulfil the historical mission of the working class (KPW 1988: 795, own translation).

Whereas *Agitation* supposedly searches for and, ideally, locates the nature of social relationships; tugs on the emotions of the individual; caters to their moods; appeals to their enthusiasm and hatred (!) while searching for the winning argument in a given situation,

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<sup>9</sup> These structures of organisation and responsibility changed in the course of time. See, specifically, Holzweißig 1994.

propaganda is regarded more as the systematic mediation and circulation of Marxist-Leninism and its world-view.

According to the GDR 'Dictionary of Journalism', this approach differs from that of agitation by being comprehensive and strictly logical (WdJ 1984: 70). The main aim of GDR propaganda was, therefore, the dissemination of socialist ideology at all levels and in all forms. This began with *status symbols* (the national flag and heraldic crests); extended to the declaration of *public holidays* (Day of Liberation on 8th May; Republic Day on 7th October) and political red-letter days (Anniversary of the death of Rosa Luxemburg on 15th January), public acts of commemoration and state-organised mass marches, etc.; as well as various forms of campaigns<sup>10</sup> and the major, staged, year-round 'propagandistic *gesamtkunstwerk*' (Gibas 2000: 29).

Certain *forms of propaganda* were integral to the GDR's self-image, such as the SED's party schools and *mass propaganda* (understood as mass political engagement). To these we might add the communicative function of newspapers, magazines, television, radio, memorials, museums, trade fairs and *public relations* amongst others (KPW 1988: 612). The SED officially regarded the mass media as conduit for propaganda. This perspective most notably returns to the Leninist notion of newspapers to be at once collective agitators, propagandists and organisers (WdJ 1984: 70ff).

The use of the term 'public relations' in the GDR was subject to historical change. As in Western Germany, the English term 'public relations' was used in the GDR in various publications (originally in the trade journal for advertising and communication *Neue Werbung*) until the mid-1960s. A concept of "socialistic public relations" began to emerge towards the end of the 1970s. The English term "public relations" was henceforth invested with negative connotations and was officially, that is to say according to the hegemonic Marxist-Leninist party state ideology, understood as a tool used in the manipulative practices of capitalist society.<sup>11</sup> The term officially used in the GDR at this time was the German word *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* — a word recognised in Germany since 1917 at the latest (Cf. Liebert 2003) that had started a 'new career' in the FRG at the beginning of the 1950s when it became synonymous with the American term 'PR'.<sup>12</sup> Until the mid 1960s,

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<sup>10</sup> Gibas (2000: 9ff) distinguishes between three main forms of campaign as the central communicative techniques of the SED: the mobilisation campaign, indoctrination campaign und disciplinary campaign.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Heyden *et al* (1969: 190ff).

<sup>12</sup> See also Wöltge (1979: 12ff) who traces the first use of the term *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* in the GDR to the mid-1960s.

the German word *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* was understood in the GDR to mean ‘company-related information [...] supported by statements on the performance, political and social achievements of the new socialist economic order’ (Cf. Swoboda 1986, own translation). This definition later transformed into a more comprehensive understanding of *sozialistische Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*, or ‘socialistic public relations’. On the other hand, the German word *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* became more strongly associated with the monopolisation of ideology and information by the SED and its executive state powers. This definition is provided in the 1971 *Dictionary of Journalism* held in the Faculty of Journalism at the University of Leipzig.<sup>13</sup> The first part of the definition remains somewhat derivative of the then prevalent western definition of public relations. The function ascribed to public relations in the GDR is to encourage the ‘development of the socialist consciousness’, as well as the linking of this activity to socialist organisations and institutions; it refers to the aforementioned inherent difference of *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* in socialism. The definition of *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* contained in the 1984 edition of the same dictionary spells out this aspect more clearly where it is:

[understood as] mass political activity by state and economic bodies, institutions and organisations. It is an indispensable component of general political and ideological engagement led by the party of the working class. Engaging in public relations [*Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*] is a principle of socialist administration in all areas and at all levels. (WdJ 1984, 148, own translation).

Such a conceptualisation is most obviously and clearly concerned to distinguish itself from a western conceptualisation by emphasising the *political-ideological function* of all public relations in Socialism and defining public relations as a

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<sup>13</sup> This definition reads: ‘*Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* [public relations] is the uninterrupted or ad-hoc circulation of information pertaining to the concerns, performance and problems of organisations and institutions by political parties, social organisations and state institutions, especially those concerned with the economy, via various journalistic and non-journalistic communications channels. The aim is to produce or strengthen a particular attitude towards the strategies, concepts and practices, such as willing cooperation with organisations and institutions, amongst the general population or a specific target audience at both national and international level. Socialistic public relations perform an important function in the development of a socialistic consciousness amongst citizens. In contrast to the public relations of imperialist societies, which are defined by class conflict and capitalist competition, and in correspondence with the principal accord of fundamental interests amongst all social forces in the socialist state, the public relations of a socialist organisation or institution [...] are always geared towards providing solutions to general problems affecting socialist societies.’ (WdJ 1971: 266f, own translation)

*component* of the SED's political and ideological engagement. Thus, like journalism, public relations in the GDR were a *component of Agitation and Propaganda*.

One specific form of mass propaganda was propaganda in the workplace, or *production propaganda*. As stated in one of the first, fundamental papers on this topic, the goal of production propaganda was supposedly to provide significant assistance towards fulfilling a "principal economic duty" to increase productivity (Gries 1996: 129). The principal, varied means and media of production propaganda were, for example, the *spoken word* (e.g. debate, 'Agitprop' groups, oral presentations and works broadcasts), *discussion* (e.g. reviews and inspections), *the written and printed word* (e.g. company newsletters), *visual stimuli* (e.g. instructional films) and *visual agitation* (e.g. posters) (Gries 1996: 130f). In the final two decades of the GDR, production propaganda was limited to so-called *visual agitation* and lost its relevance following the introduction of tangible production incentives that rendered such communicative stimuli obsolete and, at least in part, was the subject of derision.

This paper cannot describe in detail the topic of advertising in the GDR, an industry that developed during its forty-year history; performed economic and political-ideological functions in support of the state; employed several thousand citizens<sup>14</sup> and, in the case of the SED-internal agency DEWAG or with regard to the communicative practice of the Leipzig Trade Fair, exposed the various limitations of public relations in the GDR.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the 1960s *socialist commercial advertising* was defined in the GDR Advertising Handbook as "biased, concerted, structured and commercial promotion" (Various authors 1969: 23, own translation).

### **3. Public Relations as a profession in the GDR**

#### **3.1 Stakeholders and structures in GDR Public Relations and Propaganda**

Based on differences between the (social) macro-level, (organisational) meso-level and the behaviour of individuals at the micro-level that were outlined in the first section, we are able to identify public relations as a *profession* in societies that favour pluralist democracy where its structures, functions, objectives and methods of implementation can certainly be *compared* with vocations in other societies. This was, at first, a small area that

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<sup>14</sup> According to Götz (1998: 42), the SED's private advertising agency DEWAG (East German Advertising Agency) alone comprised some 4500 employees in 1990 with a further 1000 or more freelance workers more or less contractually affiliated to the agency.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, various authors (1969), Götz (1998), Gries (2000), Tippach-Schneider (1999; 2002). For a critical discussion of advertising content, see Preßler 2008.

experienced significant growth during the late 1960s. Practitioners in PR worked in accordance with *political guidelines*<sup>16</sup> when employed in communications outlets, such as press offices.

A series of devices used internationally in the profession were also implemented in the GDR, and working hours were structured by state-organised *planning regulations*. State directives markedly curtailed mandates for independent decision-making, and the control of decisive action extended to rationalisation, description and evaluation (propagandistic style of communication). For individual organisations and society in general, however, public relations was considered (in terms of its function) to be as necessary in the GDR as it was in the FRG. The profession of public relations in the GDR can empirically be defined in contrast to other occupations, such as a journalism and advertising.

In parliamentary democracies, party political PR, state organisations (government, ministries) and parliaments etc. represent an important part of the public relations profession. (Cf. Bentele 1998b, Jarren/Donges 2002, Vol.2: 59ff). As it is the case for any government, the government of GDR required an organisational division that was responsible for monitoring the environment of communications as well as for editing and publishing current government information. This was the remit of the *Press Office for the Minister-President of the government of the German Democratic Republic*. Comprising around fifty employees, this press office had *duties* that included: the licensing of all press subsidiaries in the GDR; the coordination of public relations across the various ministries; the creation of the government's official communicative media, such as the thrice-weekly government press service calls the monitoring the environment of communications, such as editing the content of the monthly journal *Presse der Sowjetunion* (The Soviet Union Press); the registration of western newspapers and magazines deemed to be officially necessary; and the guidance and regulation of all bloc party and church newspapers in the GDR. In the latter case, this was virtually censorship despite the fact that neither censorship nor censorial bodies *officially* existed in the GDR. The press office was not only able to withhold the official insignia from church newspapers prior to proofing;<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The first ruling on socialistic public relations by the GDR *Ministerrat* (East German government) was passed in 1967 (cf. Beschluss 1967) and a second ruling followed in 1972. Further rulings (listed in Holzweißig 1991: 307ff) were of an almost legalistic nature and formed the basis for the development of public relations in the GDR. As stated in the document of 1967, "public relations performs an important role in the development of the socialistic consciousness amongst member of the population." (Beschluss 1967: 3)

<sup>17</sup> This led to seventeen printing prohibitions during the crisis year of 1988 (Holzweißig 1997: 219).

those who did not follow the ‘recommendations’ of the press office closely enough were rebuked during ‘appraisal sessions’ with disciplinary measures to follow.<sup>18</sup>

A multiplicity of state organisations existed independently from the party’s information hierarchy in the GDR, many of which had departments for Public Relations. Holzweißig (1992: 506) mentions the existence of over fifty press offices of the state apparatus whose purpose it was to coordinate the intelligence of the Press Office — a partnership that occasionally prompted criticism. The internal logic of journalism, which was – to a very limited extent – also present in a central system, and varying degrees of confidentiality and disclosure led to disagreements, frictions and internal criticism as did discrepancies between the individual perception of social reality and the representation of this reality in the media.

To a certain extent a kind *municipal public relations* also existed in the GDR (such as the *Leipzig News Office*, cf. Liebert 1998a: 26). However, this was used by the central information apparatus of the GDR (the Office for Information) at the start of the 1950s. ‘Municipal public relations was henceforth organisationally used by state awareness-raising initiatives and propaganda’ (Liebert 1998a: 30).

### **3.2 Public Relations in East German industry and other areas of society**

According to ‘insider’ reports, the number of employees in the industrial sector of this profession totalled 3000 by the 1980s.<sup>19</sup> *Industrial production* had its own departments for Press and Public Relations in the form of press offices for the director-generals of the 175 state-owned combines; mass organisations (such as the German Gymnastics and Sports Association DTSB and the Free German Trade Union Federation FDGB, etc.); in awareness-raising of the GDR abroad undertaken in so-called *Auslandsinformation* (e.g. Leipzig Trade Fair); in areas of sport; colleges and ultimately in all the important areas of

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<sup>18</sup> Holzweißig cites a “recommendation” on the way that GDR Christian Democrat newspapers should cover the 1987 *constitutional paper* collectively produced by the Central Committee’s Academy of Social Sciences and the SED’s core values commission: “It is recommended that the press conference is featured on Page 1. ND [the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*] will provide a verbatim publication of the document. We should keep these verbatim extracts from the document to an appropriate length (no whole-page quotations)! ND (*Neues Deutschland*) is to issue a comment on this subject on 29th August. Individual comment should then be given using this general comment as a foundation (cf. Holzweißig 1997: 78). This quotation is aptly indicative of the political motivation behind government motions and questions of newspaper layout and article placement alike.

<sup>19</sup> See the contribution by Harald Müller (1998), Chief of the Press Office at the electronic machinery VEB in Dresden in the 18 years leading to 1989 who was then worked at DEKRA and was responsible for the (Eastern) press after 1989. Müller cites this figure as an indication of professional continuity between the two political systems.

GDR society.<sup>20</sup> It must be noted that levels of critical reflection and the quality of public relations varied greatly across the branches of industry and other fields of society.

Even though the general self-concept of all public relations in the GDR was (and had to be) politically-propagandistic, the difficulties experienced within the departments were often the same as those experienced by their Western counterparts: their *hierarchical structures, relationship to the media, difficulties in evaluating effectiveness and quality control* to name a few. The fundamental task of press offices for the state-owned combines, the largest sector of the GDR economy, was a state-directed planning exercise. By the mid-1970s, the *organisational integration* of the press offices was irregular: at the Leuna chemical works of the Publicly-Owned Enterprises (VEB), the departmental leader of public relations was subordinate to the Director for Procurement/Sales who in turn was subordinate to the General Director, whereas the corresponding role at the VEB chemical plant in Buna reported directly to the General Director (cf. Liebold 1974: 93ff). Describing the conceptual basis of public relations at the Trade Fair Office at the end of the 1960s, Merkwitschka (1968) notes that public relations for the Trade Fair would employ, for example, the 'manifold press service' as its key instrument, producing press conferences that were sent to over 3500 editors across the globe. Even PR agencies abroad (notably in Britain) were employed to this end.

Some light is shed on the concept and practices of socialistic public relations in GDR industry at the start of the 1970s by a survey of 5th June 1971 conducted by the general manager of group public relations at the car manufacturing plant of the Association of Publicly-Owned Businesses (VVB).<sup>21</sup> Twenty-one Publicly-Owned Businesses (VEBs), each affiliated to the VVB, took part in this survey.<sup>22</sup> The survey contained fourteen questions; the first few<sup>23</sup> immediately indicate the fundamental *political-propagandistic awareness raising function* and a *mobilising function* of works public relations. The interviewees were surveyed/asked about the status of public relations in relation to their

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<sup>20</sup> For a description of certain specific areas of this profession (state-owned combines, cultural establishments, municipal public relations, etc.) see the various contributions in Liebert (1998), cf. Bentele/Peter (1996).

<sup>21</sup> The GDR car manufacturing industry was centrally organised. Publicly-owned enterprises, or VEBs, were affiliated to the VVB [Association of Publicly-Owned Enterprises] until 1978 and subject to its instruction.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer Gries discovered this material at the State Archive in Chemnitz, Saxony. It has since been systematically analysed in a dissertation by Sandra Mühlberg.

<sup>23</sup> The first of these 14 questions asks: "how do chiefs working in tandem with social organisations make use of public relations in the works and state-owned combines to mobilise employees in order to fulfil duties prescribed by the state and government"? And, secondly, "how is public relations used to comprehensively inform employees of important decisions and measures to be taken on political and economic focal points, etc". (my italics)

target section of society.<sup>24</sup> The survey took place during a period of heightened interest in Public Relations in the GDR. In 1970, for example, an impassioned debate about *public relations as an obligatory management activity for works directors* took place in the pages of the SED party newspaper *Sozialistische Demokratie*.<sup>25</sup> Such heightened political interest could be regarded as the impetus behind the survey, even if the source material only permits speculation on its actual intentions.

According to the survey responses, the most significant methods of fulfilling the awareness-raising and mobilising functions are namely *work appraisals* and *works meetings* at all levels, *planning inspections*, the *System for Agitator Advice*, *works newsletters*, *works radio*, *innovation forums* and the entire *innovation body*, *production propaganda*, *wall-mounted newspapers*, *inter-factory exhibitions*, etc.

Responding to the question of which *forms, methods* and *means* of public relations are currently used, on several occasions, interviewees differentiate between the technique of the *spoken word* (e.g. advice for agitators, general meetings of union workplace representatives, public talks, conferences, public reports commissioned by directors, one-to-one conversations, discussion of best practice, round table discussions and so-called 'red assemblies'), the *written word* (works newspapers, wall-mounted newspapers, visual agitation, information support points, flyers, pamphlets, brochures, league tables, materials for production propaganda, etc.) and *pictorial representations* (e.g. wall-mounted and plant newspapers, display cabinets and window displays, free-standing notice boards, films, placards, workshops, audio-accompanied slideshows, etc.). There were even such events as plant festivals and 'Master Craftsmen Days'.

The responses illustrate that the way that these methods of communication, with the exception of certain practices and methods particular to the GDR (e.g. the body for innovation, advice for agitators, 'red assemblies', etc.), were certainly comparable with methods employed in the West during the same period. The differences between socialistic and democratic public relations can be found in their respective *functions* rather than in the specific tools of their implementation.

The corresponding *understanding* of public relations by those surveyed is rationalisation, efficiency, quota fulfilment, socialistic competition, high-quality

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<sup>24</sup> Interviewees were asked about the internal communications with colleagues, press relations, dialogue with the general public (customers, residents etc.).

<sup>25</sup> See. SD 32/1970, supplement; continued in SD 34-50/1970

workmanship, energy-saving measures, the promotion of innovation and also socialistic models of behaviour and the socialistic consciousness.

The *relationship* of state trust and VEB communications departments *with the media* was generally regarded as positive by those responsible, while collaboration with local and regional newspapers ran smoothly and was well-rehearsed. The only difference was the intensity of contact with the media, which ranged from a detailed press briefs to ‘informative pointers’. Press briefings, press discussions, press conferences, press packs, technical contributions to technical journals, press relations at trade fairs and providing expert advice for radio and television were listed as just some of the methods of press relations. Job-specific terminology was common. ‘Shortcomings’ were noted with reference to foreign media, which was generally a delicate matter in itself. The *status of press delegates* varied from one enterprise to another: public relations employees were usually subordinate to the plant manager and in some cases to the office supervisor or the director of external and internal trade.

Methods of evaluation were generally reduced to creating a summarising *press review* that was put together externally by the Globus newspaper cuttings service. However, criticism by and suggestions from the general public were also analysed.

Questions concerning a *long-term strategy or basic order for public relations* demonstrate that the Association of Publicly-Owned Enterprises may have been prescriptive on the realisation of public relations. In fact, most of the interviewed employers neither had access to the annual plan nor were they aware of the ‘index of tasks for the press and production propaganda’.<sup>26</sup> This point indicates that the ‘top-down’ model of public relations in car manufacturing *did* exist but was not always put into practice. The survey also illustrates that the profession of public relations developed from the need for communications on the part of organisations. The political system then provided the framework.

From a contemporary perspective, *plant newspapers* appear to have been an important means of internal (socialistic) public relations in the GDR even though they were subject to the personal organisations of the SED. Therefore, they were not instruments of industrial public relations in a formal sense. Rather, they were a means of *political mass engagement* in large manufacturing plants with at least 1,000 employees. Editors of plant

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<sup>26</sup> This index of tasks could unfortunately not be found during a period of research at the State Archive in Chemnitz.

newspapers were employees of the SED party apparatus; and the general direction of all plant newspapers was the responsibility of the Central Committee's Department of Agitation in Berlin. Akin to plant radio, which was, however, the responsibility of the individual Publicly-Owned Enterprises, topics and purposes of these newspapers mainly concerned plant employees. Since internal affairs of the institution - or what the SED defined as 'internal' and wanted to withhold from public knowledge - often became the content of published articles, many of these periodicals were prohibited from general circulation even in other nations of the Eastern Bloc. In 1988, there existed 667 plant newspapers with a total circulation of 2.21 million copies. Harald Müller argues that plant newspapers, although officially subsumed by the SED party, were 'one of the greatest achievements of GDR public relations' and were read from cover to cover with the exception of the 'first four pages of official announcements, which were all poor-copy lifted from the state newspaper *Die Tageszeitung*'.<sup>27</sup>

Alongside the plant newspapers there were, by the end of the 1980s, over 500 *magazines*, 176 national and 354 regional *newsletters*, as well as *weekly newspapers* and *journals* produced by the church and other religious communities. These publications were counted as part of the GDR press system amongst East German journalists (Halbach 1988). The majority of these publications may, by today's standards, be regarded as the work of the public relations profession. Journals edited by the various ministries, such as *Fahrt frei* (the fortnightly newspaper of the railwaymen with a circulation of 100,000) or *Deutsche Angelsport* — the mouthpiece of the German Fishing Association of the GDR with a circulation of 150,000 — simply fulfilled PR functions on behalf of their editing organisations.<sup>28</sup> The sheer number of such periodicals implies that the profession had considerable magnitude and was important to the GDR.

#### **4. Socialistic public relations: summarising evaluation and comparisons**

The profession of public relations was enormously significant for organisations as well as society in general in the GDR. But what *similarities* and *differences* did exist between the respective professions in the GDR and in the Federal Republic?

1. The entirely different *political and economic frameworks* (macro structure) in the two nations determined their *differences* with regard to public relations at the organisational level (meso structure). Steering by the party and the Central Committee,

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<sup>27</sup> Quotations here appear in the interview with Harald Müller in Voigt (1993: 168).

<sup>28</sup> For more on these and subsequent reports see Halbach (1988) and the more critical appraisal by Wilke (2002).

which was entirely typical of the GDR's social system; and the direct dependency of the media system and most organisations on authoritative steering, led to a fundamental and widespread political *instrumentalisation* of the media and also public relations by politics. This was evident in:

- the creation of *state guidelines* for political, industrial, cultural public relations that limited political headroom on account of their quasi-legalistic nature.
- the fundamental, forceful *political self-concept* of all forms of public relations, the political-ideological mission statement and thus in the central *propagandistic function* of 'PR' in the GDR.
- the highly-politicised selection of *form* and *content* for communication, *thus* in a *propagandistic style of communication*.

2. Journalistic establishments and organisations in the GDR (ADN, daily newspapers, radio stations) were notably less autonomous than corresponding media in the West because of their incorporation into the SED-steered information apparatus. With its political steering and political-ideological claim to be part of mass political engagement, as well as the fact that the GDR media were subordinate political auxiliaries and not a semi-autonomous system, professional public relations in the GDR can be regarded as having been a *powerful influence* in GDR society and, indeed, perhaps more powerful than in many parliamentary democracies and nations with relatively independent media outlets. The major players and organisations in the field of public relations provided the GDR media system (in the narrow sense of the term) with important information that it would otherwise have hardly been able to generate. This powerful influence was, however, weakened by the limited credibility of the media in the GDR (Cf. Hesse 1988), propaganda slogans and some centrally-coordinated campaigns.
3. One *structural difference* between the respective professions in East and West was that GDR public relations did not have a service sector. The SED had its own advertising agency DEWAG, which was entrusted with certain public relations exercises, but there was no chance of smaller, independent communications agencies developing.
4. Concerning commonalities between public relations in the GDR and (former) West Germany, some functional commonalities are certainly to be observed at the organisational level. Similar to the West, public relations in the GDR mainly had the task of monitoring, *informing*, *communicating with* and *persuading* others in the

interests of the various organisations. In this respect, the corresponding *organisational functions* remained the same even under the conditions of a different political system.

5. At the same time, however, a sharp contrast between East and West is defined by the absolutely fundamental political-ideological function of socialistic public relations and the concomitant propagandistic style of communication. Socialistic public relations in the GDR performed similar functions to its subordinate socialistic journalism: disseminating propaganda, agitation und organisation. It was an integral and prominent part of the SED's mass political engagement and its propagandistic practices. Public relations in the East and West differed on the subject of *long-term strategy*, with the major difference being that this process in GDR was authorised and prescribed by the state in all areas of society.
6. Many similarities can also be found with regard to the use of specific *instruments* (e.g. press relations) and *methods* (e.g. planning and review). The classic tools of *press relations* (e.g. organisation of press distributions, the use of press bulletins, explanatory bulletins, and the organisation of press conferences) or *PR event management* (organisation of press information events, conferences, anniversary events) right through to reviews of public relations were employed to similar extents in both East and West Germany. The complex *practices* of public communications (e.g. campaigns and the staging of large-scale events) were the direct responsibility of the party and its corresponding political offices and gave the GDR a 'public face' typical of many dictatorships.

This system of public communications in the GDR - a system in which both public relations and the media were programmed for propaganda - meant that public relations understood as dialogue and 'horizontal' communication was impossible. Socialistic public relations was in the main restricted to versions of 'Propaganda/Publicity' and a version of 'Information' (Cf. Grunig & Hunt 1984). Together with economic factors, it was this structural obstruction to genuine dialogue between state institutions and the population, the absence of an independent and critical media, and the lack of credibility of its propaganda that led to the demise of the GDR.

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**REVEALING HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS  
PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION: THE EARLY  
HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION AT BOURNEMOUTH  
UNIVERSITY - STRUCTURE, EVOLUTION, PEOPLE AND CURRICULA**

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The overall purpose of this paper is to produce a historical account of PR at BU in order to chronicle the growth and development of the subject. In addition to these observations, both internal and external factors which have made an impact on the course will be identified. Through this mezzo-level study it will be possible to analyse both the historical development of PR at BU as well as the relationship between academia, education and industry.

The way in which research was conducted in order to analyse the historical developments and changes was using a series of nine semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with those select people involved with the establishment, maintenance and development of the courses both at an undergraduate and postgraduate level as well as students involved in the start of the course. Those interviewed were Tom Watson, Kevin Moloney, Stephen Jukes, Hilary Stepien, Dan Jackson, Darren Lilleker, Mathew McKenna, Carrie Hodges, and Charlotte Bullock. Additionally, key university statistics and documentation provided further data in order to provide a tangible and factual outline of historical changes. This data in unison with existing literature helps to contextualise frameworks to provide a theoretical understanding as to not only how developments occurred, but also as to why.

Through the research conducted, the structure of the paper will illustrate the chronological developments of PR at BU in terms of course structure, curriculum, applicant rates and key influential people.

Since the start of the undergraduate course in public relations (PR) at Bournemouth University (BU) in 1989, a total of 1402 students have enrolled. The postgraduate MA course itself only began in 2004. Between 2004 and 2009, 80 students enrolled in MAPR with a total of 412 applicants (McAllister, 2010). While there has been a marked growth in

student numbers for undergraduate PR (BAPR), postgraduate (MAPR) enrolments have shown recent decline (Moloney, 2010) (Stepien, 2010).

The introduction of Public Relations (PR) as a course at Bournemouth University (BU) has provided a means to analyse the development of the discipline in a historical and sociological framework (Stephenson, 1960). There has been a trend of increase with regards to the number of PR courses taught as an academic subject at higher education (HE) as well as a growth in the PR industry (Watson, 2010; Ries & Ries, 2002). Since the inclusion of PR as an academic subject in the UK the number of available courses has grown in number to over thirty five in approximately twenty years.

There has already been some identification and analysis of growth in this trend regarding established PR courses globally (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Freidson, 1994; Heath, 2001; Tapp, et al., 2004). Furthermore there has been analysis fixed more on the research and trends in the United Kingdom (UK) (L'Etang J. , 2002; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006 p. 434). Whilst this has permitted a degree of understanding, through the contextualisation of focusing on a singular institution it becomes possible to examine this development at a mezzo-level. This is a particular area of research which currently has not had the same degree of focus compared to macro (L'Etang J. , 2004; Puchan, 2006; Larsson, 2006) and micro (Hiebert, 1966; Cutlip, 1994; Tye, 2001) accounts.

PR has been growing since its inception under the current title as a discipline. This is reflected in the growth of PR as an academic subject. Research and analysis of the growth in PR as a discipline has been extensive (Cutlip, 1995; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Through looking at the developments of this subject at a mezzo-level focusing on BU, the aim is to not only discern an evolution of the course at this identified institution but also to provide a contextual link to the corporate influence on education.

The key underlying factor in the development of PR at BU is a combination of the industrial aspirations for professionalisation along with the university's aim at growth. As both the institution and the industry sought enhancement through one another, developments in academia and industry have been running parallel to a degree.

Since its point of initiation PR has continued to grow and these developments have been under continuous scrutiny (Heath, 2001 p. 642) as the subject has made attempts to distance itself from its press agency origins. Despite emphasis being brought on shifting away from this form of message dissemination, press agency remains "the most prevalent form of PR strategy" in the UK (Tobin, 2004). It has been essential for the development of PR to loosen ties to propaganda due to the negativity of the term. By doing so, PR aims

to become more legitimate and consequently more effective at its goals. In order to gain this social legitimacy, PR has worked towards its professionalisation. In professionalising communicative persuasion into PR it can be seen as an attempt to provide credibility and overcoming the detrimental image associated with it.

This has been further highlighted with regards to issues surrounding trust. With UK society having been described as increasingly cynical and distrusting (Edwards & Cromwell, 2006; Harlow, 1957); Tobin, 2004) it presents a challenging environment for PR practitioners to function in (Harvey, 1991). Coupled with the historical distrust for the profession this illustrates the growing difficulties for PR. What the move from PR towards professionalisation shows is a conscious effort to tackle the issue of trust in the industry (Tobin, 2004; Levine, 2002 p. 328). This professionalisation would create a tangible professional entity with clearly defined outlines and jurisdiction (Harrison, 2000 p. 10) thereby allowing PR to have a clearly marked role, field and function. This would require the industry *'to adopt and publish professional ethical standards relevant to the practice of public relations and to maintain procedures for the regulation of members' professional conduct and discipline'* (IPR, 2004 pp. 3-5). In doing so the objective is to encourage trust and clarifies the public benefits of the PR industry (Tobin, 2004). There is however here a counter issue. In creating a rigid structure it creates defined branches for the array of PR functions and devices resulting in a difficulty in professionalisation (L'Etang J. , 2008 p. 36). The reason for this difficulty is that in professionalisation, clearly defined jurisdictions of practices are needed (Tench & Yeomans, 2006 p. 53). This is something that has yet to exist for the PR profession as it is almost an umbrella term for the 'Niagara', as Moloney (2006) suggests, of what it comprises. To further this issue with professionalising the subject, due to the breadth of its current influence it is undefined as to which school of thought 'owns' (Kruckeberg, 1998; Watson, 2010) the varying aspects of what can be considered PR.

In order to professionalise the subject of PR, and through this the aim for recognition of the profession and "social legitimacy" (L'Etang J. , 2004 p. 221), the subject requires a foundation of education and academic support (Brookes, 2003; Sheil & Bahk, 2010; L'Etang J. , 2002). Yet due to the breadth of what PR currently covers it remains to an extent, floating on the sea of subjects it incorporates without currently holding a firm niche itself. As Grunig (1992 p. 440) points out PR may be an occupation but due to no "defined area of competence", "consequence", "independence" and "self-consciousness" it has yet to be define as a profession.

What can be established is that PR is actively seeking a more professionalised status in order to enhance its impact and strengthen its industrial field. Additionally, this would develop a tangibility which would help clients to understand the role of practitioners (Mazur, 1992 p. 68). One of the key means to achieve this is through the reinforcement of the industry through academic support. Through including an educational aspect into foundations of the industry not only would it aid in legitimising the field but also provide numerous contributions further enabling practitioners to function more effectively.

Having an established educational programme in PR provides three key benefits to the profession aside from industrial legitimacy: social theory, frameworks (Ihlen, et al., 2009 pp. 3, 329) and student exposure (Mazur, 1992 p. 69).

The linking of social theory and PR in academia helps to enable a furthered understanding (Swedberg, 1998; Giddens, 1995) of the developments made. Through critically analysing the subjects with a degree of unison it considers external perspectives on the environment in which the industry operates. This allows for more varied research to be developed thus enhancing the understanding of PR functions and potential progression. Through academia enabled research, these developments, in understanding the nuances at both mezzo and micro levels help to identify structural strengths as well as weaknesses, consequently influencing the industry's performance (Haslam, 2002).

Another benefit brought to the industrial setting from education as noted at BU is that students are exposed to codes of practice, ethics, case-studies and encouraged in their critical thinking (Moloney, 2010; Watson, 2010) which is evident throughout the developments that were made through the progression of the course. What this produces are graduates and postgraduates who are more prepared than otherwise for the industrial aspects of the subject. This also highlights a key point which is the importance of clearly providing a bridge between pure academia and the industrial environment (Harlow, 1957). In ensuring that the curriculum has industrial value as well as theoretical course aspects, it also provides an industrial stake in the education (IPRA, 2006). What this results in is industry providing input into education, seeing the benefits to business and future practitioners (Burton, 1966). This can be clearly seen in the development of both the undergraduate and postgraduate courses at Bournemouth University.

BU in 1989 was at the time the Dorset Institute of Higher Education (DIHE) when the BAPR course was initiated. During a conference in Oxford where Guy Fielding was making a presentation on the psychology of communication, he approached Tom Watson

with regards to looking for support in establishing a PR course at DIHE (Watson, 2010). PR university courses had grown in number in Australia and in the United States of America (USA). As a result it was felt that similar courses may be able to be established in the United Kingdom (UK) (Watson, 2010) as a market for the subject was becoming apparent. DIHE was not the only educational institution which was expressing interest in the subject. At the same time as DIHE set up the course, another three institutions began initiating similar courses. These were the more established Stirling University, Leeds Polytechnic, and St. Mark's & St. John's (Marjon) (Watson, 2010; Moloney, 2010). As the subject was new academically in the UK it was important for DIHE to establish itself at the same pace as its competition.

One of the key factors why the course emerged in the UK when it did was as a result of the “end of the triumphant period of Thatcherism” (Moloney, 2010). At this point in time PR was considered to be a “growing activity tied to free markets and liberal democracy” (Moloney, 2010). Universities are constantly seeking to increase their student numbers which was demonstrated in the case of creating a course in PR. PR in the Thatcherite period was considered to be of importance due to social attitudes during this time (Benkler, 2006). As a result of this, universities and institutions looking for students saw PR in this period as a potential niche (Moloney, 2010), an untapped market which fitted into the Thatcherite attitudes during this time. It was perceived as a growing industry with a gap in the education market. This was key in the timing of launching the course as due to the growing industrial demands, more people began to gain an interest in the field though there was no established means of entering an occupation in PR. In part as a result of this identified niche, the four institutions mentioned above began to establish relevant courses due to the demand placed by potential applicants. Through pioneering a course in the identified niche not only did it seem particularly relevant and desired at the time (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006), but it provided the opportunity to acquire students with very limited competition. In doing so, pioneering institutions would be able to increase student numbers readily for the purposes of financial gain, reputation and recognition.

The undergraduate course at DIHE took a total of nine months to piece together, starting in January 1989 until September that year (Moloney, 2010). In order to do this DIHE had to gain further support to establish the course. It found this support through not only Guy Fielding and Tom Watson, but also through Tom Morely, Toby MacManus, Kevin Moloney and Paul Noble (Moloney, 2010). These key influential people in the establishment of the course had varying academic backgrounds ranging from

psychological fields to liberal arts (Watson, 2010) which with regards to the breadth of what PR encompassed, helped to shape the course structure of which underlying aspects have remained to this day.

In forming the course, DIHE sought accreditation from the then called Institute of Public Relations (IPR) prior to it becoming the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) (Jackson, 2010; Lilleker, 2010; Jukes, 2010; Moloney, 2010; Watson, 2010). In becoming an accredited course it would give a degree of validity to the course, thus proving valuable especially in external contexts as a selling point. This would provide them with a higher degree of recognition and thus aid in student recruitment. As BU wanted the IPR to accredit the course they needed to compromise on course content and establish an ongoing relationship with the industrial bodies. This industrial relationship is something which has been publicised throughout BU as a means of advertising professional course relevance. In doing so BU demonstrates a business drive for expansion and recognition, relating to demands from the target audience and marketing accordingly. The PR industry typically sought to influence courses in order to make them practically relevant (Lilleker, 2010; Moloney, 2010; Hodges, 2010). DIHE was however opposed to creating a purely vocational 'training course'. The fundamental reason behind this was that DIHE wanted to grow as a recognised educational institution. With regards to PR, the subject was of in a state of rapid development and growing interest. Consequently contribution to the academia, research and theory on PR would help DIHE gain the recognition it sought. In order to do this DIHE would need to actively participate in the development of the subject which would not be feasible should the course become purely an industrial training course. As a result the IPR through industrial requirements laid out key areas to be included in the syllabus (Jackson, 2010; Lilleker, 2010). This accreditation helped benefit DIHE in two ways. What this institution was highly focused on was its expansion to become a polytechnic (Moloney, 2010; Watson, 2010). DIHE was at the time considered to be a "*non-entity*" (Moloney, 2010) compared to other established institutions such as Stirling University. The accreditation of the course would potentially allow DIHE to be more competitive in this new field to help the institution expand. The second benefit is the fact that with the inclusion of the IPR's requirements, it would help shape the course to remain industrially relevant while not restricting academic growth.

The hope that the IPR accreditation would help place DIHE in the frontlines of UK PR academia was indicated to have had a level of success in accomplishing this. DIHE was not a well known institution though despite this, the course was recommended by

careers advisors even during its first active year (McKenna, 2010). The course itself since its inception was organised as a sandwich course. This was implemented into the structure of the course for a number of reasons. In establishing a sandwich year in which students find a placement in industry it helps ensure and maintain industrial relations (Lilleker, 2010). DIHE's industrial ties provided a total of 16 placements a year (Moloney, Evolution of PR as a course at Bournemouth University, 2010). This aspect of the course additionally helped in other respects. The objective of the placement year was to also provide practical industrial insight for students who would be able to draw on this in the final year. By exposing students to the industrial realities they would be able to conduct more relevant dissertations as well as highlight module options which would be of interest. Furthermore in doing so it was to benefit the university reputation. By having tangible industrial ties as well as providing industrial experience for students it allowed the university to market the course by openly fulfilling one of the common requirements to join the PR industry, experience. The provision of industrial experience not only helped BU attract students, but by maintaining industrial relations through this it would give rise to a plethora of guest speakers such as Max Clifford (McKenna, 2010), further helping the course remain industrially relevant.

The structure of the course not only reflected at the time the vocational framework of DIHE (Watson, 2010; Moloney, 2010) but also its aspirations of growth through becoming more 'professionally' focused. Initially the course model resembled a business studies degree with PR elements built into it (Watson, 2010). The course content followed certain skills identified as being key to the industrial facet of PR. Modules during the first instillation of BAPR at BU included 'writing foundation skills', 'persuasion and influence', and 'campaign planning' (Bullock, 2010). In addition to these the course content included aspects of accountancy and law. The purpose of these aspects was to provide insight into situations which may be of concern to PR practitioners, such as journalism law, defamation of character and copyright law (McKenna, 2010). This once again highlighted the vocational nature of the initial course.

The course content at the time also included a high degree of 'creative' modules such as graphic design (McKenna, 2010). The purpose of this was to help students aware of the creative input needed in the profession as well as giving them the tools to be able to act independently. In addition this aspect of the course was put in place to allow students to be able to liaise more effectively with those they would have to interact with in industry.

These 'creative' modules were dropped for other options over time as they were not perceived as being useful in the long term despite student popularity (McKenna, 2010).

The course content at the time also included a number of optional modules in final year aimed again at the vocational aspects of PR. These dealt with public affairs, crisis management as well as a module on 'media in society'. With regards to the media influence of the course, even at the time in 1989 BAPR at DIHE was to an extent 'ahead of its time' by including digital elements, helped by ongoing research at DIHE (McKenna, 2010; Watson, 2010). BAPR at BU has always held a firm grounding in research (Jukes, 2010; Moloney, 2010; McKenna, 2010; Watson, 2010) even during its inception whilst the institution was call DIHE. This particular focus has remained paramount during the development of the course. The research contributed to the understanding of PR from BU, has particular benefit to the industry. Furthering research crafted theory it becomes possible to create subsequent frameworks. In doing so it illustrates aspects of the industry and its effects on its environment, its audiences and structures (Moloney, 2010). In addition to this these frameworks can be implemented into practice indicating a clear benefit of academia translated into industry. This focus on research has been central to the execution of the PR courses at BU which is illustrated throughout the course outlines each year (Moloney, 2010; Lilleker, 2010; Watson, 2010; BU, 2004; BU, 2008). The focus on research helped shape the course developments to by establishing the institution as a research hub (Jackson, 2010), gaining enhanced recognition. The research the BU throughout the years has provided developments of theory regarding reputation, corporate communications, trust and legitimacy (Watson, 2010) which has benefited the industrial facet. Though one of the key aspects of BU's development with regards to PR is the course focus on critical understanding and analysis, making students aware of an "alternative narrative" (Moloney, 2010) to what PR consists of. Reasons for this are not only to provide the industry with adaptable graduates, but also to differentiate itself from other similar institutions.

DIHE managed to begin showing clear signs of growth in 1990, one year after the initiation of PR as a course, by becoming a polytechnic. While this growth cannot be attributed solely to the inclusion of PR as course, as demand for the subject was growing with initially few institutions participating, the increase in student numbers and institutional recognition is undeniably relevant (Moloney, 2010). By 1992 the trend of growth continued and Bournemouth polytechnic became BU.

During this time of transition from DIHE to BU, the BAPR course underwent a number of changes. These tended not to be radical alterations, but rather evolutionary changes. Minor changes included altering weighting of modules as well as inclusion of new modules. These changes in the course content help to reflect the relationship between academia and industry. Having grown as a subject from 0 to over 35 degrees in higher education (HE) PR in the UK in 21 years it illustrates growth not only as an academic subject, but also as an industrial field. In addition to this, the rate in terms of growth is notable in HE PR as the number of courses is increasing faster than the majority of other areas (Moloney, 2010). This again mirrors to an extent the rate of growth in PR as a practice. These changes can be clearly noted through the development of PR at BU. There was a notable change however even during the first run of the course of a shift away from politics (Bullock, 2010). Three notable additions to the course contents are the introduction of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the mid 1990s (Moloney, 2010) as well as globalisation. As the course progressed and developed the structure of the remained similar. As a result from the placement year, certain modules were shifted from second year to the final year such as CSR (Lilleker, 2010). The reason for these changes was that it was considered to be more relevant post industrial experience so that students could draw from their practice to enhance the final year projects. Other final year options soon became available such as PR and Democracy led by John Brissenden.

As stated, the course syllabus has undergone numerous changes and radicalisations since its start. While initially PR maintained a strong psychological aspect, this has been largely phased out from the course contents and has little emphasis remaining (Watson, 2010). Other elements of the course have also been changed with new aspects being introduced.

One of the most recent updates to the course content at BU has been the inclusion of Interactive Media Strategies (IMS) (Moloney, 2010; Watson, 2010; Lilleker, 2010). BU has increased its focus within the PR courses available in online PR. Furthermore the ways in which the course is taught has had some key changes made. A strong example of this is the heavy use of online media such as “mybu” to act as a point of message dissemination. While this is not restricted only to the PR degree courses, it does feature heavily in these aspects. The purpose of using online media as part of the university teaching programme is primarily focused on facilitating the transmission of information and increasing dialogue with students. Online media is however one of the newer areas of interest with regards to the PR industry. This has been reflected within the course material at BU. As

online and social media is increasing in its pervasion (Bentley, 2008; Bauwens, 2005; Moloney, 2010; Watson, 2010) globally, PR practitioners have to take the impact of this into consideration. These changes were not only an attempt to make the modules more relevant to students (Jackson, 2010) with regards to industrial exposure, but also in following with trends within the profession. This evolutionary development of the course structure illustrates the symbiotic nature of the ties between academia and industry.

This is furthermore expressed in more radical changes to the course outline such as the interdisciplinary modules shared by different subjects. Initially BAPR was taught largely insularly from other subjects, drawing from other subjects in consolidating its own field. BAPR drew heavily from business models, politics, and marketing. This highlighted the query of whether PR was to be considered a profession in its own right due to the lack in jurisdiction, boundaries, as well as the breadth of what it was involved with. What changed radically was the sharing of key modules between PR and Advertising and Marketing Communications (AMC) as well as having a joint first year. The reasons for this shift towards joint modules were for two fundamental reasons. Firstly in doing so, the students would be exposed to differing perspectives on communications which would be essential within industry. Secondly the joining of courses would prove more cost effective in running the courses via sharing resources.

With a growing demand for BAPR at BU, the university continued in its aspiration for growth by including two postgraduate courses. In 2002 came one of the most radical changes to the study of PR at BU. This came in the form of the inclusion of a postgraduate course with the specific target audience of existing professionals. The course titled 'Corporate Communications' help entry requirements based on work experience in the industry as opposed to the traditional, student orientated requirements of academic grades. The second of the two postgraduate courses began two years later in 2004 as a student orientated degree in the form of an MA in 'Public Relations Practice'.

With regards to 'Corporate Communications', BU already had an emphasis on critical thinking in the undergraduate course as well as the research elements in helping consolidate this theme. One of the fundamental objectives of this course was to apply 'critical thinking' into practice (Lilleker, 2010; Moloney, 2010). Consequently BU felt that there would be a suitable market for existing practitioners looking to make use of the skills developed through this learning and would be able to implement them to enhance their professional abilities.

The purpose of this course can be interpreted beyond a business orientated tactic in trying to place a course in a new identified niche market with limited competition. What this course can be seen as attempting is building a further bridge between academia and the profession. Rather than what has been the established link in the 'knowledge transfer' (Watson, 2010) of academia and industry through typical undergraduate courses, Corporate Communications sought to increase the number of links. The aim would benefit BU on a number of levels. Aside from an increase in university enrolment and subsequently the university reputation, it would further strengthen ties with industry and help the subject become more professionally relevant. PR practitioners who question the academic aspect of the subject would have tangible evidence of the benefits provided. Consequently the academia-industrial ties would help PR's goal of becoming more professionally recognised. Yet despite the aims and potential the course could provide, it was unsuccessful in its execution.

While interest in the course was generated, due to a lack in enrolment the course was discontinued three years later in 2007. The issue that the course mostly suffered from was that despite its aims at breaking into a new market for education, enrolment numbers were too few and the Corporate Communications became unable to sustain itself (Hodges, 2010; Stepien, 2010). The reason for this difficulty is that professionals, while expressing interest did feel that taking a year out of work to study would place them behind in industry due to the rapid pace of development.

Out of the two postgraduate courses initiated, the MA in Public Relations Practice has remained in existence. In comparison with the undergraduate course, the MA has undergone fewer changes over its shorter existence. In its original format, MAPRP was taught as an individual postgraduate course with limited interactions between itself and other subjects. In addition to this the course itself had a number of options available. Despite the collapse of the Corporate Communications course, the subject itself was deemed still highly relevant to the socio-industrial position. Consequently aspects of what the course taught were transferred to the MAPRP. The options available were Interactive Media Strategies, Conflict Management Processes, New Media Environment, and International Public Relations (BU, 2004). The postgraduate course had a small team managing its development. The course was initially led by Kath Cutts. Kevin Moloney, John Brissenden, Cathy Hodges, and Elsbeth Caswell also had a profound impact on the course development. Hilary Stepien took lead of the course by the time the course was due for revalidation (Stepien, 2010).

Enrolment into the course has remained low since the postgraduate course began. The first year in which the course was established, there were a total of 13 students attending (Stepien, 2010). This number grew progressively to 16 the following year up to a peak of 19 students in 2007 (Reeson, 2010). One concern that grew with the course was that it was felt that the title was misleading as numerous students were expecting more of a vocational degree. As a result of this the postgraduate course altered the name to MA Public Relations so as to lessen any false expectations (Stepien, 2010). It was at this time in 2008 under its new title that enrolment numbers fell to 10, and the following year, 9. A marked change in the final year was a distinct shift from predominantly international students to UK students (Stepien, 2010). The result of this drop is the situation that MAPR is bordering on whether to be continued.

Between 2004 and 2007, the MAPRP course content remained the same, shifting only slightly in terms of structure (BU, 2004; BU, 2006; BU, 2007; BU, 2008). While the weighting for the modules did not differ from year to year, the weighting within the modules did differ slightly. This change only came about in 2008 when the module of International PR changed from having two assignments to having one (BU, 2008). Only in 2009 did MAPR make a substantial alteration. As with BAPR, the course is due for revalidation every five years. What the result of this revalidation was the exclusion of all optional modules. In order remain accredited by the CIPR, certain key skills need to remain included in the curricula. These were reshuffled into other modules, such as Writing Skills being incorporated into Communication Skills (Stepien, 2010). What this permitted was a bridging between PR and AMC. This crossover between subjects allowed for a sharing of modules deemed necessary for both. The two modules shared are IMS and the newly created Joint Campaign Planning. The purpose of this manoeuvre was to allow for interaction between two subjects with differing perceptions of communications tactics in order to reflect industrial realities. This is same action was observed in the development of BAPR. While this does show a clear indication that the academic presence in PR is tied to the developments in industry, it also highlights a certain corporate mentality within the university. By combining the two courses for related subjects it helps support the currently falling numbers in MAPR through the growing number of MAAMC students. Between 2008 and 2009, MAAMC has grown by 12 enrolments bringing the course to a total of 32 students. By sharing resources across the two subjects it allows for greater cost effectiveness thereby allowing MAPR to extend its viability in order to continue trying to increase student numbers.

In comparison to the decline in numbers for MAPR, the undergraduate course has grown rapidly, especially over the last three years. In 2007 there were a total of 60 enrolled students in BAPR, while in 2009 the numbers rose to 92 (Reeson, 2010). The comparative decline in MAPR enrolment could be attributed to potentially in part to a change in name from MAPRP. Due to PR academia still developing (Hodges, 2010), currently in a state of 'adolescence', the common perception of PR remains vocationally focused. As a result the 'Practice' part of the course title may have contributed to the number of enrolments and the subsequent removal, led to the decline (Stepien, 2010). Another explanation for this is taking into account the socio-economic climate. In times of financial difficulties it is noted that increasing numbers are taking refuge in higher education (Moloney, 2010). While this is true of undergraduate studies in which a loan is provided, postgraduate courses are funded purely by applicants. Consequently if finances are of concern, then taking a year out for education as opposed to earning would be unappealing to many. The timing of this fits with the sudden decline in applicant rates for MAPR. A problem arises however in trying attribute the decline to socio-economic difficulties as comparatively MAAMC enrolment has boomed. This shifts the explanation for the decline in MAPR applicants to issues with marketing the course (Hodges, 2010) while perhaps it is relevant to industry it currently does not appear to appeal to the target audience.

In terms of the overall structural changes to BU which influence the teaching of PR, a prominent recent change has been within the infrastructure. BU has a current policy not to hire lecturers without a PhD (Hodges, 2010; Jukes, 2010; Jackson, 2010) due to a focus on research at the university. This theoretically could prove to push the teaching of the subject further towards academia and therefore further from professional perspectives. This shift however would remain limited due to the influence of both the CIPR as well as BU's strong industrial relations.

To this day BU's developments of PR as a subject continue to reflect the trends and developments in industry, partly again due to the remaining influence of the CIPR. The specific structure is subject to change with the influence of new course teams of which the current leaders for BAPR and MAPR respectively are Dr Dan Jackson and Hilary Stepien.

Following the trend which has been apparent throughout the development of PR at BU, it is likely that the ties between academia and industry will continue. Examples of this can already be seen in progress. With the re-emergence of the social interest political PR

(Hodges, 2010), plans for the inclusion of Politics/PR combined honours course have been discussed (Lilleker, 2010; Jackson, 2010). Projections for this new course have been estimated to come to fruition in 2012, provided the market research shows evidence for viable demand. Another potential future development is the possibility of having shared modules between PR and Journalism (Jukes, 2010). The reason for this, like the bridging between PR and AMC would be to provide an industrial context for students while keeping the courses sustainable.

Since its launch BU's PR programme has grown rapidly and to an extent faster than its competition. When tracing the developments made in the course what can be seen is that it is tied heavily to industry, running almost parallel with the pace of change and the industrial requirements. Nonetheless BU's PR programme is not dictated by the industrial requirements though does have to acknowledge them. Even so, it can be argued that due to the market orientated architecture of BU it has become corporatized. By seeking to grow and develop in a highly market orientated environment BU has had to act accordingly to survive and develop. Nonetheless BU has not become corporatized to the extent that it is purely a tool for industry, as shown with the development of the PR programme. They are nonetheless dependent on one another. What can be seen which reinforces the notion of corporatisation is the fact that the PR programme develops along with its industrial facet. The relationship the course holds with the industry is complex and symbiotic. Through this they have been able to develop one another furthering their individual aims.

BU as stated has had a PR programme which has been developing rapidly. The overarching shift from a vocational institution and subject to focusing on a profession shows the parallel aspirations of the PR industry. There are numerous factors which have contributed to this growth. The initial point is that it was amongst the first to include PR as degree subject, being accredited by the IPR and gaining sought after recognition. BU maintained its evolution through remaining relevant to industry and being able to hold a relationship with practitioners. In addition to this, BU has helped contribute theoretically to practical aspects thus furthering its reputation and while the curriculum has radicalised at times, it has been a reaction to industrial developments.

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# GERMAN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE 1890-1914 “NAVY PROPAGANDA”

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## 1. Introduction

Is the history of public relations a “history without beginning” (Binder, 1983)? Parallel to the boom of the profession in Germany, an interest in PR historiography has emerged in the last 25 years in a desire to give the profession a clear identity. However, most accounts of public relations history provide a mere description of facts and lack analysis from the viewpoint of public relations theory. This leads to vague and insufficiently informed descriptions, a phenomenon criticized, among others, by Günter Bentele (1997):

“As a result, even contemporary literature frequently mentions Alfred von Tirpitz, Secretary of State of the Imperial Naval Office, who – by implementing communication activities such as the assignment of officers whose task it was to inform and receive visitors, among other things – has made an early contribution to German PR history. [...] So far, obviously none of the authors addressing PR history had the time or the interest in doing more detailed research about what activities Alfred von Tirpitz has actually undertaken and what exactly, therefore, is his role in PR history.” (translation mine) [1]

This paper contributes to the description of the development of German public relations, thus enlarging the body of knowledge of a field Bentele (2003) considers to be an “underdeveloped” (translation mine) area.[2] The “navy propaganda” surrounding the enlargement of the German naval force is indeed often considered a prime example of governmental communication in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (see e.g. Kunczik, 1997). It is another objective of this paper to clarify if Tirpitz’ activities can in fact be considered a success, or if this part of communication history is mostly a legend.

## 2. Status of primary sources and central issues

The main focus of analysis are the activities of the Imperial Naval Office’s “News Office” as main governmental agent and the German Navy League as an organization with strong governmental support. Records of the “News Office” are located at the National Archives/Department Military Archives in Freiburg, Germany. There is no central location of records for the Navy League, but many documents concerning this organization can be found in the Imperial Naval Offices’ records.

In deconstructing both organizations' activities, the main issues are as follows:

Can configuration and intensity of the “navy propaganda” be attributed to political and/or societal pressure of legitimation?

It seems unlikely that the expensive and elaborate procedures of the “navy propaganda” were carried out without internal or external motivation. It is to be determined whether this motivation resulted, as we presume, from societal and/or political pressure of legitimation on the main agents of the German fleet enlargement.

Has the “navy propaganda” (at least partly) achieved its main objective concerning the persuasion of the published and public opinion of the times?

Without exemption, the determination of success of communication activities is hindered by the issue of definite proof of a cause-effect relation; even more so when these activities that took place a century ago and – this much can be foreclosed – were not part of a strategic communication program in today's terms. Nevertheless, clues as to the success of the “navy propaganda” can be derived from the primary sources.

Can the “navy propaganda” be considered an advancement in professionalisation in the development of German public relations?

Even today, public relations as an occupational area have no uniform standards of entrance. Nevertheless, historical forms of communication substantially differ from today's professional PR work. In between lies a process which has not yet reached its end point. In a first step, the “navy propaganda” will be classified in the continuum of various forms of persuasive communication. Additionally, it is to be clarified whether it marked a significant development in the field of governmental communication.

Can the historical period of the “Navy Propaganda” be connected to theoretical approaches to the development of public relations?

Scientific models and theories of the historical development of public relations usually draw links between political and societal circumstances and the development of public relations. The findings about the “navy propaganda” will be analysed as to whether they support or negate some of these approaches.

### **3. Prior research on the “navy propaganda”**

So far, few well-funded German works on the intersection between public relations theory and historical analysis have been published. This is almost certainly due to the youth of the field. Governmental relations to the public in Imperial Germany have been researched by various historians (Seeling, 1996; Stöber, 2000) whose works usually dedicate a section to the “navy propaganda”. The most thorough accounts of the activities have been given

by historians Wilhelm Deist (1976), who can also be credited with coining the term of “navy propaganda” to describe them[3], and H.F.E. Wegener (1983). With the exception of Seeling’s dissertation, all historiographic descriptions lack the perspective of PR or even, in general, communication theory.

#### **4. Background: Imperial Germany and its plans for Navy enlargement**

##### **4.1 Imperial German politics**

Imperial German politics changed considerably after the forced abdication of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1890. Especially in the field of foreign affairs, the decisions made by Emperor Wilhelm II were to enduringly alter the Empire’s situation. After his break with Bismarck, the young Emperor introduced his “New Course” (Hildebrand, 1999) with the objective of gaining greater power for Germany in the world, mainly through acquiring new colonies. He thereby dissolved the safety net that Bismarck had carefully constructed to keep the young Empire stable and secure from external conflicts. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Emperor in his pursuit of worldwide recognition alienated most former allies, especially antagonizing England (Ulrich, 2007).

The German Empire of the 1890s was a class society with sharp delineations between the nobility, which seemed to be shrinking in size as well as in importance, the increasingly politicized bourgeoisie (Wehler, 1995) and the ever-growing working class (Nipperdey, 1990). A rapidly developing media structure provided all societal classes with a forum for expressing their opinion. The spectrum of political parties was wide and heterogenous, hampering an evolution towards a parliamentary system because no single party could ever attain a majority (Baumgart, 1986).

##### **4.2 German navy plans**

When Wilhelm II ascended to the throne in 1888, Germany possessed the world’s sixth largest fleet (Kaulisch, 1982). By the beginning of World War I, it was second only to England(<http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/kaiserreich/innenpolitik/flottenverein/index.html>). Wilhelm had been a navy enthusiast since his youth and on his ascendance started planning the enlargement of the German navy (Salewski, 1979). He felt confirmed in his ideas by Alfred Thayer Mahan’s work “The Influence of Sea Power upon History”, which drew parallels between a nation’s naval power and its political power as a whole (Wegener, 1983). In Alfred von Tirpitz, Wilhelm found a political ally capable of implementing his ideas.

Tirpitz became Secretary of State of the Naval Office in 1897 after a successful career in the navy. He developed the idea of a strong German fleet as a means to avoiding

international alliances detrimental to the Empire

([http://www.marine.de/fileserving/PortalFiles/02DB070000000001/W26FCCZK925INFO/DE/DIENSTSCHRIFT.PDF?yw\\_repository=youatweb](http://www.marine.de/fileserving/PortalFiles/02DB070000000001/W26FCCZK925INFO/DE/DIENSTSCHRIFT.PDF?yw_repository=youatweb)). Tirpitz succeeded in persuading the Reichstag to adopt several laws and amendments mandating the enlargement of the fleet in 1898, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1912. As a consequence of the fleet enlargement, Anglo-German relations became increasingly strained when, despite German attempts to conceal it, the English government became aware of the threat posed by a large German sea power. The English then themselves ordered fleet enlargements (Epkenhans, 1991). A dangerous arms race had begun by 1905, not stopping until the beginning of World War I. Tirpitz' plans also faced increasing public criticism because of the huge amount of money they consumed.

Revisiting one of the central questions surrounding the analysis of the “navy propaganda”, societal und political pressure is indeed likely to have served as a motivating force behind the communication activities. Politically, the need to persuade the Reichstag representatives to vote in favour of the naval laws necessitated communication. The increasing politicization of the people, especially the bourgeoisie, made public opinion a force to be reckoned with. The press, continually rising in power, was the primary multiplier for reasonings in favour of the laws. It served as an intermediary between the government, political representatives and society.

## **5. Structures of German governmental communication**

At the time of the “navy propaganda”, there was no systematic approach to communication management in the German government. The first department of the kind, the “Literarisches Bureau” (Literary Office; founded in 1841), was a division of the Ministry of State (Nöth-Greis, 2003). The only other ministry employing officials explicitly concerned with communication purposes was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its “Pressdezernat” (Press Office). The Press Office had a very selective way of dealing with the press, giving information only to those journalists who could be relied on to write about them in the desired way (Groth, 1929; Jungblut, 1994). Attempts to unify governmental communication with the press regularly failed because of the “government agencies' individual egotisms” (Jungblut, 1994; translation mine).[4]

## **6. The “navy propaganda”**

### **6.1 Main agents**

The main governmental agent of the “navy propaganda” was the “Nachrichtenbureau” (News Office) of the Imperial Naval Office, founded in 1897. Its first director, August von

Heeringen (an intimate of Tirpitz'), had a staff of two full-time and two part-time employees (BA-MA, RM 3/9951). During its existence, the News Office never had more than five full-time employees and several assistants ([http://www.bundesarchiv.de/foxpublic/616D0B850A06221200000000A1A2937F/frame.jsp?detail=findmittelinfo.html&oben=findmittelinfo\\_oben.html](http://www.bundesarchiv.de/foxpublic/616D0B850A06221200000000A1A2937F/frame.jsp?detail=findmittelinfo.html&oben=findmittelinfo_oben.html)). The department's funding remains unclear; apart from an official budget, considerable donations were made at least during its early years (Deist, 1976). Heeringen was granted a right to information with all other departments of the Naval Office because it was considered to be "of great importance that in the eyes of the public opinion the entire navy is rallied behind the naval administration" (BA-MA, RM 3/9673).[5] Thus the News Office became a corridor of power controlling incoming and outgoing information.

In 1898, the "navy propaganda"'s other principal agent, the "Deutsche Flottenverein" (German Navy League), was founded by a consortium of industrialists. Almost immediately, the society took over the leading role in the "navy propaganda". Its budget for communication purposes far exceeded that of the News Office. It was the Navy League's professed objective to "win over the great masses of the German people, namely the lower classes, for the cause of the German navy" by means of "word of mouth agitation" and "public assembly, instruction via speeches" (BA-MA, RM 3/9907; translations mine).[6] The Navy League grew rapidly and soon attracted over a million followers (Deist, 1976).

The Navy League's relationship with the News Office was sometimes strained because the society's demands concerning the aggrandizement of the fleet far surpassed those of the Imperial Naval Office, threatening to thwart its careful steps towards a navy that could rival England's (Deist 1976). Nevertheless, the News Office was aware of the powerful communication tool the Navy League presented and carefully balanced its official stance on the organization. It was widely speculated by the media that the News Office was, in fact, the driving force behind the Navy League (BA-MA, RM 3/9909). While it definitely supported the society in many ways and collaborated with it extensively, the Navy League had its own agenda and acted accordingly, especially in terms of communication with the public. Alfred von Tirpitz noted pragmatically: "As inconvenient as the Navy League may be on occasion, we have every reason to maintain it. We do not know when we might next be very much in need of it" (BA-MA, N 253/9).[7]

Several established nationalist societies also attended to the cause of the navy (Kehr, 1930; Kamberger, 1966; Pogge v. Strandmann, 1972; Manz, 2003) Other

organizations were newly established out of enthusiasm for the navy, such as the “Flottenbund deutscher Frauen” (German Women’s Navy Coalition, founded in 1906), (BA-MA, RM 3/9937; BA-MA, RM 3/9938) and the “Deutsche Schüler-Schulschiff-Vereinigung” (German Students’ Training Ship Coalition, founded in 1910) (BA-MA, RM 3/9944).

## **6.2 Strategic foundations**

The “navy propaganda” was not based on a predetermined communication strategy. However, its strategic guidelines can be deduced from various memos and from the records detailing the actual communication proceedings and activities. The idea of creating a widespread public movement in favour of a large fleet was inspired by the English example. The German government was aware that England’s success in naval politics had been partially due to the government’s strategic communication. Therefore, in 1897, Alfred von Tirpitz commissioned a detailed account of English naval communication (BA-MA, RM 3/9618). Several of the communication techniques mentioned in the account were later copied by him.

A main characteristic of the “navy propaganda” was the duality of information and persuasion in its work. While its main objective was of a persuasive nature, the means to this end often comprised of simply conveying information. Many informative instruments, such as flyers, books and brochures, while presenting the navy in a favourable light, actually omitted any persuasive language, sticking to facts and figures.

The “navy propaganda” not only strove to address many different target groups but also counted on their function as multipliers. Journalists as “classic” multipliers and other target groups were envisioned to be carrying their own enthusiasm for the navy into associated circles. For example, the News Office counted on women passing their navy-positive persuasion on to their children or teachers speaking favourably of the fleet to their students.

## **6.3 Objectives of the “navy propaganda”**

The “navy propaganda”’s factual and communicative objectives have, for the purpose of this paper, been derivated from primary sources and likened to the design of objectives one would expect in a modern communication strategy.

The primary factual objective of the “navy propaganda” was the enforcement of the naval laws in the Reichstag. All communication measurements were ultimately focused on this goal. Various communicative goals were subordinated to this primary

objective. In contrast to the factual objective, the achievement of these communicative objectives could be immediately influenced by the Imperial Naval Office.

Since the representatives of the Reichstag had the ultimate power of adopting or overruling the naval laws, the primary communicative objective was to persuade them of their necessity. In order to achieve this, a “naval movement” was to be created among the German people, resulting in a strongly voiced public pro-fleet opinion. This movement comprised various target groups; awakening their respective enthusiasm for the fleet represented a number of secondary communicative objectives. The persuasion of the press serves as an overarching objective for the various communicative goals; journalists had a multiplier role towards the representatives as well as towards the other target groups.

#### **6.4 Messages of the “navy propaganda”**

The “navy propaganda”’s reasoning was based on several key messages. These addressed fields in which a strong German fleet was supposed to gain advantages or avert disadvantages for the Empire. The key messages were varied according to the respective target group, tailored to fit their specific living environment and brought to the fore more or less depending on their relevance for the target group. The most prevalent key messages were:

- the fleet as a warrantor for further development and job security in trade and industry
- the fleet as an instrument for offensive coastal defence
- the fleet as an instrument for the advancement and securing of international trade
- the fleet as a warrantor for colonial assets, cultural mission and successful demographic policy
- the fleet as a warrantor for peace and as a security for diplomatic relations
- the fleet as the key to worldwide recognition for Germany
- the fleet as a treasure for aspiration/fantasy and as an attractive employer for young people

#### **6.5 Target groups of the “navy propaganda”**

*Representatives, political parties and politicians* can be considered the “navy propaganda”’s primary target group as Tirpitz’ entire naval program depended on their approval. He explicitly planned to play on the public opinion to put pressure on the political leaders (BA-MA, N 253/3). As Tirpitz never had any serious hope of persuading the Social Democrats and could be rather certain of most Liberal representatives’ support

for his cause (Kehr, 1930), the main targets of his persuasive actions were the Conservatives and the Catholic “Zentrum” (Centre Party) (Kehr, 1930; Hallmann, 1933).

*Universities and professors* were targeted because of their high social status and their role as credible opinion leaders (Bruch, 1986). *Students* were to serve as multipliers: On one hand, they were counted on to carry their enthusiasm over into their families. On the other, children supporting the enlargement of the navy grew up to be adults advocating additional naval laws. For the Imperial Naval Office, targeting schools and teachers was the ideal way to reach out to them as it ensured a comprehensive, reliable and continuous conveyance of the key messages. It seemed to be the general belief that children were willing receptacles for whatever beliefs one wished to instill in them (BA-MA, RM 3/9907; BA-MA, RM 3/9951). *Women*, while ultimately not possessing any political power, were nonetheless treated as a valuable target group because of their influence on other members of their families.

In conclusion, it must be noted that the “navy propaganda”, while claiming to address the entire German people, mainly focused its efforts on persuading the bourgeoisie, as Eley (1991) correctly observes: “Its definition of public opinion proved to be socially extremely restrictive and was confined largely to the so-called ‘educated classes’”. The Imperial Naval Office strongly believed in this group’s role as opinion leaders and wanted them to become the spearhead of the “naval movement”, which should then spill over into other classes of society (BA-MA, RM 3/9954).

### **6.6 Communication activities of the “navy propaganda”**

*Press work* was conducted in a very tactical way by the News Office and absorbed a considerable part of the department’s resources. Likewise, the Navy League had from its earliest days recognized the importance of the press (BA-MA, RM 3/9907). The News Office’s treatment of the press differed significantly from that of other governmental departments: All journalists were to be supplied with information equally (Tirpitz, 1942; Deist, 1976). From this we can conclude that the News Office had understood the interdependence of governmental communication and journalism and acted accordingly. Karl Boy-Ed, News Office director from 1906 to 1909, described this as a “principle of reciprocity” (BA-MA, RM 3/9722).[8]

The News Office possessed a detailed system to *monitor media coverage* of naval topics. An ever growing number of periodicals were read on a regular basis (BA-MA, RM 3/9951). In 1900, the task was outsourced to an external reading firm (Stöber, 2000).

Works of literature with naval contents were also monitored, the results being presented to Wilhelm II in a yearly bulletin (BA-MA, RM 3/10052).

The News Office issued or launched a large amount of *publications*, the majority of which were created in cooperation with selected external writers. The News Office often concealed its part in a work's creation. An example for a book publication is "Unsere Kriegsflotte" (Our battle fleet), which had first been published in 1895 and then reworked and republished several times under the direction of the News Office (BA-MA, RM 3/220; BA-MA, RM 3/221; BA-MA, RM 3/223). Apart from books, several periodicals such as the "Nauticus" almanac (Tirpitz, 1942; BA-MA, RM 3/10001; BA-MA, RM 3/10014; BA-MA, RM 3/10077) and the "Marine-Rundschau" (BA-MA, RM 3/10143; BA-MA, RM 3/10164) were published via third parties. The News Office also commissioned a German translation of "The Influence of Sea Power upon History" (BA-MA, RM 3/9907). There are no overviews of all publications issued during the "navy propaganda". To give an idea of the extent of The News Office's output even in the span of two and a half years, Meyer (1967) states that the department had, by early 1900, issued over 150 different brochures.

The Naval League was itself a very prolific publisher, issuing an almanac (Deutscher Flottenverein, 1900; Deutscher Flottenverein, 1901; Deutscher Flottenverein, 1902), the magazines "Die Flotte" (The Fleet) and "Überall" (Everywhere) (BA-MA, RM 3/9907; BA-MA, RM 3/9909) as well as countless flyers and brochures (BA-MA, RM 3/9908; BA-MA, RM 3/9910; BA-MA, RM 3/9914). In the months leading up to the adoption of the Second Naval Law in 1899/1900 alone, the society handed out seven million books and brochures (Kamberger 1966).

In some cases, the News Office attempted to stop the publication of books it considered detrimental to the "navy propaganda"'s success (BA-MA, RM 3/10052; BA-MA, RM 3/10030; BA-MA, RM 2/923). Acceptable book projects, on the other hand, were supported with information material, drawings or photographs (BA-MA, RM 3/10053; BA-MA, RM 3/10052; BA-MA, RM 3/10054; BA-MA, RM 3/9618).

Apart from working to win established professors for their cause, the News Office created two new *professorships* dedicated to naval studies (BA-MA, RM 3/9785; Marienfeld, 1957). The News Office also strove to include naval topics into German *school curricula* in order to further children's enthusiasm for the fleet. To bypass the Ministry of Education's resistance, free copies of books about the navy were handed out to schools (BA-MA, RM 3/10059; BA-MA, RM 3/10060; BA-MA, RM 3/10062). Schools

were also provided with wall maps depicting naval scenes and battleships, supplemented by information brochures (BA-MA, RM 3/9819).

*Events* played a key role in the communication activities as they addressed multiple senses and were therefore thought to leave a lasting impression. Countless public *lectures* on naval topics were organized by the Naval League, assisted by the Imperial Naval Office which recommended speakers and provided information material (BA-MA, RM 3/9819; BA-MA, RM 3/10405; BA-MA, RM 3/9821; BA-MA, RM 3/9909; BA-MA, RM 3/9911; BA-MA, RM 3/9908). Even more than in lectures, Naval League and Imperial Naval Office believed in the strong communicative value of presenting the newly built battle ships to the public. This led to fleet parades, the biggest of which took place from April to June of 1900 and consisted of a division of torpedo boats being sent upstream and downstream of parts of the Rhine. The parade generated considerable media response which the News Office kindled by lending photographs depicting the proceedings to newspapers (BA-MA, RM 3/9814; BA-MA, RM 3/9815).

Another important category of events were *visitations* of the German dockyards displaying the friendliness of the navy (Tirpitz, 1942). Especially school classes and regional boards of the Naval League were invited to visit the dockyards and did so in great number. The most meticulously planned visitation was provided for the “navy propaganda”’s primary target group: In June 1907, 24 Reichstag representatives undertook an “information journey” to the dockyards, accompanied by prominent naval representatives, among them Tirpitz himself. His objective was to persuade the representatives of voting in favour of the upcoming naval amendment (BA-MA, RM 3/9966).

As the navy gained popularity, several companies produced *toys and collectibles* with naval themes, among them ship models, boardgames and postcards. The News Office assisted these by providing photographs, information on naval matters or even official endorsement (BA-MA, RM 3/9841; BA-MA, RM 3/9843; BA-MA, RM 3/9982; BA-MA, RM 3/9626; Deist, 1976).

*Visual communication* was an important part of the “navy propaganda”. This was evident in the News Office’s large archive of photographs which were lent to companies, newspapers and publishing houses (BA-MA, RM 3/9885), but especially in the use of film. This new medium had been successfully employed for communication purposes by the English Navy League (Loiperdinger, 2005) and was used by the Imperial Naval Office as

well as the German Navy League which started to conduct nationwide film showings with naval scenes in 1901 (BA-MA, RM 3/9900; Loiperdinger, 2005).

### **6.7 The “navy propaganda” – an example of successful communication?**

The question of the “navy propaganda”’s success is one of our central issues. The general assumption of an absolute communicative success can be challenged based on the findings from primary sources. The factual objectives, namely the adoption of the naval laws and amendmends, were indeed achieved. However, it can not be sufficiently proven that this was a direct effect of the “navy propaganda”. Some evidence points to the fact that the communication activities did contribute to the political objective. For example, many institutions or congregations of citizens felt moved to address the Reichstag directly with petitions in favour of the naval laws (BA-MA, RM 3/88; BA-MA, RM 3/9911; BA-MA, RM 3/9982; BA-MA, RM 3/9980). This proves that, in accord with the communicative goals, a certain “naval movement” had indeed been created, and that this movement had at least tried to directly influence the political decision-makers. Another potential piece of evidence is the fact that the majorities with which the naval laws were adopted grew larger each time (Deist, 1976).

However, the communicative objective of creating a “naval movement” was only achieved for the demographic mainly targeted by the activities – the bourgeoisie. In this group, the “navy propaganda” succeeded in tapping “navy-friendly” sentiments which had mostly already existed before the onset of the communication activities or which were easily awakened by skillful communication. Hopes of creating a truly universal movement encompassing all layers of society (BA-MA, RM 3/9951) remained unfulfilled.

## **7. The “navy propaganda” in the context of scientific approaches to public relations**

### **7.1 Public relations or propaganda?**

In the times of the “navy propaganda”, the term “propaganda” was used indiscriminately to describe various forms of persuasive communication (to a lesser extent, this was also true for the term “agitation”). Many historians and communication researchers have adopted these terms to describe the communication activities without considering their shifted meaning. Bentele (1999) unites political and communicative aspects in his modern definition of propaganda:

“Modern propaganda is therefore to be defined as unidirectional, persuasive communication in which truthful information plays a subordinate role or is deliberately excluded, which usually employs simple instruments of communication (strong permeation, repetitions, simple stereotypes, clear judgements, intermixture of information and

opinion), often emotionalises and employs concepts of the enemy, and which can only fully unfold inside a centralised, non-democratic society with a correspondent public structure, i.e. in systems with a media system regulated by the government” (translation mine).[9]

Bentele’s (1998) definition of public relations illustrates the main differences between the two forms of communication:

“Public relations are the management of information and communication processes between organisations on one side and their internal or external environments (sections of society) on the other. Functions of public relations are: information, communication, persuasion, image construction, continuous acquisition of trust, conflict management and the establishment of societal consensus.”[10]

While persuasion is named as one of the possible functions of public relations, a comparison of both definitions shows that pure propaganda as the ultimate form of persuasion requires a certain political environment which did not exist in the German Empire. The News Office’s equal treatment of journalists is one of the clearest signals against a propagandistic nature of the “navy propaganda”. While most of its communication measures were unidirectional (i.e., did not include dialogic features), the News Office showed itself open to public inquiries. Published information was, in general, truthful (provided that the omission of inconvenient facts not be considered a lie). The communicative objectives included information; however, their ultimate goal was of a persuasive nature. Most instruments of the “navy propaganda” show remarkable similarities to the techniques of modern public relations. Only in few circumstances (rare instances of publications being prohibited) did the government interfere with individual expressions of opinion about the fleet plans. The freedom of the press was generally respected. Factions opposing the naval laws were not deterred from voicing their opinion.

In conclusion, the overall system of the “navy propaganda” can mostly be classified as one of public relations. However, some of its instruments and stylistic devices resemble those of propaganda – mainly the repetition of key messages and the simplification of facts. Considering this appraisal, it is advisable to not use the term of “navy propaganda” without a reference to its former and current implications.

## **7.2 “Navy propaganda” – a period of professionalisation for governmental communication?**

The sociological concept of “professionalisation” means the development of an employment towards a profession. As tradition, mandatory ethical codes and a strictly

regulated entrance are defining features of classic professions (Wilensky, 1972; Wienand, 2003), the concept can not be directly applied to modern, much less to historical public relations. If, however, we take an everyday comprehension of “professionalisation” as the basis, the “navy propaganda” exhibits signs of matching them – it shows a step in the progress towards an actual occupational image of a practitioner of governmental public relations. This is most apparent in its organizational structure; never before had a governmental department for communication purposes possessed such clear objectives and such extensive intra-organizational authority. The News Office’s understanding of communication processes, especially of the interdependence between governmental communication and journalism, was much deeper than that of its counterparts in other ministries. Lastly, the “navy propaganda”’s repertoire of communication instruments and techniques far exceeded that of any other contemporary program. Another novelty that greatly resembles modern public relations strategy is the extent of external cooperation that enabled the News Office, which took on a managing function, to achieve more than its small workforce could ever have achieved by themselves.

In summary, the hypothesis of the “navy propaganda” as a prime example for the professionalisation of governmental communication can be confirmed. With regards to efficiency, diversity and strategic aptitude, the communicative agents have indeed made the most of their times’ media structure and knowledge of strategic communication.

### **7.3 The “navy propaganda” and various approaches to German public relations historiography**

Early approaches to a historiography of German public relations place the origin of the profession in the time after World War II, identifying the American role model as a starting point (Szyszka, 2008). This idea probably stems at least in part from the desire of distinguishing modern public relations from Nazi propaganda. However, in more recent times, several researchers have identified a longer tradition and continuity in the profession’s development. They either work from a term-based standpoint (equalizing the beginning of the profession’s existence with that of the term “public relations” used to describe it) or from the perspective of the actual practice (Binder, 1983). The “navy propaganda” would not be considered to be part of public relations history in term-based approaches because it ended before the first mention of the term in a context comparable to its current meaning (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Among the advocates of practice-based approaches, there are two main factions: those who believe that public relations originated ages ago when people first tried to solicit other people’s trust, and those who consider the

increasingly confusing societal structures created by the Industrial Revolution to have created an increased need for organised communication (Binder, 1983). The latter view gives a more reasonable motivation for the employment of public relations techniques. The “navy propaganda”, however, can be integrated into both variants of the practice-based approach as it took place before the perceived starting point of either.

Bentele (1997) suggests a different systematization of PR historiographies. He divides them in fact- and event based approaches on one hand and model- and theory based approaches on the other. The former term encompasses any approaches concentrating on the collection and chronological sorting of historical facts. The latter group tries to derive *types* of communication from the respective observations, thus adding explanation to description. A typical example for a model- and theory based approach is Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) “Characteristics of Four Models of Public Relations” that describes and explains different stages of the profession’s development (see table 1).

*Table 1: Characteristics of Four Models of Public Relations*

|   | <b>Press Agency/<br/>Publicity</b>    | <b>Public<br/>Information</b>                | <b>Two-Way<br/>Asymmetric</b>      | <b>Two-Way<br/>Symmetric</b>             |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Purpose</b>  | Propaganda                            | Dissemination of information                 | Scientific persuasion              | Mutual understanding                     |
| <b>Nature of Communication</b>                                | One-way; complete truth not essential | One-way; truth important                     | Two-way; imbalanced effects        | Two-way; balanced effects                |
| <b>Communication Model</b>                                    | Source → Rec.                         | Source → Rec.                                | Source → Rec.<br>←<br>Feedback     | Group → Group<br>←                       |
| <b>Nature of Research</b>                                     | Little; „counting house“              | Little; readability, readership              | Formative; evaluative of attitudes | Formative; evaluative of understanding   |
| <b>Leading Historical Figures</b>                             | P.T. Barnum                           | Ivy Lee                                      | Edward L. Bernays                  | Bernays, educators, professional leaders |
| <b>Where Practiced Today</b>                                  | Sports, theatre, product promotion    | Government, nonprofit associations, business | Competitive business; agencies     | Regulated business; agencies             |
| <b>Estimated Percentage of Organizations Practicing Today</b> | 15 %                                  | 50 %   | 20 %                               | 15 %                                     |

(Grunig and Hunt, 1984)

When the model is applied to the “navy propaganda”, it becomes apparent that this period shows characteristics of the first three models of public relations. The instances of

concealing the News Office's or the Naval League's part in publications and other activities place it in the realm of "Press Agency/Publicity", as in these cases truth indeed seemed to be less important than the dissemination of the message. The strong emphasis placed on supplying the target groups with information and the fact that the information that was given out seemed to be, in general, truthful, suggest a primary classification under "Public Information". The idea of scientific persuasion, named as a characteristic of "Two-Way Asymmetric Communication", is apparent in the News Office's cooperation with professors and universities.

Bentele (1987) also presents an approach allowing for several variants of communication to coexist. His "functional-integrative strata model" looks at communication as an evolutionary process and delineates an evolutionary development, with new specifications of communication coming into being while base functions, from which these new forms are derived, continue to exist (Bentele, 1997) (see table 2). In the case of public relations, whose beginning Bentele places in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these base functions are interpersonality and publicity, with the added element of the communication's tie to a specific organisation distinguishing public relations from, e.g., journalism.

*Table 2: Strata Model for the historical development of public relations*

[see separate Freehand document "Table 2"]

(Bentele, 1997; translation mine)

The findings on the "navy propaganda" confirm this approach including its periodization because of its organisational link and continuity.

#### **7.4 Conclusion and research perspective**

The results of this research can be summarized as:

- The enforcement of Tirpitz' navy plans depended on these plans' successful legitimization to the public and, most of all, to the Reichstag. Against the background of a pluralistic society, an ongoing process of democratization and a well-developed, sophisticated media structure, the leaders of navy politics had to employ strategic communication.

- The “navy propaganda” achieved its objective to excite interest and enthusiasm for the navy at least with certain groups – first and foremost with the educated bourgeoisie. The factual objective of enforcing Tirpitz’ plans was achieved as well although we can only speculate on the “navy propaganda”’s credit in this achievement. The original goal of creating a naval movement encompassing the entire population was not achieved.
- Measured against an everyday definition of the term “professionalisation”, the “navy propaganda” marked an advancement in the professionalisation of public relations. This is particularly true for the improvement, strategic foundation and diversification of PR instruments.
- The “navy propaganda” can be consistently connected to various approaches to PR historiography. It especially confirms approaches working with a rather narrow concept of public relations which clearly distinguish the profession from other forms of public communication.

The “navy propaganda”, in its time, broke new ground for governmental communication in Germany. Its two main agents, the News Office of the Imperial Naval Office and the Navy League, strove to influence public opinion in ways that had been heretofore unknown. Considering this, it is no exaggeration to speak of the “navy propaganda”’s “signalling” effect for governmental communication. While World War I marked a harsh break and put a definitive end to the work of the News Office, new establishments right before, during and directly after the war proved that the department’s organizational structure and way of working served as a model and started a trend that displayed a certain continuity.

This research can only serve as an overview on a subject which provides many additional research perspectives at the intersection of history and public relations, for example the media’s reception of the “navy propaganda” or social democratic counter-communication. The young academic field of PR history can certainly benefit from more academic research on this period that links the historical facts to models and theories; it would be negligent to leave the interpretation of historical communication to historians only.

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## Notes

[1] The original German quotation is as follows:

„So taucht auch in der neueren Literatur [...] immer wieder der Staatssekretär des Reichsmarinesamtes Alfred von Tirpitz auf, der – durch Einführung von Kommunikationsaktivitäten wie den Einsatz von Offizieren, die sich mit Fragen der Information und des Besucherempfangs beschäftigen sollten und anderem – einen frühen Beitrag zur deutschen PR-Geschichte geleistet hat. [...] Bislang hatte offensichtlich keiner der Autoren, die sich mit PR-Geschichte befassten, die Zeit oder das Interesse, hier einmal etwas genauer zu recherchieren, welche Aktivitäten Alfred von Tirpitz wirklich unternommen hat und welche Funktion ihm danach im Rahmen einer PR-Geschichte wirklich zukommt. Dies ist nur ein kleines Beispiel dafür, wie nötig PR-historische Arbeiten sind, die sich auf die bisher vorliegende allgemein-historische Literatur und auf Primärquellen stützen.“

[2] The original German quotation is “Defizitbereich”.

[3] The title of Deist's dissertation, "Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda" ("Naval politics and navy propaganda") established the term as a description of the activities which was then adopted unquestioningly by many authors.

[4] The original German quotation is "Ressort-Egoismen".

[5] The original German quotation is as follows:

"Da es von großem Wert ist, dass der öffentlichen Meinung gegenüber die ganze Marine geschlossen hinter dem Vorgehen der Marineverwaltung steht [...]"

[6] The original German quotations are as follows:

„die großen Massen des deutschen Volkes, namentlich die untersten Schichten, für die Sache der deutschen Kriegsmarine zu gewinnen“

„Agitation von Mund zu Mund“

„die öffentliche Versammlung, Belehrung durch Vorträge“

[7] The original German quotation is as follows:

"So unbequem gelegentlich auch der Flottenverein einmal werden kann, so haben wir alle Ursache ihn zu halten. Wir wissen nicht, wann wir ihn einmal wieder sehr nötig haben."

[8] The original German quotation is „Prinzip der Gegenseitigkeit“.

[9] The original German quotation is as follows:

„Moderne *Propaganda* ist demnach als unidirektionale, beeinflussende Kommunikation zu definieren, für die wahrheitsgemäße Information untergeordnet ist oder bewusst ausgeklammert wird, in der Regel mit einfachen Kommunikationsmitteln (starke Durchdringung, Wiederholungen, einfache Stereotype, klare Wertungen, Vermischung von Information und Meinung), häufig emotionalisiert und mit Feindbildern arbeitet und zu ihrer vollen Entfaltung nur innerhalb einer zentralisierten, nicht-demokratischen Gesellschaft mit einer ebensolchen Öffentlichkeitsstruktur kommt, d.h. in Systemen, deren Mediensystem staatlich gelenkt ist.“

[10] The original German quotation is as follows:

„Öffentlichkeitsarbeit oder Public Relations sind das Management von Informations- und Kommunikationsprozessen zwischen Organisationen einerseits und ihren internen oder externen Umwelten (Teilöffentlichkeiten) andererseits. Funktionen von Public Relations sind Information, Kommunikation, Persuasion, Imagegestaltung, kontinuierlicher Vertrauenswerb, Konfliktmanagement und das Herstellen von gesellschaftlichem Konsens.“

# THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN KOSOVO

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## Introduction

This paper presents the history and development of modern public relations practices in Kosovo from 1949 to 2000. By respecting the perspective of this conference we want to make a distinction between public relations as an integral part of the state administration and the contemporary concept of marketing discipline. This article aims to build the context of development of public relations in Kosovo. This objective is achieved via a conceptual review of existing academic and professional literatures concerning Kosovo media history, public relations management, business studies and mass communication studies.

So, what would the origins of public relations be? How would the communication begin in Kosovo? The history of public relations in Kosovo would be confined to the second half of twentieth century. Since the literature on public relations early practices in Kosovo is very much limited and there is no clear distinction between the state propaganda and the professional communication that serves the public opinion we will try to explain practices of PR scattered through history in the early 50s. The information was controlled, so were its publication and evidence on the existence of these information, thus, as there was a “propaganda” state, we have based our research on media resources, and media professionals that were included in any form of public communication, as well as on media archives.

Based on these, we will try to create/define a framework of Public Relations development in Kosovo, emphasizing that the professionals of “Rilindja” newspaper may be regarded as precedents of public relations discipline. Institutions established after year 1945 had information “commissariats”. The 1974 ex-Yugoslavian Constitution gave autonomy to institutions so they could use stronger “controlled” propaganda media. Then, for a decade from year 1990, the legal Kosovo institutions were violently eradicated by the Serbian regime in Kosovo and there were created a unique history of “alternative media” published outside Kosovo: Croatia, Slovenia, EU and USA. Thus, the overall history of PR in Kosovo may be divided into some phases:

### **Development of controlled media in the early 50s**

Public relations and media are functional mechanisms for placing the truth, thus both stressing the importance of avoiding the sense that the public opinion is misled and manipulated. In a democratic society, these principles are also the conditions for the functioning of society. But in a communist society, like former Yugoslavia, a constituent part of which was Kosovo until the dissolution of the federation in 1989, the media played the role of main communicator and almost the only one towards informing the public. They had sensitivity to the truth, based on the fundamental principle of information, but the complete care that "the truth" of the institution be supplemented and completed as true and uncontested, marks society in meeting the critical point of communication's role. Besides "Radio Prishtina" founded in 1945 with a very small information transmitting space, newspaper "Rilindja" was founded in 1949, being the only newspaper allowed by ex-Yugoslavian communist system in Kosovo. There are no authentic studies on the media and public relations history in Kosovo, but the National Library of Kosovo keeps a record of 50 years history of "Rilindja" existence, that serves as a reference for this topic. This record demonstrates the powerful role that this medium had in informing public opinion, but also in placing the ideological "truth" and care to create an incontestable truth to the public opinion. Simply, "Rilindja" was created and served as an ideological propaganda tool for decades. If we refer to the definition of E.L. Bernays' to propaganda as something consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group, in Kosovo's case over the idea, he referred to ideology. The challenge for any journalist and public communicator was big and only a few have exceeded that target if they aimed to transmit to the public the non-ideological truth.

At the conference organized by the IMP-, held in May of 2010, Ramush Tahiri, a political scientist and former journalist of the only newspaper in Kosovo "Rilindja", shared his experiences throughout different stages of communication in Kosovo.

He reported that journalists, as the biggest propaganda transmitters' ideology, used to be challenged just like being between Scilla and Haribda. They showed their level of professionalism only by accepting the idea of ideological persecution. They were guided by the principle of protecting the public right to information, which sometimes even from themselves the situation was articulated as the "national right", on the one hand, and being put through the mill, in relation to ideological power, on the other side.

The example of Mr. Tahiri selected a particular way of journalistic practice, that of the example of physical survival and partial collapse of professionalism. Having an education background in political science, he was nominated to propagate "the state of justice ", which was actually a state that violated the justice. He wrote political articles, which could not fall under the category of being against the ideology, but on behalf of professionalism tried to protect the general interest. The challenge was exceptional- he tells how he wrote his articles (on the old typewriter or manually) twice, always keeping a copy in his personal archive, assuming that one day, it would become possible to get imposed to use his articles as evidence in any trial against him, for showing the deformation that kind of editors who served as political commissars will have already made to the form of his articles published in newspaper. What is the aim of this example? That in a society in which media serve as a propaganda tool there can never be spoken on the freedom of speech, just as you cannot imagine the full freedom of expression. Control of state to the media was an essential mechanism in establishing and maintaining a positive public opinion, which should have been necessarily positive. Control of the power of that time is equal to the closing of the freedom of expression.

### **Development of propagandistic institutions (60s-80s)**

The 1960s-80 mark the complete installation of control over the media ideology and public opinion. Although in 1974 the new constitution approved by Tito, there was more room for a liberal society in the former Yugoslavia, the society remained essentially completely ideological. Consequently, the system recruited intellectuals or half-intellectual instead of propagandist militants because the system required that the liberal dimensions be coloured with an intellectual dose. Consequently, control became more sophisticated, and freedom of expression on the check. Under the guise of freedom, liberty was harmed manifold, and under the auspices of regime, liberalism underwent radical transformation of ideology.

The ex-journalist of Radio and Television of Prishtina, Mr. Xhavit Husaj, shares his experience under the control of information. He explains that all information aimed for the public opinion was controlled during the meetings of Regional Information Secretariats, where information officers' role was narrowed to technicalities such as issuing releases only. "A journalist could not add any comment to the news release issued by the Secretariat; otherwise they would be expelled from working"-he adds.

At that time, in Kosovo there was the written medium, "Rilindja," which opened the doors for writers, publishers, intellectuals and journalists who had the potential to maintain the independent public opinion, but on top of media, there were never genuine journalists, but political commissars, who were in the service of state propaganda. Through their work, media were controlled, thus directing public towards a certain direction. At the same time, they served as state representatives, while maintaining the addiction to the policy segment. This last trend is being deepened by the end of 80 years, when not only the "Rilindja", but state television, Radio and Television of Prishtina's program (founded in 1975 as an outpost of the Yugoslav Radio and Television network [JRT](#)) in Albanian language was definitively shut down, and free speech took the meaning of citizens' alternative.

### **Alternative media / alternative PR (90s)**

State propaganda in the '90s faced alternative means of communication in Kosovo. At that time, genuine journalists and intellectuals, persecuted by the regime, left Kosovo and fled to other countries, mainly in the west, where they continued their professional activity in placing the truth. In Albania, after the fall of the dictatorship, there were created opportunities for meaningful information, but sensitivity grew so extreme to the continued repression of Kosovo Albanians. Thus, being driven by patriotic feelings, newly opened media in Albania, like the administration of Mr. Sali Berisha opened the opportunity to inform the Albanian public on continued violations of national and human rights in Kosovo. We do not have any analysis completely consistent with scientific parameters to understand if the political context has affected the media context in Albania, and if the media by avoiding one aspect, passed onto another, the nationalist one, of placing the truth. However, it is widely known that they have served to inform a large part of the Albanians all over Europe and the world. Application of new technologies, including satellite waves, has helped this goal. On the other hand, the total lack of internal information in Kosovo, due to the closure of the only newspaper "Rilindja" and the Albanian state television, urged alternative forms all over Europe. As a newly created state and susceptibility to political processes, Radio Croatia in Zagreb offered five minutes of information program in Albanian (shortly after, it was followed by the publishing of newspaper "Dielli"), which for a long time was the single window of information on developments in Kosovo. Whilst, in Slovenia, another country of the dissolution of ex Yugoslavia, were focused many intellectuals, who maintained relations with culture and information people in Ljubljana. Thus, there were created a few alternate means of information, such as the

magazine "Alternativa" which dealt at the media level with the idea of independence of Kosovo, as former federal unit of former Yugoslav federation.

But the real challenge of information and its real power were born in Kosovo. Although under strong pressure of the tanks, the Democratic League of Kosovo, the first party with a clearly anticommunist platform in Yugoslavia, in the early 90s established the Kosovo Information Centre (KIC), which for many years served as the main medium on events briefing in Kosovo and as a basic references of foreign information. It ran so fast, that the information was transmitted from the field in an extremely fast manner, thus becoming a model for today's media. In the late '90s, in the wake of the outbreak of war, the centre published five editions of the informer, in main European languages, testifying to any event that could happen anywhere in Kosovo. That was the time of the darkness of information, as well as the presence of technology. History of QIK is now part of the history of Kosovo.

#### **Creation of professional PR network (from 2000-present)**

The results show a profound influence of the media in state propaganda, that is the role of the media in the general development especially in the instalment of strong state propaganda Instruments. During the communist years, information tools were not used for state propaganda, whereas their roles dominated the public relations. Until the end of 90s, Kosovo did not have strong PR development indicators, for the above mentioned reasons. When the propaganda tools started to vanish, "information obscurity " overspread in Kosovo and became replaced by alternative media in the end of the 80s.

Modern times have marked a rapid growth of professional knowledge and expansion of professional networks of communication specialists, institutes and agencies that deal with public relations. Nowadays, Kosovo has tens of PR Agencies. The Institutions of the Republic of Kosovo have established public relations offices, both at central and local level government, whereas the political staff is also predisposed towards offering a necessary space for PR professionals.

The 1999 war in Kosovo not only marks the final collapse of the totalitarian regime of Milosevic, but also the ideological control over free speech and independent public opinion. Establishment of the United Nations mission and the establishment of provisional institutions in Kosovo created a new opportunity not only to establish a stable administration, but also to spread its dimension in communication.

Thus, the administration of UNMIK, which initially had the leading role and was therefore responsible for any kind of communication, the installation of the mission

created relatively large office information, which began organizing regular conferences. In the early deployment of mission, communication was regularly organized through conferences almost every day. The mission communicated about everything, because the mission had not built institutional mechanisms for specific areas. The formation of the interim Kosovo institutions as created and overseen by UNMIK would happen a year later. Jeff Bielely, former UNMIK spokesman tells how big were the challenges of communication in a time when the mission faced not only political, but technical issues, as it was, we suppose, a landfill of garbage in a certain municipality, during the period when the mission was actually lacking the mechanisms of policy implementation.

After establishment of provisional institutions of Kosovo, and its first government, there were opened more opportunities for communication with the public, because in addition to establishing the administration through its ministries, public information offices were established, which had communication task to cover specific areas, while the prime minister's office created the public information office and appointed a spokesperson, who was obliged to coordinate inter-ministerial communication and public attitudes reflected in the government, which could not always be transmitted independently, due to the obligation to coordinate with information office of UNMIK, with which it was not always easy to coordinate.

Mimoza Kusari, first spokeswoman of the first government in Kosovo under UNMIK administration, explains three challenges the first government of Kosovo faced, in terms of communication. The first challenge was coordination with the office of UNMIK, which also had solid policies and medial positions towards the public. The second challenge was the coordination of positions of political parties in power (the three main parties, because the government was comprehensive and articulation of their government positions was difficult at times). The third major challenge in terms of communication, however, was coordination with the newly created offices of information in government's ministries. In most cases, these offices had only one staff member, sometimes not coming from an academic background in the field of media or communication. Also, these offices until then did not have any active participation in communication with citizens and often functioned as isolated. What is more, these offices were neither regarded as a part of the performance evaluation of the institution nor as their representatives. Therefore, the coordination from a central level was almost impossible. Establishment of new media and opening of communication opportunities with institutions did also increase the pressure on them, thus putting institutions before new challenges. For

example, at the same time, two ministries could publish two opposing views, which came out as a result of political views of their ministers' leaders, who were from different political parties.

In year 2003, a government spokesman's initiative, supported by the "Friedrich Ebert" Foundation, headquartered in Germany, intended to reorganize information offices in the government, but from that time the role of communication offices in key institutions of the country is still left not too clear and not completely coordinated. Above all, there is still noticed a highlighted lack of will to consider information offices as an important part of effective management and decision making role in maintaining the reputation of institutions.

After the declaration of independence, the role of UNMIK has undergone minimisation of role and waning power on the one hand, and the role of the Kosovo institutions has increased on the other hand, but the challenges of communication have remained almost the same, in terms of public communication.

In the meantime, there is a strong tendency of expansion of communications agencies, mainly marketing ones, some of them independent and some in collaboration with strong European PR companies. This has helped in increasing the performance of different organizations. But, there was no initiative or goal to put some light at the academic level of communication. The establishment of the Kosovo Institute for Public Relations, "IMP", in 2009, marks the first attempt to raise the professional capacity on the PR professional field.

The Kosovo Institute for Public Relations is an independent organization, whose mission is to stimulate and increase the capacity of genuine communication, creativity in communication, and creation of stable identity of different organizations / entities in Kosovo. By linking scientific research in the field of public relations with proper professional education, "IMP" helps in creating a culture of authentic communication, and encourages creative forms of public appearances.

IMP is the only institute which combines professional knowledge with proper education in the field of public relations. Thus, the institute remains a leader in the creation of PR professionals in Kosovo.

To accomplish these goals the institute conducts the following activities: ongoing scientific research, public opinion research, awareness campaigns, scientific conferences, public debates on the role of communications, promotional campaigns, and media campaigns and similar. The institute has published so far several research and reports on

existing public relations issues, among them, the research on “Communication of Political Parties with the Public” and the book on “ Basic Writing Techniques in PR”. The institute is expanding its PR professional’s network through debates, conferences, trainings and research in PR, through well-established mechanisms: training/education, research and consultancy departments.

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## **The Origins and Early Developments of Public Relations in Italy, 1945-1960**

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### **Introduction**

A country just out of two decades of harsh censorship and heavy propaganda under a Fascist dictatorship; a country soon to become a major battlefield of the Cold War; with an economy, largely made up of small-sized companies, shattered by the world war; with a media system trying to recover from the Fascist scars; and with a limited tradition of advertising and commercial communication: this is the backdrop against which the early efforts at developing public relations in Italy took place. This paper intends to trace such efforts and place them in relation to the social, economic, political, and cultural changes affecting the country between 1945 and 1960.

As suggested by recent contributions to the history of PR (L'Etang 2008, Rodriguez Salcedo, 2008), in our case too periodization and nomenclature constitute two key, closely related, issues. Given the rather introductory nature of our article, that covers a ground still largely unexplored (Muzi Falconi, 2007), we have focused on the period in which the expression "public relations" made its appearance on the Italian scene, namely the post-World War II period. Indeed, we have not failed to refer to Fascist activities that could probably be considered antecedents of PR. But we leave for another occasion a more in-depth discussion of that period and of the broader issue of the appropriateness of describing an activity as "public relations" prior to the actual use of the term (L'Etang, 2008).

Another key theme is the much debated question of moving beyond what has been so far mainly a U.S.-centred history of PR (Miller, 2000; L'Etang 2008). Our effort has been to stick as closely as possible to the available evidence, acknowledging the unmistakable influence exerted by American models, but also underlining the "hybridization," rather than a strict one-way influence, that resulted from the encounter between different cultures (Zeitlin and Herrigel, 2000), and the peculiarities of this

national case. By doing so, we hope to contribute to the comparative and international history of PR.

The main objective is to set straight what has been so far a rather obscure and murky record, addressing the following questions: Who were the main actors of such a process? Which role did, respectively, private, social and public forces play in the emergence of PR? Which specific international influences affected the evolution of the field? How did the new vocabulary of “public relations” adjust to and impact on a public discourse long-gearred to traditional political and religious propaganda? How did PR activities relate to the ensuing culture of consumption gradually permeating Italian society? How did they crystallize into the emergence of professional associations devoted to expanding the field?<sup>29</sup>

The paper proceeds in four sections. In the first we lay the groundwork by charting the political, economic, social, and cultural infrastructure in which PR developed. Second, we explore the American influence, both at a public and corporate level, and see how this intersected with practices carried out at two private companies, Fiat and Piaggio (producer of Vespa scooters), which, leading the growing motorization of the country, found themselves at the forefront of a newly emerging consumer society. The third section engages what could be arguably considered best practices in the field, confined to a tiny cluster of private and public companies. Finally, we review the main practitioners from this pioneering era and cast light on their efforts in establishing a community by building professional associations.

### **The context**

This section explores the Italian public relations infrastructure in the post-WWII era starting with its institutional and political setting (Colarizi, 2007, pp. 11-75).

At the end of the war, on the ashes of the Fascist regime, Italy faced the daunting task of reconstructing the state within a newly emergent Western liberal democratic order.

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<sup>29</sup> While in other southern European countries the English term public relations has been translated as ‘relations publiques’ (France) or ‘relaciones publicas’ (Spain), in Italy the most commonly used name is *pubbliche relazioni* (a literal translation of public relations). This stems from at least two origins: a) simply an incorrect albeit literal translation, as the real sense of the English term public relations implies relationships with publics and not in public; b) a much more commonly used term such as ‘public administration’ in Italy is generally called ‘pubblica amministrazione’ rather than ‘amministrazione pubblica’ as it should be. The Italian association of public relations is instead called Ferpi (Federazione Relazioni Pubbliche Italiana) and has always used the term *relazioni pubbliche* to define its domain. Therefore in Italy the term ‘pubbliche relazioni’ is mostly used to define the worst interpretations of the term, such as bodyguards in front of discotheques, or simply prostitutes, or ‘pranzi e rinfreschi’ (i.e. food and beverages).

Succumbing to the combined efforts of the Allied forces and the autochthonous armed Resistance movement, the Fascist dictatorship bequeathed a complex legacy ranging from substantial continuity in administrative law and personnel, to the persistence of state economic agencies such as the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (IRI). Specifically the latter, passing into the hands of the new, freely elected party in power, the Christian Democrats (DC), saw its role enhanced by postwar impellent needs in supporting and promoting the development of basic industries necessary for economic reconstruction, for example steel.

No less significant was the remarkable continuity shown by the Catholic Church. Amid the collapse of all the other major institutions, the Church remained a linchpin of the establishment and, through the DC, acted as a major player on the national public scene (Pavone, 2004, p. 273). Finally, with the onset of the Cold War, Italy became a crucial battlefield in the global clash between liberal democracy and communism.

Against this backdrop, DC and its leading opponent, the Communist Party (PCI), stood out as the key elements of the nation's political and institutional life. They filled the void opened by the Fascist regime, revitalized political activism, and formed citizens in the development of a sense of democratic participation. In the process, though, they also contributed unwittingly to the continued lack of a sense of state among the republican masses. Traditionally weak in the country since its formation in 1861, the liberal legal-formal expectations by citizens *vis-à-vis* public institutions was not strengthened by the postwar political regime. Identifying themselves primarily with political parties, republican masses “showed loyalty to *democratic institutions* (parties, trade unions, etc.) but not to the *democratic state*.” (Salvati, 2003, p. 562, original emphasis).

In spite of their harsh ideological confrontations, DC and PCI, who had joined forces during the antifascist Resistance, signed an informal mutual pact that somehow survived the breakout of the Cold War, the entrance of the country into the US political orbit, and the attendant exclusion of the Communists from government (Golden-Picci, 2008, pp. 269-270). This “consociational” system of government, as it was later called, was based on a de facto common commitment to national economic growth. Absent other sources of broad cohesion, this political culture provided the fledging national community with a sorely needed public mission (Salvati, 2003, pp. 563-565). It also exerted an important influence on the economy, whose recovery and growth was largely dependent on the stronger than average role played by government. It is now widely agreed among scholars that, not without serious clientelistic downsides, the new republican

administrations “led by the centre party, the DC [...] proved capable of supporting expansion.” (Malanima-Zamagni, 2010, p. 14). A gradual opening to the international market, the modernization of the large private and public companies through aid provided by the Marshall Plan, and the huge investments in basic, publicly-controlled industries such as steel and oil laid the groundwork for the revitalization of the industrial system, still mainly composed of small-sized companies (Battilani-Fauri, 2008, pp. 86-87).

Yet, a successful transition to a consumer led economy required further modernization in distribution, marketing, and advertising: all chronically underdeveloped. In 1950 Italian expenditures in advertising (543 liras per head) paled in comparison to the English (3,240) and U.S. ones (25,683) (Fasce, 2001, p. 214). Advertising lagged behind due to the limited size of the domestic market, as well as to constraints deriving from the Fascist propaganda machinery (Cannistraro, 1975). A major force of Mussolini’s dictatorship, the propaganda machine had tried to “subsume a nascent mass consumption under its totalitarian project” by purging it of its “individualist” ethos and imbuing it with a “collectivist, nationalist” one. The ultimate result had been a rhetoric of “Fascist comfort” that combined “the traditional privatist aspirations of the middle class and the organic strength of the nation” (Arvidsson, 2003, pp. 11, 21, 43, and 62), undermining the growth of a modern advertising industry.

In the aftermath of war, echoes of Fascist propaganda melded with anti-consumption and collectivist streams stemming from the two newly emerging hegemonic sub-cultures, Catholic and Communist, in mediating the gradual, and yet irresistible, exposure of Italians to the nascent consumer society influenced by models coming from the other side of the Atlantic (D’Attorre, 1991). Swiftly removing the embarrassing issue of their individual responsibility toward the Fascist past and identifying themselves as innocent victims of a tragic destiny (Pavone, 2004; Nacci, 2009), Italians took cover under the traditional strong sense of family as the main source of personal and collective belonging (Ginsborg 2005; Guaiana, 2009). Familism loomed large, alongside religion and partisan affiliations, as a major feature on a socio-cultural map in which communal identities, deference and the search for certainty trumped personal initiative and tolerance of uncertainty.

Unprecedented active participation in an increasingly democratized public life through mass parties and voluntary civil society associations coexisted with traditional deep-rooted beliefs and long-standing patterns of networking and sharing, centred around the family, all of which eased the adjustment of the population to modernity. Although

recent research has emphasized the continuities running through Italian mass culture from the late 1930s till the early 1950s (Colombo, 1998; Forgacs-Gundle, 2007), nonetheless a comprehensive portrait of the media and the “public sphere” in the totalitarian Fascist era is still sorely lacking. Similarly, scholarly research has not yet investigated the extent to which at the beginning of the period under consideration (1945-1960) the Italian media was still sensing the scars inflicted upon it by the so-called *ventennio* (the two decades of Fascist rule). To be sure, a migration of people and practices took place from Fascist propaganda and from Allied information services to the postwar public relations camp, but it is difficult to trace the threads connecting communication activities across the divide that separates the fascist from the democratic experience.

As far as the press was concerned, the fascist dictatorship had bent to the extreme the traditional “paternal” mode of this medium, namely its chronic subordination to the political establishment (Gozzini, 2003). A note, drafted in 1953 by a U.S. public relations expert active in Italy suggested that serious flaws still tarnished the medium. “In Italy -- the note read -- there are no press relations [...] The whole relationship between press, public and industry in Italy seems so corrupt that Standard Oil of New Jersey, for the time being, has given up any attempt to work with the press. The same seems to hold true for other large companies, except for those who are taking part in the game of giving cash payments for services rendered. There seems to be no hope for any improvement in the situation in the near future” (J.W. Hill Papers, b. 24/7). No less puzzling to American eyes would appear the limited and strictly controlled space for commercial advertising allowed by TV, that began its operations in 1954, consolidating the electronic media system as a “public entity [...] effectively controlled by the governing DC” ( Marletti and Roncarolo, 2000, p. 200).

However, energies and forces that perhaps somehow eluded those American observer eyes were at work beneath the surface of this quite heterogeneous infrastructure. An infrastructure which mixed the new with the old (including traces of the Fascist experience), reflected the strong influences of the major antifascist parties and the divisions of the Cold War, and burst with economic dynamism. In the following pages we reconstruct how public relations succeeded in making inroads into such an environment.

### **Between Propaganda and PR**

The introduction of PR activities and practices in Italian firms and politics was strongly influenced by US companies and government agencies, and went hand in hand with the outbreak of the Cold War and the establishment of an American sphere of influence in

Western Europe. At the same time, the ways in which US ideas about public relations translated in the Italian context showed a series of continuities with the prewar, particularly the Fascist period. This section will examine the rise of public relations between the end of the Second World War and the early 1950s, through an analysis of the main actors involved in the process, namely the United States Information Service (USIS), the US oil company Standard Oil (N.J.), and two of the main promoters of mass motorization in Italy, Piaggio and Fiat.

Before World War II there had been scattered but very limited examples of public relations in Italy. Preceding the Italian military aggression on Ethiopia (1936), Mussolini had sent to the United States Bernardo Bergamaschi, an officer of the Ministry of Propaganda, with the aim of employing a public relations agency capable of gaining the neutrality of the US administration and the support of the Italian communities living in the US (Luconi and Tintori, 2004; Muzi Falconi, 2004). At the same time, as part of its totalitarian project, the Fascist regime had adopted several forms of what would be later called “public relations,” in order to control the public “pulse” and build Italians’ consent to the regime. However, it never resorted to public opinion polls, nor did it engage in the rich debates that took place in the United States during the 1920s and the 1930s concerning the relationship between public relations, the public sphere, politics and the world of business (Colarizi, 1991; Fasce, 2000; Rinauro, 2002).

The term “public relations” started circulating in Italy only after the arrival of the Allied forces in the Summer of 1943. The military forces, particularly the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), employed numerous PR men, many of them Italian Americans, and trained Italians, who often went on to work for the new offices of public relations established by the international firms operating in Italy after the war. The United States Information Service (USIS), the successor of the PWB, played a particularly important role in introducing Italians to the new discipline. After the war, in a country characterized by the presence of one of the strongest Communist Parties in Western Europe, USIS transformed information and the media into powerful political tools. It disseminated pamphlets, newsreels, press releases and books showing Italians the superiority of “consumer democracy” to Communism, especially during the 1948 national elections, which were characterized by a heated confrontation between the PCI and the DC, in which PR and “propaganda,” as it was called at the time by many Italians, played a crucial role (Ellwood, 2001; Scrivano, 2005; Tobia, 2009). Furthermore, throughout the 1950s USIS also organized a series of exchanges between Italian and American businessmen,

advertisers, journalists and PR experts, which exposed many Italians to the growing field of public relations. Starting in the mid-1950s, it organized a series of courses on public relations in its Milan offices and at the International University for Social Studies in Rome, which were intended for businessmen and university professors (Mainini, 2000; Anania and Tosatti, 2000; Cassamagnaghi, 2007).

US corporations, particularly Standard Oil (N.J.)'s Italian affiliate, Esso Standard Italiana, were crucial in promoting public relations in postwar Italy. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, SONJ had been a precursor in the field of PR, establishing employee representation to counter workers' unrest (Marchand, 1998, p.98; Fasce, 2000). During and after the Second World War, its Office of Public Relations, located in New York, employed many people who had previously worked for the OWI and for the United States Information Agency (USIA). In the context of the Cold War, SONJ assigned public relations the task not only of winning the public's confidence, but of convincing the public that corporations could substitute politics in providing the public with goods and services, thus establishing "consumer democracies" (Cohen, 2003). As Earl Newsom, SONJ's PR consultant, put it in 1945, public relations had the aim of transforming a company into a "corporate citizen...an enterprise with a heart – a good company – a good citizen – an institution to be trusted" (Bini, 2010).

As SONJ expanded its international activities after the end of the war, it also assigned a growing importance to public relations, as a crucial tool necessary to present itself as a friendly actor to foreign governments and countries. In the late 1940s, SONJ's Italian affiliate opened an Office of Public Relations, the first one of its kind in Italy. Directed by Piero Arnaldi (see last section), who during the war had worked for the Allied forces, Esso's PR office relied on a close cooperation between American and Italian "PR men." Between the second half of the 1940s and the early 1950s, it carried out an intense and aggressive campaign aimed at promoting free competition and thus challenge the control of the Italian State-owned oil company Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli (Agip) on the exploration of oil and natural gas in Italy. It did so also by distributing a high-quality magazine, *Esso Rivista*, and organizing public events such as concerts and motorcycle and car races. It thus sought to portray itself as an Italian company working to achieve the country's economic reconstruction and increase people's standard of living (Fasce, 2001, p.218; Bini, 2010).

The emergence of public relations in the immediate postwar period had a deep impact on several Italian firms. One of the country's main corporations, Fiat, offers a

particularly interesting example. While Fiat had produced automobiles since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and had, together with the Fascist regime, embraced the idea that cars should become accessible to large sectors of the Italian population, it did not engage in public relations activities until the early 1950s. In the interwar years, its Press and Advertising Office, directed by Gino Pestelli, a journalist who had turned to advertising in order to avoid being targeted by the Fascist regime, had focused primarily on selling products through posters and ads in the press. As Fiat emerged from the ashes of the Second World War, however, Pestelli broadened the field of advertisement to include public relations (Fasce, 2001; Castronovo, 2005). While he started using the term “public relations” after the founding of the Institute for Public Relations (Ipr) in 1952 and of the Italian Association for Public Relations (Airp) in 1954, he continued to prefer the expression “propaganda” to that of “public relations” and changed the name of his office from “Press and Advertisement Service” to “Press and Propaganda” (Fasce, 2001).

Throughout the 1950s, Pestelli promoted a wide range of PR activities, which included the use of the radio and television, as well as the press, to communicate both with emergent categories of consumers and with Fiat’s employees. To be sure, thanks in large part to Marshall Plan aid, in the early 1950s Fiat fully embraced mass production and pursued a mixture of anti-union policies and corporate welfarism (Bigazzi, 2000; Castronovo, 2005). Besides establishing leisure activities and providing housing for some of its workers, it started producing industrial movies and published a house organ, *Illustrato Fiat*, aimed at celebrating the “cooperation” between employers and employees, in the workplace as well as in workers’ free time and private life. Fiat used the new technologies coming from the United States to produce utilitarian cars (most notably the *Cinquecento* and the *Seicento*) and refrigerators – the symbols of an Americanized prosperity and “consumer democracy” -- that could be afforded by the lower middle-classes as well as by the working-classes. In the process, Pestelli selectively appropriated a series of American advertising and public relations techniques to sell the new products on the Italian market. He thus cooperated with the Advertising Office of a US refrigerator company, Leonard, and started producing short films to be inserted in the *Settimana Incom*, a newsreel shown in most Italian movie theaters at the time. Pestelli’s office drew also on other Italian experiences of corporate communication, particularly that of Piaggio, to launch its cars and the promise of mass motorization. In 1955, to celebrate the production of the first utilitarian car, Fiat organized a massive motorcade in Turin, thus echoing the

public events sponsored by Piaggio to present its main product, the Vespa scooter (Fasce, 2001).

Piaggio was, alongside Fiat, one of the main promoters of mass motorization in postwar Italy. As Fiat, it carried out an intense debate about the relationship between propaganda, public relations and advertisement. Founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the interwar period the company had built planes and helicopters for the Fascist regime. After the end of the Second World War, it rapidly changed its focus and became the producer of one of the most popular vehicles in Italy, the Vespa scooter, a symbol at once of national recovery and pride. Designed by Corradino d'Ascanio for Piaggio, Vespas made style and design accessible to large sectors of the Italian population, a population deprived by the war which had not yet experienced widely available forms of private motorization. While the company did not have an office specifically devoted to public relations, between the late 1940s and the early 1950s some key elements of PR became part and parcel of Piaggio's corporate communication.

One of the main protagonists of the firm's public relations activities was Renato Tassinari, whose biography sheds light on several key elements of Italian business history. A fan of motorcycling since his youth, Tassinari had strongly supported the Fascist regime. At the end of the 1930s, he had directed the sports newspaper *Il Littoriale*, and had advocated a "totalitarian conquest of the motor on the part of the masses," thus embracing the idea – advanced by Fascism, as well as by Nazism – that mass motorization should constitute an integral part of the regime's politics. In his view, as in that of many others at the time, access to consumer goods constituted not an expression of democracy – as in the United States during the New Deal – but rather of totalitarianism, and was to give way to Fascist forms of consumption and leisure, through the organization of collective activities, particularly in the *dopolavoros* (working men's clubs) (Rapini, 2007, pp.77-78; De Grazia, 1981).

After the end of the Second World War, Tassinari became director of the firm's journal, *Piaggio*, and promoted a series of public relations activities, which were defined by him as forms of "propaganda," thus highlighting the continuities (ideological, as well as terminological) between the Fascist and the post-World War II periods. Piaggio organized consumers around national and international "Vespa Clubs," and promoted competitions, festivals and shows. By doing so, it did not only advertise its main product, Vespa, but it built a positive image of the company itself, of its relation with consumers and, more broadly, with the "public." In the postwar, as in the interwar period, however,

the forms of public relations pursued by Piaggio were not so much viewed as the expression of a “consumer democracy” promoted by the corporate world, but as a form of “nationalization from above,” characterized by disciplined leisure activities (Hebdige, 1988; Rapini, 2007, pp.229-240; De Grazia, 2005).

### **Best Practices**

As we have seen thus far, the emergence of public relations in postwar Italy was characterized by a complex set of interactions, mostly between American and Italian actors, which involved the business as well as the political worlds. Compared to other contexts, where either the state or corporations had led the way in defining the importance of public relations, in Italy large-scale publicly-controlled industries were among the main promoters of PR during the 1950s and early 1960s. To be sure, their PR activities gave rise to a series of exchanges with a cluster of “progressive” Italian privately owned firms such as Olivetti and Pirelli and led to a rich intellectual and political debate about the role corporations should play in a consumer economy and society.

Italy’s main oil and gas company, the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (Eni) was a pioneer in the field of public relations. Founded in 1953, Eni incorporated the Agenzia Generale Italiana Petroli (Agip), a product of the Fascist regime, and became one of the main boosters of Italy’s economic reconstruction, alongside the Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale (Iri). Against those who, both inside the Italian government and among US politicians, favored a limited economic role of the state, Eni, led by a charismatic figure, Enrico Mattei, together with sectors of the Christian Democratic Party (DC), pursued the idea that the state should guide the country’s economic recovery from war, increase people’s standard of living and make consumer goods widely accessible (Toninelli, 1999; Carnevali, 2000; Pozzi, 2009).

Faced with a growing opposition on the part of international oil companies, sectors of the American government and large segments of the Italian political world, from the second half of the 1940s Agip in the earliest years and then Eni pursued an aggressive communication campaign through the publication of articles and pamphlets which presented the Italian company as a victim of foreign powers and a symbol of national pride. The campaign sought to establish a direct relationship with the “public,” whose role was increasingly recognized as crucial to modern economic and political life, and aimed at portraying Eni as a state-owned company acting in the interest of citizens – eventually consumer-citizens – and thus a symbol of democracy, albeit a Christian Democratic one.

When Eni was founded, in 1953, it already had an office devoted to Relazioni pubbliche e interne. Throughout the 1950s, the office changed its name several times, and was called the Direzione per le ricerche economiche e le relazioni pubbliche in 1957, the Servizio per gli studi di pianificazione economica in 1959, the Servizio per le relazioni pubbliche, studi economici e stampa in 1961 and, in 1963, when it was placed under the direction of Franco Briatico, the Servizio relazioni pubbliche (Briatico, 2004; Bini, 2010). As can be seen by these different definitions, the company devoted a particular attention to the relationship between public relations and political economy. One of the first offices in charge of providing the public with information about Eni was the Servizio studi, which employed journalists, economists and sociologists in charge of writing press releases and defining Eni's role in an advanced industrial economy and society. Under the direction of economist Giorgio Fuà, intellectuals such as Sabino Cassese, Luigi Spaventa, Giorgio Ruffolo and Marcello Colitti transformed the Servizio studi into a laboratory for the envisioning of a new role of the state in the economy, one that could combine social justice with economic growth and, increasingly, mass consumption (Colitti, 2008; Pozzi, 2009).

During the 1950s, Eni's PR offices broadened the meaning of corporate communication by employing some of the most prominent Italian writers and film directors. In order to communicate with its employees, in 1955 the company started publishing a house organ, *Il Gatto Selvatico*, directed by poet Attilio Bertolucci. While the magazine was less innovative than the journals published by other Italian firms such as Olivetti, Eni's movies and other publications proved to be more groundbreaking. Starting in the mid-1950s, the company produced several movies and documentaries which were directed by up-and-coming movie makers such as Bernardo Bertolucci, son of Attilio, and Paolo and Emilio Taviani, or by well-established directors like Joris Ivens. It also promoted the publication of the *Enciclopedia del petrolio e del gas naturale*, written by scientists from across the world, a newspaper, *Il Giorno*, and a 33-volume series titled *Stampa e oro nero*, a collection of all the articles written against Eni (Accorinti, 2006; Deschermeier, 2009).

As consumer goods, including automobiles, became gradually accessible to wider sectors of the population, Eni's PR activities increasingly intersected with its advertisements addressing the expanding ranks of gasoline consumers. Directed by Leonardo Sinisgalli, a graphic designer and poet who had worked for Olivetti, Pirelli and Alitalia and had founded, in 1953, the Iri magazine *Civiltà delle macchine*, until 1961

Eni's Advertisement Office had been largely autonomous from the company's PR activities. With the creation of the Servizio per le relazioni pubbliche, studi economici e stampa in 1961, however, advertising was incorporated into PR and placed under the direction of Manlio Magini, who had previously worked as press officer for Italian Prime Minister Ferruccio Parri and as an advertiser for a small company, AIAR, thus leading to an integrated communication. (Venanzi and Faggiani, 1994; Eni, 2009; Bini, 2010).

Unlike ENI, product advertising played a negligible role in the communication strategy of Cornigliano (later Italsider), the other major publicly-controlled company that pioneered public relations in the 1950s. This was due to the nature of its output, made of huge amounts of semi-finished and finished steel products sold to industrial customers, namely other Italian firms which for the first time in the history of the country, thanks to this newly built plant located in the industrial outskirts of Genoa, were provided with much needed cheap steel churned out on a large scale. At the forefront of the widespread process of adaptation of American technologies and managerial and organizational techniques to domestic needs, Cornigliano made a wide use of "human relations" policies designed to integrate a workforce comprising largely immigrants from Southern rural areas, with little or no previous experience of industrial work and urban life (Ranieri 2000).

Through such programs, which included a vast array of recreational activities, ranging from movies, to theater programs, company libraries, and various cultural initiatives, human relations blurred into public relations with an overlap between the communication addressed to employees and the one reaching out to the larger public. Both communication flows, managed by an Ufficio Pubbliche Relazioni established in 1955, two years after Cornigliano entered into operation, were informed by a deep managerial sensitivity toward issues of education and culture. Melding the moderate reformist outlook typical of the most enlightened exponents of IRI with the interest in art shown by several other large firms including Esso, Cornigliano aimed at bridging the gap between high and low brow. Exposing the workers and the community surrounding the plant to the best and most advanced forms of art and literature, the company pursued the promotion of industrial culture through its association with "style" as a means to foster individual cultural uplift among its employees and create more harmonious social relations, while steering away workers and society from Communist union and political organizations. Hence came the publication of a house organ called *Rivista Cornigliano* and of a spate of books of arts and photographs on industry, steel, and culture featuring scholars and artists such as Umberto Eco, Kurt Blum, and Alexander Calder, or the production of

documentary films directed by up-and-coming moviemaker Valentino Orsini. Such activities took place under the aegis of the Ufficio Pubbliche Relazioni run by avant-gardist writer and poet Vita Carlo Fedeli and painter Eugenio Carmi (Orsi 2000; Vinti 2007).

Among the alleged sources of inspiration for Cornigliano stood out Olivetti, a private company in which the “humanistic” managerial view, the notion of “style” and that of the firm and its surrounding environment as a “community” found their most accomplished expression. A protagonist of the postwar recovery with its fast growing engineering business centered on the production of typewriters, Olivetti represents a unique case in the whole Italian industrial history, reflecting the Renaissance-like personality of its owner-manager Adriano. Adriano Olivetti inherited and expanded the family business started by his father Camillo, an electric engineer. An engineer by training himself, Adriano had taken the helm of the company in the interwar years, after a visit to the U.S. in the mid-1920s that sparked his interest in scientific management and the overall rational organization of business. But it was in the postwar era that, through a free and inventive application of such techniques, he turned his company into a thriving business of 8,500 employees, as well as a laboratory for human and cultural engineering reaching out to society as a whole (Crepas 2001).

Economic success was accompanied and fostered by the elaboration of a social and political vision in which Adriano Olivetti brought to fruition his myriad personal cultural interests, from philosophy to art to urban planning, and, breaking loose from the traditional tendency of Italian private businessmen to steer away from broad political and cultural debates (Rugafiori 1999), strove to move beyond the two poles of individualism and statism. In their place he envisioned the advent of a “communitarian” society springing out of the devolution of power from central government to de-centered forms of participation based on the single company. In this vision the single productive unit like Olivetti would form the cell of a more humane society, putting together management and workers under the common banner of the “producers” allied against waste and parasitism. This could be achieved, in Olivetti’s view, only by a company with deep roots into the area in which it operated, a company made efficient and respected by a systematic application of scientific management, human relations, and “welfare” provisions for its employees, spanning housing to recreational activities, coupled with free collective bargaining. An eclectic and cosmopolitan reformer surrounding himself with Italian

scholars pioneering in the fields of industrial economy, psychology, and sociology, Olivetti drew freely upon French “personalism,” Joseph Schumpeter’s emphasis on entrepreneurship and managerial responsibility, Lewis Mumford’s urban planning, and Charles Le Corbusier’s rationalist architecture (Berta 1980; Renzi 2008).

“Style” as a way to design and sell products, but also to positively identify the firm in the eyes of its employees and the public at large, was a critical component of the company’s policies. These comprised a wide spectrum of communication activities ranging from product advertising to corporate campaigns to cultural and artistic initiatives involving major designers like Ettore Sottsass. Such activities were carried out by an Ufficio Pubblicità created in the late 1930s under the management of poet Leonardo Sinisgalli and expanded in the 1950s by hiring other eminent poets, artists, and intellectuals. Olivetti never felt the need to set up a public relations department because, while early acknowledging the importance of cultivating the goodwill of both employees and society, Adriano and his collaborators always conceived the projects addressing such goals within an integrated perspective, encompassing design, production, promotion, and social engineering, and permeating the whole company, although officially carried out by the Ufficio Pubblicità in conjunction with the Direzione Relazioni Interne, that is the Personnel Department. But the lack of a separate public relations department did not prevent the company from assuming a leading role in the development of the profession in the country and earning wide praises among practitioners and business people (Vinti 2007).

The poet Leonardo Sinisgalli is the connecting link between the public relations policies of ENI and Olivetti and those of Pirelli, the other major family firm, active in the rubber industry, whose PR activities are worthy of attention. Pirelli shared with Olivetti a strong emphasis on the technological side of the business, founded and developed since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century by people with an engineering background, and an early exposure to the international dimension of the industry, complete with educational stints abroad for the owner-managers including Alberto Pirelli, the son of the founder Giovan Battista, who led the company from the 1930s through the 1960s (Bolchini 1985).

Pirelli never pursued the kind of broad social and political project envisioned by Adriano Olivetti. Yet, its communication activities, entrusted from 1948 through 1953 to Sinisgalli, who moved in from Olivetti, partook of the above mentioned attention to “style” as their defining character. Besides, here too, like at Olivetti, advertising largely

overlapped with public relations, in a continuous flow featuring artists like Mino Maccari, Gino Boccasile, and Armando Testa and encompassing product design and advertising, institutional advertising, and several forms of cultural sponsorship and promotion intended to improve the overall image of the company. Absent such a broader agenda as the Olivetti one, at Pirelli Sinisgalli could perhaps more freely experiment with his own long standing vocation at breaking down the barriers between technical and humanistic culture through a particularly sophisticated house organ, *Rivista Pirelli*. The names under which Pirelli communication activities were carried out were, until the early 1950s, Ufficio Pubblicità, and since 1952 and until 1965, Ufficio Propaganda. Which confirms how the term “propaganda” was regularly used to designate an approach to communication deemed broader than advertising well into the 1960s and attests to the heterogeneity of the practices and the mixture of novel and traditional features that we have already remarked (Vinti 2007).

### **Professionals and Professional Associations**

We now narrate, through a selection of the ‘founding fathers’ of the public relations profession in postwar Italy, the interrelationships between their successful professional practice and their passion for the development of the profession, namely through the creation, enhancement and social recognition of professional associations and license to operate.

Guido De Rossi del Lion Nero, from Rome, will be the protagonist in Venice in 1961, together with the French Lucien Matrat, of the approval of the first ever International Public Relations Code of Conduct promoted by IPRA (International Public Relations Association). Also, in 2003 he will address (on video, from his home) the 500 strong audience of leaders of the global public relations community gathered for the First World Public Relations Festival to approve the Global Ethics Protocol promoted by the recently formed Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management. 61 years earlier, in 1942, Guido was a young and fluent English speaking journalist of the United States Information Service in Rome and practiced public relations for the Marshall Plan until 1952.

Similarly to Guido, Alvisè Barison - who is today 91, alive and kicking - had returned to his native Trieste fleeing from Buchenwald where he was deported for having refused to join the post-fascist northern Republic of Salò. In 1948 he joined the allied

military command where he was assigned to mediating relationships amongst the various armed forces and the local community.

In the early fifties he joined the United States Information Service and will be, in Milano, head of public relations of the US Trade Center. Vittorio Crainz (just turned 90) and his late partner Piero Arnaldi also worked for the Allied forces in Rome in the middle forties and, in 1952 will open the first public relations agency in Italy (SIPR). In 1961 they will teach in the first ever two year Masters Course in Public Relations at the Pro Deo University (today LUISS Business School), run by Father Felix Morlion, a highly controversial and powerful Opus Dei figure of the Vatican.

Rome, Milano, Trieste and Genova are the locations where the term ‘public relations’ were first echoed in post war Italy. However, back in the late 30’s intellectuals such as Guido Mazzali and Dino Villani, both from Milano, rounded up young antifascist, progressive peers around the Ufficio Moderno (modern office) a journal dedicated to spreading the achievements of Taylor, Mayo and other international management theorists and practitioners towards the emerging Italian business and cultural communities,.

Associated with Vanni Montana, a US lobbyist and trade unionist who had successfully managed the breakup of the Italian socialist party in 1947 to deter the communist party from winning the decisive 1948 first post war political elections, young intellectual and economist Roberto Tremelloni, subsequently to become Minister of Finance in the sixties, formed in 1952 in Milano the IPR (Institute for Public Relations), a group of scholars and managers, many from the reorganizing public sector, and delivered public relations courses around the country and, most importantly, devised and launched the Oscar del Bilancio, an annual award for the most informative corporate reporting. Run today by FERPI (and specifically by Gherarda Guastalla Lucchini, who by the way was Alvisè Barison’s assistant at the US Trade Center in Milano), is yet and by far the most important and reputed award for corporate reporting.

On that same 1952, the Province of Bologna opened the first office of public relations in the country’s public administration (in 2000 a national law will oblige every branch of the national and local public administration to open an office of ‘relations with the public’ called URP).

In 1956 the Italian Association for Public Relations (formed in 1954) and the nascent National Union of Public Relations Professionals (one based in Rome and the

other in Milano) will organize together, along the Lake of Stresa, the first International Conference of Public Relations.

Many of Italy's top industrial leaders and politicians participated, together with a significant number of international representatives from France, the UK, the US, Mexico and Belgium. The conference proceedings are a precious source which allow to appreciate how human relations and public relations are intertwined, and employee and union relations an essential and interdependent part of the public relations profession. Marketing public relations has yet to come.

Two different interpretations of the profession are explored: while Father Felix Morlion specifies that public relations implies relations with the external publics of the organization (thus the term 'relazioni esterne' frequently used also today), Alberto Muller, one of the fathers of a handful of fathers of Italian public relations, clearly indicates instead that the term is to be interpreted as relationships with publics.

Amongst curiosities, professional Piero Arnaldi is publicly scolded by the conference leadership for having voiced the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of public relations and to develop methods for evaluating and measuring their impact. This was, in those times, an unheard of request, as public relations was by most interpreted as a philosophy of the organization and therefore needed no specific demonstration of effectiveness. However, at the conclusion of the conference, its Chair Umberto Baldini remarks that the next step for the profession is to resolve the contradiction amongst those who say there is no unity of measure and those who instead say that an organization cannot omit to ascertain the effectiveness of their public relations effort. (atti della prima conferenza nazionale Internazionale per le rp Franco Angeli editore- franco angeli editore).

The strong European influence on the conference, also sprinkled by relevant Anglo Saxon presentations, led to the subsequent creation in 1959 of Cerp (Confederation Europeenne des Relations Publiques) which in turn will merge (2009) into the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, thus concluding the long road from the United States to Europe and from Europe to a more global perspective today including Asia, Oceania, Africa, Latin America and Canada both in body of knowledge and practice.

## **Conclusion**

As we have stated at the outset, the main objective of this paper was to provide a first introductory account on a topic that, with very few exceptions (Muzi Falconi, 2007), has been so far largely neglected by Italian scholars and practitioners alike. Several elements emerge from our analysis can contribute to the broader field of the history of PR from a comparative and international perspective. Like the Spanish case recently explored by Natalia Rodriguez Salcedo (Rodriguez Salcedo, 2008), Italy too poses the excruciating problem of dealing with public relations in a country plagued by a Fascist dictatorship and characterized by a strong tradition of propaganda, indeed being Italy the country where the word itself “propaganda” was first coined. While, unlike Rodriguez Salcedo, we have focused our attention on the period in which the expression “public relations” made its appearance on the Italian scene, the similarities between the Italian and the Spanish cases deserve a closer and more sustained “Mediterranean” comparative investigation (Hallin-Mancini, 2004).

On the one hand, both countries were characterized by a heterogeneity of practices and by a divergence between practice and theory. In Italy this took the form of a very limited theoretical production, at the beginning basically confined to the work of Piero Arnaldi, who helped set up the first PR department in the country, that of Esso Standard Italiana (Arnaldi 1957). On the other hand, Spain and Italy shared an overlap between advertising and PR that can be attributed, at least in the Italian case, to the rather limited size of its domestic market, the shadow cast by Fascist propaganda, and the underdeveloped character of the nation’s industrial culture. Throughout the period analyzed in this paper, corporate communication kept a more continued focus on the product, rather than on the consumer, and tried to compensate for a lack of industrial culture by striving to earn the goodwill of employees and public opinion through exposing them to the cultural side of business.

In Italy, this peculiar development of communication practices offered unusual professional opportunities to an array of “humanists” (publicists, writers, graphics), exemplified by poet Leonardo Sinisgalli. Such practitioners, in turn, shaped in their own image the departments they directed, reinforcing the emphasis on “style” and culture, at least until the mid-1960s, when marketing and marketing research stepped in and eventually took over. The “humanistic” bent characterized to varying degrees all the main cases examined here, especially the best practices ones, and set the Italian case apart from other national cases. While all the practitioners we have examined in this paper came from

the corporate world, they also showed a deep interest in public and, in some cases, political matters, thus reflecting the peculiar combination of private and public-owned companies that characterized the Italian mixed economy in the decades following the Second World War.

Unlike other contexts, such as the British and the US ones, where respectively the state (L'Etang 2004) and corporations (Marchand, Miller 1999) had led the way in defining the importance of public relations, in Italy two large-scale state-owned industries and two huge family firms, the protagonists of the country's reconstruction and "economic miracle," were among the main promoters of public relations during the 1950s and early 1960s. As a consequence, a complex mixture of autochthonous reformist culture, drawing freely upon social Catholic and lay reformist traditions, coupled with American influences, underpinned the initiatives that we have examined. The various forms of public relations carried out by Italian companies contributed to the broadening of the public sphere and spread new ideas about the relationship among firms, the state, democracy and consumption. But, as we said, much remains to be done on the larger impact, if any, that such developments exerted both on the wide world of small-sized companies which comprised the bulk of the Italian industrial system and on public administrations, local and national alike.

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**CREATING COUNTERNARRATIVES:  
Harvey Company Publicity and Native Americans (1902-1936)**

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In 1924, D. H. Lawrence lurched along a bumpy road to a Hopi village, his vehicle one of many filled with tourists traveling to see a ceremonial dance in which Indians carried rattlesnakes in their mouths. Lawrence (2009a, pp. 80-81) called it a “circus-performance” and mocked the tourists for thinking of American Indians as “a sort of public pet”:

The South west is the great playground of the white American. The desert isn't good for anything else. But it does make a fine national playground. And the Indian, with his long hair and his bits of pottery and blankets and clumsy home-made trinkets, he's a wonderful live toy to play with.  
(Lawrence, 2009b, p. 187)

Although Lawrence satirized his fellow tourists for their romanticized images of Indians, he and many of his contemporary intellectuals constructed their own notions of Indian identity. They thought of aboriginal Native American culture and practices as being true – and mourned the encroachment of Eastern industrial influences on the purity of tribal life (Lawrence, 2009c; Meyer, 2001; Snyder, 2007).

Cultural tourism scholarship has primarily explored cultural imperialism and the negative implications of the commodification of indigenous culture (e.g., Azarya, 2004; Bsumek, 2008). Meyer and Royer (2001, p. xi) called cultural imperialism “highly corrosive” and a crucial issue for American Indians. To highlight the problems of cultural commodification in tourism, studies frequently focus on advertising and publicity-oriented communication that depicts stereotypes of ethnic populations (Bsumek, 2008; Buzinde *et al.*, 2006; Green, 1993).

Typical are the studies examining the advertising and publicity efforts of the Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company during the early to mid 1900s. Harvey partnered with the Santa Fe in 1876 to run restaurants and hotels along the growing western U.S. rail lines. Around the turn of the century, many major Southwestern U.S. archeological sites were discovered, such as Mesa Verde, piquing interest in the area served by these companies and a fostering a “mania for Southwest Indians” and their artifacts and hand-made goods (Snyder, 2007, p. 664). To meet this burgeoning demand, the Harvey Company formed the Indian Department in 1902 to collect Indian art, later

selling it to tourists as well (Harvey, 1963). In 1926, the Harvey Company entered directly into the tourist trade by offering Santa Fe passengers the chance to take “Indian Detours” through the New Mexico countryside in Harvey Cars guided by Harvey “Couriers.”

Under the terms of the contract between the two companies, Santa Fe controlled all advertising, which heavily promoted Southwest tourism to increase rail traffic (Wilson, 2003, p. 16). Ads in national magazines and newspapers often featured “Indian maidens and red mesas, while little Navajo boys wrote ‘Santa Fe all the way’ in the desert sand” (Henderson, 1969, p. 29). Scholars who’ve studied these ads, along with Harvey’s promotional materials for Indian crafts and the Indian Detours, have charged the two companies with commodifying Indian culture (e.g., Shaffer, 2003; Tydeman, 1963) and creating a purposefully feminized and romanticized Indian image to lure tourists (Weigle and Babcock, 1996b; Wilson, 2003).

Dilworth (1996, p. 159) says the two companies “were nostalgic . . . for an Indian that never existed; in the interest of selling tickets and hotel accommodations in the region, the two corporations constructed a version of Indian life that reflected American middle-class desires.” He claims “Indians were conceived of mainly as making objects for tourist consumption or as objects of visual consumption themselves, both as sights to be seen and as props for photo opportunities” (p. 163). Weigle (1989, p. 133) charges that “In commodifying the Indian Southwest as a tourist or secular pilgrimage center, Santa Fe/Harvey corporate image makers transformed it into a mythological holyland of grand natural wonders, inspirational primitive arts, and domesticated, artistic natives.”

Others, however, note that such scholarship assumes Indians have no agency in their cultural development. Far less attention has been paid to the potentially beneficial effects of cultural tourism, such as job creation, social enrichment, and affirmation of cultural identity (Bsumek, 2008; Guyette and White, 2003; Markowitz, 2001/2002; Santos and Buzinde, 2007). Some Indians, for instance, have chosen to use the Anglo concept of Indian identity to promote tourism because of the financial benefits (Bsumek, 2008; Cuillier and Ross, 2007; Hilden and Huhndorf, 1999; Sorrells, 2003). Even Lawrence (2009c) suggested that the “Indian who sells you baskets on Albuquerque station or who slinks around Taos plaza” was not completely divorced from the effort to recruit tourists (p. 178).

Additionally, the cultural imperialism literature often reifies a particular notion of “authenticity” that turns Indians and their lifestyles into museum pieces and fails to account for innovation, growth, and change (Berkhofer, 1978; Merskin, 1998). Guyette

and White (2003, p. 164) suggest “authenticity can be examined in a more fruitful manner by focusing on the social construction of authenticity and recognizing that there are multiple levels of social presentation of reality.” More work is needed that examines cultural tourism from the standpoint of the relations between producers and consumers, that doesn’t impose an idealized identity on either but realizes that “the practice of tourism reflects, shapes, manipulates, and transforms culture and identity in complex and multiple ways structured by power” (Rodriguez, 2003, p. 185).

This study attempts just that by using the cultural-economic model of public relations based on the circuit of culture (Curtin and Gaither, 2005), which incorporates the concepts outlined by Guyette and White (2003) and Rodriguez (2003) into a public relations focused approach. This study ascertains the multiple identities the Fred Harvey Company created for Indians from 1902 to 1936 and the shifting relationships that developed to better understand the company’s promotion and public relations efforts. The dates were chosen to be inclusive of the establishment and demise of Harvey’s two main contact points with natives: the Indian Department and the Indian Detours. Data stem mainly from an in-depth and comprehensive examination of primary materials—the Fred Harvey Company photographs and papers at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona and the Fred Harvey Collection at the University of Arizona, comprising photographs, correspondence, and miscellaneous records. The data are supplemented by secondary sources as well as literature from a variety of fields, including art, literature, anthropology, and sociology.

### **Indians as Object of the Tourist Gaze; Harvey as Educator**

The conflation of Santa Fe advertising with Harvey Company promotional material stems from the close contractual relationship and operations between the two, often making “the two corporations seem one and the same body politic” (Thomas, 1978, p. 30). As one long-time Harvey employee noted, “In a large organization, men to be valuable must to an extent forget their individuality and work for the general good. . . . [and] the Fred Harvey Organization is always ready to sink its individuality for the general good, ‘The Santa Fe Railway’” (Schweizer, 1921, p. 3). It’s not surprising, then, that the often stark Orientalism (Said, 1979) apparent in the Santa Fe’s advertising was credited to Harvey as well. For example, a Santa Fe ad in the San Francisco *Examiner* (February 14, 1914, p. 12) beckons tourists to explore “a land of quaint, swart faces, of oriental dress and unspelled speech.” One from 1929 depicts three young Anglo children exclaiming out a train window—“Gee! We are going to see real, live Indians” (Heard collection). In fact,

however, the Harvey Company had no control over advertising, which by mutual agreement was strictly the purview of the Santa Fe.

The Harvey Company's formal relationship with local tribes began with the establishment of the Indian Department in 1902 in Albuquerque, next to the Harvey run Aldarado Hotel. The enterprise was directed by Fred Harvey's son-in-law, John. F. Huckel, who commissioned Herman Schweizer, a local manager with the company who had established relations with Indian craftsmen during his 16 years in the Southwest, to obtain material for it. Schweizer (1930a) observed that the Indian Department was established as an "advertising feature of the Santa Fe Railway, with a view of interesting the public in the Indians of the Southwest and their products, which purpose has been admittedly well served." The commercial side, he noted, was a secondary consideration. Although Schweizer originally had to stand in front of the building and solicit traffic, the Indian Department soon took on a life of its own, becoming a major source of income for Harvey and a center of trade and accommodation for Indian craftspeople (Fergusson, 1940).

The Indian Department became part museum, part store, and part workspace. Schweizer collected museum quality pieces for exhibition only, while offering less valuable pieces for sale. Schweizer also donated archeological materials to museums and shaped publicity that positioned the museum as a scientific endeavor (Pardue, 1996), but his involvement with the commercial side as well led some in the New Mexico Archeological Society to snub him for commodifying the "ethnology and archeology of the Indians" (Schweizer, 1917, p. 2).

Also integral to the Indian Department were the Indian craftspeople who exhibited their skills and sold their wares. An apparently early brochure for the Department exhibits the same Orientalism evinced by Santa Fe's efforts, describing "Indians from nearby pueblos lounging about in colorful costumes . . . offering their primitive wares to the passing travelers" and "Native silversmiths fashioning crude wrought ornaments embellished with barbaric symbols" (The Indian Building, n.d.).

More typical of Harvey's promotional works, however, "were lengthy, didactic, and documentary [publications], like anthropologist George A. Dorsey's *Indians of the Southwest*, a 233-page, profusely illustrated ethnography (including a 7-page bibliography)" (Weigle, 1989, p. 121). The Harvey Company viewed the mission of the Indian Department as primarily an educational one. When Schweizer, on a visit to Anasazi ruins, saw a thunderbird pictograph and thought it would be a perfect logo for the Indian Department, Huckel produced a scientific, multi-page document explaining its history and

symbolism to visitors. In an era when most media were reducing tribal differences to create a homogenized Indian as “other” (Berkhofer 1978; Bird, 1996), Harvey publications painstakingly outlined tribal differences in appearance and culture. Short examples include the *Indians of the Southwest* (Huckel, 1926), which describes Pueblos as “a model of peace and industry” and Navaho as “nomadic shepherds.” In the 26-page brochure for the El Tovar Hotel (Black, 1909) at the Grand Canyon, Hopi are “small-statured,” “gentle folk,” who throw pots and weave cloth in immaculate houses, while “tall, taciturn Navajos” live in hogans, the women weaving “fine wool blankets” and the men “cunningly fashion[ing] silver ornaments.” Other tribes described in various publications are the Apache, Havasupai, and the ancient Anasazi. In some publications, the Harvey Company used native or Spanish words and provided translations, noting the significance of these words and certain illustrations to the indigenous cultures (e.g., Birdseye, 1926; “De-Ki-Veh” 1933).

Indians were made the direct object of the tourist gaze in Santa Fe exhibits at expositions and through the Indian Detours. The 10-acre Painted Desert, Santa Fe’s exhibit at the San Diego Exposition in 1915, reproduced the landscape of the Southwest and the pueblos, hogans, and tipis of the Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache, respectively. For the exhibit, the Harvey Company hired more than 200 Native craftspeople to “work at their usual occupations, some making pottery, others designing silverware, and still others weaving baskets” (Hewett and Johnson, 1916, p. 40). In fact, under government terms, Harvey could hire the craftspeople only “for the purpose of exhibiting them engaged in their native industries” and not for “exhibition purposes by circuses, wild west shows, and the like” (Merritt, 1914). Controversy arose when Exposition promoters wanted to use the Indians “as circus performers,” which Huckel (1935) explained did not fit with either the dignity of the company or its educational mission and refused to grant permission. It was a concern of Huckel’s that such ventures were not really up to Fred Harvey standards, and attempts by the Santa Fe to organize another exposition featuring Indians in 1935 appear to have fallen through due to lack of enthusiasm from the Harvey side.

For the Indian Detours, Couriers served the purpose of the educational brochures, providing extensive background on history, botany, biology, culture, geography, archeology, ethnology, and anything else that might arise in the course of a trip. Couriers were always college-educated women, many of whom had traveled abroad and were conversant in foreign languages. They underwent 4 months of training, including lectures and field trips, before becoming a substitute, or apprentice, Courier (Birdseye, 1930, p. 6).

The role of the Courier was not only to educate, however, but to provide entrée into the hidden rituals of Indian life, to provide, in MacCannell's terms (1973) a form of staged authenticity through a glimpse of backstage behavior.

While the expositions and Detours constructed a certain staged authenticity and directly invited the tourist gaze, making Indians the exotic object of scrutiny, they did so through an educational lens designed to point out difference rather than produce a homogenized "other." Roger Birdseye, publicist for the Indian Detours, spelled out three types of tourists: the pioneers, the fireside readers, and those of the Harvey clientele, who "ever seek the middle and pleasanter path" and want to educate themselves (in Weigle, 1989, p. 130). Letters demonstrate, however, that not all tourists got the message. One was quite enthralled with her Indian Detour to "our quaint artistic Pueblos" (Dixon, 1927), another simply stated that she "thoroughly enjoyed . . . seeing the Indians in their natural habitat" (in Thomas, 1978, p. 172). Yet others argued for the inclusion of even more education, such as one who "noticed that some of the tourists viewed the Indians as merely a diverting vaudeville show" (Strawbridge, 1928). A Harvey Company official replied that in addition to the lecture room being added to the hotel to better accommodate educational presentations, the tours tried to appeal to "the discriminating individual" (Clarkson, 1928, n.p.).

Head Courier Erna Fergusson, in an article for the October 1928 issue of *The American Motorist* (in Thomas, 1978, p. 192), tried to enact a bit more education and broaden the tourist gaze. "White people," she wrote, "impressed with their own importance and that of their dollars, often assume that Indians dance only for white spectators. This is emphatically not so. Many of the dances are strictly secret and no whites are permitted to see them." As for those who wanted to view Indians in their "natural habitat," she suggested a more human approach: "It is worth while . . . just to make friends with a shy, proud people in their homes. The crude white tourist who looks upon Indians as animals in a zoo meets with very little attention" (p. 192). Through such sponsored articles, Harvey turned the tourist gaze back on the tourist, requiring a level of reflection unusual in such endeavors.

Couriers also were instructed to respond to tourists who objected to paying Indians for pictures that the money helped defray the cost of lost work time, thus reinforcing the notion that Indians were much more than simply exotics on display for the whim of the tourist (Thomas, 1978). The Harvey Company endeavored, then, to educate tourists about the object of their gaze and, through self-reflexivity, to resituate the Indian as something

other than just an object to be gazed upon. But circumstances helped them as well. When the first Indian Detour customers dined at the Santa Fe hotel, locals came and gawked at them through the hotel windows, causing one to observe, “I know how the Indians must feel now” (in Thomas, 1978, p. 128).

### **Indians as Creators of the Authentic; Harvey as Definer of the Authentic**

Personnel within the Harvey Company struggled to balance Harvey’s well-known reputation for high quality with acquiring crafts for sale to tourists. For example, when Navajos starting weaving cotton warp blankets, Schweizer (1907) refused to buy them, saying they wouldn’t hold up, and instead stocked a few in the store to display to the public to educate them about the difference between them and all-wool blankets. He also insisted on pure native wool blankets, not blankets that had been made with lighter-weight wool imported from Pennsylvania, which Indian traders were supplying (Schweizer, 1935). Schweizer would often reject half a shipment of blankets received from a local Indian trader as “poor quality,” not up to Harvey standards of craftsmanship. As Alice Donahue, director of promotion and public relations for the Harvey Company, observed half a century later,

Through the years we have encouraged the Indians to continue making their hand craft articles of the highest quality. . . . Indian curios purchased at Harvey shops are exactly what they say they are represented to be. . . . If you buy a Navajo blanket, you get a Navajo blanket, made for Fred Harvey shops in the Southwest in the traditional Indian way. You can be further assured that the Indian was paid a fair price. (1954, p. 2).

The market may have driven the business, but “preserving the Harvey Company quality image was pre-eminent” (Howard, 1996, p. 97).

Scholars have accused Schweizer of both altering native craftsmanship through his strict buying standards and of refusing to allow any natural progression of stylistic change through his strict adherence to “authenticity” (e.g., Adair, 1944; Weigle and Babcock, 1996a, 1996b). Close examination of Harvey documents suggests, however, that much of this apparent tension resulted from the struggle between Huckel, the Harvey family member in charge of the Indian Department, and Schweizer, who had the contacts with craftsmen and was in charge of acquisition. While Schweizer was concerned with maintaining quality, as with the Navajo rugs, Huckel’s concern was “authenticity” and “tradition.” Huckel (1909) pushed Schweizer to have some of the older Indians try to reproduce older, no longer used dyes so as to revive their use and achieve a more “authentic” look for the Navajo blankets. Schweizer (1909) diplomatically responded that

he would try to get the Indians to trial the process, but expressed doubt as to how exactly it should be done, which seemed to end the matter. As a Harvey family member observed, Huckel and Schweizer were frequently at odds, but Schweizer was “a forceful man and was not easily deterred from his goals” (Harvey, 1963, p. 40).

Although some early scholars (e.g., Adair, 1944, p. 27) credit the Harvey Company with changing traditional Navajo silversmithing to smaller, lighter weight pieces to fill market demand for “popular souvenirs of a visit to the West” that “became stereotypes of the art of the Southwestern Indians,” a close examination of company documents provides a much more nuanced narrative. In 1932, Huckel and Schweizer butted heads again, this time over the authenticity of Navajo silver being carried in Harvey shops. Huckel (1932a, p. 1) bemoaned “people who sell imitation goods as genuine goods” as a “menace to good society and morals. They are doing a phony business, and they are cheating and misleading the public.” In this light, he wrote to Schweizer that he “was very much disturbed some months ago to learn that at several of our curio places we were selling imitation Indian Navajo jewelry” (Huckel, 1932a, p. 1). Over the course of 3 months and 8 letters, the two debated the ethics of carrying Tammen silver, machine manufactured and lighter weight than handcrafted Navajo silver. In 1899, before starting work in the Indian Department, Schweizer had asked Navajo silversmiths to make lighter weight jewelry for sale for tourists but found the Indians generally unwilling. To satisfy customer demand, Schweizer subsequently obtained Tammen silver jewelry, but it was kept segregated from Navajo silver in the stores and marked as not Native made. Huckel’s parting shot to Schweizer on the controversy was to note that “If Tammen and other phoney manufacturers succeed it will hurt one of the most lucrative departments of our Indian business; but more than that it will prevent the Navajos from making an honest living” (Huckel, 1932c, p. 2).

What united the two men was a firm belief that a regular outlet for “authentic” quality native crafts that provided fair prices to Native artisans was necessary for the survival of tribal culture and peoples. As Huckel (1932b) noted, “Our Indian Department hasn’t been simply a commercial department. It has done a lot of humanitarian work. At least, this has been my feeling all along since I started this department in 1902.” In turn, it was well known among the Indians that Schweizer would pay a fair price for quality work, higher than that offered by the local Indian traders (Blomberg, 1988; Whitmore, 1938a).

When The Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative Marketing Board Bill, commonly known as the Leavitt Bill for its House sponsor, was proposed in 1930 to set up an

oversight board for Indian products, the government sent the vice president of Walter Thompson Advertising Company to ask Schweizer to support the bill as a way to guarantee the authenticity of native goods. Instead, Schweizer heavily lobbied against it, believing it would allow the government to control yet another aspect of Indian life and, as in the past, not to the advantage of the Indians. For instance, Schweizer (1930b, p. 2) opposed the government Indian Boarding Schools and their policy of assimilation: “The whole trouble is that the government has started to educate the Indian to fit him into the white man’s way of earning his living, and he has been unfitted for his primitive life, and has not yet reached a point where he fits into our economic situation.” To Schweizer (1932, p. 3), it spelled an end to Native craftsmanship: “Indian schools and modern changing conditions are doing more to eliminate the possibility of continuing primitive workmanship than any other factor.”

In this manner, “The Santa Fe was neither merely reproducing nor simply displaying the native Southwest; it became the source of authority for Indian authenticity” (Kropp, 1996). Schweizer used his position to lobby government to protect what he perceived to be the native way of life and testified before the Federal Trade Commission on the issue of imitation Navajo silver in 1932.

### **The Harvey “Family”: Indians as Children, Harvey as Patriarch**

Indians were not only tourist objects and suppliers of crafts for Harvey, they were employees as well. An early Santa Fe piece states that at Harvey “working conditions are made as good as it is practicable to make them, and every opportunity is accorded employees to advance in the service” (Santa Fe Magazine, 1916, p. 45). The term repeatedly used to describe Harvey employees was family; as a long-time employee said, “The Harvey people were like one big family. The people at the top, the superintendents, were really interested in the welfare of the employees, even their children and families” (in Poling-Kempes, 1991, p. 97). Byron Harvey, Jr. (1947, p. 132), elected president of the company in 1946, reinforced this interest in all aspects of employees’ lives, noting the company worked to deserve employee loyalty “by being considerate, not only as regards their relationship with the company, but also by encouraging them to bring their personal problems to us if there is a possibility that we might be of help.” He added, “We endeavor to treat employees as fairly and as carefully as customers” (p. 132).

Indeed, the customer always came first at Harvey, and all customers were treated with great care regardless of class or ethnicity and, during the Depression, sometimes without regard to ability to pay (Poling-Kempes, 1991). Among the first customers at

Harvey's original restaurant in Topeka were 76 Sioux Indians, who, in the same year as the Battle of Little Big Horn, were fed and treated as courteously as any other customers (Marshall, 1945). Yet evidence exists that Fred Harvey's "employee practices were in fact discriminatory toward minority women, and maintained the status quo of American business" (Poling-Kempes, 1991, p. 40). In the early years, Hispanic and Indian women were found at Harvey Houses mainly as kitchen help and maids—positions from which the usual Harvey promotion from within wasn't possible. A few notable exceptions were made—a Laguna woman at the Grand Canyon and an Isleta woman at the Alvarado worked as Harvey Girls (waitresses)—but they were noteworthy because of their rarity. The situation changed only during the labor shortage in World War II, when many Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni girls left the reservations to take positions as Harvey Girls, where they served both white and African-American troop trains without discriminating (Henderson, 1969).

Those few Indians who were hired as Harvey Girls made good money. In the late 1800s, all Harvey Girls received \$17.50 per month plus room, board, tips, uniforms, and a free trip home once a year. In the early 1900s, their pay was raised to \$25 per month. At the time waitressing was regarded as a low class profession, a belief that Harvey sought to dispel, and the pay compared favorably to what men were making in similar professions (Poling-Kempes, 1991). Those Indians who worked at the Santa Fe Painted Desert Exhibit at the 1915 San Diego and San Francisco Expositions were also paid a salary, housed and fed, given medical care, and allowed to sell their crafts directly to the public and accept tips (Kropp, 1996).

For those who worked as demonstrators in the Indian Department, the pay could be even better, depending on how much they sold directly to tourists. Basket weavers often made up to \$7.50 a day and were housed, fed, and provided medical care (Smith-Ferri, 1996). The Harvey Company had a reputation with the Indian craftspeople as offering fair wages and, more importantly for mainly agricultural tribes in an area with harsh winters, a year-round income and snug accommodations. Except for the Navajo silversmiths, the craftspeople were mainly women (i.e., weavers, basket makers, and potters), and because of the steady employment offered by the Indian Department, they often became the main source of financial support for their families (Howard and Pardue, 1996). Additionally, women remarked that they liked working there because they were treated like everyone else—they were part of the Harvey family.

To keep women at the Indian Department, the company would often move their families in with them, although in some cases such tactics didn't overcome the homesickness, and women returned to the reservation, particularly in the spring. Special care was taken to meet the needs of well-known craftswomen, such as Elle of Ganado, a Navaho weaver, who with her husband Tom spent many years at the Indian Department and served as a star attraction. Another was Nampeyo, the famed Hopi potter who gave demonstrations at Harvey's Hopi House at the Grand Canyon. While Elle and Nampeyo achieved a large measure of independence because of their stature, most Indian employees of Harvey experienced a paternalistic system. As Huckel (1932b) observed, the company had a duty to protect the "livelihood [sic] of innocent and ignorant Indians" (Huckel, 1932b).

### **Indians as Empowered; the Harvey Company Adjusts**

As noted in the beginning of this paper, too many studies of cultural imperialism and commodification of culture ignore the possible empowering benefits to be had from cultural tourism. While the historical record doesn't offer much from the Indian perspective, there is just enough material to provide a glimpse into this side of the relationship.

As much as many of the Indians relied on Harvey for a source of income, Harvey relied on the Indians for a source of crafts for the Indian Department and spectacles for the Indian Detours. One well-publicized incident in 1923 almost severed the company's good relations with the Navajo, when Navajo sand painting replicas were included in the interior design of the El Navajo Hotel in Gallup. The Navajo objected to the use of their religious imagery in a commercial, Anglo building. Harvey officials, recognizing the damage that could result, immediately ordered them removed. The upshot was that the Navajo ultimately agreed to the paintings placement and use, provided they were allowed to give them a proper blessing ceremony. In true Harvey educational fashion, a booklet was prepared explaining the ceremony and giving details of the religious significance of the paintings (Navajo House Blessing, 1923). Over 2000 Indians and 30 medicine men from different tribes attended, making a community day of religious observance and celebration out of the event (Poling-Kempes, 1991).

Harvey learned its lesson. Ten years later, when it wanted to construct a Hopi House at the Grand Canyon, it invited the Hopi to help in the design and to build the house. A blessing ceremony was held, parts of which took place in the kiva and were private because of "the necessity of respecting Hopi tradition." The rest was public and fully

explained in another Harvey educational booklet (De-Ki-Veh, 1933). The program used many Hopi words and provided translations; it also explained the significance of the different ceremonial dances and illustrations used. Hopi bread, pixi, was served, but only the blue corn version, not the red or white. Those colors were reserved for the Kachina Ceremony, and Harvey promised the Hopi that no part of the sacred Kachina Ceremony would be used (Watchtower Dedication Ceremony Menu, 1933).

The Indians also held the upper hand on the Detours because without access to the Indian villages, the Detours would lose some of their star attractions. A few tribes, such as the Zias, refused to open their villages to tourist groups, and Harvey Couriers were often left to explain to tourists that while the New Mexico license plate featured the Zia sun symbol, the tourists would not be consorting with the Zias themselves (Fergusson, 1940). At Santa Domingo Pueblo, one Courier firmly told tourists that no pictures were allowed. When tourists took them anyway, their cameras were smashed and the Pueblo was closed to further visits. It took Harvey much negotiation to re-open the Pueblo to tourists (Thomas, 1978). A more laid back approach was used by the governor of Santa Clara Pueblo. When tourists there broke the ground rules the Courier had laid out about not climbing on the buildings, she apologized to the governor, but he simply noted that “some people have no breeding” (in Thomas, 1978, p. 196). Because of the company’s efforts to maintain good relations, Indians often gave Harvey Cars preferential treatment over other tourist groups.

By developing a market for native crafts, the Harvey Company is credited with bringing prosperity to the tribes and preserving native craftsmanship, although the profit motive for the company cannot be overlooked (Cox, 1987). From the Indian perspective, however, a Santa Clara elder remembered in 1994 how “before the Harvey buses came it was hard for the women. After they started coming it seemed like the women were the ones who were the providers, the moneymakers, and the men did their farming” (Gregorita Chavarria, in Howard and Pardue, 1996, p, 126). An Isleta woman recalled that 4 to 5 Harvey cars a day meant money, especially when the Pueblo started charging Harvey Cars for parking.

Contemporary critics (e.g., Wilson, 2003) who decry the depiction of the Southwest tribes in Plains Indian headdresses and buckskin in the company’s images ignore the fact that the Indians themselves often decided to don their neighboring tribes’ wear because it meant tourists were willing to pay more for pictures (McMullen, 1926). Another critic decried the “commercialization” of Indian art that Harvey brought about,

while noting that the “economic reasons were very compelling” (Swentzell, 2003, p. 69). Guyette and White, who worked with the Pueblos, tell a different story, however.

Tourism stimulated a pottery revival in the early twentieth-century due to creation of a market demand. In general, Pueblo people considered this to be beneficial to their communities: it promoted retention of a highly valued cultural craft and one that—unlike wage labor—involved the cooperative efforts of extended family groups. (2003, p. 167)

In fact, the debate surrounding the construction of authenticity and culture is nothing new. When Emily Hahn was a *Harvey Courier*, she went to a party hosted by the “arts” crowd where she was told that “Indians were getting their values warped, that everything was becoming commercialized and spoiled” (Hahn, 1937, p. 104). In turn, her fellow *Couriers* countered that the *Detours* allowed the Indians to live more comfortably and preserve some of their traditions that might otherwise be lost. The lesson for public relations history scholars is that relations are never fixed and stable; they assume a multitude of meanings and enable a variety of formations of empowerment and disempowerment. More rigid perspectives within cultural tourism and public relations history based on essentialism and functionalism fail to capture historical context and situational nuance, limiting scholarship and understanding.

### **Conclusion**

As Rodriguez (2003, p. 185) noted, “the practice of tourism reflects, shapes, manipulates, and transforms culture and identity in complex and multiple ways structured by power.” What emerges from this analysis, employing Rodriguez’s perspective, is not a straightforward narrative of publicity and propaganda serving the purposes of marketing, as proposed by Cutlip (1995). For example, Cutlip (1995, p. 41), in one of his well-known histories of U.S. public relations, concludes that a major contribution of 19<sup>th</sup>-century railroad public relations was to define the romantic image of the West: “The romantic picture painted in roseate hues by the publicists to lure settlers and tourists west created a distorted canvas that plagues us to this day.” By doing so, he argues, “the publicity campaigns of the railroads are exemplary of the major supporting role public relations can play in the marketing of goods and services” (p. xiii). Cutlip thus writes out of consideration the rich, contextualized findings of this study. Of note is that heavy reliance on publicity over other primary sources may have unintentionally reinforced the linear model in earlier studies, limiting the possibilities of approaches based on a more in-depth examination of organizational culture.

By looking at public relations history through a cultural-economic lens, rather than a functionalist one (Curtin and Gaither, 2005), a much more nuanced view of U.S. public relations history emerges that takes into account discursive formations of identity, the relationships between producers and consumers, and the contextually situated nature of relationships. Through such work, U.S. public relations history scholarship can escape the linear, static view that has bound the field for almost 25 years (Brown, 2006; Lamme and Russell, 2010; L'Etang, 2008).

To move past the limitations of the dominant perspective, calls have been issued for more historical studies that “begin with the public relations function itself” (Lamme and Russell, 2010, p. 355) and those that examine small to medium-size businesses (Miller, 2000). This study demonstrates, for example, that the Harvey Company proceeded with a financial motive in many of its interactions with Indians; for example, efforts to educate the public about tribal differences may simply have been conceived as a way to ensure that tourists couldn't say, “if you've seen one, you've seen them all,” thus driving repeat business. Yet while the Company in its relationships with Indians occasionally embodied the financial empowerment, dominant patriarchy, and discrimination of the times, it also was not always empowered in those interactions and at times acted out of motivations other than that of market gain. Moves to define Indians in relationship to the company were always subject to context, defined by discourse, and ultimately in a state of flux.

No static model of public relations historiography captures this fluidity and changing power structure. As such, this study lends insight into 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. public relations practice and problematizes simplistic examinations of early Southwest tourism. It uncovers counternarratives to the metanarrative of public relations evolution and to the subnarratives that have developed to support it, much as other scholars of U.S. public relations history, such as Gower (2008) and Lamme (2009), have begun to do as well.

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## **EMPIRE, ECONOMY, EXPLOITATION: A 'RACED' VIEW OF PUBLIC RELATIONS HISTORY**

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This paper addresses the importance of history as a foundation that shapes the present and future of public relations in the UK. I argue that the social structures that gave rise to the formal profession of public relations remain a factor in its current make-up. Specifically, I suggest that the relative standing of members of different 'racial' groups in history, and their relevance to public relations work, continues to shape the professional experiences of people of colour today (Edwards, 2010). To understand how this happens, I propose a re-reading of public relations history using post-colonial and critical race theoretical lenses, which foreground issues of 'othering' on the basis of 'race' and allows us to see the mechanisms through which this legacy is perpetuated. I begin by reflecting on the importance of history and the way it might inform the operation of power in and through public relations.

### **Why is history important?**

Bourdieu (1990, 1984) argues that history informs the present (micro, meso and macro levels) through habitus, the sedimentation of norms, values and beliefs that are inculcated through family, education and other institutional mechanisms such as professions. These norms values and beliefs are enacted and made material through practice, which is shaped by them, and in turn shapes them.

Bourdieu's argument means that PR' history, as we recognize in this conference, defines who we have become and who we have the potential for becoming. It demonstrates the discursive boundaries of the profession as they have evolved, it illustrates the justificatory grounds for our existence, it is the roots of our future. It also defines our possibilities because it has shaped the way we perceive our place in the world.

To interrogate how history influences the present profession, though, we must go beyond the periodisation approach that characterizes much research in this area. Individual questions of how particular events were managed, how particular organizations communicated crucial events in their past, or how particular groups of people

communicated, are all vital; but at some point we need to complete the jigsaw, we need to put all the different pieces of this history together and look at the overview.

We can do this in a number of different ways; the overview will change depending on the position from which we view it. So for example, Jacquie L'Etang's (2004) work gives us a forensically detailed understanding of the emergence of the profession and its professional identity over the last century in the UK. This history is tied up with individuals who had particular influence on the profession's development, as well as the institutions and organisations that developed the practice because of their remit and need at any one particular time. A different lens might explore the influence of women on the profession since its inception, or the adoption of North American models of practice in the UK market over time. All these are valid histories of PR.

Whichever historical overview we choose, it will of course be limited because it describes a time past. The Britain of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that enthusiastically embraced PR, is not the same as the country that uses it today. The profession itself is also different. So if we are to understand how history informs the present, we must bear this ontological evolution in mind (Childs and Williams, 1997). The nation-states that shaped the world in which PR initially evolved may no longer exist, replaced by the fluidity of globalization. Nonetheless, that political and economic time is part of why we are what we are (as academics as well), and the realities of that time should be internalized as part of PR's identity, rather than an adjunct to it. This means not only investigating how practice evolved, but also how PR was connected to other aspects of the environment: the political world, the social world, the industrial world. The foundation of PR is inextricably linked to the foundations of these worlds too, as L'Etang (2004), Cutlip (1994) and Ewen (1996) have demonstrated.

If history informs the present, then history is a means of understanding the present too. As a critical scholar, I am interested in using it to understand how power operates through public relations. Critical scholarship often addresses the impact of PR: which voices are silenced, are not given space? How did the PR tactics used in a campaign open up, or limit, access for groups opposed to a particular message or practice? Alternatively, how did PR tactics deployed as a means of resistance, succeed or fail? This approach echoes the functional emphasis of normative approaches to PR by positioning it as a tool for domination, a means by which those in power stay in power. The way it is used is at fault, not the profession itself – which can, of course, be a force for good. Yet, by

definition this means that the practice of PR potentially becomes incidental, a mechanism, an ‘empty vessel’. What matters is what fills it. What fills it, of course, is discourse.

Discourse is one of the key tools in the process of domination; its influence is, after all, why PR exists. Foucault (1980, 1991) suggests it is inseparable from power, and Bourdieu (1991) argues that it is fundamental to the acquisition and maintenance of symbolic power for elites, as well as to the acquiescence of dominated groups to the status quo. But in positioning PR as a channel or a tool, we distance the profession from this crucial reality. PR works ‘on behalf of’, and thereby abdicates responsibility for the discourses it creates – these are the requirement and the responsibility of the client. The client is everything and the client is therefore deterministic, PR can only act in relation to and in ways shaped by the client. Such a view has some truth (although it clashes nicely with the aims of the professional project in PR – see e.g. Pieczka and L’Etang, 2006), since PR is a service profession, and may therefore only exist in relation to those it serves. Nonetheless, we know from practice that the amount of effort that goes into creating discourses, forming messages and shaping documents, belies the notion that they are completely client-dependent. Practitioners choose the words, based on the client’s overall aim. They choose the formation of the words, what accompanies the words (visual symbols, interactive tools), and how those words may be disseminated. The client, one might argue, sets the ideology, but the practitioner determines how that ideology is justified.

If this is the case, then we have to complement the notion of PR as a tool for domination with the recognition that it cannot be separated from discursive power, which it generates through its practice. Neutrality is a fallacy. On the contrary, PR, I argue, *is* power. Those who exercise that power cannot plead neutrality on the basis that ‘their clients told them to do it’. They must take responsibility for their active role in the maintenance of – or resistance to - power. This applies to history as much as to the present.

How might we understand this role more clearly? Drawing on Dewey’s work (Dewey and Bentley, 1949[1991]), practitioners’ actions may be viewed as *trans-actions* with other entities (institutions, individuals, groups) in their social sphere – to whom they are connected. These trans-actions are simultaneously forms of identity work; new positions, new subjectivities, new relations are brought into being as a result of each transaction (Simpson, 2009, Emirbayer, 1997). Understanding PR actions as trans-actions underlines the fact that PR cannot be treated as an impermeable world, separate from the

social. On the contrary, it is embedded in the social (for varying views on how this might be conceptualized, see Ihlen and van Ruler, 2009); it is defined by the relationships (e.g. with client, audience) within which it exists and is also implicated in the relative positioning of other individuals and groups in society, which it produces as part of its activity.

Trans-actions are continuous, always incorporating the past and anticipating a future. This temporal aspect of transactions means they cannot be understood as events in isolation, but need to be examined in relation to the past that informs them and the future they call into existence (Emirbayer, 1997). Bourdieu may argue that history shapes our present and the possibilities that make up our potential futures through discourse and practice (Bourdieu, 1990, 1999); Dewey, in perhaps a more powerful way, suggests that this history is present in each and every one of our transactions (Dewey and Bentley, 1949[1991], Emirbayer, 1997, Simpson, 2009)

We have, then, in history, a tool for understanding the present at a level of practice and discourse, and in particular, for understanding the social structures within which individuals and groups are differently positioned. Conversely, our starting point for examining history becomes the present. The contradictions, confusions, inequalities, or simple puzzles that we see in the present guide the lens through which we may examine history in order to more fully understand our current situation.

### **Why ‘race’?**

One of these present ‘confusions’ driving my own research is the ‘raced’ nature of PR in the present. ‘Race’, like gender, is a primary social definer (Anthias, 2001). It generates preconceptions of us in other peoples’ minds as soon as we walk into a room. These perceptions are linked with our perceived place in the world; or, alternatively, our relation to whatever the ‘norm’ is in that particular context. In the context of PR in the West, the norm is ‘whiteness’, and this becomes the benchmark against which all of us are measured for ‘fit’ (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Whiteness is not just about phenotype, but is an ideologically-driven and socially-constructed understanding of the world made evident in assumptions about people from different ethnic groups (Frankenberg, 1993, Haney Lopez, 2006, Ahmed, 2007). It encompasses both embodied Whiteness and the categorizations normatively associated with White and other ethnic groups. These categorizations construct positions in society for ethnic groups in terms of, for example, class, criminality, intelligence, and occupation. As Ladson-Billings (1999) argues: ‘In a society where whiteness is positioned as normative everyone is ranked and categorized in

relation to these points of opposition. These categories fundamentally sculpt the extant terrain of possibilities even when other possibilities exist.’ Socially constructed ‘race’, then, is one means by which individuals and groups are positioned in society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). This is not a question of Black and White, but more of ‘Whiteness’ and the ‘Other’. Thus, in the recent study I carried out, the ‘other’ included Welsh, Polish, Black African, Black Caribbean, first generation British Pakistani, second generation British Indian and mixed race practitioners.

If ‘race’ is a primary social definer, then it should not be regarded as an analytic category that can be ‘tagged on’ to our main interest in process, practice or social context. It should generate a valid focus in itself, like gender or class. [At this point it’s perhaps useful to ask why there isn’t more focus on ‘race; or ethnicity in PR scholarship? There is a lot of work on gender. Where is ‘race’? ]. And so we come to ‘race’ in the present. Is PR ‘raced’ – in other words, are there what one might call racial hierarchies that require an explanation?

The answer, in the UK, is ‘yes’. Not all ‘other’ practitioners experience marginalization, but many of them do. Not all find themselves working twice or three times as hard as their white colleagues to prove they are worth a promotion, but many do. Not all have been treated as the catering assistant in meetings, rather than the professional, but many have. And not all have experienced the gaze of Whiteness as they walk into professional spaces and become the exotic ‘other’, disturbing the texture and fabric of their environment, but many have (Edwards, 2010).

How do we explain this? Why should PR – a profession – demonstrate this hierarchy? Why should whiteness dominate in a world where merit is supposedly the criteria that defines progress, and where more ‘BME’ students are graduating from university with appropriate qualifications for entry? Here, I believe an examination of history can be productive.

### **Searching for ‘race’ in PR history: post-colonial and critical race perspectives**

PR history in the UK and in the US is defined by whiteness. In both contexts, the modern profession evolved in a social political and economic environment where the elite – who had the power and money to use PR – were white. Reading PR history with a view to revealing the presence of ‘race’, then, means rejecting the western and whiteness perspectives in existing narratives (Childs and Williams, 1997). Adopting a post-colonial perspective for this endeavour allows us to read what Prakash (1995) calls the spaces between discourse and the material, between the lines. These ‘hidden histories’ may not

have been told, but have been nonetheless inscribed on the emotions and lives of the 'Other' (Fanon, 2008(1952)). Part of this re-reading of history also means recognizing that the marginalized are part of our history, and therefore part of our identity; we cannot exist without the 'Other' (Said, 1995, Prakash, 1995, Spivak, 1988). The counterpoint of subaltern knowledge is what permits us to construct our dominance. We can only be 'more' valuable, 'more' valid in contrast to something that is 'less'. This reification controls and contains the subaltern voice (Prakash, 1995), creating a form of epistemic violence exerted through PR in the 'worlding' (Spivak, 1999) that it enacts: the centralization of Europe and the West through the transmission of categories and identities embedded in forms of meaning and knowledge that intersect with power and define the 'order of things' (Foucault, 1980).

The question for a history of PR informed by postcolonial theory is how PR constructed the 'Other', appropriating it for the 'West' and, inevitably, from a post-colonial perspective, how this construction was resisted and transformed even as it was enacted (Childs and Williams, 1997). The lives, narratives, and perspectives on the world order that derive from 'Others' rather than from the colonizer; the voices that colonization variously ignored, obliterated or reshaped to serve its purposes, are essential to such a historical reading and require us to go beyond the world of PR and explore wider social contexts to inform our understanding. The voice of the 'other' is fundamental to this exercise. Colonial powers tended to speak for the (essentialised) 'other', and so postcolonial work aims to make discursive, material, intellectual and cultural space for the voices of the subaltern in all its varieties (Said, 1995, Spivak, 1988).

Critical race theory has much in common with post-colonial work, although its roots - in critical legal studies - differ. Taking as their starting point the reality that race shapes everyone's lives, and that discrimination is a characteristic of social structures, built into the way society works, critical race theorists argue for a deconstruction of normative ideologies to reveal the ways in which they work (primarily) with Whiteness and against raced 'others'. The structural focus of critical race theory has the advantage of forcing researchers to examine the ways in which 'race' and 'racism' serve society in a whole range of different ways and on different levels (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). It also forces us to reflect not only on those who are discriminated against, but also on the actions of those (functions, institutions, and agents) who do the discriminating. Of particular interest is the 'new racialism' (Chang, 2002, p. 88) that explains differences in social and economic outcomes between racial groups as a result of meritocracy and market

forces. This is inextricably linked to the historical metanarrative of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ as *material* progress, which in turn lead to the ‘deracinated consumer, fully informed and rational’ (Carrasco, 2002, p. 368), the ‘perfect’ market and the quantification and categorisation of production and consumption. Like the epistemic violence exerted on subaltern histories (Spivak, 1988), the new racism subjugates identities and limits the degree to which racism itself can be talked about. Stripping identities of their social context removes ‘social context’ from discourse and therefore leaves no foundation for articulating ‘racism’. Because this new racialism is discursive, it is also temporal (it has a past and a future) and can be examined through a historical lens, focusing on how and why discourses have emerged that privilege this view of the world. PR narratives are recognised as ‘the mechanism by which the dominant group is able to transform an otherwise contingent view of the world into a universal system, while simultaneously marginalizing competing views through the use of a ‘dominant gaze’ that perpetuates racial inequality’ (Carrasco, 2002, p. 372).

The history of PR, then, from these perspectives, should be read with a view to understanding PR’s function as a creator of stories that ‘legitimate(d) the racial viewpoints and interests of those in power’ (Carrasco 2002, p. 367) and thereby constructed social hierarchies in relation to ‘race’, in ways that may continue today. Based on this, I re-read the history of PR for evidence of ‘race’, for the ways in which it has shaped and has been shaped by social structures, and for the potentially discriminatory effects it may have exerted that shape the present I see.

### **Public Relations History and ‘Race’**

The origins of the modern public relations profession lie in the commercial and political environment in the US and UK in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In North America, the nineteenth century was characterized by a massive expansion of heavy industry and a gradual increase in the use of public relations to promote their interests (Windle, 1971, Russell and Bishop, 2009). The wealth this generated led to the growth of an American middle class, able to participate in the production and consumption of economic and social benefits. In contrast, the urban poor and immigrant populations had limited opportunity to consume relative to their wealthier, middle-class neighbours, while non-White groups, and particularly Black Americans still carrying the legacy of slavery, were legally, economically and socially defined as subordinate to Whites (Ross, 1997, Harris, 1993, Ross, 2002). The emergence of new understandings of ‘mass’ publics, easily manipulated and vulnerable to influence by radical movements that might

destabilize the status quo, generated a real concern that these working class poor and ‘savages’ would break out of their allocated spaces and cause chaos (Bernays, 2005 (1928), Ewen, 1996, Cutlip, 1994).

The rapid expansion of corporate and government public relations occurred in this context, to manage public opinion and control the ‘masses’. In addition, the new ‘science’ of persuasion articulated by early practitioners was used by commercial organizations to expand their territory, market their products and encourage consumption. The profession’s early practitioners were employed by most of the major corporates and in government, and as the twentieth century progressed, public relations became increasingly focused on preserving these interests under the guise of generating prosperity for all Americans (Martinelli and Mucciarone, 2007, Ewen, 1996, Russell and Bishop, 2009, Cutlip, 1994).

Re-reading this history for ‘race’ offers an alternative view, defined by the perspective of the ‘Other’ and revealing the dominance of Whiteness. From this standpoint, the economic, political and social structures of the US promoted by PR professionals were predicated on the systematic privileging of White interests. This was facilitated by the legal recognition of the material and symbolic benefits of Whiteness as a property that could be claimed and enjoyed by those to whom it was accorded (Harris, 1993). These included Whiteness as a set of legal rights; as a locator in social systems and structures through employment rights, education entitlements, and other forms of state validation; as the basis for reputation and status; and as a set of expectations about personal and group entitlement to enjoy the benefits of these legal and social rights. Insofar as Whiteness was protected and privileged, other groups were not.

Harris (1993) demonstrates the degree to which Whiteness shaped every aspect of mainstream life in North America, permeating the discursive positions taken by commercial organizations, educational institutions and other government departments. Public relations narratives justified and perpetuated the assumptions of white superiority and the inferiority of other ‘races’, for example through the dissemination of segregation policies, arguments for separate schools, and by simply closing off the discursive opportunities for people of colour to participate in shaping dominant norms. This closing off occurred not least because of the invisibility of Black Americans in the discourses they produced (Ewen, 1996) and indeed, on occasion, proactively promoting racist violence via support for organisations such as the Klu Klux Klan in the early twentieth century, an episode described by Cutlip (1994) as ‘unquestionably the saddest chapter in public

relations history'. In addition, the increasing use of public relations to encourage consumption during the twentieth century defined the economic subordination of people of colour. In reifying Carrasco's 'deracinated consumer', audiences were valued in terms of their ability to buy – or, alternatively put, their ability to enjoy the economic and social benefits of Whiteness. As consumption increasingly defined the American way of life, it became a central part of the American narrative of belonging, adding another dimension to the process of 'Othering' that characterized the status of people of colour. The growing, consuming, and voting White middle-class was – and remains - increasingly the main audience of interest to corporates and government alike (Munshi and Kurian, 2005). Progress towards economic well-being became a colour-blind story of individual effort generating individual, material benefits; the social context of that individual effort was, and is, obscured (Hill-Collins, 2006, Carrasco, 2002).

Postcolonial approaches additionally demand that we find the voice of the 'other', of the subaltern population within the West (Munshi and Kurian, 2005) in this history, and indeed there have been some valuable reviews of public relations activity on behalf of activist organizations, or carried out through marginalized groups such as women (Straughan, 2004). However, these are periodisations of history that form one particular element of resistance but do not tell the whole story. What is required is an examination of the space *between* discourse and the material – the bodies that lived in that space, carved out an existence in it and were marked by it (Prakash, 1995). So resistance cannot be viewed purely in terms of 'good' PR activities, it must also incorporate social histories that illustrate the way these subaltern lives, while inevitably incorporated into the dominant discourses as stereotypical sources of fear and desire (Farley, 2002), were also shaped by resistance, being the locus of reinterpretation such that dominant PR narratives were always contested. These histories need to be acknowledged as valid elements of public relations history, countering the 'worlding' that public relations work enacted.

### **Links to the present**

How do these perspectives link to the present? Historically, the legal subordination and discursive exclusion of non-White groups in North America combined to 'other' them culturally, politically and economically in the discourses of American identity and belonging that most public relations practitioners spent their time communicating. This subordinate relationship to the norm, which was called into existence in part through the trans-actonal work that PR did, is echoed in the current context. Today, Whiteness, as a property that affords access to American identity and belonging, is still protected. Aside

from the formal legal environment that provides the structures for this (Harris, 1993), such protection is enacted discursively through public relations activities. The audiences that public relations practitioners address are defined in terms of their material value – their propensity to vote, to buy, to use a particular service. This definition is not ‘race’-neutral; on the contrary, the fact that non-White groups are over-represented in socially marginalized populations means that, by definition, speaking only to those who can claim material value simultaneously ‘others’ those who cannot, by virtue of their place in the country’s racial, economic and political hierarchy (Carrasco, 2002, Said, 1994, Hill-Collins, 2006).

At the same time, reading history in this way necessarily disrupts our own identity as scholars and practitioners of PR. As Bhabha points out, we realize the truth of our own history through the ambivalent stereotype of the ‘Other’ (Bhabha, 1994). PR has constructed this other, creating both the fear and the desire that makes up its, and our, identity. In constructing the Other, dominance is justified dominance but the door to challenge is simultaneously opened (Bhabha, 1994). We sent out ‘hybrid’ messages that reinforced whiteness, but which were changed by some in their reception, in their translation. Our history doesn’t show that. It just assumes the messages were received in the manner intended by the sender. We need to explore social histories to connect ourselves with the ‘other’ and explore how PR trans-actions produced new relationships, identities and dynamics of power. Spivak (1988, 1987) calls for us to avoid simplistic readings of history and, indeed, reification of the ‘Other’ in ways that simply reflect the coloniser’s fantasies. Instead, she argues for a complication of the story, unlearning our own privilege in the process and recognising our own positionality. Similarly, critical race theorists challenge essentialist readings of ‘race’ and its effects, and call for more complex analyses of the present that reflect the variety of identities that characterize different groups (Carbado, 2002).

Because of history’s link to the present and future through practice and discourse, revealing an alternative past also helps us develop new readings of the present and the future. As Prakash (1995, p. 12) argues, a postcolonial view of history necessarily emphasizes heterogeneity and a departure from normative readings: ‘The historical analysis of disciplines cannot but disorient disciplinary expectations shaped in the history of colonialism’. Interdisciplinarity is therefore required to ‘explore and realign disciplinary boundaries’ (Prakash, 2005, p. 12). Introducing ‘race’ as a central concern in PR requires us to not only review the territory of professional jurisdiction, it also

introduces new academic theory that allows us to reshape our understanding of power in PR. Revealing the profession's historical complicity in the exercise of power allows us to detect the deep, socially-determined assumptions that still mark its territory today. Armed with such knowledge, we have the possibility to make space for resistance to those assumptions.

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**FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS TO COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT**  
**Historical revision of Public Relations and fundamentals of a new discipline**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose**

Reflect on the origin, evolution and possible concomitances between the “public relations” and “communication management” concepts as they are understood in Spain.

**Design/methodology/approach**

After a brief review of the historic evolution of public relations, the concept of communication management is analyzed based on the most relevant literature published in Spain since 1993. The role assigned to public relations in said texts is also assessed.

**Findings**

Existing texts on communication management or corporate communications reduce public relations to a mere technique or ignore the concept altogether, albeit appropriating its structural elements as their own.

**Value**

It is suggested that although the term “communication management” is used as a global concept, public relations must be understood, at the least, as one of its relevant parts, avoiding the disgregation of its components.

**Key words:** Public Relations, Communication Management, historical revision, Spain.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In Spain, as in other countries, the “public relations” concept that is used in the academic arena is disappearing in the business and institutional environments, where new terms such as “communication management” are proliferating to encompass the various communication-related tasks a company needs to implement, in an integrated manner, as one management function

Many researchers and scholars working in the field of communication defend this corporate view. They understand that communication management is a broad and comprehensive function that encompasses many elements, public relations being one of them; and further add that the term public relations, which they consider obsolete, only designates a series of basic techniques that are developed within a master plan of greater scope.

Other researchers, however, defend that public relations and communication management are synonyms and therefore refer to similar functions. For these authors public relations is a discipline that has existed for more than one hundred years and has undergone ample theoretical development, while communication management, at least from an academic point of view, is yet to be built and therefore the public relations concept should be kept.

Lastly, other authors understand that, whether public relations and communication management are considered as the same, similar, complementary concepts or a part and a whole respectively, the term public relations, because of its negative connotations and the popular confusion it generates, is doomed to disappear.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The notion of public relations cannot be sustained unless it can be proved that this discipline fulfills, today, the necessary functions to manage efficaciously the relations between an organization and its various publics in the same manner that it is not possible either to take communication management to the academic realm if its origins, foundations and relation to other disciplines are not clearly explained. For this reason, whether the intention is to recover the term public relations or to incentivate and introduce into the academic arena the idea of communication management, it seems appropriate and necessary to reflect on the actual bases of both concepts while trying to clarify their origin, evolution and possible concomitances, which is the main objective of the present study.

## **3. APPROACH**

To pursue said objective the historic evolution of public relations has been reviewed, analyzing the manner in which this discipline has continued to assimilate elements that have transformed it into a managerial function and have brought it closer to what today we know as communication management. In a parallel manner, the concept of communication management has also been analyzed using the literature published on this topic in Spain since 1993 as starting point and focusing on its development, scope and potential for future growth, while continuing to assess the role assigned to public relations in these texts.

#### **4. ANALYSIS**

##### **4.1. Historical review of public relations**

It could be said that public relations as a discipline started in the United States during the second half of the XIX century as a tool for large companies to defend themselves against the attacks of the press. This defensive activity, carried out by press agents, evolved quickly thanks to the contributions of figures such as Ivy Lee, who insisted, during the early XX century that relations with the press should be an ongoing and proactive activity. The terms used to describe these practices during the early years, “publicity” and “press agency”, were largely displaced after Bernays (1923) defined the functions of the “public relations consultant” and this term became widespread.

Little by little, while the incipient discipline of the public relations practice develops in the professional spheres and spreads towards new publics, a theoretical and academic corpus starts consolidating around the concept. At about the time of World War II, scholars started trying to distance this discipline from others such as propaganda, reinforcing the idea that public relations must seek the common good and achieve the *goodwill* of the public through activities more complex than the mere interaction/dialogue with the media.

This vision expands during the 1950s when the General Systems Theory is introduced to the public relations field. Cutlip and Center (1952) refer to the need of organizations to adapt to their environment to survive, and it is in this context where public relations become necessary, since they enable the negotiation process necessary to search for the desired equilibrium between the private interests of the organization and the interest of the public a large. Furthermore, this approach implies that public relations must be a bidirectional process: the organization must listen to the public as the only way to provide means for acting on the causes of the conflict and recover the original position of equilibrium in its environment.

Through this evolution and the contributions from academia, public relations gradually shed their initial characterization as a set of techniques and are transformed into something more complex; in other words, the systemic perspective embodies the foundations for the future development of the so called managerial perspective of public relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) contributed substantially to this view with their work *Managing Public Relations*, where public relations are conceived strategically, as a fundamental management tool, and thus consolidating the idea that it must be a management function inseparable from the other managerial functions of the organization.

From this perspective, Grunig and Hunt define public relations as the management of the communication between an organization and its various publics. This idea, which appears repeatedly in numerous definitions, resembles the concept of communication management and has led to widespread use of this term within the field. In fact, in 1992, Grunig edited a volume titled *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*.

From this perspective the horizons of public relations expand and new functions and concepts, such as the notion of the stakeholder are added, allowing the discipline to adapt to an ever increasingly complex corporate reality. So much so that Grunig and Repper (1992: 124-125) describe a public relations process having seven stages, the first of which is identifying who are the stakeholders, understanding as such those persons or groups that may affect or be affected by the actions of an organization.

It should also be noted that since the 90's a new paradigm in public relations has been consolidating in which the idea of relationship prevails over the idea of communication. The communication aspect of public relations is then seen as the tool public relations provide to achieve the actual management of relationships, which is the main aim of the discipline.

This notwithstanding, while the discipline of public relations consolidates and continues to be innovated in the United States, its evolution in Europe is slower (since as a discipline it was also incorporated at a later date). And even more so in Spain, where the political regime known as the Dictatorship prevents the entry of new ideas that are already part of the corporate environment in other countries, and where the new concepts of the managerial perspective and the new visions of the discipline do not enter the academic context until well into the 90's

(suffice to say that the Spanish translation of *Managing Public Relations* is not released until 2000).

This is why, at a time when the need to have a broader and more globalizing idea of communication is made patent in the corporate world at large, public relations continue to be seen in Spain, and a large portion of Europe, merely as the rudimentary techniques of the business. This incomplete vision of the discipline, and the generalized lack of knowledge of the public at large of the actual meaning of the term, is what drives Spanish professionals and many of their European colleague to shun the term and look for alternative names that better reflect the management aspect of communication the thinkers in the US are proposing and that have become an imperative in an ever more complex corporate world.

#### **4.2. The friction between communication management and public relations**

Before analyzing the concept of communication management it is essential to analyze the presence of communication in the world of organizations. And given the tight link between communication and public relations, references to the later are unavoidable. In this sense, Martín reviews what he calls “communication and image in companies and institutions”. He starts by identifying Ivy L. Lee – considered the father of public relations– as one of the pioneers in this field (Martín, 1995: 18).

In Spain, according to Martín (1995:29), communication within the company or the institution is not known as such until the late 60s and the early 70s, when the first communication offices, direct descendants of the “old press and public relations offices” but with extended functions, start appearing. The relevance of the services offered by such agencies is perceived in such a manner that, according to the author, more and more organizations create their own office or hire “communication and image or public relations consultants”. In fact, Costa (2001: 49) proposes that by the end of the seventies communication is already seen as a concept that could solve many problems in the organizational world, going as far as mentioning the idea of integral communication in 77, and thus being ahead of the times by introducing the idea of the director of communication.

Thus, at the same time in which the vision of the managerial aspect of public relations starts to take root – directing the definition of the discipline towards communication management – other concepts such as that of integral communication are sprouting in the business and academic arenas. Yet both approaches attempt to address the same need: that communication must be an activity that is coordinated and developed not only from the technical perspective but as a relevant management function within the company.

The consolidation of communication in the business world goes hand in hand with theoretical advances, such as were the first studies that appeared in the late 70s and early 80s leading the theory of communication towards systemic trends (Garrido, 2002:13). Let's remember, however, that public relations were pioneers in this sense, since the systems theory was incorporated to the discipline in the 50s. Despite these points of reference, Costa (2001:47), as other authors, although acknowledging that there is a resurgence of public relations at this time due to the economic crises and advertising problems, he sees them merely as an “old alternative method”. That is, without considering its management bases, public relations is considered a technique and after the emergence of the integral communication idea, it is deduced that this and other manners of company communications should be managed in a coordinated manner.

In this vein Costa (2001: 59-60) says, if up to this moment in time companies covered communication tasks employing professionals from specialized fields such as journalism, advertising or public relations, once the idea of integral communication emerges the need for a generalist manager also arises. In this context the figure of the director of communication or *Dircom* does not take long to appear. In fact, according Xifra (2003: 5), it can be dated and pinpointed to the early 80s in France. This concept is used to designate the position occupied by the person responsible for managing and coordinating the integral communication of the company, and therefore aligning it along the management echelons of the communication department.

In a similar sense, Martín (1995) notes that the *Dircom* is an executive management figure that is responsible for the strategic communication plan of a company and acts as an orchestra director, coordinating all the communication-related activities of a company, advertising included. And perhaps this is one of the turning points at which public relations and communication management diverge,

and where the perception of public relations being a less ambitious approach is felt more clearly, since its scope does not attempt to, for instance, control the advertising activity .

All authors that approach the issue of communication management coincide in that it must take a relevant place in the company's organigram. For Costa (2001: 62) this place is by the president, managing director or general manager's side, and in contact with the heads of human resources and *marketing* in order to be able to synthesize the institutional communications both internal and external.

Costa (2001:66), nevertheless, also points out that three large areas depend on communication management: institutional communications, relational communication (with internal stakeholders, the media, clients, institutions, social bodies...) and organizational communication or marketing. In this case the author treats the concepts of institutional and organizational communication as different realities, while characterizing relational communication as that taking place with a series of publics that have been traditionally the province of public relations, yet this discipline is not named as such.

Soler (2001), on the other hand, explicitly includes public relations as one part of communication management since he considers that the functions of a *Dircom* include establishing the objectives and strategies in the areas of advertising, public relations, direct marketing, etc.

Martín (1995: 44, 47) on the other hand considers that communication management should encompass the areas of internal / external communication, public image, audiovisual media, data / publications bank and institutional advertising, reducing public relations to a minimum when posing them as an activity of external communication related to event organization, although later pointing out that the activity of "communication and image / public relations consulting firms are structured into two sections: institutional advertising and "communication and image / public relations" (Martín, 1995: 151).

Lastly, Lucas Marín (1997), although initially also posits public relations as an element of external communication overseen by the director of communication, he later qualifies it by saying that corporate communication, advertising and marketing are part of the public relations plan of organizations and, although acknowledging the difficulties associated to the term and how many see it

as an area circumscribed to media communications, insists that these are aspects of a wider function that may even pay attention to the internal publics.

Therefore the greater friction and confusion is found in the definition of the functions of communication management and public relations, since many activities that have been traditionally the province of public relations, such as relations with the media, the shareholders, clients or suppliers, are now considered elements of integral communication, but are no longer identified with the notion of public relations, that begins to become undefined.

Another consideration is how the figure of the *Dircom* and the idea of communication management, though firmly rooted in reality, take much longer to be considered in depth in theoretical and academic reflections. Not until the 90s is this figure clearly addressed in the manuals of the profession. In Spain, for instance, these contributions may be generally found diluted in texts on corporate communication, although during the early nineties some contributions specifically targeted the figure of the *Dircom* (Benavides, 1993) despite the idea of “communication management” not being yet consolidated at the time.

This notwithstanding, the situation in Spain during the last decade of the XX century is that although there are manuals that describe the functions and tasks of communication management, its foundations as a possible discipline have not been explored in depth and it continues to be perceived as the means to manage corporate communication. In fact, Benavides (2001: 20) points out that “talking about the Director of Communication requires, first, to place the new figure in the general context of the problems and then justify methodologically its study within the scope of corporate communication”.

During the last five years, however, several researchers and scholars (Almansa, 2006; Mut Camacho, 2006; Morales and Enrique, 2007...) dwell deeper on the bases of the *Dircom* figure and on the communication management concept in itself. So much so that communication management becomes an essential subject matter in numerous graduate programs and even the University of Vigo has made it a mandatory subject for the Advertising and Public Relations degree.

Lastly, it should be noted that a large part of the theoretical corpus on communication management in other countries has originated within the sphere of public relations. One of the key works in this aspect is the already cited *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, edited by Grunig (1992).

This joint treatment of public relations and communication management, understanding them as something similar, or at least very close, is seen also in many European countries that have no qualms treating both concepts as synonyms.

In Germany, for instance, higher education centers such as the University of Leipzig impart study programs in “public relations / communication management”, since both terms are assiduously used. Public relations being the preferred term within the institutional sphere, while the private sector favors, to a greater extent, the expression communication management. In fact, Van Ruler and Vercic (2004: 1) assimilating both ideas, state that in Europe, public relations are widely practiced and CEOs are aware of its strategic importance, although for this reason precisely they prefer to call them information management or communication management. And, according to the authors (2004:3), replacing the term public relations with communication management or even with the term corporate communications is frequently done in continental European countries.

## **5. FINDINGS AND VALUE**

As was mentioned at the beginning of this paper, some authors interpret the concept of communication management as synonymous with public relations while others, even public relations theoreticians, consider it has a broader scope. Yet, all of them concur in the obvious need companies and institutions have for a function that agglutinates all the communication tasks from a managerial and executive perspective.

In this sense is then reasonable to understand that the concept of communication management is the best suited to refer to this integrating function. Even if we understand that the term “public relations”, when conceived from a managerial perspective can be considered as synonymous with “communication management”, the later offers more advantages than the former, that having been unfortunately reviled in the past now carries confusing connotations for many societies. The concept of communication management has earned the blessing of the actors in the business and the professional world since this term satisfies their interest in getting closer to the top layers of organizations and liberates them of the demeaning ballast of the public relations notion.

Stating this reality, however, does not justify the practice found in many texts on communication management or corporate communications of reducing public relations to a mere technique, or of completely obviating it, while at the same time they refer to its structural elements making them their own. In other words, while acknowledging the inherent problems of the term “public relations” its existence cannot be denied. Public

relations is a professional activity with a long history and it is also a relevant academic discipline that incorporates a significant body of theoretical and practical contributions and has been doing so well before other disciplines were fledged.

For this reason, if the notion of communication management is to be used as an integrating concept that reflects a clear executive function and includes the management of all the organization's communicative activities, public relations have to be conceived, at the least, as one of the relevant parts of such a concept to avoid the disaggregation of its components.

From this perspective it could be said that communication management refers to three fundamental functions:

- Managing corporate image and identity.
- Coordinating advertising actions or commercial communication so the objectives in this area are coherent with the remaining communication modalities and activities of the organization, although it is understood that the objectives of commercial communication are dependent on the marketing objectives and this function can be coordinated with communication management without necessarily be dependent on it.
- Public relations or the management of the relationships with the various stakeholders and publics of the organization, and all its elements, which include relations with specific groups such as the media, employees, suppliers, the community, institutions, etc., as well as functions such as crisis communications or public affairs managements.

In this manner, the pragmatic logic prevailing in the professional arena that advises to use the term "communication management" can be reconciled with the necessary survival of the term public relations, which premises and contributions configure a solid base from which communication management can emerge as a new discipline.

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## Notes

[1] Amongst the organizations working on corporate / institutional communication as we would call them in Europe, or to organizational communication as they would be called in the United States, Martín (1995) mentions, for instance, the Asociación Mexicana de Relaciones Públicas or the Public Relations Society of America.

[2] It could be said that public relations occasionally uses advertising as a tool at the service of corporate (not commercial) communication. The uses of advertising derived from marketing objectives would not fall necessarily within the competencies of the public relations practitioner.

[3] This assimilation makes external communication a marketing issue (as external and commercial communications become one function), internal communications a human resources issue and leaves the Dircom to attend solely to institutional communications, but this approach is removed from the integrated communication vision of the author and reduces communication management to an institutional relations activity that is not very different of what can be associated to the realm of public relations.

[4] In Spain, the idea of communication management is associated to a professional function while the concept of corporate communication has been expanded to encompass all the modalities of communication the company or corporation engages in which to a greater or lesser extent leads to understanding it as an academic discipline. In other countries, however, corporate communication is understood solely as the managing of the corporate image and identity while the communication management concept has a more disciplinary connotation.

**ABSTRACT – See also Proceedings on PowerPoint**

**THEORETIC ISSUES IN HISTORIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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All research is historical. It is historical in the sense that it captures and describes the essential characteristics of phenomena of interest at a particular point in time. This is essentially history as description: the gathering of facts, a process of counting and pointing. History, however, can be much more than mere description. History which leads to understanding of why events occurred, the ability to anticipate future events, or the ability to control future events by manipulating present phenomena is most useful. These are the types of history that are necessary to the development of public relations as both an academic discipline and a profession. This is a view of public relations history as a social science.

Public relations like other social science disciplines is naturally poly-paradigmatic (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). This essay extends and applies this argument to historical studies of public relations. It is divided into two parts. The first part argues that historians, like other public relations scholars, must address at least two fundamental questions (Pearce, Cronen, and Harris, 1982). The first is “what counts as data?” The second is “what do data count as?” The remainder of this section focuses on how various philosophical research traditions found in public relations answer these questions differently.

The second part of this essay presents the author’s orientation to public relations history as an emerging profession influenced by broadly conceived social institutions and social change. Specifically, the influence of increasing democracy, increasing levels of education, increasing social diversity, the emergence of the mass audience, and the fragmentation of the mass audience upon the emergence and development of public relations in the United States is considered. Finally, the potential for these abstract and general concepts to be useful in historical studies of public relations across cultures is considered.

## **EVOLUTION OF ISSUES MANAGEMENT: JOHN HILL, TOBACCO CONTROVERSY, AND THE BATTLE OF SCIENTISTS**

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Controversy surrounding the public health impact of tobacco is quite old and so is public relations/affairs' role in that debate. A key moment in that history occurred when Hill & Knowlton (H&K) became the agency of record for the tobacco industry in late 1953, a time when leading scientists mounted an aggressive publicity attack on the health effects of cigarettes. That year, which marked the transition toward increased public health regulation of the product in the United States, witnessed a major step forward in the development of issues management. In part through the tobacco controversy, John W. Hill, co-principal founder of H&K, helped build the intellectual, strategic, and ethical heritage for what became known as issue(s) management. This leadership helped this discipline take a major step toward its modern identity during the mid-1970s, (Heath & Bowen, 2002).

This paper focuses on two themes relevant to the history of public relations. One addresses the nature of a front and consideration of whether the Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC) was such. The TIRC was created to review and evaluate research by tobacco critics and other researchers and to fund research that might confirm or disconfirm health professionals' indictment of the product. The second theme is whether the issue communication campaign counseled and executed by H&K distorted the public dialogue and confused the health issue in ways that denied consumers' ability to make a rational decision—an enlightened choice. That theme is simplified here as the Pollay hypothesis. After reviewing this hypothesis, it is necessary to set the 1953 public health research stage for the issue campaign that H&K launched in January 1954 and provide historical insight into Hill's engagement in that controversy. Out of that controversy we gain historical insights into the standards for responsible issue communication by large corporations committed to the public interest.

### **Pollay Hypothesis**

Not only did Richard Pollay (1990) condemn how public relations, specifically the work of H&K, manipulated the judgement of smokers, but he also served as an expert witness in tobacco litigation. His judgement of the nature of public relations and Hill's practice was flawed in many ways, but nevertheless led to and/or paralleled the argument that public relations as practiced in this case was irresponsible and therefore liable for damages. That reasoning, in the USA, was defined by the spirit of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. Designed to combat organized mob activities of crime, it was used to condemn the tobacco industry and its communications professionals who allegedly conspired against the public health of smokers and non-smokers. If such argument were true, that judgement would dramatically affect the practice of public relations issues communication.

For his critique of the practice, its impact, and role in tobacco publicity, Pollay relied on Bernays' view that "engineering consent" is the dominant approach to public relations practice and its role in influencing public opinion. Bernays' connection to the issue was based on his use of publicity to sell Lucky Strikes. The health angle gained momentum in 1953 as popular magazines examined health risks associated with tobacco use. Pollay noted how the publicity battle over tobacco safety had heated up.

Public relations was used extensively by the cooperating industry to fight the health scare. All of the many tools of public relations were employed: Advocacy organizations and advertisements, media monitoring, personal contacts with media managers, ghost writing, media placement, film and pamphlet production, coordinated political action, scores of press releases, and the redistribution of favorable items in large quantity. (p. 43)

One of the tools in this effort was the TIRC. Of its goals, Pollay claimed: "The TIRC wanted to keep unfavorable publicity to a minimum, and to counter it so as to promote the idea of scientific uncertainty and controversy" (p. 43). Citing not John Hill's writing on public relations, but a 1966 Harvard Business School Teaching case, Pollay claimed that Hill's

...philosophy of public relations and the management of public opinion recognized that "merely putting facts before people is not always enough. Attitudes tend to be based more on feelings and emotions than upon cold logic ... (so one must) tie in with the deep motivations of people." Public opinion is based on what people hear, see and read, with individual responses dependent upon each individual's "racial, religious, political, or economic interest, their background of culture and tradition, and their degree of education and level of intelligence." (p. 44)

Buoyed by the judge's conclusion in *Cipollone v. Liggett et al* (NJ 1988), Pollay used his language to characterize the TIRC and H&K's effort as a hoax, not designed to seek truth but engage in conspiracy against the health of consumers. This claim was dramatized by anti-tobacco litigators who waved copies of H&K press releases before juries while asserting that they

confused opinion on the matter to lead people to be less worried than they should about the harm of tobacco use.

Two quick rejoinders are in order. First, Hill's philosophy of public relations was quite different from Bernays'. The best evidence of the difference in philosophy is demonstrated by the fact that Bernays was never invited to be a member of the Wise Fellows, a group of senior professionals that met in New York City and was heavily influenced by Hill. And second, close reading of Hill's books offers a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the decision-making ability of stakeholding publics.

Pollay is important to this history of public relations not only because of his indictment of standard public relations/issues communication tools and practices, but also his use of Hill documents archived at the University of Wisconsin through the effort of Scott Cutlip.

Using documents such as these, we can examine whether public relations can be strategically used to defend an industry against science-based claims in a way that is ethically responsible and reflective and in so doing, even if science and the policy arising from it wins, does not discredit the effort during a period of issue dialogue. This paper proposes that not only can organizations defend themselves, but they are actually irresponsible if they do not do so in the public interest. The fact that science had prevailed in the formulation of public health policy by 1964 does not support the claim that engaging in scientific and policy debate in 1954 was irresponsible and conspiratorial. And, the claims as to the dominant influence achieved by the mighty H&K in service to a "villainous industry" are overstated in so far as H&K's efforts were essentially reactive, fact oriented, and never able to dominate media coverage of the scientific discourse beyond the efforts of the campaign.

Rather than relying on Bernays to tell us about public relations, and how Hill practiced, we are wise to ponder Hill's 1958 book in which he cautioned,

It is not the work of public relations—let it always be emphasized—to outsmart the American public in helping management build profits. It is the job of public relations to help management find ways of identifying its own interests with the public interest—ways so clear that the profit earned by the company may be viewed as contributing to the progress of everybody in the American economy. (p. 21)

Esponsing commitment to fact over spin, Hill bristled at practitioners who based their strategies and tactics on propaganda:

In a public relations battle in a free country it is important that there be no lies. Different interpretation of the facts is possible, and each side is entitled to present its views, leaving it to public opinion to decide which to accept.

The purpose of public relations in its best sense is to inform and to keep minds open. The purpose of "propaganda" in the bad sense is to misinform and to keep minds closed.

Business managements have every reason and right to communicate regularly with all segments of the public whose support they seek; and more, to work for better understanding of the private enterprise system.” (Hill, 1963, p. 6)

Whether in dealing with a crisis or an issue, Hill believed that open debate and fairly presented facts were crucial to the arena of public opinion:

Nothing could be more absurd than to imagine that the so-called “corporate image” can be created by a clever use of words or by “slick” stunts. The ability of a specific business, or of business in general, to defend itself against its detractors and to project its worth to people begins with definitely existing policies and intrinsic values. The rightful purpose of public relations is openly to confirm, strengthen, and defend these values. Without integrity this cannot be accomplished. (Hill, 1963, pp. 161-162)

Hill never doubted the public’s ability to make intelligent decisions. He loved issues and controversy. His journalistic roots fostered this love for debate; contested issues led him to create organizations to debate issues and inform publics. In that regard, he was in the 1950s advancing the discipline that became issues management (Heath & Bowen, 2002).

### **1953: The Issue Debate Advances**

In her balanced and insightful biography of Hill, Miller (1999) framed the battleground:

Although both tobacco and antismoking interests relied on the media to disseminate their claims during the health scare, the tobacco industry had a tremendous advantage, money to purchase the services of skilled media professionals. H&K did not present any arguments on behalf of cigarettes that tobacco executives had not previously made in the press. But the PR specialists realized the importance of credibility and emphasized that information they supplied to reporters should come from an organization associated with research and well-known scientists rather than the industry or the agency. Creation of the TIRC meant that public relations professionals could coordinate the statements of the tobacco companies into complete, well-organized reports such as background memoranda for the press, while scientists released their findings piecemeal. (p. 144)

In large part she is correct, but she can lead us to conclude that scientists did not get their messages across even with sympathetic reporters looking for a scoop. Often scientists presented a press conference after a paper presentation examining tobacco and health at prestigious conferences. News hungry reporters were waiting to translate those reports into explosive stories. After becoming the agency of record, H&K monitored these events so they could use press conferences or press releases to offer scientific challenge as appropriate to refute or moderate researchers’ claims. Sound science was the monarch of the decade from 1954 to 1964.

For decades, health professionals had mounted a publicity, issue awareness, campaign against the product—a death of a thousand cuts. That campaign became more heated in 1953—a

lance thrust to the heart of the industry. It included a feature story in *Life Magazine* entitled “Smokes Gets in the News,” with pictures of white lab-coated scientist Ernst L. Wynder of Sloan Kettering, his testing apparatus, and research mice in a swirl of smoke. The story served to demonstrate the health risk of smoking by linking tar and cancer. Sensational stories reached the general public based on data-driven studies reported in scientific journals such as *Cancer Research* (Wynder, Graham, & Croninger, 1953).

Nearly one half century later, Wynder (1997) reflected on the robust scientific controversy churning studies and debating results during that era. He noted that it took a long time for many other scientists to become as convinced of the link as he was in 1953. In fact, the controversy was substantial. Dr. Charles Cameron (1954), lead researcher for the American Cancer Society, for instance, pointed out that 59% of Wynder’s control group mice developed cancer even though they did not have cigarette tar applied to their skin. Cameron explained to readers that this incidence was likely “because a strain genetically susceptible was used” (p. 8). Of the 91% of the experimental group that developed cancer, it was “not of the type involved in the striking increase in human cancer” (p. 8). Even in humans, not all smokers get lung cancer, and some non-smokers do. Controversy over scientific methodologies and findings was waged to gain useful and solid insights in the midst of research anomalies.

In December 1953, other research based articles and speeches aroused grave concern among the leaders of the tobacco industry. On December 8, 1953, Alton Ochsner spoke about his research findings in New York City (Cutlip, 1994, p. 483). New York City, a crucial venue for such speeches, was the headquarters for many corporate purveyors of tobacco products. It was home to many illustrious medical institutions a media center for the nation, and the world.

Popularization of this health theme continued into 1954. In that year, Ochsner, researcher at Tulane Medical School, published *Smoking and Cancer: A Doctor’s Report*. Researchers such as Ochsner were able, with or without professional counsel, to attract attention to the sharp, science-based criticism they brought against the industry. During 1954 and 1955, several radio and television programs discussing tobacco and health included researchers as panelists. One of the most important was Edward R. Murrow’s “Cigarettes and Lung Cancer” which brought together scientists including Dr. Clarence Cook Little, Chair of the TIRC. These and other media venues gave leading experts means to use medical and social scientific research to pronounce firmly that tobacco kills.

On December 10 and 11, 1953, presidents of all but one of the major tobacco companies met to formulate a response to these findings and to bolster the marketing plan of the industry. Despite fear that they would violate anti-trust guidelines (their fate in 1911 and 1939) leaders of

the industry met in the Plaza Hotel at the invitation of Paul Hahn, president of American Tobacco. Liggett & Myers declined to participate, believing either that the flurry of health claims would end or that it could exploit those claims in its product design and advertising. Within three weeks, H&K, led by John Hill and Bert Goss, had conducted situational analysis with industry leaders, proposed an issues management plan including creation of the TIRC, and launched a media campaign to challenge critics and burnish the industry's reputation as committed to customers' health. To monitor issues and engage in the dialogue, H&K started tracking scientific reports and responding to them in press releases and other forms of issue communication.

### **Cutlip's Front Hypothesis**

The TIRC led to the creation of the Committee for Tobacco Research and eventually to the Tobacco Institute. Cutlip (1994) condemned the TIRC as a front: "The TIRC in fact became a public relations front as Hill and Knowlton continued to present the industry's side in the smoking debate as evidence of the damaging effects of tobacco on a person's health mounted" (p. 458).

One can imagine that Hill would have been the first to contest this claim because it indicts his role in this controversy as shady business. Moreover, Hill (1958) liked and worked as counsel for several major trade associations; one supposes he had no reason to confuse them with fronts. On the matter of trade association, he was explicit and detailed, devoting a chapter to their nature and value to society:

"Some of the great trade associations, while they have no control over the policies or actions of member companies, have been effective in helping establish a public relations pattern or tone for the industry as a whole" (p. 131).

In presenting to the nation the facts about the work of its industry, an association must at all times be bound by exactly the same rules and principles that apply in the public relations of any corporation: The integrity of the facts must be beyond question, and the meaning of the facts must be established and clarified beyond the reach of any reasonable challenge. (p. 131)

Public relations has served the Trade Association and its industry consistently well whenever it has been used with ethical skill in behalf of industrial goals that are based on sound policy and that conform with prevailing concepts of what constitutes the broad public interest. (p. 134)

A front is more than an organization that presents only one side of the evidence in any debate. By that narrow definition, any organization (think activist and NGO) and even opinion radio and television can be considered as a front. Is it unlikely that an advocacy activist group provides "both sides of an issue" with equal vigor? Palenchar and Fitzpatrick (2009) featured the concept of "secret persuaders" in their discussion of fronts. They believed that fronts involve "controversial public relations techniques used by organizations to influence public opinion and

public policy on behalf of undisclosed special interests. The groups are created to pursue public policy objectives for organizations that disguise their connection (e.g., financial support) with the effort while attempting to appear independent” (Fitzpatrick & Palenchar, 2006, p. 203).

One of the earliest planning meetings between senior executives of tobacco companies and John Hill and Bert Goss (representing H&K in determining whether to take the industry as a client) occurred on December 15, 1953 just days after the industry panicked over the scientific evidence that was receiving substantial publicity. H&K recorded the thinking that began to emerge in a document called "Background Material on the Cigarette Industry Client" dated December 15, 1953. This document (Hill Papers, Box 110, Folder 2) presented under Bert Goss's signature, summarizes the meeting: "The following information was given us by the presidents of the leading tobacco companies at the Hotel Plaza this morning." A crucial point of discussion focused on this reality:

There is no trade association in the cigarette industry. This is because the tobacco companies are prevented by the dissolution decree of 1911 and the criminal convictions under the Anti-Trust Act of 1939 from carrying on many group activities. As a matter of fact, before the current health crisis arose, cigarette manufacturers never met together at any time except at dinners honoring some industry leader.

The industry, having been convicted of business conspiracy, was seeking legal opinion regarding whether a trade association or similar group could legally be formed for the purpose of achieving a singular voice in response to tobacco critics: "Because of the anti-trust background, the companies do not favor the incorporation of a formal association. Instead, they prefer strongly the organization of an informal committee which will be specifically charged with the public relations function and readily identified as such."

Along with the legality of formal association, another topic was the name of the organization to be formed to express the industry voice. Hill and Goss wanted a name that would avoid the organization's appearing as a front and would establish the purpose and credibility of the organization. "For example, Mr. Hahn (convener and president of American Tobacco) reported that one name they had considered was the 'Tobacco Industry Committee for Public Information.' John Hill suggested that he felt the word 'research' should appear along with 'information' in the title of the committee." By this stroke of experienced insight, the committee became responsible for public relations and research. Note: Hiltz (1996) is incorrect in stating that Hahn did not want the tobacco industry identified.

In the 12/15/1953 planning document, Goss recorded that the industry leaders feel that they should sponsor a public relations campaign which is positive in nature and is entirely "pro-cigarettes." They are confident they can supply us with comprehensive and

authoritative scientific material which completely refutes the health charges. They are also emphatic in saying that the entire activity is a long-term, continuing program, since they feel that the problem is one of promoting cigarettes and protecting them from these and other attacks that may be expected in the future. Each of the company presidents attending emphasized the fact that they consider the program to be a long-term one.

With this purpose in mind, the H&K planning document records the meeting as addressing several questions raised by Hill and Goss. As a foundational principle for the campaign, the industry emphasized “that the National Cancer Institute of the U. S. Public Health Administration, which is a government agency and supported by Congressional appropriations, has officially refuted the tie-up between cigarette smoking and cancer.”

First Question: "Will the cigarette companies organize themselves into an association publicly announced, which will openly sponsor their public relations activities?" Answer: "The companies replied that they had no desire to set up a smoke screen or 'front' type of organization. They are perfectly willing to sponsor any statements that may be issued or any institutional advertising that may be recommended and approved."

This recollection offers explicit and solid refutation for Cutlip’s claim that the TIRC was designed and intended to be a front. Also, note the irony of the use of "smoke screen" to describe the undesirable type of public information organization; that was the title of Hilts' (1996) book. Hill suggested that the word cigarette also be in the name of the organization, but after discussion the group agreed to use tobacco as a better identified of the image and nature of the industry.

Second question: "Do they accept the principle that public health is paramount to all else, and would they issue a public statement spelling this out?" Answer: "Everyone present wholeheartedly agreed to this principle and readily consented to widespread dissemination of a sound statement of principles.”

Distribution of such a statement it was agreed would be the first step in the public relations program that Hill & Knowlton would recommend. The initial document was the industry’s "Frank Statement" which H&K placed in print media around the nation in early January 1954.

Third Question: "Do the companies consider that their own advertising and competitive practices have been a principal factor in creating a health problem?" Answer: “The companies voluntarily admitted this to be the case even before the question was asked. They have informally talked over the problem and will try to do something about it. They do, however, point out that this is one important public relations activity that might very clearly fall within the purview of the anti-trust act (1911 dissolution decree and 1939 Anti-Trust criminal convictions). Accordingly, it is doubtful that we will be able to make any formal recommendation with regard to advertising or selling practices and claims."

This answer reflects the concern the presidents had for regulatory oversight against conspiracy by the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission.

Fourth Question: "Will the companies agree to sponsor new research which will provide definite answers to the charges?" Answer: "A clear-cut answer to this question was deferred for the time being. The companies all say that they are carrying on much more research in their own laboratories and are sponsoring more research at hospitals and universities than is generally recognized. They believe that when we are acquainted with all of the scientific and factual material in the hands of the companies, we will agree that the major problem is to disseminate information on hand rather than to conduct new research." Hill opposed this strategy and "emphatically warned the companies that they should probably expect to sponsor additional research."

The fifth question addressed the extent to which the leaders believe this situation was a crisis. The answer is self-evident. This was a consumer confidence marketing/investor relations crisis.

Sixth question: "Are we primarily concerned with cigarettes rather than all tobacco?" Answer: "The emphasis is on cigarettes."

As well as meeting with presidents of the major companies, H&K personnel met with the scientific directors of leading companies the afternoon of December 15, 1953. The purpose and outcome of this meeting was to ascertain whether the scientists believed that a credible information campaign could be waged to refute scientific claims of industry critics. H&K wanted to believe from the outset that they had truth on their side and the challenge was to put facts and fair interpretations into play.

### **Media Impact**

Critics of the TIRC have alleged that through the skill and reputation of H&K this "front" distorted the debate over the health effects of tobacco to such an extent that the general public was misled. This theme was central to litigation in the USA, including the claim that H&K along with the industry formulated and implemented a conspiracy against Americans' public health. A cornerstone of Pollay's (1990) hypothesis is the assumption that the scientific community and other key stakeholder groups were fundamentally of one mind on the relationship between tobacco and health.

Two points are worth making. One is the demonstrated case that health researchers were divided (See Wynder, 1997). Two contested lines of evidence were being offered. One was experimental evidence, such as produced by Wynder or tissue samples investigated by Oschner, to demonstrate a "hard science" connection. The other line of research featured statistical probabilities, similar to or actual epidemiological examination of the issue. For that reason, Hill's agency could support claims against one set of scientists by giving voice to alternative scientific perspectives, journalists' logic of a balanced news story. Secondly, polls suggested that the general public (and smokers/non-

smokers) were concerned by scientific evidence on the health-tobacco issue. In the media battle, Hill's efforts did not dominate.

First, statements in leading newspapers reveal the division of scientific opinion on the issue. On December 9, 1953, *New York Herald Tribune* used this headline "Dentists hear two link cancer to cigarettes" to feature the work of Wynder and Ochsner as well as Rhoads of Sloan-Kettering. The *New York Times* of the same date made a parallel report. Statistical evidence was discussed in newspapers in this month. For instance, the *New York Herald Tribune* (12/23/1953) tentatively reported: "Some medical investigators believe they have established a correlation of some kind between the two" (health and tobacco use). Reporting the use of laboratory experiments and statistics, the *Herald Tribune* noted that such findings are suggestive; additional research is needed "to have this issue answered one way or the other." Part of the complexity arose because other factors, including air pollution, aging, and genetics, were also considered to be causal or facilitating variables.

Here are other headlines and stories. The *San Francisco Examiner* (11/15/1954) noted that "Doctors at the National Cancer Institute said today there is not enough evidence available to prove that smoking causes lung cancer." Earlier that year (6/18/1954), the *Examiner* used the headline, "Experts Clash Over Cancer-Cigaret Idea." After that headline, the opening sentence reported, "A peaceful press conference involving officials of the American College of Chest Physicians erupted last night into a sharp and almost angry battle over whether or not cigaret smoking is a major cause of lung cancer." The day before (6/17/1954) the *Examiner* offered this headline: "Doctor Group refuses to Blame Cigaretts for Cancer." This story developed the theme presented in the opening sentence: "Directors of the American College of Chest Physicians last night refused to endorse the theory that lung cancer is caused by cigaret smoking."

On June 17, 1954, Dr. Charles S. Cameron, Medical and Scientific Director, of the American Cancer Society issued a statement asking for caution in accepting the statistical conclusions of Hammond and Horn. "Personally I am not convinced that the Hammond-Horn theory of cause and effect relationship between heavy cigarette smoking and increased susceptibility to death from cancer in general is as yet entirely proved. One cannot at this time exclude the possibility that heavy cigarette smoking and the tendency to cancer are both expressions of a more fundamental cause of a constitutional or hormonal nature" (Hill Documents, Box 106, Folder 9). Pressing for cause, scientists were quite early in their research. They were sensitive to alarming patterns between use and

health, but demanded that research consider multiple causes, moderating and facilitating conditions, and a host of other scientific methodological standards.

However strongly or weakly any one or group of researchers believed links to be, others held different opinions. This issue of fact was far from resolved. The controversy raises an interesting question relevant to issues management: When is an issue (for or against some proposition) sufficiently proved so that there is no reasonable doubt? The standard merely is the intellectual acuity of researchers, not some arbitrary alternative. In the case of tobacco, one can propose that for the USA, the issue was sufficiently settled for public policy by 1964 when the Surgeon General issued a report justifying health policy and regulation of the product and its sales.

Secondly, we should examine data on public opinion. On July 2, 1954, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* reported Gallup Poll data. The topic of health and tobacco had been discussed in conversation, ads by the tobacco companies, and in popular media. By various means, the public had formed opinions regarding this issue. The data presented in this newspaper followed beneath this headline: "Smoking Habits Affect Opinions on Cigarettes' Link to Cancer." On the question, "do you think cigarette smoking is one of the causes of lung cancer, or not" more of the public answered yes (41%) than no (29%), and undecided (30%). A higher percentage of women (43%) answered yes than men (39%). Those who had given up smoking and those who had never smoked were more likely to answer yes. Older smokers who had smoked for many years were more likely to doubt the connection, whereas their counterparts were exactly the opposite. The conclusion is that members of the general public had conflicting views on the health hazard of smoking and although no demographic category was firmly decided one way or another, users were less convinced, and older non-users and women were more convinced of the connection. That Gallup Report received national attention. For instance, on that same day, the *Los Angeles Times* ran the same story, but in less detail. These opinion profiles were crucial to the analysis of this paper since the critics of the H&K issues campaign reason that this initiation year sets the stage for what they believed was a concerted, even conspiratorial, effort to confuse the public.

Early in 1954, Gallup ascertained that most respondents had heard or read recently that cigarette smoking may be a cause of cancer of the lung (yes, 82.5%; no 17.48%). Gallup Poll data generated in 1949 indicate that 59.77% of the public believed that smoking was harmful as opposed to 34.4% that answered no. By 1954, that percentage had dropped 18 percentage points.

In 1957, 77.52% answered that they had read or heard about the recent report of the American Cancer Society regarding the effects of smoking (22.5% answered no). The 1957 poll found that 33.86% believed smoking was a or one of the causes of heart disease (32.4% no; 22% no opinion) and 47% believed it was one of the causes of lung cancer (32.4% no, and 20%, no opinion). That year, 52.98% believed that the danger was sufficient to warrant government requirement of a health warning (34.88% no, 12% no opinion). By 1960, 50.41% answered yes that cigarette smoking is one of the causes of lung cancer (28.1% no, 21.49% don't know). Those numbers had changed by 1969 to 63.7% yes, 10.3% no, and 16.47% undecided.) Similar statistics were obtained for the connection to heart disease: yes (50.4%, no 28.1%), and don't know (21.49%).

As Hill engaged in a counter argument along with the TIRC against scientific critics of tobacco, he employed fact-based analysis, credible medical researchers' testimony, scientific methodological analysis, and other arguments designed to press medical researcher for a firm scientific indictment of the product. In this sense, Hill's efforts for the industry established a contest of fact as the rationale for issue debate; herein lies some of the strategies of crisis response and risk communication which became explicitly important to the public relations industry later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. During those years, the public and public policy makers steadily became more convinced that tobacco use was related to health problems.

### **Media Relations Issues Battle**

Critics claimed that Hill's campaign clouded the judgement of smokers so they were less fearful of the product. Although no direct evidence supports that claim, critics reasoned that because of its media relations ability, the agency dominated discussion. To explore this hypothesis, content analysis demonstrates that H&K and the TIRC actually lost the media relations debate. Content analysis addressed the reporting on the tobacco health issue by closely inspecting 10 leading US newspapers. That analysis reveals industry press release rejoinders were often ignored. Even when the position of the industry was reported as a voice at various stages of the battle, it received less depth of presentation and often merely constituted as little as 10 percent of each story, limited to a couple of paragraphs that noted the position of the TIRC as opposing/disagreeing with the scientific claims that constituted most of the content of each story. This analysis helps reject a propaganda rationale for public relations issues debates, and previews scientific debates vital to crisis and risk communication.

The media relations battle took two related strategies. The first and focal one was to charter and fund the TIRC as a research body. It was headed by a known researcher, Clarence Little, an expert in genetic aspects of cancer onset and former President of the American Association of Cancer Research. The purpose of the TIRC was to generate research proposals, vet them to find the most promising, fund them, monitor them, and report findings. This was a sound science approach to a scientific battle. From the outset of the campaign, Hill advised against the industry doing such research alone and advised that TIRC procedures needed to be above reproach and a means for building credibility for the industry position. Its self-interest would corrupt the findings and weaken their persuasiveness in the dialogue. Having said that, it must be acknowledged that critics endlessly voiced doubts as to the independence, competence and objectivity of the scientists on the TIRC. That is an issue too big to discuss here, but critics' concern, having been noted, was itself challenged as not credible because they were portrayed as opposing scientific findings that cast doubt on theirs.

The second theme, and it arose in mid-1954, was that funding and conducting research was a slow process. The issue could get ahead of the science fostered by the TIRC because the media continued to report ongoing research and that funded by TIRC would not produce results for several months, and even years. Thus, H&K was charged with two strategies: (1) Finding and communicating positions of scientists that critiqued anti-tobacco research and (2) finding and reporting studies to "balance" the discussion. One major tool, especially relevant to the second strategy, was publication of "A Scientific Perspective on the Cigarette Controversy" on April 14, 1954. This white paper was the culmination of careful literature review begun before H&K became agency of record.

As scientific results rolled out in the popular media during these years, H&K strategically brought the insights of third-party critics into the debate. The press releases which it issued became, in litigation, the basis for the propaganda theme. Tobacco critics inside and outside of courts pointed to (litigators actually waved them before juries) these press releases as evidence of the media relations clout H&K used to confuse and otherwise prevent enlightened choice.

The first of the two themes on media impact was explored using content analysis which began by locating all of the press releases on this topic in the Hill documents. Ten national newspapers from around the USA were selected to determine how scientific studies and specific press releases were covered: *Atlanta Constitution*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Chicago Tribune*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*,

*Houston Chronicle, Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, and San Francisco Examiner.* For coverage between 1954 and 1964, the *New York Times Index* was used. After that date, only the dates of the press releases were used to locate coverage. A total of 61 releases was used, 28 of which were those featured in litigation. Evidence does not support the claim that the H&K press releases dominated the discussion.

The content analysis began with members of the research team locating relevant coverage in these newspapers. Worth noting is the fact that rarely did all newspapers cover the specific stories used in coding and in key instances, none of them covered the story covered in a release.

Once the stories were located, the principal investigator read and coded all stories by press release: 1. Coverage (yes/no), business coverage (yes/no), positive to the industry only (yes/no), negative to the industry (yes/no), and mixed/both sides (yes/no). Business coverage could also be coded as positive, negative, or mixed/both sides. To verify the accuracy of this coding, five coders were employed and trained; these coders worked under the guidance of an independent researcher who oversaw their and the principal coder's reliability. These coders read, from the total of 1046 documents, 224 (21.4%) that were randomly selected. Using Kappa, the coding through training and discussion increased from slightly unacceptable (trial coding) to .80 for story themes and .93 for inclusion of industry commentary in a specific news story. For results, see Table 1.

**Table One**  
**Summary of Newspaper Coding**

| Newspaper     | #   | Biz   | Pos   | Neg   | N/Mix | TR    | Ratio |
|---------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| NY Times      | 590 | 14.6% | 15.1% | 57.5% | 25.8% | 20.0% | 3.81  |
| Chicago Trib  | 73  | 34.3% | 13.7% | 43.8% | 20.6% | 13.7% | 3.20  |
| St. Louis P-D | 49  | 28.6% | 12.4% | 38.8% | 34.7% | 30.6% | 3.13  |
| Wash. Post    | 49  | 30.6% | 18.4% | 38.8% | 26.5% | 32.7% | 2.11  |
| At. Const.    | 41  | 24.4% | 24.4% | 43.9% | 19.5% | 31.8% | 1.80  |
| H. Chronicle  | 36  | 19.4% | 08.3% | 55.6% | 33.3% | 25.0% | 6.70  |
| D. M. News    | 20  | 20.0% | 10.0% | 40.0% | 40.0% | 35.0% | 4.00  |
| NYHT          | 55  | 14.6% | 14.6% | 29.1% | 45.5% | 43.6% | 1.99  |
| LA Times      | 68  | 27.9% | 11.8% | 48.5% | 29.4% | 27.9% | 4.11  |
| SF Examiner   | 65  | 16.9% | 13.9% | 50.8% | 23.1% | 18.5% | 3.66  |

**New York Times Annual Summary (Averages)**

|      |    |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------|----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1954 | 27 | 11.1% | 33.3% | 18.5% | 40.7% | 66.7% | 1.80+ |
| 1955 | 12 | 08.3% | 33.3% | 41.7% | 25.0% | 58.3% | 1.25  |
| 1956 | 20 | 0.00% | 25.0% | 50.0% | 25.0% | 25.0% | 2.00  |

|      |     |       |       |         |       |       |       |
|------|-----|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1957 | 24  | 12.5% | 08.3% | 45.8%   | 54.2% | 45.8% | 5.52  |
| 1958 | 32  | 12.5% | 12.5% | 59.4%   | 28.1% | 21.9% | 4.75  |
| 1959 | 25  | 08.0% | 16.0% | 56.0%   | 20.0% | 36.0% | 3.50  |
| 1960 | 27  | 18.5% | 33.3% | 37.0%   | 22.2% | 25.9% | 1.11  |
| 1961 | 20  | 10.0% | 20.0% | 50.0%   | 25.0% | 35.0% | 2.50  |
| 1962 | 57  | 07.0% | 05.3% | 61.4%   | 33.3% | 19.3% | 11.59 |
| 1963 | 73  | 12.3% | 12.3% | 63.0%   | 27.4% | 20.5% | 5.12  |
| 1964 | 250 | 17.2% | 14.8% | 64.4%   | 18.8% | 06.0% | 4.35  |
| 1965 | 10  | 20.0% | 10.0% | 37.5.0% | 62.5% | 10.0% | 6.00  |
| 1969 | 8   | 75.0% | 00.0% | 62.5%   | 37.5% | 12.5% | ----- |
| 1988 | 4   | 50.0% | 25.0% | 25.0%   | 50.0% | 50.0% | 1.00  |

Note: Industry activities featured in the press releases were coded as positive even if they did not make a statement specifically relevant to health and tobacco, for instance the 1954 appointments. Ratios were calculated for positive/negative coverage. Note that positive was greater than negative only for the NYT in 1954.

Results suggest that not all releases were covered. Except for the *New York Times* in 1954, stories were coded as more negative than positive to the industry, often by substantial ratios. Tobacco research by industry as such was covered only about 25% of the time.

Press releases were used to present (1) facts about the TIRC (such as the announcement of Clarence Little as chair or about grants for research), (2) third-party commentary on statements by anti-tobacco critics, and (3) research claims by critics of that research. For instance, a third-party expert might comment on the methodology, the limits of the research conclusions, or counter evidence/conclusions based on other research—often the critic’s. In the earlier years, especially 1954-1956, news stories were relatively balanced, but as time went on, if the industry’s claim was presented in a story it received limited space. For instance, a tobacco critic’s statement was typically featured in a news story; it might receive nine of eleven paragraphs. Two middle paragraphs might contain something of the following: Statement identifying the voice of the industry often either Little or an industry executive (typically Timothy Hartnett who helped organize the TIRC) as not agreeing with the tobacco critic’s views. The second paragraph (but considered as “mixed” for purposes of coding) indicated that the industry did not agree with the critic, but often did not present the substance of the criticism.

By applying these two lines of analysis, it is reasonable to conclude that H&K, often through the TIRC, was able to get coverage of the industry’s opinions and actions on research. However, it was by no means certain that coverage would occur and as time went on, the coverage tended to favor critics more than industry. Did H&K dominate the

discussion on this topic between 1954-1964? No. Did it confuse readers? Perhaps, but there is no general and convincing information on this conclusion, although one must assume that in individual cases (as was argued in court) individual smokers might indeed claim to rely on such conclusions to decide that smoking was safe. However, even under those circumstance, H&K only put into print claims by third parties or non-industry research that could withstand third party review.

### **Conclusion**

As a patron saint of issues management, Hill's work is not without criticism. Such criticism gives us a leverage point to examine advocacy and information systems as process and the rationale of public relations. Cutlip (1994) spotlighted "John W. Hill's 10-year campaign to deny and obfuscate the damage to a person's health that is caused by smoking cigarettes" (pp. ix-x). Cutlip's standard is this: "A democratic nation's public information system consists of all those elements and channels of communication through which a citizen obtains the information he or she needs to make daily economic, political, social, cultural, and philanthropic decisions" (p. xii). Without doubt the fostering of enlightened choice is a, perhaps the, major standard by which public relations discourse is judged. "The social justification for public relations in a free society is to ethically and effectively plead the cause of a client or organization in the free-wheeling forum of public debate" (Cutlip, 1994, p. xii). As such,

It is a basic democratic right that every idea, individual, and institution shall have a full and fair hearing in the public forum—that the merit ultimately must be determined by their ability to be accepted in the marketplace. To obtain such a hearing, the idea, individual, or institution needs the expertise of the skilled advocate. (Cutlip, 1994, p. xii)

Because issues management, and issue communication, tends to engage in such heavy lifting, it is necessary—and historical analysis is an excellent methodology—to examine, understand, and monitor these standards. The point of this paper then, is not to justify or resurrect the reputation for ethical and effective practice by John W. Hill. Instead, it is to examine the substance and logic of that case to understand the voice, strategy, and standard for assessing impact by exploring his work to give voice to sound science without distorting the record and frustrating enlightened choice, or merely – even substantially – adding value to such choice making. In fact, as years of evidence on tobacco use and health have piled up, we still find in the United States some 20% of the population smoking cigarettes. Does the "public" make enlightened, fact-based choices on health

matters? That issue aside, it is important to realize that principles espoused by Cutlip are laudable and in the case of Hill applied in contradictory ways. Decisions often are complex, even when best practices are used ethically and in the public interest—a theme with which Hill was obsessed.

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## **ABSTRACT with PowerPoint Presentation**

### **EDWARD BERNAYS, THE UNITED FRUIT COMPANY, AND THE ETHICAL COMPLEXITIES OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS COUNSEL**

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Throughout his long career, Edward Bernays oscillated between two professional roles, publicist and public relations counsel. Bernays the publicist became widely known as a master planner and executor of spectacular events designed to influence public opinion through purely strategic means. But Bernays the public relations counsel is a much less familiar and more ethically complex historical figure. In this role, Bernays emphasized that public opinion formation ought to be a give-and-take process, a communicative and behavioral “two-way street.” To be sure, he shared the views of Walter Lippmann and other so-called democratic realists of the 1920s, who argued that only political, economic, and cultural elites have the resources necessary for shaping the opinions of a preoccupied and disorganized public. But at the same time, he also recognized that the long-term process of opinion formation required elites to adjust their own words and actions to satisfy public demands and expectations. This stress on “reciprocal adjustment” predates by six decades the emphasis that James Grunig and others would later place on “symmetrical communication.” But no matter what one calls this ideal of communication ethics, the question of how much it actually informs public relations practice continues to be disputed.

Our proposed paper addresses this question by exploring the ethical complexities of Bernays’ role as public relations counsel. We analyze archival documents from the Library of Congress collection of his papers that relate to one of his notorious professional involvements. Specifically, we explicate reports and memos that illuminate his controversial work for the United Fruit Company during the 1940s and 1950s. Some historians have criticized Bernays for facilitating the company’s economic imperialism, which went hand-in-hand with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency’s covert intrusions into Latin American politics, particularly in Guatemala. But to complicate this view, documents show that, as early as 1943, Bernays recommended a long-term strategy that would promote not only United Fruit’s economic interests but also the cultural survival of the predominantly Mayan people who lived and worked in the areas where the company operated. By detailing this overlooked aspect of Bernays’ involvement, we intend to shed light on the inevitably mixed motivations that inform public relations work.

# The evolution of UK PR consultancies 1985 – 2010

September 2009

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## **Introduction. From tactical media relations to strategic reputation management**

In 1985, UK public relations (PR) consultancies were showing growing confidence in managing their clients' media relationships.

David Churchill, consumer affairs correspondent, Financial Times (FT), commented on research from AGB Communications which found that employing a PR consultancy brought the advantages of, "greater expertise and better knowledge of the media than in-house departments." Marketing directors from the 155 companies surveyed spoke of their "confidence and belief that the profession of PR has matured." They saw the PR consultancy's role as creating "a favourable image".

The outputs from PR consultancies were not seen to be measurable, but this did not appear to diminish their popularity. Often, PR was described as a subset of an advertising campaign.

Total annual fees from the Public Relations Consultants Association's (PRCA) 113 member consultancies were then estimated to be £25million.

However, Anthony Thorncroft, also from the FT, provided a broader context in saying, "most companies have never used a PR consultancy; many have little clear idea of what PR can do". During the last quarter century the understanding of what PR does has spread to all areas of business life. Many organisations now routinely employ the services of a PR consultancy.

**PR has changed from being simply a media specialism to being at the heart of strategic reputation management.**

PR Week in its annual review of the top 150 PR consultancies said that in 2008 they employed a total of 7,990 staff.

Unfortunately, the magazine does not try to estimate total consultancy turnover because of the reporting restrictions arising from the 2002 Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which prohibits information that could "impede, obstruct, or influence." In practice, this has led to a withholding of previously available data.

More up to date information is provided by The Bellwether Report, from the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising which looks at PR in the context of the marketing sector as a whole and estimates total UK annual PR turnover at around £2,430 - £2,835 million.

## Chart 1: total estimated PR spend

| Annual total advertising spend:<br>£billion | 2004     | 2005     | 2006     | 2007       | 2008       |
|---|----------|----------|----------|------------|------------|
| Media Advertising                           | 37       | 33       | 32       | 29.3       | 30.3       |
| Direct Marketing                            | 23       | 27       | 28       | 25         | 24.9       |
| Sales Promotion                             | 14       | 12       | 12       | 9.5        | 9.2        |
| Internet                                    | 3        | 4        | 5        | 8.7        | 9.9        |
| Market Research                             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 6.2        | 6.4        |
| Events                                      | 0        | 0        | 0        | 8.6        | 7.8        |
| <b>PR</b>                                   | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>8.5</b> | <b>8.1</b> |
| All Other                                   | 23       | 24       | 23       | 4.1        | 3.4        |

Source - Bellwether

All estimates show that PR consultancies have grown and thrived during the last 25 years and the following pages take a brief look at some of the main factors shaping this evolution.

## “agency” or “consultancy”?

Dictionary.com defines agencies as providing “some service for another” whereas consultancies are said to provide “expert or professional advice in a field.”

The commonplace use of both these terms to describe the work that a PR company undertakes reveals PR’s history and its ambitions.

Agency was a natural descriptor for the early PR companies. They were staffed by former journalists, who would have had contact with press agents in government and commerce and they brought this experience with them. As is usual with publicity, the information flow tended to be one way. Its quality was important, but audience feedback had not yet been considered.

Also, these PR companies were often owned by advertising agencies, called such initially, because they were agents for purchasing advertising space on behalf of their clients. The advertising agency parent rarely gave its subsidiary the more expert title.

Other PR companies took their founders’ names as a trading title and avoided the agency or consultancy dilemma.

But the founding companies of UK PR sector wanted be experts and provide professional advice. “Consultancy” soon became and remains their chosen description.

The PRCA has used this term for 40 years.

## **The UK economic context**

Consultancies are not leading indicators. As Amanda Merron of auditors Kingston Smith W1, has said, “PR consultancies do not reflect economic trends, they follow them.” Their growth reflects how much our national wealth has increased over the last 25 years.

There have been two short periods of economic decline, in 1991 and 2001 – 2, and now, since early 2008, a longer recession. However, the International Monetary Fund reports that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown from £239.913 billion in 1984 to £1,442.92 in 2009, a six-fold increase.

Household disposable income has also grown and the Office for National Statistics says that it is now around four times more than it was in total, in 1985.

**In our free market economy, competition between companies for a share of this increased wealth has led to a proliferation of products and brands. As the range of available choices increases, the use of PR to influence consumers and businesses has become increasingly important.**

## Education and professionalism

In 1985, aspiring PR consultants were advised, “to gain some first hand, relevant experience of industry, local government, or law” for a couple of years before applying to join a consultancy. Or, it was conceded that, “entrants qualify through the secretarial route.” Many existing practitioners had come to PR from journalism.

The Communications, Advertising and Marketing Education Foundation organised a Certificate and Diploma which contained PR theory in a broad marketing context. There was no dedicated teaching of PR.

The PRCA recognised that this lack of education about PR would limit its professional status and was already calling on the industry to educate its own talent rather than relying on, “a natural migration from other, allied crafts, such as advertising, journalism and marketing.”<sup>30</sup>

**The University Careers Advisory Service (UCAS) now has more than 230 degree or postgraduate courses entitled, “Public Relations”. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) recommends 43 courses from 27 universities.**

Of course, not all entrants to the PR sector have vocational degrees, although it is now unusual to find consultancy employees who do not have some form of undergraduate qualification. Postgraduate awards are also common.

In addition, there is a wide range of training provided by external suppliers, by the industry associations and in-house, among departments and consultancies.

The CIPR both provides and requires continuing professional development (CPD) as part of achieving qualifications.

It seems that the call for the sector to educate its own talent has been answered.

## Consultancy operating principles and business types

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Consultancies may appear different, but there are core principles which condition how all operate.

The simplest and most critical is the *ratio of employment and operating costs to profit*. This concept became prevalent in the 1990s, probably as a result of the international PR consultancies employing talented financial directors. It is now an accepted norm. This ratio says that total staff costs should not exceed 55 per cent of overall income, other operating costs should be at most, 25 per cent of total income, leaving 20 per cent of income to be taken as profit.

This is not easily achieved. In 1990, Kingston Smith W1, began to analyse from PR companies' year-end accounts a series of performance metrics. Chart 2 shows how the consultancies with the largest turnovers have fared, on average, with these benchmarks over the last nine years. Total employment costs tended to rise but with the economic downturn, are now falling. Total operating costs have tended to be contained and gradually, average profitability has edged up and is now over 16 per cent.

### Chart 2: % employment costs, operating costs and profit per head of top 30 consultancies

| Year | % operating costs | % employment costs | % profit |
|------|-------------------|--------------------|----------|
| 2000 | 35.4              | 54.9               | 9.7      |
| 2001 | 32.6              | 53.8               | 13.8     |
| 2002 | 31.6              | 57.3               | 11.1     |
| 2003 | 28.5              | 58.4               | 13       |
| 2004 | 28.7              | 61.4               | 9.9      |
| 2005 | 29                | 60                 | 11       |
| 2006 | 26.9              | 59                 | 14.1     |
| 2007 | 25.3              | 59.2               | 15.5     |
| 2008 | 24.5              | 59.2               | 16.3     |

Source – Kingston Smith W1: The Financial Performance of Marketing Services Companies, 2000 to 2006

The other core principle which determines how consultancies operate is the type of business that they are expected to run.

**At any one time, the UK PR sector is engaged in a flux of mergers, acquisitions, take-overs and break-aways to create larger, new or start-up businesses.**

Indeed, this reinvention is so entrenched that all main consultancy competitions: the “PR Week Awards”, The CIPR “Sword of Excellence” and the “PRCA Awards” annually recognise that year’s “Best New Agency.”

This means that UK PR consultancy managers may be working in one of several, widely different, styles of business. Chart 3 charts the ownership of leading consultancies, showing how many at any one year are foreign owned, are UK quoted or subsidiaries of UK quoted companies or are privately owned. It shows how considerable shifts in ownership and therefore business type take place from year to year. This is a sector where change is endemic.

### **Chart 3: Ownership of top 20 or 30 (by turnover) UK PR consultancies**

| Year | Foreign-owned | UK-quoted or subsidiaries of UK-quoted companies | Privately owned |
|------|---------------|--|-----------------|
| 1991 | 5             | 6  | 4               |
| 1992 | 5             | 6  | 5               |
| 1993 | 5             | 7  | 8               |
| 1994 | 5             | 8  | 7               |
| 1995 | 4             | 7  | 9               |
| 1996 | 4             | 5  | 11              |
| 1997 | 4             | 8  | 7               |
| 1998 | 5             | 7  | 7               |
| 1999 | 5             | 8  | 17              |
| 2000 | 12            | 7  | 11              |
| 2001 | 13            | 5  | 12              |

Source – Kingston Smith W1: The Financial Performance of Marketing Services Companies, 1991 to 2001

Drawing on Professor Charles Handy's work on organisational development, David Welling Orchard Consulting, has identified four typical company types: the entrepreneur or founder model; the tasks orientated model; the organisation and process model and finally, the professional, "individual as star" model.

### Chart 4: The four classic organisation shapes

| Type A   | Type B   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneur / Founder Model</li> <li>• Great for driving a young business hard</li> <li>• Spider at the centre of the web</li> <li>• Controls and directs</li> <li>• Absence of formal processes</li> <li>• Fitting in to the 'family' is critical to joiners</li> <li>• Poor horizontal internal communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation is the God</li> <li>• Layered organisation</li> <li>• Process (not task of result orientation)</li> <li>• Everything prescribed and described</li> <li>• Risk averse</li> <li>• Tendency to bureaucracy</li> <li>• Poor vertical internal communication</li> </ul> |
| Type C   | Type D   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultancy model</li> <li>• Results /Task (not process) orientated</li> <li>• Senior Partners build accountable 'micropractices' within Greater Practice</li> <li>• Flexibility to adapt processes and organisation within and between 'micropractices'</li> <li>• Greater Practice hold sway in a show down</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architects / Vets / Barristers Model</li> <li>• Existential – individuals bigger than the organisation</li> <li>• Organisation (back office) exists to support individuals</li> <li>• Individuals are peers – normally working alone</li> </ul>                                 |

These models each have widely different operating characteristics and they all apply to UK PR consultancies. Managers will be working within the constraints and advantages that each business type brings. They will be competing amongst themselves for the available new talent and business.

### *The evolution of UK PR consultancies*

An interesting point to note is that while no single set of organisational characteristics guarantees creative success, diversification by specialist offering and by geography, tends to make consultancies more robust. Kingston Smith W1 consistently report that group-owned PR consultancies are more profitable than independents.

There are currently only nine independent PR consultancies among the top 40 by fee income, and they tend to be smaller, until they reach a size where they are attractive acquisitions for larger marketing services groups.

Of the 113 members of the trade association in 1985, only four exist today. Of these, all are international, three have their roots in the US and three are public limited companies.

## The shape of UK PR consultancy sector

In 1985, PRCA comprised 113 consultancies. In 2009, there are 120 members. Its Yearbook shows that there is little overall change in total number of consultancies. However, the number of employees and clients have more than doubled during the twenty years from 1985 to 2004. Accounts which have fees of more than £1million rose from 13 to 80 by 2000.

### Chart 5 : Numbers of PRCA members, employees, clients and fees over £1 million 1985 to 2004

| Year | Members | Employees | Clients | Fees over £1million |
|------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------------|
| 1985 | 113     | 1,942     | 2,616   | 13                  |
| 1989 | 154     | 3,856     | 4,595   | 37                  |
| 1990 | 173     | 4,145     | 5,073   | 38                  |
| 1994 | 129     | 2,982     | 3,902   | 39                  |
| 1995 | 131     | 3,274     | 4,407   | 46                  |
| 2000 | 128     | 5,824     | 5,550   | 80                  |
| 2004 | 137     | 4,433     | 4,516   | N/A <sup>31</sup>   |

Of course, not all consultancies are members of the PRCA. The annual 2009 PR Week “League Table” lists the top 150 companies and there is a classic 80:20 shape to the sector.

### The top three consultancies have combined annual fee revenues of more than £155million.

The top 20 have more than £446 million in annual fees with the remaining 130 consultancies contributing another £412 million. The sixty smallest listed all have annual fee incomes of less than £2million.

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<sup>31</sup> Sarbanes Oxley legislation prevents disclosure of this information

## **1984-1989. The PR consultancy as a source of editorial expertise**

### **A time of consultancy growth, consolidation and specialisation in a context of business deregulation, pressure group activity and growing environmental awareness**

In 1985, the “Footsie”, the share index of the UK’s most highly capitalised companies, reached 1,000 for the first time and in November the next year, “Big Bang” deregulated City dealings. British Telecom, British Gas and the electricity boards were privatised and bus companies deregulated. Rules regarding the promotion of professionals, such as accountants and lawyers, were relaxed. Spending on health services increased.

Corporate PR accounts grew, healthcare communications emerged as a specialism and expert financial PR consultancies managed their clients’ investor relations, benefitting from the boom in stock market listings.

The same year, the PRCA attributed its members’ growth to factors including the, “growing complexity of the marketplace, the development of consumer and environmental pressure groups, the rising demand for information, employer and social legislation.” It was common to describe the consultancy role as, “creating the climate of opinion in which the sale can be made”.

**A trend was emerging amongst PR consultants that they should not only be disseminating clients’ policy, they should also be helping to shape it.**

The PRCA Yearbook for 1985 described PR companies as having seven main areas of operation: marketing, financial PR, employee, community and government relations, international and, most importantly, media relations, where press coverage was described as the “backbone” of most PR programmes.

“Single Issue” pressure groups became a feature of daily life and everyone watched closely when Greenpeace re-wrote consumer campaigning rules during the Piper Alpha oil rig disaster, which took Shell so much by surprise. Exxon Valdez’s Alaskan oil spillage showed what impassioned communities could achieve when faced with unresponsive, remote organisations. Formerly, blue-chip companies had imagined themselves impervious to the agendas of activists and “citizen power”. PR consultants responded with a wide array of crisis and issues scenario planning.

In addition, general public health scares, such as radio-active fall out from Chernobyl in 1986 and BSE<sup>32</sup> in 1990 galvanised interest and industry groups into communicating more effectively with their customers and business partners.

For the first time, the parent company became closely associated with its brands and organisations become more accountable for their actions, prompting better communications.

**This was a period when companies recognised that simply issuing literature was not sufficient to maintain their reputation.**

However, the tendency was still for clients to ask for tactical advice, which had not been developed in conjunction with their marketing or business plans.

During this period, PR consultancies were seen to be the pre-eminent source of expertise for managing media relations.

The media environment was stable. Sales of national newspapers hovered at around 2,700 million copies per annum, regional newspapers sold around 2,700 million copies per annum and the number of free newspapers distributed to households grew from 1,600 million in 1984 to over 2,000 million by 1989.

Annual sales of consumer magazines peaked in the mid 1980s at nearly 1,700 and fell to just over 1,500 million by 1990.

TV advertising expenditure grew consistently, doubling during the five year period to finish at around £2,000 million per annum. Commercial radio experienced similar growth, with the number of stations also doubling from 49 to over 106 at this time.

The PR consultant usually had a range of journalist contacts who could be relied upon to deliver the coverage that clients expected. Relationships were personal and direct, with many 'phone conversations and meetings, often over lunch. Groups of media were assembled to meet clients for press trips and product launches.

**However, if those in the PR sector were confident, outsiders often had different views.**

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<sup>32</sup> Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad-cow disease

Forty per cent of the marketing managers interviewed in AGB's Communications survey said that they saw public relations as the "poor relation to advertising". When referred to by those outside the sector, this research found that PR was often considered to be the "promotion of goods by non-advertising means" or "by subtle means". It was felt by a majority of respondents that PR had a "fuzzy relationship to advertising."

Jim Surguy, Harvest Consulting, explained the marketing sector's perspective on PR consultancies, "In the early eighties escalating costs for TV commercials made PR activity seem a cheaper, and to some, a more effective medium. So, companies came to appreciate the importance of narrow-casting – reaching audiences through means less all-embracing than advertising. The importance of identifying and communicating to particular target groups become more widely recognised and practiced and this in turn led to a rapid growth in PR consultancies."

In 1987, Dr Danny Moss, Manchester Metropolitan University, set up the first formal PR qualification, a Masters degree, at Stirling University. He said, "there was a view that PR was best taught at post-graduate level. However, until the mid 1990's, when a European PR research symposium was created, most of the theory came from the US." In fact, PR had been taught in American universities since 1922, when the first course was established at New York University.

**In 1989 an Economist article noted, "Corporate communications (a term it used synonymously with PR) is now at the same stage in its development as marketing was in the early 1960s. Companies know it's important but are not sure how to go about it or what skills it entails."**

This comment is a reasonable summary of where the PR consultancy stood in its evolution. It was growing and developing specialist skills to meet market needs. Its operations centred on the traditional practice of media relations, increasingly tailored to and targeted at, different audiences. Technology – in the form of networked computers – was making processes more efficient, but it was still largely an unsystematic business.

## **1991 to 1999. PR as part of the marketing mix**

**PR secures its position as a key element of integrated marketing campaigns. Privatisations, building societies de-**

## **mutualising and the National Lottery launch create substantial PR budgets and campaigns demonstrate returns on investment**

In 1991, Kingston Smith W1 published its first “Financial Performance of Marketing Services Companies”. Public Relations had its own section, confirming its role as part of the marketing mix.

The coal industry, Railtrack, National Power and Power Gen all privatised. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1994 the first draw of the National Lottery took place. At the end of the decade, the “Millennium Bug” was much promoted.

Big issue, big idea, multi-audience education campaigns became common and PR consultancies joined other marketing disciplines in providing integrated communications. Often, campaigns were multinational, with the UK contributing the management and co-ordination.

### **The UK PR consultancy sector grew to become the second largest internationally, after the US.**

In the ten years since 1985, the number of PR accounts with annual fees over £1million rose threefold to 39. During this period, turnover of leading consultancies increased from nearly £251 million to over £451 million.

Management of this scale of resource necessitated greater professionalism in project planning, execution and in evaluation. PR consultancies began to introduce systems to promote efficient working. New technologies, provided by a new range of suppliers who could now make a living from the PR sector, facilitated this trend.

In these more open and transparent client relationships, where the PR consultancy reported its results alongside other marketing specialists, greater scrutiny was given to results. Measuring outputs moved on from counting cuttings to a wider range of metrics, including audience research.

In 1999 the Consultancy Management Standard (CMS) was launched to improve industry standards and to differentiate those who achieve it. Membership of the PRCA is still limited to those consultancies who hold CMS. Consultancy Codes of Practice were also created, for parliamentary advisors, for health care and for investor relations. The PRCA’s Professional Charter complemented that of the IPR.

General business practice was also formalising processes and standards, with Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Total Quality Management (TQM), Investors in People and ISO 9000 gaining acceptance during this period.

In terms of the media that PR consultancies influenced, the 1990s were a period where, overall, the print media sector was fairly static. Sales of consumer magazines

settled at around 1,300 million copies sold annually while sales of both national and regional newspapers began to decline slowly from their 1990 peaks.

However, broadcast media grew rapidly. The money spent on TV advertising doubled and new channels were introduced to take advantage of this. The number of radio stations increased by 150 per cent.

As the media channels available to consumers multiplied influencing them through advertising was often seen to be disproportionately expensive. PR campaigns became a popular choice because of their cost-effectiveness in reaching and building relationships with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

**There was a growing understanding that business operated in a pluralist context where communications had to be two-way.**

The impact of large scale PR campaigns often clearly dwarfed that generated by the concurrent advertising programme and budget holders, aided by PR consultancy managers, came to question which marketing discipline delivered the best return on investment.

Cranfield Business School professor, Jon White, predicted that the “complexity of the business environment, international developments, changing social expectations regarding economic growth and the role of large organisations will all reinforce the importance of PR tasks in the immediate future.” He was advocating that PR should be, “an essential part of modern management” and that practitioners should be seen as “management advisors”. This was the period when “strategic editorial” and “management by objectives” became popular concepts with PR consultants.

**During this period, PR consultancies began to re-define their roles, beyond media relations towards reputation management.**

“Perception management” was a popular consultancy service which usually included the analysis and then ongoing management of an organisation’s internal and external relationships.

Expert financial, technology, consumer, lobbying and corporate consultancies were created, all delivering high margins. Kingston Smith W1 describe the mid 1990s as a time of the “rise of the highly profitable specialist.”

“In general” Kingston Smith W1 continued, “PR consultancies continue to be rather more successful than their counterparts in the marketing services sector in managing

to contain their operating costs in the face of improving gross income." Throughout this period however, consultancies struggled to stop their staff costs from eroding profits.

Generalist consultancies tended to be less competitive. This was partly due to the shift away from charging clients a mark up for bought in goods and services. Instead, profits had to come from core fee revenues.

Some found they could not charge premium rates for what was perceived to be low-value work. Correctly pricing and executing PR deliverables was a recurrent problem, shown in the consultancy accounts analysed by Kingston Smith W1.

**However, for those who could take advantage of it, developing technologies and increasing numbers of media encouraged more rigorous campaign planning, programmes which had greater impact and results that could change business performance.**

By the end of 1994 the World Wide Web had come into general, if not popular, use. While the total number of web sites was minute compared to today's standards, quite a number of those that existed were either the precursors of, or the inspiration for, the current most popular services.

In 1993, university status was given to polytechnics, assisting the rapid expansion of degree-level public relations and communications qualifications.

In 1994, a European PR research symposium was held, assimilating for the first time case studies that were "local" to Europe and were not US-based. The fact that documented examples of measureable activity existed shows that the practice of PR was maturing.

Many more PR practitioners were becoming formally educated. In 1999, there were already 18 IPR-approved PR courses at 15 institutions and the next year the IPR set up a CPD scheme.

Paul Holmes, Holmes Report, has a theory about PR consultancies during this time which illustrates both the opportunities and threats faced by this rapidly growing and evolving sector.

He says, "In the late 1980s, early 1990s PR consultancies faced a choice which they probably didn't realise or understand. They could become more like advertising agencies or more like management consultancies. Most PR consultancies had a billing model that

represented that of a management consultancy. However, many were owned or influenced by advertising agencies. In the end, they collectively veered off in the direction of the advertising agency model, as it was this group that was prepared to invest in them. This decision led to a period of time when PR was subordinated to advertising." He continues:

**“PR folk got into the habit of giving away thinking, even before they had won the business. They then found it easier to charge for an account executive to make 50 media calls than for a consultant to advise on strategy. They also allowed their objectives to be defined in advertising terms, typically in what is termed ‘advertising equivalents’. But PR is not about equivalency with advertising. It is about building relationships.”**

Charging correctly for creative and intellectual content and explaining the value of consultancy outputs are still practices that PR consultancies are trying to establish.

However, the demand for public relations was strong. Looking back over the 1990s, Chris McDowall, then Director General of the PRCA, reported that, “the Public Relations industry is enjoying year on year growth, nationally and globally, of 20 per cent”.

## 2000 – 2009. The PR consultancy is more than “marketing support”.

May 2000 - Internet shares fall. September 2001's terrorist attacks are followed by the collapse of Enron and WorldCom, the biggest corporate failures ever until Lehman Bros in September 2008. Accountancy and business regulations are tightened. 2004 sees the term “Web 2.0” created. YouTube is launched in 2005 and Twitter the next year. Economic growth resumes till 2007 when the FTSE hits an all-time high.

Although the period began with many PR consultancies contracting their operations, once economic growth resumed, continued public and private sector investment meant that demand for PR campaigns grew, although not at the high rates experienced in the 1990s.

**Increased interest and scrutiny from the media into business life helped executives recognize that it was worth investing in a professional approach to safeguarding corporate reputation.**

Business men had come increasingly to personify their organizations and while some found this celebrity appealing, most were mindful of Warren Buffet's comments that reputation takes 20 years to achieve and five minutes to lose.

Not only was the media interested in business life, but the governance reviews of the late 1990s demanded greater transparency and thus better corporate communications. “Comply or explain” the Higgs Review told boards, advocating greater disclosure of organisations' due diligence and risk-control practices. In the public sector the COI celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and during the decade became the UK's largest significant buyer of marketing services.

**PR consultancies increased their expertise accordingly, seeing themselves as taking responsibility for identity and reputation, whether of an organization, its people, its products or its services.**

By 2000, the impact of a vastly increased, professionally-educated supply of public relations practitioners was beginning to be felt by PR consultancy managers. Demand for public relations had indeed grown significantly, but, in fact, most of the growth

was outside consultancies. In 2005, the CIPR commissioned first rigorous research on the UK public relations sector, which revealed that, “Of the 47,800 professionals, most (82 per cent) are in-house specialists employed directly by companies, government or not-for-profits”.

**For the first time, the role of PR consultancies as the source of pre-eminent media expertise was being successfully challenged by in-house pr teams.**

Comments in the PRCA Yearbook suggest that PR consultancies began to lose their former confidence. For example, the trade association gave itself the specific objective of helping to build consultancy esteem, saying that one of its objectives was, “To promote confidence in public relations as a whole, and to act as a spokesperson for consultancy practice.”

Two of the main issues which pre-occupied PR consultancy managers were the quality of service provided to clients and the professionalism with which their consultancies were run.

**Operating a consultancy profitably had become much more challenging.**

There was a wide range of suppliers promising to make their purchasers more professional and competitive. Services and systems that could be outsourced now included; training, news distribution, media contacts, monitoring and evaluation, HR compliance, information resources, broadcast and web services. However, clients, many now with in-house communications teams that had the size and spend of a small to medium-sized consultancy, could access these services too. It was becoming harder for PR consultants to be the sole repository of editorial media expertise.

These years see PR consultancy managers grappling with an array of pressures that varied according to the overall business climate. These include: problems arising from clients become more efficient in buying PR services; of competitive pressures from other consultancies or other marketing disciplines and, difficulties in securing talented professionals who now had in-house careers as options. This was the period when procurement professionals became part of the consultancy: client contracting process. It became important to show transparency in the consultancy’s client invoicing, which in itself, often entailed making improvements in account handling procedures.

The notion of “transparent relationships” also fed through into general account management processes, helping to remove any remaining mystique that PR consultants had of being uniquely able to generate media coverage.

**In 2004, the PRCA summarised the challenging climate, “Business for consultancies has been tough, clients have been harder to source, take longer to close, have less business to play for and have much greater expectations,”**

Delivering measurable “value” through communications campaigns was all important, if difficult to achieve. Many clients and consultancies felt that traditional evaluation techniques were not sufficient for showing how the work had impacted at a strategic, rather than at a purely operational, level. This debate continues today.

Sometimes however, the PR consultancy failed to get provide clients with a desirable level of information. A marketing director is quoted as saying, “About 18 months ago there was a danger of our consultancies killing us with bureaucracy.”

This was not surprising. Technology systems were being created to provide clients and consultancies with “real-time information” and most had too many features and were too complicated for the average PR consultant to use on a daily basis. A typical jargon-ridden claim from a supplier of a new client-relationship-management system was that this would allow, “Account administration to embrace technology solutions that offer clients a means of managing internal processes and communications project-critical information”.

For many of the larger consultancies the early years were a time for rationalising and restructuring. Kingston Smith W1 report that 17 of the top 30 companies showed exceptional costs due to re-organisation.

**Many PR consultancies struggled to thrive in this increasingly competitive environment. “It’s a buyers’ market, of that there is no doubt” said the chairman of the trade association in 2007. “Buyers can select by market sector, PR discipline and geography.”**

Although specialisation was not new, this period saw the emergence of niche PR consultancies securing large, Blue-Chip clients for high-value retained and project work. For the first time, the trade association yearbook described consultancies as falling into two categories; full service and specialist.

Of the many new consultancies created, almost all professed a particular expertise. Not only did specialists thrive, but the larger consultancies created or invested in a wider range of skills so that their businesses could reflect their clients' organisations. Of course, clients often selected a consultancy whose niche matched their own business interests and this narrowing of focus enabled PR consultants still to develop a level of media expertise that was not available externally.

**Often, the consultancy took on the role as interpreter of the external environment which had grown to be much more complex.**

Businesses, whatever their area of operations, tended to communicate along functional reporting lines and could be inward-looking, so the external, more objective, perspective provided by the PR consultancy was often considered valuable.

**However, despite a more competitive trading environment, there was still much profitable business to be won. By 2009, the combined annual income of PRCA members had grown from £25 million in 1985 to £342 million.**

As has been mentioned, the PRCA has been fairly consistent in representing around 150 UK consultancies, which together make up around 80 per cent of the fee income of the UK PR sector. The majority of consultancies, some 2,800, still remain unattached and unrepresented as professional PR companies.

Services to the communications sector had also developed. PR consultancies now assembled their own pitches for selecting suppliers to support their businesses, including: property consulting; legal support; training for craft and business skills; HR compliance; professional and indemnity insurance; project management and accountancy software services.

In addition, there were developments and innovations in the services which enabled PR practitioners to operate more effectively. There were now companies offering, usually on a national and international basis: press release distribution; automated media and media contact selection, media monitoring and evaluation, analysis and planning; web casting; broadcast consultancy; market research; editorial and writing services; media training; multi-lingual copywriting and translating; events listings by

sector and calendar; access to social media “libraries” plus outsourced events management, venue finders, promotions fulfilment.

**Of course, all this expertise was also available to in-house teams, so using it per se, did not confer competitive advantage to PR consultancies.**

A decade after the web was created, its use was general.

E mail to desk was the norm by 2002, facilitating development of the “24/7” information environment and with it the PR consultancy’s role of interpretation and analysis of the ever-changing external situation. “Competitive monitoring” of a client’s rivals, and interpretation of PR campaign opportunities and threats, became commonplace.

Gradually, the impact of Web 2.0 in catalysing a host of media channels that can be engaged with and contributed to became clear.

Once this trend was underway and the content of these channels became impossible to control, then the relationship that organisations, their products and services have with the media, had to change.

**There could be no more “control” or “management” of stakeholder communications. The time of deference was over.**

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, the Freedom of Information Act (2000) FOIA came into force and journalists and campaigning organisations learnt the value of using FOIA as a means of embarrassing public authorities across a wide range of issues. PR consultants quickly understood how to make the most of these opportunities, but the publicising of information that often by its nature had never been expected to be made generally available, hastened the tendency to distrust organisations and authority figures.

**By 2006, mainstream media had adopted “climate” as a newsworthy issue and this helped to stimulate an awareness of the individual’s and the organisation’s relationship to the environment.**

A similar interest developed in terms of the relationship to the community, which now greatly affects organisations, their employees, their products and services.

Towards the end of the decade the concept of “social media” emerged, meaning a myriad of narrow-cast, ever-changing communities. However elusive, the key characteristic of such groups is that its members communicate transparently and usually, individuals in the groups are trusted, their views respected. This is often in contrast with communications emanating from the outside world.

**This period sees seismic change in the UK’s media landscape with rapid declines in national and regional newspaper sales.**

“National newspaper sales are eroded as web audience grows” is a common headline and “newsosaur” – a clever term for those still loyal to the printed page. New sizes and formats were experimented with but failed to halt the year on year loss of readers, which, from 2004, is said to be, on average, just under five per cent. National newspapers, particularly the broadsheets, have successfully attracted readers, if not advertisers to their websites. Regional and local newspapers continue to close down.

**Free newspapers, however, are growing their circulations.**

For example, Metro UK claims to distribute a million copies a day to 16 cities and have two million readers. Its news reporting is described as “bite-sized national and international news, wrapped around local entertainment reviews, travel and weather” and this formula has become a prime target for those bringing editorial content, promotions and advertising.

**Chart 8 :sales of UK newspapers 1983-2008**

| Newspapers | National Newspapers<br>Copies<br>sold(millions) | Regional<br>Newspapers | Free Newspapers |
|------------|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1983       | 5,734   | 2,793                  | 1,555           |
| 1984       | 5,860   | 2,767                  | 1,638           |
| 1985       | 5,703   | 2,733                  | 1,846           |
| 1990       | 5,537   | 2,588                  | 2,023           |
| 1995       | 5,206   | 2,277                  | 1,648           |
| 2000       | 4,692   | 2,104                  | 1,562           |
| 2005       | 4,336   | 1,745                  | 1,526           |
| 2008       | 3,906   | 1,482                  | 1,695           |

Sales of consumer magazines have also declined, but given the wide and diverse scope of published titles, some will inevitably be winning and some losing readers. On-line publications, some of existing hard copy titles and some new are legion, but (currently) difficult to measure.

**In the last 25 years, the UK has gone from having three television channels to having just under 300.**

Increasing choice, however, almost always entails declining numbers of those making the choice and the scale of this change is illustrated by chart 10 which shows how television advertising expenditure is reducing from its mid-decade highs.

## Chart 10: UK advertising expenditure sales 1983 - 2008

| TV   | Total Advertising Expenditure (£m) |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1983 | 978                                |
| 1984 | 1,085                              |
| 1985 | 1,186                              |
| 1990 | 2,004                              |
| 1995 | 2,667                              |
| 2000 | 3,950                              |
| 2005 | 4,097                              |
| 2008 | 3,819                              |

Chart 11 charts the growth of commercial radio, which, despite the significant increase in the number of “services” or stations, is now suffering so severely from cuts in advertising that sector analysts, Enders, predict that it is “dying out.”

**It is said that outside the BBC, radio will not be commercially viable and is likely to end up in the form of hobbyist models, such as podcasts.**

## Chart 11: UK radio stations 1983 - 2008

| Radio | No of Services at year end |
|-------|----------------------------|
| 1983  | 42                         |
| 1984  | 48                         |
| 1985  | 49                         |
| 1990  | 106                        |
| 1995  | 176                        |
| 2000  | 256                        |
| 2005  | 285                        |
| 2008  | 355                        |

Source - The Advertising Statistics Yearbook 2009

## **PR consultancies, what next?**

Dr Danny Moss, who has been practising and lecturing in PR for longer than the time of this study, says in his view, PR has not really changed. What has changed, he acknowledges, is the context in which PR operates and the technology and systems it uses.

PR consultancies, however, have evolved, taking advantage of consumer and business trends, upgrading their technologies and systems and adding expertise and value to their services.

Whether PR consultancies can continue to prosper in the competitive mix of outsourced business services remains to be seen. At the moment, they are challenged on several fronts.

### **① As executor and manager of media relationships**

The “editorial expert” role is still central to much PR consultancy work. Influential media coverage that communicates organisational strategy and changes opinions and behaviours is a key requirement of many campaigns.

Clients continue to be happy to pay high fees for this and consultancies must meet the challenge of advising on, then delivering, compelling on and off line media presence.

It is a more complex task than it used to be, with a mix of established and new tools to assist in the sifting of data, the deciphering of intelligence and the targeting of stakeholders. Clients, however, also have more tools at their disposal to assess the quality success of the consultancy’s service.

It is an area where digital and advertising agencies increasingly compete.

“Advertising firms scooped a slew of awards with PR-led campaigns at the 2009 Cannes Lions Advertising Festival” reported PR Week in early July 2009.

**Owning content creation for experiential and social media is as essential as that for traditional media and consultancies must increasingly protect their competitive positions.**

## ② As reputation manager

As organisations have become accessible and accountable, safeguarding their brand and corporate reputations is inextricably linked. Both are vital, impacting current value and future success.

**PR is an important tool in effecting this stewardship and it is in this sense that consultancies have moved “beyond marketing.” It is an area of massive potential growth.**

Most consultancies have taken advantage of this opportunity, schooling senior talent, often co-opting it from other disciplines, developing risk analysis and change management<sup>33</sup> techniques and undertaking proprietary research.

However, if skilled personnel can move into PR consultancies, they can also move from them. Many find a more congenial, better remunerated career outside consultancies. In addition, the “Tesco Law”<sup>34</sup> brings new opportunities for PR professionals within traditional partnership firms.

**With around 80 per cent of practitioners employed in house, PR consultancies may struggle in the future to retain top talent.**

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<sup>33</sup> VMA reports a 36 per cent of consultancies say they have been asked to provide advisory services to CEOs and boards on managing communications through change. Communicate March 2009

<sup>34</sup> The Legal Services Act (LSA) 2007

### ③ Evaluation

Demonstrating the return on investment delivered by a campaign – whether this involves measuring social media conversations, on or off line coverage, controlled or direct communications - has never been more important.

Many consultancies offer bespoke evaluation methods, but overall, they lack a common, agreed standard which would give assurance to their clients.

Barry Legetter, CEO Association of Measurement and Evaluation Companies (AMEC) says,

**“The media is experiencing the equivalent of the UK’s industrial revolution. Consultancies must embed measurement or loose relevancy.”**

Consultancies need to agree a common measurement methodology or they risk being left behind by clients and evaluation experts.

### ⊕ “Integration is the name of the game<sup>35</sup>”

**A seamless combination of different expert skills, brought together to answer a particular business need is how PR consultancies of the future will operate.**

Working alongside others, from sister companies to external partners, will be the norm.

This puts testing demands on all consultancies. Do they have the contacts, confidence, and business processes to be able to work in this way? Do they have the knowledge to provide the optimum answers to client problems? What happens if the right answer does not deliver fees to the consultancy?

Increasingly, clients will have communications problem that they want solved. They will not care what is the label of company that provides the answer.

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<sup>35</sup> Campaign 19 June 2009

**These are difficult business and strategic questions, but they must be answered now if PR consultancies wish to continue to evolve in the future as successfully as they have over the last 25 years.**

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## A HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON SCREEN: CINEMA AND TELEVISION DEPICTIONS SINCE THE 1920S.

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### Abstract

While public relations rode a wave of success with the ballyhoo surrounding film in the 1920s and 30s, Hollywood developed its own screen images of the public relations industry. As early as 1924, cinema began depicting public relations stunts in the short film *Publicity Pays*. As film genres developed and social and cultural norms changed so too did the depictions of the industry: from the 1938 corporate manoeuvrings of *Four's a Crowd* to the 1962 ethical struggles of *Days of Wine and Roses*, and the '80s, '90s and '00s political spin and satire of *Yes Minister*, *Wag the Dog* and *In the Loop*. This paper presents a study of the representation of public relations in film and television from the 1920s through to the present day. It extends the discussion raised in Miller's seminal 1999 paper which looked at PR in film and fiction in the United States, by turning the focus onto international changes and developments in the industry over more than 80 years, drawing on memory theory and chronicled public relations history to provide a framework. It features two films, each made and remade over different decades: *A Star is Born* (1937, 1954, 1976) and *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* (1947, 1994), as well as more than a dozen others, to illustrate how public relations evolved. The paper suggests that film and television, as forms of popular culture, can be useful tools to enrich our understanding and knowledge of the public relations industry.

### Introduction

In a recent postgraduate class of mine, during a discussion about movies and public relations, a student said she had been so affected by the film *Hancock* that she was prompted to take up the study of public relations and set her sights on it as a profession. Lee argues that "film as a preeminent component of popular culture, has the power to depict and then influence the image of a particular topic, institution, profession or endeavour" (2004, p. 157). In the student's case film did influence her career choice – there was a clear causal link. However, it is not the intention of this paper to use media effects theories to explain how film and television depictions might have affected the uptake of public relations as a profession. Rather, it incorporates Lee's observation that film can influence and depict a profession by considering how portrayals of public relations in this form of popular culture have changed over time and how these developments might align with a profession which itself was evolving and developing.

The study focuses at film and television depictions of public relations from the 1920s to 2009. These include public relations professionals working as consultants,

publicists, press agents, press secretaries, communications managers, lobbyists or event managers. It also includes some films which incorporate public relations *functions* carried out by non professionals, in order to include examples of the earliest films. It features an analysis of two films, each made and remade over different decades: *A Star is Born* (1937, 1954, 1976) and *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* (1947, 1994) plus 14 other film and television series in order to track changes in representations. Not surprisingly, these films/programs sometimes entail public relations being juxtaposed across other industries or sectors such as politics, the media, the tobacco industry and even religion. The study encounters themes which range from power, fame, truth, deception, morality and love, across genres which include comedy, drama, political satire and romance.

Over the same period, public relations had been defining itself and writing its history. One study found that over a 70 year period to 1976, a total of 472 definitions for public relations had been developed (Harlow in Lamme and Russell 2010, p. 284). Indeed, Cropp and Pincus note that public relations is “amoebic in its ease at changing shape to functionally conform to different situations and circumstances” (2001, p. 194). Lamme and Russell note how public relations has historically been understood as both as *a profession* and as *a function* with the primary foci on its development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its rise as a corporate function in corporate America. Recent scholarship from outside the United States has questioned and expanded these limited perspectives beyond this time frame and its corporate focus (see for example L’Etang 2004, 2008 in the United Kingdom; Johnston & Zawawi 2004 in Australia). Lamme and Russell further argue that popularised histories of public relations, which start at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bernays 1952, Goldman 1948), have resulted in limited and sometimes confused models, terminologies and frameworks while the concept of the “ethical progression” (Hoyt et al, p. 196) of the profession, employed in Grunig and Hunt’s 4<sup>th</sup> model has further restricted the historiography of the profession. In this study, however, such reductive approaches help provide a framework for parallels to be drawn between screen depictions and the developing profession because both can be traced through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The research uses theories of collective and cultural memory to help explain the connections between screen depictions and the public relations industry. It draws on a growing body of cultural studies scholarship which suggests that film and television can prompt, even enhance, our individual and collective memory and help

to determine our cultural identity. Memory studies suggests that coming together in a forum or conference setting – as we have here – looking at, talking about and analysing film can feed into our collective understanding of the profession.

### **Literature review**

Depictions of public relations on screen ignited research interest in the 1990s, first with Tavcar's 1993 study of 17 films, followed by Miller's 1999 broader study of 118 films and novels. Since then, Lee has developed a research specialty in film representations, focussing on government public relations (2009, 2001) and also taking a wider view, incorporating the nonprofits and management on screen (2002, 2004). Similarly, Wielde and Schultz (2007) focussed on government professionals on screen. Tilson looked at public relations both as a subject of film and as a publicity function of film in his 2003 study of public relations and Hollywood while Ames focussed on the period 1996 to 2008 for her study of films and public relations to bring "research on public relations in film into the present" (2009).

Lee argues that, compared to fields of public administration (Lee 2004), politics and journalism (Lee 2001), study of public relations in popular culture is meagre "especially [considering] the nearly-universal mass entertainment medium of film" (2001, p. 297). While it is supplemented by some interesting and upbeat web articles and blogs (see for example Snowden 2009, Stone 2008), academic studies of public relations in film and television can be counted in single figures, though other studies have investigated how different forms of popular culture, such as the news media, depict public relations (Spicer 1993, Henderson 1998, Meza 2001).

Just as there has been limited research, so too has there been limited screen representations of the industry. Tavcar suggests, "public relations practitioners don't win the screen time of lawyers – or doctors, teachers, accountants, athletes, ad executives and architects" (1993, p. 21). Indeed, the professions to 'win' the most screen time during the 20<sup>th</sup> century were law enforcement, show business, medicine, journalism the law and the armed forces – representing 46 per cent of the 2,300 lead roles analysed (in Tilson, 2003). Furthermore, public relations was not included in the list of 51 top occupations appearing in movies (in Tilson, 2003).

Previous studies have, on the whole, looked for typologies or characteristics of public relations professionals or public relations functions. Miller found that – in film and novels – three quarters of the practitioners were male. Women were often

included either as love interest or, if they were practitioners, tended to be attractive or unmarried. She found little diversity in race or ethnicity, characters were often “cynical, greedy, isolated, unfulfilled, obsequious, manipulative or intellectual lightweights” (1999, p. 23). Ames’ study of 11 films in 2009 took up where Miller’s left off and she found improvement in positive depictions, borne out in the title: *The image of public relations improves from 1996 to 2008*. She argues: “According to current films, PR work is now considered more valuable and its processes are better understood than previously” (2009, p. 6). Ames suggests that television may have contributed to this (for example *Spin City*, *Sex and the City*) and she also attributes this to better knowledge of public relations by screenwriters. She notes that some of Miller’s attributes were no longer apparent, seeing a profession that is at times “challenging, positive and worthwhile” (2009, p. 6).

Lee (2001) found six consistent and overwhelming characteristics in depictions of government relations: first, like Miller and Ames, public relations officials were almost entirely male; second, media relations was almost exclusively their field of work; third, the roles depicted were predominantly from American units of government (17 out of 20 analysed) – showing, like Miller and Ames, little diversity; fourth, the agencies involved were predominantly military or quasi-military; fifth, more than half the movies came from the 1990s despite the sample covering a 50 plus year period; sixth, in most movies (18 of the 20), government public relations staffers had minor roles (Lee, 2001).

The sampling techniques of previous studies warrant some discussion. Previous research used samples drawn from first-hand knowledge or recommendations (Tavcar, 1993) or movie databases such as the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Halliwell’s Film Guide or the American Film Institute (Lee, 2001; Ames 2009) or a mixture of both (Miller). Tilson (2003) uses Tavcar’s sample and adds to this, rating the additional films according to Maltin’s Movie and Video Guide. In contrast, some samples were chosen in order to be entirely separate from others, for example Lee (2001) notes that he chose *not to* overlap with Miller’s sample. Likewise, Ames (2009) sample was chosen so that it did not overlap with Tavcar, Miller or Lee. Apart from Miller’s sample of 67 films – with a further sample of 51 novels – (1999) all studies looked at 20 films or less: 17 (Tavcar 1993), 20 (Lee 2001), 11 (Lee 2004), 7 (Lee 2009), 11 (Ames 2009), 8 (Tilson 2003). Issues associated with sample selection are discussed further in the methodology section. One thing in common with

all previous studies was their exclusive or primary focus on North American productions, a point from which this study departs.

### **Why film and television?**

In *Memory and Popular Film* Grainge posits that “as a technology able to picture and embody the temporality of the past, cinema has become central to the mediation of memory in modern cultural life” (2003, p. 1). He explains how “a growing body of work has begun to examine cultural constructions of identity produced through audience memory” (2003, p. 11). Thus, film can be used as a prism for understanding now and the past. At the extreme, it is argued that film is so powerful that it can in fact “reprogram” popular memory (Foucault 1975, p. 25). He explains: “so people are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been” (1975, p. 25). However, Edgerton argues that television sheds additional or nuanced light on history rather than creating new knowledge (2001). He says the language of television – unlike written discourse – is stylised, elliptical (as opposed to linear), associational and metaphoric in its portrayal of ideas and images (2001, p. 10) which can contribute to understandings of popular history, as opposed to more formal professional histories.

Halbwachs uses the term “collective memory” to describe shared recollections of the past by members of a connected group. While individuals are the ones who remember, being located in a specific group provides for a context to remember the past and this applies to associations, families, trade unions, social classes, corporations, armies (1992, p22).

Grainge argues that unlike history as a discipline: “the negotiation of memory describes the echo and pressure of the past as it is configured in present-based struggles over the meaning of lived experience” (p3). While he is referring specifically to class and cultural struggles, this description nevertheless resonates in this study, which draws on film and television depictions – both past and contemporary – of a profession which itself is increasingly negotiating its place in society and questioning its role both as a profession and within the wider industrial landscape (see for example L’Etang, 2004). Furthermore, we can overlay theory of memory studies with available historical documents and literature to see where relationships, links and synergies exist.

Studies of literary works have been identified as being powerful forces in reinforcing and helping to define public memory. Lerentzen (20087) for example, explains how Thomas Hardy’s writings of Wessex reinforced the collective rural

memory in his writing. By incorporating rural textuality in order to preserve the collective memory of the rural learner, Hardy defied the hegemonic position of conventional education, to “prevent the further marginalization of these populations that was made possible by this reductive definition imposed from outside the communities themselves” (Lorentzen, 2007, p. 1). As a result, literature – and also film – as modes of storytelling, can provide reference points for memory. As Lavenne *et al* point out:

[M]emory, and especially collective memory, needs material supports to endure, such as monuments, movies, music ... books ... Literature thus seems to be an almost eternal site of memory that preserves the memory of the past, passed down from generation to generation [which] gives flesh and blood to History. (2005, pp7-9)

This is illustrated in Stubbings’ analysis of “memory narratives” drawn from newspapers and oral histories of cinema in which she notes that cinema-going during the 1920s to 1950s was a community experience, enjoyed as a social outing (2003, p. 71). This period, known as the ‘Golden Years of Hollywood’, is typified by movies that were “fervently moral in nature” (2003, p. 73). “For many respondents the morality on screen in the Golden Age was evidence of values in the society as a whole ... taken by many ... to explain the widespread level of audience participation” (2003, p. 73). Movies and life not only reflect each other but by reinforcing the cultural norms of the time, film is used as a reference point or a “comfort zone” that life is being played out as it should.

Thus, consideration of the social and historic conditions within which the consumption of a cultural text takes place is important (Willis, 1995 p. 174). So, we might ask: As contemporary forms of popular culture from the 1920s through to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, did these films and television shows make a difference to how a burgeoning profession evolved? Or, were films and television shows simply reflecting contemporary mis/understandings or stereotypes?

### **Discourse analysis and methodology**

This study’s primary aim was to analyse cinema and television depictions to help inform a profession about how it was seen to have developed over 80 plus years. The sample had to do something that previous studies had not included: see how film and television depictions might reflect changing industry perceptions of public relations at

different times. As indicated from the film selection processes of others, there was no definitive or exhaustive list of public relations films. Defining public relations is itself a subjective task. In this study, I used an initial IMDb key-word search of “public relations”, “publicity”, “publicist” or “press agent” and “spin doctor” and also, like Miller (1999), followed up recommendations and prior knowledge. The earliest film located was a short-film (nine minutes), *Publicity Pays* (1924), about staging a Broadway publicity stunt. This is noteworthy because it does not appear in any of the earlier research. The next films follow a decade later: *Professional Sweetheart* (1933) and *Thirty Day Princess* (1934) (also not cited in earlier research) and *Four’s a Crowd* (1938) – which appears to be the first film to centre on a “public relations counsel” (indeed, this is written on the door of Errol Flynn’s character Robert Kensington Lansford) rather than just activities or stunts associated with public relations/publicity. The limitations of IMDb became apparent when a film from previous studies (Tilson 2003, Lee 2001) *The Americanization of Emily* (1964), did not include any of the key-words in the plot summary. Conversely, *Carry on Admiral* (1957) lists “a public relations executive” as a key character in the movie blurb but the role is one of a bureaucrat who is neither a public relations professional nor does he perform any public relations roles – he merely switches places with a Naval Admiral and carries out some vaguely diplomatic tasks. It was also noted that the plot summaries – which formed the basis of key-word searches – were posted by reviewers and so language chosen to describe movies is subject to individual understandings of the film and its characters. Problems with terminology and definitions are further illustrated by the film *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* which states the film is about “the world of advertising” on the back cover, despite the film’s clear focus on public relations and its IMDb listing as such.

The study used two samples: one which coded all films from previous research plus additional films added for this study (see Table 1), according to genre and decade and a second, smaller sample of 17 films and series which was viewed and coded (see Table 2). The first sample required grouping films and series by genre and in doing so, provides a guide to how the profession had been presented to audiences on a decade by decade basis. Films and series used IMDb’s genre coding to determine their placement. If more than one genre was cited – for example Comedy, Romance, Musical – more information about the production was sought from IMDb to determine its most dominant genre. While this remains a convenience sample, it

nevertheless represents the largest list of films and television series depicting public relations in any scholarly work.

The second, smaller sample was intended to provide a tour through the decades, looking at key films including *A Star is Born* (1937, 1954, 1976) and *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* (1947, 1994) plus 14 others.

Finally, the analysis drew on previously documented public relations history to map potential synergies with cinematic and television depictions.

|                      | 1920s          | 1930s               | 1940s  | 1950s                    | 1960s                | 1970s                              | 1980s                              | 1990s                              | 2000s  |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Comedy/Satire</b> | Publicity Pays | Thirty Day Princess |  | Carry on Admiral*        |                      |                                    | Yes (Prime) Minister, Roger and me | Wag The Dog                        | Absolute Power Hancock, Thank you for Smoking, In the loop |
| <b>Drama</b>         |                |                     | Miracle of the Bells, Miracle on 34 <sup>th</sup> Street | Man in Grey Flannel Suit | Days of Wine & Roses | Miracle on 34 <sup>th</sup> Street |                                    | Miracle on 34 <sup>th</sup> Street |  |
| <b>Romance</b>       |                | Four's a Crowd      |  |                          |                      |                                    |                                    | Sliding Doors                      |  |
| <b>Musical</b>       |                | Star is Born        |  | Star is Born             |                      | Star is Born*                      |                                    |                                    |  |

Table 1. Films under analysis in the study – from 1924 to 2009. (\*Depicts films which were disgarded after analysis).

|                                | 1920s   | 1930s    | 1940s    | 1950s    | 1960s    | 1970s   | 1980s     | 1990s     | 2000s     |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Comedy/Satire</b>           | 1 (.8%) |          | 2 (1.6%) | 2 (1.6%) | 1 (.8%)  |         | 11 (8.8%) | 10 (8%)   | 9 (7.25%) |
| <b>Drama</b>                   |         | 3 (2.4%) | 2 (1.6%) | 8 (6.5%) | 2 (1.6%) | 5 (4%)  | 3 (2.4%)  | 12 (9.6%) | 3 (2.4%)  |
| <b>Romance</b>                 |         | 4 (3.2%) | 1 (.8%)  | 2 (1.6%) | 5 (4%)   |         | 2 (1.6%)  | 6 (4.8%)  | 2 (1.6%)  |
| <b>Documentary/History</b>     |         |          | 1 (.8%)  |          |          | 1 (.8%) | 2 (1.6%)  |           |           |
| <b>Musical</b>                 |         | 2 (1.6%) | 1 (.8%)  | 2 (1.6%) | 2 (1.6%) |         |           |           | 1 (.8%)   |
| <b>Biography</b>               |         |          |          | 1 (.8%)  | 2 (1.6%) | 1 (.8%) |           |           |           |
| <b>Action/Thriller/Mystery</b> |         |          | 2 (1.6%) |          | 2 (1.6%) | 1 (.8%) | 1 (.8%)   | 2 (1.6%)  | 1 (.8%)   |
| <b>Science fiction</b>         |         |          |          |          |          | 1 (.8%) |           | 2 (1.6%)  |           |

Table 2. Total number of public relations films/series counted and studied in scholarly works between 1993 and 2010 (Total number 124).

## Discussion

The discussion is based on 14 single films and series, plus three versions of a *Star is Born* and two versions of *Miracle of 34<sup>th</sup> Street* (totalling 17. Nb: the 1973 version of *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* was unable to be sourced). In order to work logically through the decades, movies and series have been analysed, as far as possible, in chronological order, although at times this sequence does vary. Where possible, discussion incorporates references to public relations histories in order to locate synergies and connections within existing literature.

The two earliest films under examination *Publicity Pays* (1924) and *Thirty Day Princess* (1934) focus on the *function* rather than the *role* of public relations. (It should be noted here that *Publicity Pays* could not be sourced for this study but it has been included in order to provide the earliest identified example of public relations tactics in a film. Analysis has been drawn from various online synopses). *Publicity Pays* features the use of stunts by a would-be Hollywood actress who is trying to achieve celebrity status. As such, the film mirrors key activities of Hollywood publicity departments in promoting films of the 1920s. During this decade, Zawawi notes how the major film companies, Paramount, Fox and Selnick, had “ballyhoo” departments which specialised in headline-grabbing stunts (Zawawi 2009.) Almost a decade later the term “ballyhoo” is regularly used in the *Thirty Day Princess* to describe the need to raise funds for the floundering country of Tyronia. In this film’s plot we can see a parallel to Edward Bernays’ description of a real campaign from 1919 when Lithuania moved to become an independent nation. “We were engaged to advise the Lithuanian National Council on ways and means of achieving popular sympathy in and official recognition from the United States,” he explains (1952 p. 80). Both these early films focus on stunts, publicity and promotion and manipulation of the media and others to achieve their ends, with females as key protagonists.

*Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* presents an interesting case study of special events within a corporate environment which changes only subtly over almost fifty years – from its 1947 version to its 1994 version. The film focuses on Director of Special Events, Doris Walker, a single mother who has raised her daughter to believe the truth and, as such, she doesn’t believe in Santa Clause. In both versions of the film, Doris is part of senior management within Macy’s (1947) and Coles (1994) Department Stores. In the 1947 version she is the only woman of the seven executives who meet at Macy’s to discuss the issue of their ‘special’ Kris Kringle; in the latter version she

storms in on a meeting of five male senior management and demands they support Kris Kringle. It is noteworthy that Doris and the Toy Department Manager are given credit for a changed store policy (actually introduced by Kris Kringle) without consulting the advertising department. L'Etang (2004) notes that from 1948 onward public relations emerged from under the umbrella of advertising and with this came struggles over legitimacy and identity. It is noted of the time: "the advertising man is selling a product; our job [PR] is to show the social justice of an enterprise" (Usher in L'Etang, 2004, p. 102). Indeed, this quote resonates with the higher calling of the public relations role in this movie. On a personal level, Doris is identified as divorced in the 1940s version but while she is single in the 1990s version, the divorced status is not raised, reflecting an acceptance of single parenthood by the 1990s. There are aspects of her status raised in both versions: she has a maid in the 1940s version, though not one in the latter version; in the 1990s version she has a large, plush office. The theme of *truth* is significant in both versions of the film, with Doris as truth's greatest champion. In the 1990s film she tells her daughter: "... because you know the truth and truth is one of the most important things in the world". While she is cast as a cynic in both versions, this dissolves as Kris Kringle's legitimacy as Santa evolves and she rallies against the media: "If we stand with Kris, challenge the rumour, the scandal sheets, we'll win," she argues. Certainly this film presents the role of the special events director – and for that matter her love-interest lawyer 'friend' – as the 'good guys'. It presents a strong, single, well-off woman, a part of a company's dominant coalition, successfully raising a well-adjusted daughter, championing the cause of truth. The concept of the role in senior management is discussed further in the next film.

Like *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street, A Star is Born* (1936/1954/1976) deals with an in-house practitioner. This comes as no surprise when we consider that the emergence of the public relations consultancy was still in its infancy at this time. L'Etang notes that in 1948 in the UK only four of the founding 101 IPR organisations were consultancies (2004, p. 103). Meanwhile in the United States in 1945, 455 public relations practitioners were listed in 24 states, with 3,870 employed in business and 1804 employed elsewhere in in-house positions: by these figures then, consultants numbered only seven percent of practitioners (Bernays 1952, p. 137). Matt Liddy – the PR man in this film – is called a "Press Agent" in the 1937 version, a Director of Publicity in 1954 and is non-existent as a PR character in the 1976 version. (Apart

from an occasional oblique reference to Norman “contacting his public relations man” there is no further recognisable public relations role in this final version of the film which and is not part of the ongoing discussion in this paper). Changes to the nomenclature of the public relations role are noted by Bernays who points out that ‘Press Agent’ was used synonymously with Publicist up to 1925 but by 1926 the term was on its way out (1952, p. 93).

Changes to the character of Matt Liddy from the 1930s to the 1950s – in general, an unsympathetic, calculating, hard-edged character in both versions of the film – might be seen as a parallel to developments within the profession during these periods. In 1937 as Press Agent, Liddy has the office adjoining the film studio General Manager but appears rather like a stereotypic journalist, hammering out press releases on a type-writer, interviewing Vicki Lester and announcing loudly that her real name ‘Esther Bloggett’ will have to be changed and a new persona created. He does have clear access to the studio’s General Manager and advises him on how to maximise publicity options on Vicki and Norman’s wedding however the role, and the power of the practitioner, grows considerably in the 1954 version. In this depiction, Liddy is a more significant character, running a large publicity office, staffed by a busy, officious gaggle of female secretaries and assistants who look after costumes, star’s portfolios and so on. L’Etang notes how the post WW2 era saw the public relations role as one of helping the press (2004) – this is certainly borne out in both versions of the film. But she also notes that public relations practitioners sought to distance themselves from the journalist-turned-PR (2004, p132). We see this in the elevated role of Liddy in the latter version of this film. Also in this era, public relations practitioners in the United States were noted to have acquired the status of advisors to management (Goldman 1948; L’Etang, 2004, p. 112). Unlike the earlier version, Liddy’s 1954 department boasts a massive sign which reads ‘Publicity’. Subtly, another sign of the importance of the role is how Liddy sits on the studio General Manager’s desk and lights up a cigar as he advises him about how to manage the Lester-Maine wedding. While Liddy is a far from likeable character – in contrast to both Vicki and Norman and the film Studio boss – he is nevertheless transparent and driven by the film studio needs – unashamedly a corporate man, particularly in the 1950s film.

This representation of the role within the organisation, at senior management level, in the 1950s, is paralleled by Tom Rath’s role in *The Man in the Grey Flannel*

*Suit* (1956) in which Rath abandons his poorly-paid not-for-profit job to work as campaign director for the United Broadcasting Corporation. On the one hand this is an ethical slide for Roth – seen as selling out to capitalism – dealing with what he describes as “double talk” and “a tricky business with lots of tricky angles” as his wife warns him not to “turn into a cheap, slippery yes-man”. Ultimately though he not only chooses an ethical path but he has a long, conversation with the station boss who supports him. Where this film differs from the two previous is the lack of media focus – others up to the 1950s prioritised positive news coverage as the key aim – *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* focuses on the honesty of a pitch to a group of doctors about a mental health campaign. This dramatic film forms part of the dominant genre of film to this point as noted in Table 2.

Step back in time, to the 1930s: the public relations-journalism link is very strong in the 1938 film *Four's a Crowd* in which Robert Kensington Lansford is first introduced by his name and title “Public Relations Counsel” on his office door. This is the earliest use of the term “public relations counsel” in the films under analysis, despite the title being in place since the early 1920’s (Bernays 1952). Bernays notes: “In the year 1922 the distinction between ‘counsel on public relations’ and ‘publicity man’ was being recognized” (1952, p. 92). Lansford’s wealth and importance is denoted by his massive office, how his barber comes to his office to cut his hair, how his secretary buzzes about after him and how he big-notes himself: “heads of 120 corporations seek my advice”. This is also in keeping with L’Etang’s observation of how the role of the consultant, as opposed to the in-house practitioner, was higher up the professional hierarchy (L’Etang 2004, p. 108). When referred to as “a Publicity Man” in the movie, Lansford’s secretary, Miss Christie, corrects: “Mr Lansford is much more than a publicity man”. This is perhaps the biggest breakaway from the pure publicity function or depiction of early films. Lansford’s involvement with a newspaper is as a former editor-manager and he uses this role unashamedly for his own gain. While his work may appear somewhat Machiavellian – he is motivated by redeeming rich clients in the eyes of the public – their philanthropy is aimed a needy causes, so Lansford’s role is somewhat of a corporate Robyn Hood. This reflects Insull’s observations of a decade earlier in which he argues that “it matters not how much capital you may have ... if you haven’t got public opinion, you are bound to fail” (Insull in Bernays, 1928, p. 93)

Though the film *Miracle of the Bells* (1948) positions public relations against a religious backdrop, it is really about the combination of public relations and Hollywood, as press agent Bill Dunnigan seeks to apply pressure to the film studios to release the first film of a deceased young actress. The publicity stunt of having all the bells in the region ring constantly and in unison to demand the film's release, and the consequent 'miracle' of the moving statue, clearly positions the public relations role in a sympathetic 'well-connected' light as it battles and gains victory over the capitalist-driven imperatives of Hollywood. The social justice and social responsibility roles of public relations in this era, as described by L'Etang (2004) are illustrated here. She quotes a Dutch perspective: "Independent from religious and ethical movements, public relations follows its own path which leads to better humanity" (Vegrin in L'Etang 2004, p. 71).

In direct contrast, the 1960s film *Days of Wine and Roses* (1962) presents a seamy side of public relations as Joe Clay's job as a public relations consultant is likened to that of a prostitute and his alcoholism is linked to his inability to claw his way out of a job which constantly challenges his ethical and moral position. While *Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* a decade earlier represents a similar – though not so extreme – ethical dilemma, Clay's whole life becomes subsumed by his 'immoral' work and drink, and his potential for redemption in his new-found relationship is never fulfilled. Clay's internal struggle is mirrored in public relations literature of the early 1950s: "If we are not concerned that are we are benefitting humanity, we are wasting our time" (Rogers in L'Etang 2004, p. 73). Indeed, Clay's work borderlines on that of a pimp, as he arranges female guests for his rich boss and on one occasion likens his work to prostitution.

From the 1970s onward, public relations moves into some news spaces on screen: series begin to appear, the profession features in satires or hard-edged comedies about politics and business, more females appear as consultants. *Yes Minister*, *Yes Prime Minister* (1980-88), *Wag the Dog* (1997), and *In the Loop* (2009) show a trend since the 1980s to bring comedy, satire, politics, international relations and public relations together on screen. Some 24 percent of the movies in Table 2 come from the comedy/satire genre over the three decades 1980s, '90s and 2000s. The depictions have one thing in common – manipulation. In the case of the *Yes (Prime) Minister* series' the manipulation by staffers over the minister; in *Wag the Dog* and *In the Loop* we see American (*Wag the Dog*) and British (*In the Loop*) communications

directors fabricating and spinning political agendas. In both movies and the *Yes (Prime) Minister* series, while the communications professionals are unethical and manipulative, they are motivated to redeem the blundering or foolish behaviour of politicians. However L'Etang (2004) notes how the role of public diplomacy within public relations was to become a major source of criticism. "Public relations is now entrenched in international diplomacy and the promotion of capitalism on a grand scale" (2004, p. 155). Within this genre we once again see the connection between Hollywood and public relations remains strong in *Wag the Dog*.

The BBC series' *Yes (Prime) Minister* ran, collectively, for five series over eight years; such was the popularity of this saga which took the audience inside the world of British politics and the civil service. While much was conducted within this ambit that incorporated public relations functions, neither Sir Humphrey Appleby nor Bernard Wooley (private secretary) bore a public relations title. Conversely, the BBC series *Absolute Power* (2003), is set inside a buzzing, successful and often unethical consultancy in London, with its activities intersecting with politics, the corporate world, international relations, religion, medicine, sport and the arts. The series is possibly the single British one (*Spin City* is an American example) which focuses explicitly on public relations as a profession, using other industries as back-drops. Episodes navigate very close to reality with, for example, oblique references to British politicians and a member of the Bin Laden family attempting to buy the iconic British Airways. Within the short two-season series, agency boss Charles Prentiss is arrested and detained for perjury – yet even this is turned to his advantage. The series comes well after discussion about ethical public relations has become entrenched in the discourse of the profession. The unacceptability of using half-truths, distortions and white lies was identified as undermining the profession in the 1980s (Samson in L'Etang 2004). This "explosion of social responsibility" (L'Etang 2004, p. 176) in the profession occurred ironically as films and series were to raise public relations to new heights of unethical behaviour.

Amongst the most highly satirical films are *Thank you for Smoking* (2005) and *Roger and Me* (1989) which bring roles of corporate lobbyist and corporate minder under scrutiny. *Thank you for Smoking*, based on a book written in 1994, is a fictionalised account of the tobacco industry war, with striking similarities to the documented history. There are stark overlaps between the two – the defensive approach of Big Tobacco (the collective term used to describe the tobacco industry),

the manipulation of the truth and head-on battle with government representatives feature in the film and are also found in chronicled historical documents and events (Pratt, 2001). In his account of the tobacco wars, Pratt points out how the industry used a “risky, if not ethically questionable, see-no-evil, hear-no-evil approach to articulating its position on a public issue” (2001, p. 340). While Hill and Knowlton were hired to develop a public relations program to counter-claim the government health research and warnings (Pratt, 2001), Nick Naylor brings this role of public relations to the screen – in all its satirical glory. Similarly, *Roger and Me* deals with the ‘public be damned’ approach by the corporate world, the single documentary-style film under analysis in this study. This is brazenly exemplified when a spokesman for General Motors – under scrutiny for shutting down operations at the expense of the town of Flint – tells film-maker Michael Moore that a corporation has no responsibility beyond making a profit. Ethical practice and corporate social responsibility are well embedded in corporate agendas by the time this film was made in the 1980s, with many U.S. businesses developing codes of conduct by this decade (Daugherty, 2001). The title of the film encapsulates its irony: Roger Smith is the Chairman of General Motors who evades Moore throughout the film, defying the ‘golden rules’ of accessibility, communication and community consultation.

Less extreme, in their cynical treatment of the public relations consultant is *Sliding Doors* (1998) and *Hancock* (2008). Though Helen Quilley does explain how to get out of trouble by lying – “that’s what we do in PR – bullshit” – in *Sliding Doors*, the role is really a positive portrayal of the profession. As Helen’s life splits in two, and we watch these two parallel existences, Helen’s lucky, positive character is aligned with getting back on her feet in a public relations job, while her unlucky, unfortunate character has to wait tables. The PR role also lands her the good guy, while the waitress remains saddled with the cheating, loser boyfriend. This film brings romance and comedy together with a twist – and public relations is generally presented as an ethical profession, though it is largely a backdrop to the film, rather than a feature. While romance is popular in this latter period, the genre rates consistently high across the 80-plus years of film and television.

On the face of it, *Hancock* is also a positive portrayal of the public relations consultant with a mild-mannered, philanthropic Ray Embrey taking on the deserving case of Hancock, the obnoxious, alcoholic, super-hero who needs redeeming. Embrey’s work with the ‘All Heart’ campaign has aspects of many of our previous

characters – Lansford from *Four's a Crowd*, Dunnigan from *Miracle of the Bells*, Rath from *Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* – as he works with a drug company to achieve third-world product distribution which he describes as “me, trying to change the world”. Embrey’s explanation of public relations is reminiscent of Lansford’s in 1938 but, predicably, more up-to-date: “I’m in PR. You know what that is? We’re image consultants. We change the way people see people, products, companies”. An interesting twist to this film has been described as the “not-so-subtle subliminal message being sent to the military’s target market” via Hancock’s name and character (Hill 2009). In particular, Hill points out: Hancock is the namesake of a “Declaration of Independence signatory, Los Angeles crime-fighter John Hancock”; an eagle is Hancock’s symbol in the film and the name ‘Hancock’ has been used on the helmet of a soldier in a new US army recruitment brochure (Hill 2009). All of these have been used by the US military, Hill argues, to assist in military recruitment. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, this film firmly casts public relations as a strong socially responsible profession.

### **Conclusions**

Though it is not the most filmed profession, public relations has nevertheless found its way into dozens of movies and television series since the 1920s. This research has collated 124 films and series from the past nine decades and drawn on only a handful of these to present a potted history of public relations on screen. It has noted how film and television often reflected the written histories of the time, histories which themselves have often drawn on memory, by way of first-hand interviews and recollections (see for example L’Etang 2004, 2008). Viewing these films brings alive the temporal existence of public relations over the years, as it evolved, developed and changed. The capacity for film to reinforce what we may already know about the industry – its move from press agency to publicity to counsel, its role both in-house and in consultancies, its relationship with truth and morality – are shown time and time again in film and television series both in obvious ways and in more metaphoric representations. Many films and television episodes present several levels of discourse, notably *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* which we see underpinned by questions of truth and morality. And though characters and roles are far from ‘squeaky clean’, many, particularly in the first half of the study period, are well intentioned and working through internal struggles which they eventually win.

As forms of public culture, film and television depictions can enhance our knowledge of professions, society and culture. As such, the collective memory of the public relations profession can only be enhanced by such interpretations and representations. It would appear from this study that many depictions do not depart dramatically from established histories, even if some histories represent depictions that are not complimentary of the profession, such as the tobacco wars. Yet histories in themselves are not absolute: Lamme and Russell (2010) recently published a *New Theory of Public Relations History* and so too has L'Etang (2004, 2008) questioned some of the universally accepted narratives. Thus, it would seem that screen depictions might feed into these evolving histories and, like other forms of popular culture, they can be used not only to enrich our understanding of how the public relations industry grew up but also, through the lessons they portray, help direct where it is going.

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## ABSTRACT (See also Proceedings on PowerPoint)

### ALL THE OLD MEDIA WERE ONCE NEW MEDIA: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES BETWEEN 1950-1999.

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This paper describes a study that is examining how public relations books published between 1950 and 1999 in the United States discuss the role of new media technologies in public relations. A popular topic in contemporary public relations research is how new media technologies (e.g. Twitter, social media networks) are transforming the practice of public relations. The transformation of public relations practices in response to new media technologies is not a new phenomenon. What we call “old media” were once considered new media. At one point, the videotape, television, radio, the fax machine, and even the telegraph were considered new media technologies. This study is examining how public relations writers of the past have examined the relationship between new media technologies and public relations.

Data is being collected through a content analysis of public relations books published between 1950 and 1999. Specifically, the researcher is examining three things. First, how do the authors describe the role of new media technologies within public relations? Second, what types of assumptions about new media technologies are present in the books? Third, what factors do the authors identify as contributing to failure when public relations practitioners utilize new media technologies?

Preliminary findings can be summarized as follows. First, the authors’ approaches to the issue of new media technologies can be categorized as *ignore*, *isolate*, *idolize*, and *integrate*. Authors adopting the *ignore* approach do not discuss new media technologies. Those adopting the *isolate* approach discuss new media technologies but present these technologies as the responsibility of other organizational entities aside public relations. Those adopting the *idolize* approach emphasize that new media technologies are key to public relations success. Advocates of the *idolize* approach stress the importance of investing in and utilizing new media technologies. Authors adopting the *integrate* approach caution against an overemphasis on new media technologies. They argue that not all public relations problems can be solved with new media technologies and that prior to relying on technology, underlying human communication problems need to be addressed.

A second finding is that in some works, there is a strong underlying assumption that public relations practitioners need and demand more data, graphics, and other resources to do their jobs. New media technologies are portrayed as tools practitioners can use to gain access to useful resources. In contrast, other scholars argue that public relations practitioners already have too many resources. Instead, what they require are more useful resources. These critical scholars point out that the presence of new media technologies will not necessarily result in more effective public relations campaigns.

A third finding is that several authors identify technological determinism, ignorance of the information technology paradox, and ignorance of how information technologies differ from information systems as reasons why efforts to utilize new media technologies in public relations sometimes fail.

**A PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL LOOK AT  
WOMEN'S USE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS TO SPUR  
EARLY- TO MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY U.S. SOCIAL CHANGE**

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**Introduction**

The first 50 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are a rich era in terms of media, public relations, and social change. This time frame bridges two different “media ages,” according to Shaw, Hamm & Knott (2000), who classify the years from 1870 to 1930 as the media age of “class,” when “all kinds of subgroups emerged to seek, clarify and defend their own interests,” and from 1930 to 1980 as the age of “mass,” in which radio and then television broadcasts became the dominant communications media for U.S. audiences. In addition, continued industrialization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the growth of public relations in promoting politicians (Streitmatter, 1990) and political causes (Ponder, 1986), including war (Oukrop, 1975), increased the knowledge and use of strategic communication across U.S. society.

Although some scholars (e.g. Penning, 2008) argue that the beginnings of modern public relations occurred in the 1920s, when public opinion concerns and the consumer culture began in the U.S., Lamme and Russell (2010) have documented that the start of public relations efforts on behalf of U.S. educational, nonprofit and reform causes extend back much earlier than this era—as far back as the 1600s, when Harvard used public relations tactics for fundraising—it’s nonetheless true that the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a rich time for public relations efforts of all kinds. Cutlip (1995) called these the “Seedbed Years” of public relations and wrote, “Thus came in these years, councils of social agencies, welfare federations, alliances of charities, community funds, community chests, and new social concepts, all of which, in time, utilized publicity” (pp. 264-265). It was during this era that businesses and politicians were increasingly turning to communications to achieve goals, that muckrakers were exposing social ills and corruption, and that nonprofit and advocacy groups of all kinds were championing causes, seeking to influence public opinion and to bring about significant and lasting social change.

According to Trivedi (2003), “Social movements reflect the attempt of a challenging group within society to affect change and achieve goals” (p. 1). Long-

time social movement scholar Charles Tilly (2008) wrote that social movements include continuous activities that have a base of supporters and that possess “WUNC displays (public enactments of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment)” (p. 200). He believes that political change originates with ordinary people, not elites, and that their public actions, or “performances,” are a central part of that change.

Yet, despite the many public efforts of nonprofit and reform organizations to implement widespread social change, historians have only recently begun to add these types of PR histories to those of 20<sup>th</sup> century businesses, politics, and professional personalities. Therefore, this paper seeks to add to the literature by examining women’s use of PR to drive social change from 1900 through the mid-twentieth century through the lens of social movement and activist theory.

### **Literature Review**

Straughan et al. (2007) have documented women’s use of public relations in a book about the U.S. Progressive era, generally defined as from 1890 to 1920. The book details the campaigns of Alice Paul and the suffragists who ultimately won the right to vote in 1920 (Farmer, 2007); the birth control education efforts of Margaret Sanger (Flamiano, 2007); the work of the U.S. Children’s Bureau to reduce infant and maternal mortality (Straughan, 2007); Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s anti-lynching campaign (Ward-Johnson, 2007); and the campaign to end child labor (Straughan, 2007), among others. In the preface, Gower writes that these women accomplished much of the change they sought “not just by putting out press releases, but by conducting research, by building alliances with other organizations, by enlisting the support of influencers, by distributing a wide variety of communication materials, by listening to those who supported them and those who didn’t, and ... they were doing it all at a time when public relations was supposedly just press agency and publicity” (p. iii). The above named scholars have documented these women’s determination and varied strategic communication activities to change society for the better. Durst (2005) also writes of a women-led Progressive era movement: the day nursery movement to accommodate working mothers.

Other scholars (Trivedi, 2003; Ashley & Olson, 1998; Barnett, 2005) have looked at 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. women and examined how they framed the women’s movement and how the media framed it, at how black women were framed during the struggle for civil rights (Lumsden, 2009), how the advertising industry responded to the women’s movement of the 1960s (Craig, 2003), and how individual women have

contributed to public relations history (Henry, 1997; Zwilling, 2005; Patterson, 2009; Lamme, 2007; Martinelli & Bowen, 2009; and Martinelli & Toth, 2010). All of these studies are valuable. As L'Etang (2008) writes, "PR history needs to encompass individual, organizational and societal levels" (p. 321), but she notes that public relations historians have not as yet been very responsive to the latter. Other scholars (Smith & Ferguson, 2000; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; and Roper, 2005) too have called for more understanding and depth in public relations scholarship about activism.

Fortunately, public relations scholars have begun to broaden our scholarly inquiry in these areas. Heath (1997), for example, has written about activism and described its stages of activity. These stages include some sort of societal strain; mobilization to address the problem; confrontation with those in power regarding the problem; negotiation with them; and, if successful, ultimately resolution, when the activist organization is no longer relevant. He contends that activism is a critical component of democracy, and other relatively recent critical and feminist scholars agree. These researchers include Holtzhausen (2000, 2007), who also argues that activist groups are valuable and the true voices within a democracy, and Demetrious (2006), who examines activism as an area of public relations and helps trace its study through the literature. She notes that public relations scholarship has traditionally portrayed corporations and activists in adversarial roles, with activists to be managed or negotiated.

More recently, Stokes and Rubin (2010) used a case study and rhetorical approach to explore an anti-smoking group's grassroots campaign for a smoke-free restaurant ordinance. The group, GASP, was at odds with tobacco giant Philip Morris and was ultimately victorious against the corporate giant by inoculating audiences against the company's messages and by stressing economic benefits. The authors discount the two-way symmetrical and mixed-motive models and their compromise approach, instead advocating for a broader view of public relations and activists that includes refusal to accommodate.

This paper seeks to further add to the sociological history of public relations scholarship by next reviewing literature from media, public relations, sociology, psychology, and political science that "bridges" media, public relations and activist/social movements, and then using this literature as a theoretical lens by which to view women's previously documented use of public relations to effect U.S. social change.

*“Bridging” Literature: Media and message frames.* In his book *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Gamson (1990) says that “virtually every aspect of a challenger’s experience—recruitment efforts, organization, strategy, and tactics—is affected by a potential or actual media presence” (p. 147). It also affects how the authorities respond to the challengers, he says. “It dramatically changes the scope of a conflict, enlarging the role of the audience and the intervention of potential third parties, who may act as allies, opponents, or brokers” (p. 147). He notes that the frames the media use in defining the conflict are “central in determining their fate.”

In the classic book *The Whole World is Watching*, Gitlin (1980) discusses the tendency for television and other mass media to support existing power structures and frames and thus to marginalize protestors. His work was important because many organizations seek media attention through their acts of protest; however, in terms of enlisting public support, such strategies can backfire. Rojecki (1999) also found evidence of media’s marginalization of antinuclear activists, who were often portrayed as extremists. Gamson & Wolfsfeld (1993) too examined “the ways in which social movements interact with the news media and the outcomes for both parties” (p. 114). They looked at the power and dependency aspects of the activists’ and media’s relationship and the cultural meaning of the frames employed by each.

Benford & Snow’s (2000) sociological exploration of social movement frames demonstrates that such frames are dynamic. They note that in terms of movement frames, “three factors are particularly important: political opportunity structure, cultural opportunities and constraints, and the targeted audiences” (p. 628). These are important, they say, because the political structure can facilitate or constrain frame accessibility; the culture’s repertoire of meanings, myths, narratives, and the like also influence frame construction and acceptance; and sought-after audiences may necessitate the modification of message frames to attract them. Indeed, one study (McCluskey, Stein, Boyle & McLeod, 2009) found that media in less diverse/pluralistic communities were more critical of protests overall, while media in more diverse communities were more apt to quote protesters as sources.

Movement organizers are “thus in a certain sense both consumers of existing cultural meaning and producers of new meanings, which are inevitably framed in terms of organizers’ readings of the public’s existing values and predispositions. Collective action is thus the stage in which new meanings are produced, as well as a text full of old meanings” Yarrow (1992, p.189) explains.

In other message frame research, Reber & Berger (2005) found that, as an activist group, the Sierra Club uses frames not only to influence public policy debate and formation but also “to ‘make meaning’ for members” (p. 192). Jiang & Ni (2007) have also discussed the unique roles of activist groups, as both public communicators and as a public of their targeted organizations or institutions.

*“Bridging” Literature: Audiences or publics.* A classic public relations study that stemmed from an interest in activism is the situational theory of publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This theory includes audiences’ problem recognition, level of involvement, and constraint recognition to determine what level of information seeking or processing they engage in on an issue. The audiences can be segmented into four distinct types: nonpublics, inactive publics, latent publics, and active publics. In an experiment, Werder (2006) found support for the situational theory and also found that goal compatibility was also a predictor of information seeking and of public relations strategy effectiveness.

In their study of women’s actions and attitudes toward social movements in the 1960s, Stewart, Settles & Winter (1998) classified another type of active public. They said that “in addition to political activists, social movements also appear to include ‘engaged observers’—individuals who are attentive to movement writings and activities, and express moral and even financial support them, but who take no other action” (p. 63). Their research built on a long line of political science research that sought to understand who participates in political causes and why, and includes such motivations as rational choice (cost/benefit), socioeconomic status, mobilization by political elites, and personality factors.

Passy & Giugni (2001) also examined participation in social movements and found that being personally recruited by an activist (otherwise described as being “embedded” in social networks, p. 123) and believing one’s potential contribution will be effective are the two best predictors of participation. Jasper (1998) writes that emotions also are important elements of social movement participation, including “shared and reciprocal emotions, the latter being feelings that protestors have toward each other” (p. 397). This work again underscores the importance of relationships between or among activists themselves, not just with the audiences or organizations they hope to engage.

Scholars McVeigh and Smith (1999) found that people who engage in social protest are similar to people who are active in traditional, institutional politics.

However, after examining survey data with multinomial logistic regression, they observed that such factors as education about issues, participation in community organizations, and frequent church attendance further increased the likelihood of social protest.

Related research includes that of volunteerism. Stukas, Snyder & Clary (2008) write that because audiences have the freedom to volunteer or not “means that influence strategies must rely on the art and science of persuasion” (p. 965). They contend that the key to successful social marketing is “knowing how to alert target audiences to benefits that may not be immediately apparent (or available in the short-term)” (p. 965). They take a functional approach to volunteerism that allows for both self- and other-focused motives, rather than emphasizing the more individual approaches of egoism or altruism, as other researchers have done.

In this media age of “space,” Shaw, McCombs, Weaver & Hamm (1999) define the ever-growing potential of digital media for “agenda melding,” which is the process by which people join groups by, in effect, joining their issue agendas via both mediated and interpersonal means. Similar to the agenda-melding concept, is the notion of mesomobilization. Drawn from sociology, notions of micro- and mesomobilization involve the actors involved in movements (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992). Micromobilization actors are defined as pursuing their own goals independently or in loosely structured organizations, while mesomobilization actors coordinate and integrate the micromobilized. Gerhards & Rucht describe how mesomobilization occurred during 1988 protests in Berlin, where activist groups were connected together and achieved “a cultural integration ... by developing a common frame of meaning to interpret the issue at stake” (p. 559). They called this a master frame that connected logically to the various groups’ specific frames.

These studies all could be argued to “bridge” media, public relations, and activist scholarship, examining the stages of activism in society; the activists’ organizational and resultant media messages; the characteristics, feelings and motivations of activists and potential activists; and then returning to studies that involve media and frames. Still, there remains much room for scholarship that intersects activism, social movements, and public relations, perhaps now—in this digital age—more than ever.

However, Demetrious (2006) writes that “the majority of traditional literature and discussion devoted to public relations deals with the subject as a professional

offshoot of corporate business and avoids any rigorous discussion of civil society and public communication” (p. 103) and that public relations literature does not deal adequately with activism. “... it may be concluded that activist discourse and literature does not deal comprehensively with the issue of public communication, nor does public relations literature deal adequately with activism” (p. 107).

Yet, when the goals and means of social movement activists and public relations practitioners are examined, they are remarkably similar. Activists seek positive change through communication, public opinion and attitude change, and legislative and judicial action, while public relations practitioners seek to build mutually beneficial relationships to achieve specific objectives through education, attitude change, and motivating action. Still, PR and social movement “bridging studies” remain rare. This paper seeks to add to this literature by examining women’s social change campaigns of the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century through the lens of the aforementioned social movement and activist literature to discover possible patterns.

### **Method**

To do so, three female-led and –dominated, previously documented 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. campaigns were chosen for this study. These include Alice Paul’s suffragist campaign, 1912 to 1920, via the National Woman’s Party; Margaret Sanger’s birth control education movement, 1911 to 1937, when legal discussion about birth control was legally broadened; and the “second wave of feminism,” led by Betty Friedan and others of the National Organization for Women, formed in 1966, which sought among other things, the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment from 1972 to 1982. Their use of public relations and strategies will be viewed through the lens of current social movement theory and practice.

### **Findings and Discussion**

*Alice Paul and the National Woman’s Party.* Although 19<sup>th</sup> century suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are often remembered as the leaders of the U.S. suffragist movement, Adams & Keene (2008) note that they were all dead by 1906. Alice Paul took on the cause, initiating a number of successful public relations strategies and tactics to help U.S. women secure the right to vote.

Fed up with the more conservative methods of the National American Women Suffrage Association, who were working state by state to gain voting rights, she split from that group and started her own, more aggressive and radical movement as the National Woman’s Party, which sought a federal amendment. She started her efforts

quietly, first by starting a journal called *The Suffragist*, which, in addition to editorials and letters, used visual symbols of liberty and cartoons to reinforce the suffrage message. However, before long, she began staging very public events with the wives and daughters of Washington influentials. Her parade of women down Pennsylvania Avenue was “the first women’s parade in Washington, the first national suffrage parade, and the first organized mass march on Washington” (p. 77), and it was held the day before President Wilson’s inauguration, when the town had swelled with visitors. Naturally the event drew reaction from bystanders and policemen, who failed to clear a path for the protesters. The scuffles that ensued were exaggerated by Paul for the publicity and sympathy it would evoke. She also organized pickets in front of the Wilson White House during the war, burned the president in effigy, and was thrown in jail on several occasions, where she and others employed hunger strikes. She once was even committed to a psychiatric hospital by the authorities to demonstrate her “mental instability” (p. xiv).

Therefore, Paul used verbal and nonverbal means to persuade and engage others to join in the suffrage movement. She used positive messages in terms of assuring cause success, message repetition, community-oriented language by using “we” in rhetoric, and both logical and emotional appeals. She segmented audiences and used specific calls to actions and effective news hooks to gain publicity. She actively practiced issues management by issuing press bulletins, maintaining a clipping book and staying apprised of what newspapers in different parts of the country were saying about the movement.

“Nothing is more vitally important ... than our press work,” she’s quoted as saying in Adams & Keene’s book about her efforts (p. 74). She built relationships with reporters and used opinion leaders to disseminate the movement’s key messages. She also spearheaded displays and speeches in respectable venues like the World’s Fair, organized conventions around the country, had a train and automobile tour, two-way communication through the publication of letters and local special events and speeches. She also used standard colors throughout the movement and its displays: “purple for loyalty, white for purity and gold for life” (Adams & Keene, 2008, p. 81).

As a woman with few political rights, Paul’s use of public displays was all the more unusual and daring. She used the news value of conflict in what social movement scholar Tilly (2008) called “contentious performances.” She also demonstrated his WUNC movement aspects: worthiness of effort, seeming unity of

purpose by women across the country, great numbers of supporters (an image that Paul was careful to maintain, even in the NWP's earliest days, when there weren't many subscribers or active supporters of her group), and commitment to purpose through her and her followers' well documented arrests and hunger strikes. Yet, just as we've noted in the social movement literature, the status quo disparaged the movement. Even when Wilson finally advocated suffrage to Congress as a war measure, he said, "the voices of foolish and intemperate agitators do not reach me at all" (p. xv), and when the amendment was signed into law, Paul's request that her representatives be present was denied.

Gamson writes that crises can help challenging groups, if they have launched their efforts prior to and sustained them up to the point of the crisis. Under these circumstances, Gamson says that "antagonists will be pressed to normalize their relationships with the challenging group" (p. 114), and the challengers will be under pressure to postpone their current demands for future gains.

In the case of suffrage, the NAWSA, which had been working concurrently for the same goal through more traditional lobbying efforts, had publicly distanced themselves from Paul's NWP. Farmer (2007) writes: "NAWSA suffragists continually had to explain that they had nothing to do with the demonstrations carried out by the Woman's Party so as not to be linked together by opponents" (p. 53).

Although it's difficult to say for sure, most scholars who have documented the suffragists of this time imply that without Paul's more obtrusive, visible civil disobedience, the NAWSA would not have been effective in its work. Hawranick, Doris & Dougherty (2008) say, "In her work for suffrage, [Paul] pioneered methods and techniques that were to become standard tools for later successful social movements" (p. 190). In addition, Gamson (1990) writes that multiple challengers to society enhance each other's effectiveness. "More precisely, the existence of a radical challenger in the field helps the cause of the more moderate challenger," he says (p. 112).

Also similar to modern social movement research (McVeigh and Smith, 1999), Paul and her primary supporters were well educated and knowledgeable about institutionalized politics. Paul had three degrees in the areas of sociology and political science, including a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, and she wrote her thesis on women's equality. She also had been raised in and still maintained ties with the Quaker community—similar to the findings that people involved in church

activities were more likely to volunteer for causes. As Passy & Giugni (2001) noted in their work about the effectiveness of asking people directly to participate in movements, Paul often asked others directly for assistance. However, in addition to her savvy techniques and determined efforts to mesomobilize other women's groups and supporters to partner in her suffrage efforts, she was a difficult woman in terms of her personality. She was abrasive and bossy, and Adams & Keene (2008) believe it was difficult even for historians to like her, and thus her belated documented place in history.

As Benford & Snow (2000) discuss in their research, frames are dynamic owing to political, cultural and audience opportunities, and Paul's certainly were as well. "This reminds us that a social movement, by its very nature, is a transitory force," Trivedi writes. "Such a group is often based on the promotion of a single idea or framework, not a sweeping ideology that can evolve to address new concerns" (p. 35).

Trivedi (2003) writes that the suffrage movement had to narrow its demands to the vote instead of equal rights in general "in order to enter traditional politics and create allies within the establishment" (p. 35). Therefore, Paul not only agitated, but she later tied the movement to such well-respected cultural events as the World's Fair, which would attract respectable women from around the country.

Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argue that in addition to a large audience, social movements are propelled by an "emphasis on the visual, and emphasis on entertainment values" (p. 114). Certainly Paul understand the visual and entertainment elements of social influence well: her parades, demonstrations, use of cartoons, automobile tours, use of celebrities, use of color, dramatic portrayals, and such visual displays as hundreds of thousands of signatures and the Liberty Bell with its symbolism were only a few of her activities.

Paul continued her efforts for women's equality after the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed, writing the first Equal Rights Amendment and working for its support.

However, she died in 1977 at age 92 without ever seeing it passed.

*Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement.* Flamiano (2007) argues that most Progressive era reformists operated separately from their radical counterparts, with the former using lobbying and negotiation and the latter, confrontation and civil disobedience. This certainly seemed the case with the NAWSA and the NWP in the

suffrage movement. However, Flamiano says the birth control movement was “a notable exception to this rule” (p. 87).

The movement emerged around 1911 as part of the radical agenda of the Socialist Party. Sanger, who had seen her ill mother have 18 pregnancies during 22 years of marriage and die at the age of 50, trained and worked as a nurse, which further exposed her to great urban poverty and unwanted children who added to families’ economic and emotional hardships. The inequality she saw made her passionate for the Socialist cause. She became a paid lecturer and organizer for the Party, which defined birth control “as a focal point of revolution, a key to women’s political, economic, and sexual liberation, and a free speech issue” (p. 95). The movement was aligned with other Socialist causes, including support for labor unions. However, during World War I, dissent was actively suppressed, and Sanger’s rhetoric changed to support dominant social messages of women’s “maternal duty to care for their husbands, children, and nation” (Buerkle, 2008, p. 27).

Flamiano (2007) wrote of Sanger’s early activism for birth control: “Her public relations campaign included creating and disseminating propaganda, organizing educational outreach, generating press coverage, staging direct actions, and forging strategic alliances with powerful organizations and individuals” (p. 90). She notes that biographer Ellen Chesler also described her bestselling books, widely read journal, conferences, lectures around the world, her network of clinics and that she “built a thriving advocacy movement” (p. 90).

The most radical years seemed to be 1914 to 1916, during which the movement used more radical tactics to gain publicity. The term “birth control” was coined in 1914 because Sanger thought it had broad appeal and was clear and direct. She performed informal research, talking to women about their situations, and used powerful testimonials from these women and those who wrote to her, quoting them in her speeches and printing their letters in her journal, the *Birth Control Review*. She used logical and emotional appeals and also clearly distinguished birth control methods from abortion, to which she was opposed. By 1916, she conducted a national speaking tour.

Just as Paul had been, Sanger also was arrested several times. Her crimes involved distributing birth control information through the mail and in her clinics when such information was deemed immoral under the Comstock Laws. Also like

Paul, Sanger encouraged the formation of local organizations to support and trumpet the cause around the country.

Flamiano writes that although Sanger was depressed about the anti-radical backlash during World War I, she did what was necessary to keep the movement alive. By 1921, she had deliberately shifted her messages and strategies to take advantage of the political and cultural opportunities to reach her audiences that Benford and Snow (2000) discuss in their social movement frames literature. Specifically, the movement's key messages changed from liberating the working class to one of scientific progress—a more acceptable theme for the day.

“The movement had to redefine a taboo topic,” writes Flamiano (p. 118), and it did so, for by 1921 it was a legitimate social issue. In addition, Sanger was forging relationships with the medical community and beginning to lobby Congress. In fact, she moved the organization's headquarters Washington, DC, to have a more visible and influential political presence.

Patterson (2009) writes that one of her more newsworthy actions occurred in 1929 when she called a press conference but appeared with her mouth taped shut because the Boston authorities prohibited her from speaking. She understood the power of that visual image when it appeared in the press, which made people think for themselves about what she could not say.

Also in 1929, say Murphree & Gower (2008), she adopted “a more conservative and professional approach . . . with the establishment of the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control (NCFL) in New York City” (p. 8). “Sanger realized that tactics such as hunger strikes, inflammatory speeches, and deliberate defiance of the laws, along with the consequent court appearances, had garnered media attention. . . . Her earlier radical tactics had put birth control on the media's agenda and hence on the public's. But during the 1930s, she opted for more traditional ways to keep it there” (p. 8).

She started an active publicity bureau, issuing 150 news releases during one two-year period alone. She also used news hooks like Mother's Day to gain attention and public support. The national network CBS lifted its ban on speaking about birth control on the air and gave her a national radio audience in 1935.

Sanger also used repetition of key messages, wrote and disseminated educational pamphlets and gained the support of respectable influentials, many of whom were connected in Washington and publicly endorsed the movement.

Well educated and active politically, Sanger also conforms to more modern studies regarding activists. However, although she was raised as a Catholic, Sanger was not particularly religious—her father was an atheist—but she went on to mobilize religious others in the effort, including the Episcopal Church and other denominations, which supported her efforts to voluntarily limit families. Eventually, she even gained the support of the American Medical Association, who had wanted to “own” the birth control discussion and keep childbirth a medical event.

However, despite growing public support, her Congressional effort fell short, and by 1932, she opted to challenge the issue via the court system instead. The positive outcome of the *U.S. vs. One Package* decision in 1935, which allowed medical personnel to discuss and distribute birth control devices, ultimately dissolved the NCFL in 1937.

Hence, this particular group’s work was concluded, although its ultimate aim, to get Congressional support to change the Comstock laws, was never achieved. (Sanger died in 1966; the laws were finally rewritten in 1971.) According to Murphree & Gower (2008), Heath’s social movement life stage of resolution had occurred. Although the radical efforts of Sanger are thought to have put the birth control topic into the public consciousness, the radical messages were soon abandoned for more traditional language and appeals owing to government pressure on dissidents. This aligns with Siebert’s (1963) research that shows when social systems are under stress—as in times of war—freedom is suppressed. It also conforms to Gitlin (1980), Rojecki (1999) and others’ observations that actions designed for publicity can ultimately backfire when portrayed as extreme by traditional media and elites.

Like Paul, Sanger was a determined woman who wasn’t afraid to be radical or to change methods and key messages for the good of her cause. Ultimately, her organization turned into Planned Parenthood of America, but Sanger had been against the change and ultimately split from the group. She continued to travel around the world and speak about birth control.

Just as Paul had lived in England and learned from the suffragist movements there, Sanger also drew strength from her international ties, fleeing to Europe when she was going to stand trial and learning about birth control methods and practices from other parts of the world to inform her U.S. work. Of course, in today’s digital

age, international communication and education can be obtained nearly instantaneously.

*NOW and the Equal Rights Amendment.* Three years after the publication of Betty Friedan's best-selling 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, which spoke of the "problem that has no name"—that of American women's unsettling dissatisfaction with their housewife role—Friedan, who also was reportedly abrasive and bossy, joined with other women after a Washington, DC, meeting to create the National Organization for Women (NOW). The acronym reflected the urgency of their cause, and by using "for" instead of "of," the name was deliberately inclusive. The women hoped men would join their efforts for equal rights, for they saw women's freedoms as tied to freedoms for men and from their proscribed societal roles as well. They established seven task forces, charged with addressing issues related to employment, legal and political rights, education, women in poverty, the family, women and religion, and the image of women.

Almost immediately the group began pressuring the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to amend regulations to prohibit sex-segregated "help wanted" advertisements and established local chapters—just as Paul and Sanger had done before them. They enlisted the chapters to hold demonstrations around the country to protest these advertisers and also to demonstrate at establishments that denied women admittance or service. They also boycotted the large Colgate-Palmolive company's products, claiming the company maintained rules meant to keep women from top-paying jobs. (These jobs had as a requirement the ability to lift 35 pounds.)

Just as Sanger, the group used Mother's Day as a news hook, but in this case, they called for "Rights, not Roses" during their proclaimed "Freedom for Women's Week." One of NOW's members, African-American Shirley Chisholm, became the first Black member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1968, giving the group some legitimate political presence—or political opportunity structure, per Benford & Snow (2000). (Chisholm went on to be the first American woman to run for President in 1972.) On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment's passage, women around the country march in a Women's Strike for Equality. More than 50,000 women march in Fifth Avenue in New York City, garnering much media attention. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) soon afterward.

NOW took advantage of its changing cultural opportunities and began establishing college women's studies courses, beginning in such forward-thinking states and institutions as California, Michigan, and Princeton University. They also worked through Congress to gain opportunities for women in sports and to redefine rape as a crime of violence.

In 1972 the Senate passed the ERA, and NOW began its state by state ratification campaign, as NAWSA had attempted to do sixty years prior. In 1976, NOW established an Action Center in Washington, DC, just as Paul had established a presence in the nation's capital, and began a concerted campaign for ERA ratification. At its annual convention the next year, the group endorsed a controversial lesbian rights plank. There was dissension within the group, for some feared it would be viewed as too extreme and harm the organization and its efforts. Paul and Sanger also had faced such controversy, but theirs had occurred earlier in their movements, not later. Both had eventually tempered their methods and messages to conform with more mainstream political, cultural, and target audience values and frames.

The following year, in 1977, the group used another tactic of Paul's: a march in Washington, DC. It was estimated that between five and eight thousand people marched in Paul's parade; there were four thousand in NOW's. This also was the last year in which a state ratified the ERA; by this time, 35 of the necessary 38 states had ratified it, and NOW members were confident of passage. They had until 1979 to get the remaining three.

NOW continued its multi-pronged approach to change U.S. society. In 1978, the group held Gay Freedom Day demonstrations around the country, and marched down Constitution Avenue in Washington, DC, to demand an extension to the ERA ratification deadline. A three-year extension was granted—half the requested seven years—and the organization began to boycott states that had not yet ratified the amendment. NOW also continued its work to support women and their reproductive rights, but unlike Sanger, they also supported those who sought abortions—now legal up to the first trimester under the 1972 *Roe vs. Wade* decision.

However, just as during Sanger's efforts, the nation's sentiments began to swing to the right. Although there was not a World War, Americans had been taken hostage in Iran in 1979, the country was in a recession, and President Carter was becoming increasingly unpopular. In 1981, the conservative President Reagan won by a landslide, and the following year, the ERA extension expired, without the necessary

ratification. The Cold War was again heightened, and it seems NOW's political opportunity for social movement frames had passed.

NOW continues today to work for social justice and equality and continues to hope, as did Paul, that the ERA may some day become law. But there's no doubt that the ERA defeat was a blow to the organization. Unlike Sanger, who could claim victory with the lawsuit outcome, NOW's defeat was painfully public. Perhaps the organization became too diffuse in its activities or was perceived as too extreme by mainstream America. The group also violated Tilly's WUNC displays, specifically that of unity, with its public split over lesbian support.

However, the group also made lasting and real changes in terms of Congressional support for job and educational equality, as well as bringing pressure on companies and organizations to alter the stereotypical images of women in advertising and popular culture and in strengthening laws dealing with violence against women. Perhaps NOW's efforts had indeed reached the resolution stage, even if its ultimate goal—as with Paul's ERA dream and Sanger's Comstock law changes—was not achieved.

This paper examined three different social movements led and dominated by women in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to successful public relations strategies and tactics, other elements contributed to their successes and failures. These included times of social pressure—during war and economic stress—when freedoms become more constricted and social dissent less tolerated; disparate groups, some more moderate and some more extreme, working simultaneously on an issue to further the cause; recognition of political and cultural opportunities and the framing of movement messages accordingly for desired target audiences; broad mesomobilization strategies; and, in these cases, strong, determined—even abrasive—leaders who personally asked and demanded much of others but also of themselves. All were well educated and experts in their respective causes, and all understood the power of the media to help break down taboo issues and of local organizations to maintain enthusiasm, personal relationships, and to more effectively spread the cause to those less pluralistic areas, where social protest is not as tolerated.

This brief review illustrates that regardless of a group's media or communications or organizing savvy, the political, economic, societal, and technological (PEST analysis) factors in a society at a given time bear not only on the

success of public relations campaigns, but also on the success of larger social movements.

### **Limitations**

This paper examines only three of the many women-led social movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, two of the movements occurred early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the latter built on the earlier ones and started nearly 50 years later. Examining other movements, especially those led by minorities or those that were not at all successful, would lend greater depth to this work. Collectively, this kind of information could be documented and classified, much as Lamme and Russell (2010) have summarized the use of public relations tactics in their recent chronicle of public relations history through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition, the analysis in this paper is being reviewed in post hoc fashion, comparing the literature of past scholars in a way that the original studies had not intended. Nothing is being tested here; observations are simply being made regarding common attributes in public relations history and social movement literature. Therefore, the method could be criticized as being subjective and not particularly rigorous.

However, this paper does make a contribution in that it begins to explore the literature that bridges public relations, media, and social movements and uses previously documented PR history in new ways to expand the intersection of public relations and activism.

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# **THE HISTORY OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA: THE CASE FOR “RELATIVELY UNIVERSAL” PRINCIPLES.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the intellectual history of applied ethics in Russia and the United States of America, looking at the contributions of 20 influential philosophers and writers, from Confucius to Etziona. We argue that over the centuries, the fundamental moral unit in applied ethics has shifted from a focus on the individual to a focus on relationships—families, collectives, corporations, society and the environment. We demonstrate this point by presenting the advice these philosophers and writers would offer about a fictional case of media bribery.

We argue there is an important distinction between applied ethics and professional ethics. Applied ethics focuses on individuals and relationships in all walks of life. Professional ethics, a subfield within applied ethics, focuses on standards established by a certain segment of society—for example, doctors, lawyers and professional communicators.

We compare and contrast the historical development of applied and professional ethics in public relations in both the USA and Russia by examining ethical concepts and principles from philosophers closely associated with those countries. From our analysis, we conclude there are “relatively universal” principles that govern professional public relations practitioners not only over time but also over geographic space—principles that have governed practitioners in this field not only over the centuries but also currently all over the world--such as seeking the truth, doing no harm to the innocent, being fair and treating others as you wish to be treated.

## **The ideas of 20 philosophers and writers will be used to identify what is morally permitted and prohibited about media bribery.**

We will discuss in this paper fundamental philosophical concepts and ethical principles that have been developed over two thousand years—from Confucius and Aristotle in the third and fourth centuries Before the Current Era (B.C.E.) to Habermas and Etziona in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. After a brief description of the main ideas of 20 philosophers and writers, we will identify what is morally permitted and morally prohibited in a fictional media bribery case.

The intellectual history of applied and professional ethics involves all cultures, goes from antiquity to modern times and considers topics from what constitutes a good person, to what constitutes a just society. Over the centuries, the fundamental moral unit in applied ethics has shifted from a focus on the individual to a focus on relationships—families, collectives, society and the environment.<sup>i</sup>

There is an important distinction between applied ethics and professional ethics. Applied ethics focuses on individuals and relationships in all walks of life. Professional ethics, a subfield within applied ethics, focuses on standards established by a certain segment of society—for example, doctors, lawyers or professional communicators.<sup>ii</sup> The distinction can be seen clearly when someone justifies ethical

decision: a professional will refer to principles established and accepted by society as appropriate norms. The concepts of justice, equality and pluralism are at a social level. The principles of doing no harm, seeking the truth and treating others as you wish to be treated are at the individual level.

There is a significant overlap between individual and professional ethics. As an individual enters a profession, that person often feels a clear distinction between morals “on the job” and “off the job.” As that person matures and advances in a profession, often the tension between individual and professional ethics decreases and the person learns to “walk the talk” of both personal and professional ethics because those two aspects of a person’s life have blended together.<sup>iii</sup> But the tension between individual and professional ethics never ceases, because as a person wrestles with ethical decisions, both individual and professional principles are considered.

**Over the centuries, applied ethics has shifted from a focus on the individual to a focus on relationships, institutions and society.**

In the following section are descriptions of the key concepts and principles of philosophers and writers--wise men and women--presented chronologically and all too briefly. But the brief descriptions are on purpose. They should allow you to see a trend in the sequence of ideas: the intellectual history of applied ethics has shifted over the centuries from a focus on the individual’s character traits to a focus on relationships and social institutions—to, most recently, a renewed emphasis on virtue ethics.

As a rock skipping over water, the reader is asked to glance at the key points of these major thinkers and to recognize trends in the development of applied ethics. One trend is that the fundamental moral unit has gone from a unit of one to a unit of many.<sup>iv</sup> The unit of analysis goes from the individual, to interpersonal, to small group...to organization...to society...to the eco-sphere...and beyond. The fundamental moral unit is not the impartial judge outside the system or necessarily a single moral actor. Rather, it's the center around which the ethical concept or principle revolves. Similar to the notion of atomic structures or building blocks, fundamental moral unit in applied ethics starts with the human (or sentient being) and works outward to its relationships with others and on to networks of relationships, eco-systems and Mother Earth notions. Aristotle said a good man was concerned about community and his environment, but his unit of analysis was the individual. Aristotle’s virtue ethics are not group-centric or relationship-based but are focused on how a person—a unit of one--can best live a flourishing life.

The intellectual history of applied ethics is coming full circle, especially in the Western canon that dominates the management of most modern organizations and the professional communicators who work for them. Applied ethics has gone from an initial focus on individual-based virtues through phases of more and more emphasis on calculating consequences to others, building relationships and establishing just social institutions to, most recently, a renewed interest in virtue ethics--not only character education at the individual level but also public policies (for example, communism, socialism and communitarianism and their respective emphases on the character of a good society).

No intellectual history is linear; most occur in phases—with thought leaders in each generation keeping good ideas from the past, creating new concepts and providing leadership to others by example and by their writings.

In chronological order, here are brief descriptions of the key ethical concepts and principles of 20 influential men and women. Within each description are key

definitions, assumptions, strengths and weaknesses, with implications for professional communicators.

This menu of ethical principles and concepts is not presented with the notion that these ideas should be “cherry picked”—that the reader is to pick and chose the ones that are most appealing. It would be wrong to claim that the right one is right only because it’s right in the eyes of the beholder: that would be subjectivism and a weak argument for making an ethical choice. Rather, the presentation below is made so that strengths and weaknesses of the various principles and concepts can be examined. None of the following ideas should be applied without understanding its strengths and weaknesses. Not only the selection of the best choice should be justified but also the rejection of the next-to-best choice should be justified by examining the assumptions, strengths and weaknesses of these important principles and concepts.

**Confucius** (551-479 B.C.E.) emphasized harmony and equilibrium in daily living.<sup>v</sup> In his book, “The Doctrine of the Mean,” Confucius wrote “the superior man cultivates friendly harmony without being weak... He stands erect in the middle, without inclining to either side.” Confucius explained that the superior person avoids extremes and acts harmoniously. The strength of Confucianism is its emphasis on virtues. A weakness of Confucianism is that it does not fit the Western model of an ethical theory: it does not seek to explain or predict ethical decision-making. Confucius profoundly affected Asian intellectual ideas about right and wrong and the traits of a good person. For professional communicators, avoiding excesses by following the Golden Mean, living harmoniously, and seeking the truth are practical guidelines. Confucius and Aristotle are both given credit for what is known as the Golden Mean.

**Aristotle** (384-330 B.C.E.) said virtuous people follow the Golden Mean by avoiding extremes when making ethical choices.<sup>vi</sup> Aristotle did not deny the validity of extremes but said good person should exhibit moderation over a lifetime. Aristotle said the character of a person should be judged not for a single act but for a lifetime of actions. He said virtuous people are good over time and are good in a variety of circumstances. Aristotle said it was not easy to be virtuous because it requires habitually doing good deeds. A weakness of Aristotle’s concepts is that they focus on the individual as the primary unit of analysis. Although Aristotle acknowledged that a virtuous person is concerned about and involved in the community, but that relationship is not central to his philosophy. Rather Aristotle’s ethics focused on the individual—and, as originally proposed by Aristotle, it focused on only men in the ruling class—not women nor slaves, both of whom were considered unable to make moral decisions. Aristotle’s notion of the Golden Mean and the importance of virtues strongly influenced the development of Western philosophy.

**Hobbes** (1588-1679) was one of the first philosophers to discuss rights based on Natural Law—that people have a purpose in life, and that purpose is to be selfish.<sup>vii</sup> He said people were born selfish and stay selfish unless they are forced to do otherwise by other equally selfish people. He said people can’t be trusted to be good on their own; that the only way they would agree to be good if there were rules of engagement among people—social contracts—that protected everyone from the self behavior of others and ensured civil behavior. The undeniable selfish behaviors described by Hobbes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is called in the 21<sup>st</sup> century psychological egoism—a flawed concept criticized for its purely selfish assumptions about human behavior. Nevertheless, Hobbes’ notion of the social contract as the basis for civil society is important for several reasons: it was not based on religious assumptions

about divine commands; it assumed people had a natural right to act as they do, and that social contracts not only allow certain behaviors but also protect people and society from the selfish natures of humans. For professional communicators, Hobbes's notion of a social contract highlights the importance of identifying and explaining underlying assumptions within civil and uncivil relationships so that all parties understand. Professional communicators should recognize that they are engaged often in designing and implementing communication campaigns and programs aimed at maintaining, changing and strengthening social contracts.

**Descartes** (1596-1650), like Hobbes, rejected divine commands as a source for ethical decision-making and focused instead on rational ways to make sense of the world and to ethical decisions.<sup>viii</sup> Descartes argued that free will allow humans to be independent of god's will. Regarded by many as the founder of modern science, Descartes recommended that we test in various ways our sense-based data to make sure the data were accurate because we cannot always trust our senses. He said all we can be sure of is that we have doubts and thoughts; hence his famous saying, "I doubt, therefore, I think; therefore I am." The strength of Descartes is his insistence on double checking what we think we know by gathering a variety of data in a variety of ways to confirm hypotheses about what we think is happening in the world. The weakness in his approach, according to theists and spiritualist, is that rationalism ignored the spiritual realm. The importance of Descartes rationalism for professional communicators is its emphasis on reliable data, logic and reason as a basis for ethical decision-making.

**Kant** (1724-1804) presented a systematic theory of ethical decision-making and argued that morality was independent of divine commands.<sup>ix</sup> A Christian, Kant argued that logically a god was not necessary for a person to be good. He said rationality was more important than emotion. Contradicting Hobbes, Kant said a good person was concerned for others not selfishly but because it's the right thing to do--it's a perfect duty—what he called a Categorical Imperative. Kant's notion of the Categorical Imperative is that a person who makes right decisions would act in such a way that the action could become a universal law for all others to follow at all times and in all circumstances. A related Categorical Imperative, Kant said, was to always treat others not as a means but as an end, because all human life is precious. Kant's Categorical Imperative, in other words, is very much like the Golden Rule: treat others as you wish to be treated. A modern day metaphor for Kant's Categorical Imperative is called Front Page analogy: don't do anything you would not feel comfortable seeing on the front page of all the major newspapers in the world. The weakness of Kant's systematic approach to applied ethics is that it assumes people are rational and feel duty-bound in their actions; when, many would argue, there are other motivations beyond duty to others, such as primal instincts to survive (unless such acts are described as duty-to-self, which is a variation of psychological egoism). The importance of Kantian ethics for professional communicators is its focus on duties and obligations. Professional communicators have serious duties not only to supervisors, employers and clients but also to professional colleagues and the publics they serve.

**Mill** (1806-1873) was one of the first philosophers to move away from virtue and duty-based ethics and to focus on the consequences of people's actions.<sup>x</sup> Mill argued that a good act is one that creates the greatest good for the greatest number; and that truth and accurate information are keys to making good decisions and leading a good life. He said right actions could be identified by calculating the consequence of possible actions, weighing potential outcomes, and then deciding. He said the

question should be: What is the usefulness or utility of an action? Such a utilitarian approach to ethics focused on individual happiness and defined that happiness as the ability to pursue a life of one's own choosing. He argued that to pursue a good life, a person needed as much information as possible to make the best possible decisions. Consequently, he argued, people have a right to a free press capable of providing them with as much information as possible. The strengths of utilitarianism is that it is fairly straight-forward, assuming that the "greatest good" can be defined.

Utilitarianism also does not involve divine commands. A significant aspect of utilitarianism is that the unit of analysis shifts from the individual to the community via individual's acknowledgement of consequences for others. The weakness of utilitarianism is that it assumes people are rational (capable of calculating consequences) and good in their intentions. It also assumes a certain basic level of civility exist in society: calculating the greatest good for the greatest number is not easy in a corrupt society. The importance of utilitarianism for professional communicators is that it supports notion of freedom of press, speech and assembly.

**Hegel** (1770-1831) rejected a "god's eye view" of morality that viewed ethical principles and coming from "above" humans and, instead, argued that morality was grounded in reality and dependent on current trends reflecting historical patterns and conditions.<sup>xi</sup> He argued that bad acts are wrong because they essentially deny someone else's rights. He said punishing a criminal was evidence that the other person's original rights had been violated. Hegel said large numbers of individuals denied certain rights could be considered a class and the state had an obligation to punish wrong doers and to correct conditions that systematically denied a class of people their rights. For example, Hegel said, a capitalist economy created conditions that caught a class of individuals—worker who owned no property--in a perpetual cycle of poverty. Hegel argued that the state had an obligation to protect these individuals. Hegel's ideas highlighted the role of civil society in protecting the rights of the less fortunate.

**Marx** (1818-1883) built upon Hegel's notions by arguing that capitalist producers systematically deny workers' rights and that, therefore, the state was justified in socializing and controlling basic components of the economy.<sup>xii</sup> Marx argued that human development—including conscience and morality--was dependent in large part upon economic conditions. Therefore, he said, the state had an obligation to control and make economic condition as good as possible. Marx was one of the first philosophers to argue that human conscience and behavior are dependent in part on social conditions. However, Marx gave insufficient attention to the value of individuals; his focus was on classes of people and how they were affected by economic conditions. Professional communicators are using derivatives of Marxist concepts when they conduct target audience analyses and market segmentations.

**Dostoevsky** (1821-1881) wrote novels and short stories that focused on the conflicts within a person over good and evil.<sup>xiii</sup> Dostoevsky demonstrated in his writings that evil comes from within and without, and how an individual copes with evil defines that person. Dostoevsky would agree with Aristotle that there is no virtue without temptation. Dostoevsky argued that how a person reconciles the internal conflict between good and evil determines that person's character. Dostoevsky did not think it possible for the individual or for society to ever resolve the tension between good and evil. Importance of Dostoevsky's concepts for communication professionals is his emphasis on human psychology, with a recognition that deciding what is right and what is wrong and what constitutes a good life are questions the define the human condition.

**Tolstoy** (1828-1910) in his various novels and short stories often made the case that violence is never an ethical solution.<sup>xiv</sup> Tolstoy assumed that goodness is within each individual; that mutual respect—indeed, love of others (agape)—is essential in a good society; and that being close to nature and avoiding materialism is good for the soul and makes for a better society. Tolstoy writings illustrated that it is a constant struggle for most individuals to replace selfishness with altruism and the desire to make life better for everyone. Tolstoy offers insights about human relationships and the value of engaging in dialogue to resolve conflicts.

**Nietzsche** (1844-1900) said clearly there are no moral laws, only complexity and paradoxes. An atheist, Nietzsche may be considered the first existentialist.<sup>xv</sup> Nietzsche, as ethical relativist, argued that all moral principles were derived from a society's dominant ideology and religion. Nietzsche emphasized being critical of all ethical standards and using a variety of ethical principles and concepts. He may be considered not only the first existentialist but also the first philosopher to argue for global pluralism—the integration of a variety of ethical principles and concepts found useful to societies around the world.

**Solovyov** (1853-1900) said each person has a right and obligation to experience love, to create kindness and to show compassion for others.<sup>xvi</sup> This right is fundamental for a moral society, Solovyov said. He suggested that a person first needs to overcome egoism to be in a position to experience love. Solovyov key insight is that the ethics of the heart are just as important as the ethics of the mind; indeed, he argued, loving is more important than being rational when making ethical decision. The strength of Solovyov's emphasis on love is its appeal to values that cut across all societies and are enduring over time: he was a universalist. The weakness of Solovyov's concepts is that they are more ideal than practical: they offered no guidelines for internally dealing with conflicting values; or externally, for dealing with other moral actors with conflicting values, principles and loyalties.

**Dewey** (1860-1950) is often described as a pragmatist.<sup>xvii</sup> He said the criteria for a good decision should be based on the context. The key question, Dewey said: Does this value judgment help me solve my problem? He recommended reflecting upon an ethical decision and revising assumptions and judgments in light of the consequences of this “thought experiment.” Dewey said “reflective intelligence” was the fundamental for virtues. The greater the problem recognition ability of the individual and the greater the uncertainties and risks a person faced, the greater requirements for reflective intelligence. The importance of Dewey's pragmatism for professional communicators is its emphasis on communication and dialogue to improve ethical decision-making; its ability to predict and explain when people will engage in information-seeking behaviors and demonstrate reflective intelligence.

**Gandhi** (1869-1948) argued for nonviolent direct confrontation as the best approach to making social changes.<sup>xviii</sup> He practiced and helped develop the Indian philosophy of Satyagraha that says evil should be confronted and dealt with nonviolently. Gandhi said if you see something that is not right, you should try to fix it. He encouraged nonviolent civil disobedience (breaking the law when the law causes more harm than good; but being willing to suffer the consequences of breaking the law—such as going to jail). He recommended nonviolence; but he was not afraid of violence and did not want Satyagraha used as a shield for cowardice. Gandhi became a model for civil rights demonstrations around the world. He pursued truth, he said, because truth was god; god was truth.

**Sartre** (1905-1980) is considered the father of existentialism—the notion that there is no meaning to the universe except the meaning experienced by an individual by being

alive; that without a person's being aware of his or her existence, there is no meaning in the world.<sup>xix</sup> Sartre argued that a person has the freedom to assign a unique meaning to the universe by being as authentic as possible. He said each person's unique meaning becomes most clear when confronted with an existential choice to live or die. But Sartre argued that all decisions—not just life and death decisions—presented a person with opportunities to be authentic and intellectually honest. The virtuous existentialist, Sartre said, is not alienated from the world but comes to grips with the apparent meaninglessness of the universe and gives the world meaning by living an honest, authentic life. He said a person is in self denial to suggest that “this is the way I am, and I cannot change.” Sartre argued that each individual is continuously responsible for shaping the emerging self.

**Rawls** (1921-2002) argued that goods and services—including justice—are limited because there are so many people with conflicting demands and claims; therefore, justice needs to be distributed fairly.<sup>xx</sup> According to Rawls, justice should be blind to social class, race, gender, sexual orientation; everyone's basic human traits—characteristics you are born with—should be considered equal when a person's action are judged from behind a “Veil of Ignorance.” Rawl's first principle: maximize basic liberty for all by properly managing the institutions, systems and organizations of society. His second principle, assuming the first one is operational, is that inequalities in social goods, including justice, are okay if they act to benefit the least advantaged in society. The strength of Rawls' principles is that they acknowledge the role of organizations and systems in modern society—they acknowledge systemic biases—but claim those biases, if they are just, must help the weakest in society. The importance of Rawls “Veil of Ignorance” concepts to communication professionals is that it can be used to make decisions about how editorial resources can best be used. For example, within limits of what can be covered in a particular campaign or particular medium, the question becomes what topics and issues should be covered. Rawls would argue that the emphasis should be on articles dealing with the weakest in society.

**Habermas** (1929- ), following World War II and the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, said moral philosophy has failed to encourage a thorough public discussion of what was right and what was wrong and what constituted a good life—the essential questions of applied ethics.<sup>xxi</sup> He argued that why we do what we do requires justification and a space within which that can occur—at home, certainly, in our private lives among family and friends; but also in public spheres—from coffee shops to mass media, with other members of the greater community. To that end, institutions in the modern world need to be structured to facilitate more and better public dialogue so we can justify our claims of truth; the rightness of our treatment of others; our authenticity; the consequences and fairness of our choices of means to our ends; and our goals in life. The strength of “public space” notions of Habermas is not only its emphasis on private but also public justification of ethical decisions. The weakness of Habermas is that he assumes people can be meaningfully engaged by public dialogues. The importance for professional communicators of the “public sphere” of Habermas: journalists, public relations, advertising and marketing specialists, government officials—all associated with the mass media—have a moral responsibility to facilitate not one-way asynchronous communication but genuine two-way synchronous communication in public spheres

**Derrida** (1930-2006) argued that universal justice is impossible to achieve in our lifetimes, so we must constantly be deconstructing and justifying our decisions.<sup>xxii</sup> He said we need to recognize that the uniqueness of the moment includes our perception

of the past and our perception of the future. He said our perception of our self is distinct from our perception of what we think others think of us, so we need to constantly deconstruct these two self-images and have unconditional openness not only to ourselves but also to others, including animals. Derrida recommended that we look for paradoxes and examine them. He said we should recognize that the uniqueness of each moment carries with it our perceptions of the past and future. The importance for professional communicator: it encourages the deconstruction not only of the message but also the sender and receiver.

**Anscombe** (1919-2001) said that postmodern relativism needed to be offset with a return to virtue ethics and its emphasis on character.<sup>xxiii</sup> She acknowledged the wisdom of Aristotle's virtue ethics, especially the Golden Mean with its emphasis on avoiding extremes by seeking not the easy answers to ethical problems but the difficult right choice that a good person makes. The weakness of virtue ethics is that it focuses again on the uniqueness of the individual. The importance of virtue ethics for professional communicators is that it supports the notion of moral leadership. Often professional communicators help leaders of organizations and communities present and explain their vision and actions.

**Gilligan** (1936- ) challenges male-centered models of moral development and argues that the virtue of caring for others is demonstrated more by women than men: in fact, she argues, caring for others is the hallmark of a woman's approach to ethics.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Gilligan said men and women often will arrive at similar decisions along different paths—with the women more focused on the fairness of relationships and the men more focused on the rules of engagement. Gilligan's feminist approach assumes all relationships are about power—the ability to influence—and that men and women exercise power in different ways. The strengths of the virtue of caring approach to applied ethics is that it highlights differences between men and women when making ethical decisions. The weakness is that it does not fully explain how and why many men and women share similar traits. The importance for professional communicators of the ethics of care: when addressing both men and women, focus on both fairness of relationships and rules of engagement and highlight common ground. Note: treating others as you wish others to treat you—the Golden Rule--addresses both fairness of relationships and rules of engagement.

**Etzioni** (1929 - ) argues that institutions, including those involved with the media, have a moral obligation to facilitate public dialogue about important issues of the day that respects both individual autonomy and the common good; proposes a New Golden Rule—to expect social norms to respect personal autonomy and to respect and treat social norms as those social norms respect and treat your personal autonomy.<sup>xxv</sup> The strengths of Etzioni's New Golden Rule: it focuses on building community values. The weakness is that it assumes a certain degree of civility and viability of common ground among conflicting groups. The importance for professional communicators is that it emphasizes that the quality of community discussions is critical to community and personal development.

### **What would these wise men and women say about media bribery--what is morally permitted and prohibited?**

The following case is based on fact but has been fictionalized to protect the innocent. The original case was presented by a professional communicator from Africa at a workshop conducted by Prof. McElreath in the summer of 2004. But media bribery occurs around the world; so, unfortunately, this case may be consider

representative of the type of media bribery that occurs all too often in all parts of the world.

**The public relations director** for the region’s largest concrete construction company with major contracts to build highways throughout the nation **sends a press release and invitation to local reporters to attend a special event** to be held at the company’s headquarters **to announce a new public communication campaign to reduce highway accidents** especially in highway repair/construction zones.

**A reporter calls him on the phone and says he will only come to the event and write a news story about the new campaign if he is paid “something.”**

In other words, **the reporter wants a bribe.**

**The public relations director** listens to the reporter but makes no commitment to pay anything.

Instead, when he gets off the phone, he **calls the publisher of the reporter’s newspaper and tells him of the reporter’s attempted bribery.** The public relations director has known the publisher for years, not as close friends, but as business associates who see each other at various community events and professional gatherings. **He reminds the publisher of the extensive amount of advertising the company has done with the newspaper.** He restates what’s in the press release and encourages the publisher to consider sending another reporter to cover the event.

According to the wise men and women discussed in this paper, here are guidelines for determining what is morally permitted and prohibited regarding media bribery:

| <b>What wise men and women over the years might claim is morally permitted and morally prohibited about media bribery.</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Wise person</b>   | <b>What is morally permitted?</b>   | <b>What is morally prohibited?</b>  |
| Confucius  | To act harmoniously and to respect the other person’s dignity.  | To yield the others seeking extreme actions, especially if those actions harm innocent people; to do the biddings of others without thinking through the consequences.                |
| Aristotle  | To seek the Golden Mean by avoiding extreme positions; to discuss the matter with others, including all the parties involved; to figure out an appropriate middle ground where the request for the under-the-table payment may become more transparent and no longer a bribe. | To take an extreme position—either accepting the bribe without question or adamantly refusing the bribe without considering the motives of others or the consequences to all parties. |
| Hobbes   | To accept what is natural and work within the social contract; and, if  | To violate the social contract; furthermore, if that social contract  |

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|            | bribery is the norm, then either learn to live with it or work to change the social contract.   | permits bribery, not paying the bribe is morally prohibited.  |
| Descartes  | To be rational: gather facts; conduct an experiment if possible to find out if bribery is worth it; conduct a cost-benefit analysis for all parties; and then determine what is best.                     | To avoid looking at the facts as they are; to avoid evidence that might justify bribery in this case; or to avoid evidence that suggests bribery ultimately does more harm than good.                     |
| Kant       | To tell the truth; to treat others as you wish to be treated; and not to use others as a means to an end without that person's sincere permission.  | To shade the truth; to lie; to use someone else as a means to an end without that person's sincere and expressed permission.  |
| Mill       | To calculate the overall good to society of this act of media bribery and to act accordingly; to not necessarily reject short-term bribery unless the overall impact on society is negative.              | To ignore the consequences of media bribery, especially the long-term negative impact of media bribery on truthful and fulsome flow of information essential for others to experience a flourishing life. |
| Hegel      | To avoid bribery if the effect is to deny others their rights to communicate freely (the PR director and publisher) and to receive useful information (the readers of the newspaper).                     | To engage in bribery if the effect is to deny others their rights to communicate freely (the PR director and publisher) and to receive useful information (the readers of the newspaper).                 |
| Marx       | To engage in media bribery if the economic exchange is fair to all parties involved, most especially the working class.   | To engage in media bribery if the economic exchange is unfair to all parties involved, most especially the working class.   |
| Dostoevsky | To recognize that media bribery is one example of how people wrestle within themselves with the forces of good and evil; and that how they deal with media bribery is a reflection of that person's soul. | To not think about the inner conflict caused by a bribe—should I or should I not engage in this act—or to not think about the harm this act can cause others.   |
| Tolstoy    | To not think the person requesting the bribe is necessarily evil; to not treat the people involved in media bribery as evil but to address their needs individually.                                      | To threaten or engage in violence as part of a media bribery scheme.  |
| Nietzsche  | There are no moral laws against media bribery; so what is permitted depends on the society within which the media bribery occurs.   | There are no moral laws against media bribery; so what is prohibited depends on the society within which the media bribery occurs.  |

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| Solovyoy | To be compassionate to all parties, especially the most blameworthy.   | To react with disgust or hatred toward anyone.  |
| Dewey    | To be practical: to seek additional information and to reflect on consequences before you act.   | To be impractical and ignore the consequences of the bribe.   |
| Gandhi   | To confront the wrong doer and to persistently challenge that person or institution to become better.  | To engage in violent confrontation or to avoid prosecution if a law has been violated as part of an act of civil disobedience.                |
| Sartre   | To come to grips with the bribery and its implications; to recognize that whatever decisions are made, they will shape how you experience life.  | To deny personal responsibility and hide behind disillusionment and alienation; to accept the status quo as a permanent condition.            |
| Rawls    | To try to make organizations, institutions and society as fair and transparent as possible in its use of scarce resources; and, when necessary, to discriminate in distribution of resources so that the weakest in society benefit. | To judge others not only for their actions, such as requesting a bribe but also for their age, sex, ethnicity or other basic characteristics. |
| Habermas | To recognize power relationships that are involved   | To corrupt the channels of public discussion with bribery but also other manipulations  |
| Dirreda  | To deconstruct past, current and future actions and perceptions to recognize why this unique decision was/is being made.   | To disregard people's motives—including your own--and the consequences of everyone's actions.   |
| Anscombe | Not to judge a person by a single act but over time; to practice right and good acts even if they don't come naturally, to make good acts habitual.  | To blame your actions on others and the circumstances; to not take responsibility for your own actions.                                       |
| Gilligan | To nurture the reporter and publisher; to elicit the best.   | To not care about or elicit the best from others but to treat others as a means to an end.  |
| Etzione  | To respect the dignity of the reporter even though the reporter was wrong; to help establish a social contract that respects individual rights and well as institutional integrity—  | To respect social norms that do not respect you as an individual.   |

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|--|----------------------------|--|
|  | Etzioni's new Golden Mean. |  |
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We make the assumption that the public relations director in this case, as an Ideal Virtuous Person, would consider the above ideas, among others, when making a decision about how to act in this case. Integrating and synthesizing the best of the above ideas, the Ideal Virtuous Public Relations Director in this case would demonstrate understanding if not compassion for the reporter requesting the bribe, would recognize media bribery as a slippery slope that might lead to more problems, would work to make relationships among the moral actors more transparent and would encourage public discussions about media bribery so as to lessen its negative impact on individuals and society.

We would point out that the “old” ethical concepts and principles presented above were "global" in their day and continue to be applicable to professional communicators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, Kant's Categorical Imperative, first proposed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, can be interpreted as a 21<sup>st</sup> century requirement for communication professionals to determine a global corporate policy for actions taken at the local level. For example, most corporate transparency requirements are based on local or national jurisdictions; but a well-thought-out global corporate policy on transparency by a multinational firm would take this into consideration and provide an overarching policy that would apply in all jurisdictions. What would Kant do as CEO? As the Chief Corporate Communication Officer? These are good questions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This modern-day analogy clarifies, too, the difference between what Kant meant by a right act and a right rule: it's not the specific act of being transparent in a specific jurisdiction that needs to be universal; it's the corporate policy on transparency that needs to be global.

**How best to deal with media bribery varies from culture to culture—yet the core values of professional communicators do not change.**

We advance our argument in this paper by examining the media bribery case as it might have occurred in four different cultures—keeping almost all the factors the same except for cultural values and beliefs—and imagining how the moral actors would act in increasing corrupt economies. In this way, we will demonstrate the importance of cultural norms to professional communicators. But we will not make the false argument of cultural relativists—that cultural values dictate ethical decision-making. We will argue that cultural values and beliefs, while they are not easily changed, do change—and, in fact, are constantly changing, most often in small, subtle ways; but sometimes, dramatically. We will make the argument that the core values of the Ideal Virtuous Person do not necessarily change from culture to culture, but that the Ideal Virtuous Person will always take into consideration cultural values and beliefs.

We point out the strengths of ethical pluralism—the concept that there are many irreducible moral values in the world and that, therefore, there is no one best “supreme value” or “hyper norm” from which all others are derived. The strength of ethical pluralism for professional communicators will be highlighted—that it demands more than tolerance; it requires seeking common ground among a variety of cultural values with the expectation that new and better ethical insights will emerge from the confluence of different cultural values and beliefs.

**Values distinguish cultures and affect ethical decision-making by professional communicators.**

Cultural values can be defined as the synergistic set of lifestyles of a recognizable group of people; it is possible to identify a wide variety of cultural values. For example, one community may have standards of living, including ethical standards that differ dramatically from those in another community. These cultural differences can exist between communities located side-by-side within one small regional area. Obviously, such differences can exist between people living in different countries and in different parts of the world. For example, business ethics have been found to vary dramatically from country to country. In recent years, Germany was perceived as one of the most ethical country in which to conduct business, followed by the United Kingdom, the United States, and France. Cameroon, Nigeria, Mexico were ranked the least ethical of the countries surveyed.<sup>xxvi</sup> The researchers found that consistent ethical behavior based on a common set of principles was strongly linked to economic development within a culture. Where there is little consensus on cultural values, economic development is difficult.

As global changes sweep through cultures, the work of professional communicators is affected. Transnational consumerism, international marketing, expansion of free market economies, new alliances among nations, multinational corporate mergers, organizational specialization, and diversification are trends that offer communication professionals both opportunities and problems.<sup>xxvii</sup> In one way or another, public relations practitioners find themselves, for a variety of clients and employers, either working to achieve these changes or working to resist such changes and maintain the status quo.

Communication professionals work on a regular basis with two different cultures: the internal, organizational culture of the sponsoring organization or client; and the broader culture within which the organization or client operates. Both types of cultures have shared problems and opportunities; shared resources; shared transformational processes and technologies; shared values, principles, and loyalties; shared languages and communication channels; shared learning experiences; and shared boundaries of concern.

As managers within organizations or for clients, professional communicators are involved in a variety of cultural issues: defining problems and opportunities; gathering, monitoring, and controlling resources; working with others to transform these resources into goods and services; identifying and clarifying appropriate values, principles, and loyalties; using common languages and communication channels; creating shared learning experiences, from specific mass media to general educational programs; and distinguishing areas of interests and boundaries of concern. How these factors are explained to others and put into context—how the right and wrong ways of looking at these factors are presented—are ethical questions for professional communicators to answer.

Geert Hofstede conducted a global survey of large samples of IBM employees involved in similar jobs, yet located in a variety of cultures.<sup>xxviii</sup> The survey instrument asked a range of questions about values. Because job-related factors were similar, differences in values were attributed to cultural differences. Hofstede found that the following four sets of values could be used to describe and distinguish between various cultures:

- Attitudes about social inequalities—the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture expect and accept that power is distributed unequally—including people’s attitudes toward authority.
- Expectations about the relationship between the individual and the group: individualism versus collectivism.

- Definitions of masculinity and femininity, relationships among men and women, and the implications of being born a boy or a girl.
- Anxious feelings people have about being in an uncertain situation and the ways they go about dealing with uncertainties--for example, accepting authoritarian policies to resolve uncertainties, or expecting the "invisible hand of the marketplace" to resolve uncertainties, or living with and accepting a certain degree of uncertainty in life.

**Cultural values are based on assumptions that often vary from culture to culture.**

Because professional codes are derived from values outside an individual, all professional codes contain principles relating to cultural values and beliefs. Here are two examples:

- Members of the Society of Professional Journalists...“believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues... Journalists should support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.”<sup>xxix</sup>
- Members of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management... “base our professional principles...on the fundamental value and dignity of the individual. We believe in and support the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the media, which are essential to the practice of good public relations.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Notice that within these two principles are a number of assumptions:

- public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and democracy.
- seeking the truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues is the duty of a journalist because it helps public enlightenment.
- supporting the open exchange of views is important for public enlightenment.
- fundamental value and dignity of the individual supports the free exercise of human rights, including freedom of speech...assembly...and media.

Most assumptions within ethical principles relate to cultural values and beliefs.

For example, in the previous chapter we discussed legal principles that are based on assumption of the rule of law which, in turn, is based on two major assumptions: 1) government has right to use force (arrest, imprisonment, including lethal punishments) in exchange for compliance with laws and fair treatment under the law; and 2) the governed (citizens) have a right to help develop and change the laws.

The value of public enlightenment for professional communicators is based on at least two assumptions: 1) that better informed individuals will be able to make better decisions and, therefore, experience a better life; and 2) that civil societies will benefit from having more informed citizens. The value of an enlightened civil society is based on eight assumptions:<sup>xxxi</sup>

1. Stable governmental system; independent legislative, executive and judicial branches; democratic oversight of military.
2. Fair elections with popular participation.
3. Acceptance and support for non-governmental organizations that support citizen participation in political processes.
4. Independent media, including press freedoms and Internet access for private citizens.
5. Viable economy and relatively stable institutions of commerce and government.
6. Transparencies of federal, state and local governments.
7. Judicial fairness with emphasis on protecting the weakest in society.

8. Public perceptions of corruption; business and governmental leaders' support of anti-corruption policies and procedures.

Another value that varies from culture to culture is the expected relationship between men and women. Often this relationship is based on assumptions made about the rights and roles of women; for example, the rights of women to vote, participate in civil society; the rights of women within marriage; the roles of women within families; and the right of girls and women to basic and higher education.

Another important cultural value is stability—or, its opposite, change. The degree of acceptable uncertainty in society can be reflected in statements such as “I like all the changes going on...” or “I don’t like all the changes; I like how it used to be.” The value a society places on stability or change affects the willingness of people to participate in civic decision-making; their willingness to take economic risks; their willingness to accept or doubt the “truth” of authorities; and their willingness to accept or question the “invisible hand” of society.

The values of individualism and collectivism conflict because they have conflicting assumptions.<sup>xxxii</sup> Individualism is based on the following assumptions:

- A person is born into this world as a unique entity and then develops (or does not develop) relationships that define the self.
- The individual is the most important unit of analysis.
- Each human has rights that should be respected by others.
- The community and “the other” may or may not affect the decisions of an individual: it’s the individual’s choice to include or not include the concerns of others when making ethical decisions.
- Ethical egoism is good: it’s a virtue to be selfish.
- An individual has free will—is capable of making independent ethical choices.

Collectivism is based on the following assumptions:

- A person is born into a family and set of relationships that define that person’s life.
- The “significant others” in a person’s life are as important if not more important than the individual.
- An individual’s rights are granted by others; they are derived from society--and can be restricted or taken away by society.
- The individual should elicit the best from others; the other in a person’s life defines the individual: you are who you are in relationship to others.
- Altruism is good: it’s a virtue to value others more than yourself.
- The notion of free will is an illusion that denies the importance of taking others into consideration when making ethical decisions.

**Cultural relativism is a weak concept because some of its assumptions are weak, if not false, especially in today’s global economy.**

Some argue that the idea of universal values is a myth. They argue that the various customs of different societies are all that exist, and that these customs cannot be said to be correct or incorrect, for that implies an independent standard of right and wrong. Philosophy professor James Rachels explains that cultural relativism assumes that “there are only the various cultural codes, and nothing more. More over, our own code has no special status; it is merely one among many.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Here are the assumptions of cultural relativism:

- Morality is culturally specific; ethical guidelines come from society; ethical judgments are relative to the culture in which they are made.

- Unless you are part of a culture, you cannot understand all the reasons for why something is considered right or wrong in that society; therefore, you should not judge that society's morality.
- Just as you should not judge another culture's morality, other cultures should not judge your morality.
- Everyone should be tolerant of others living in other cultures; as they should be tolerant of you.

A major fallacy in the logic of cultural relativism, Rachels points out, is to jump to the conclusion that because there are different sets of cultural values, there is no objective truth in ethics—that right and wrong are only matters of opinion, and opinions vary from culture to culture.

Rachels states, “The trouble is that the conclusion does not really follow from the premise—that is, even if the premise is true, the conclusion still might be false. The premise concerns what people believe; in some societies, people believe one thing; in other societies, people believe differently. The conclusion, however, concerns what really is the case. The trouble is that this sort of conclusion does not follow logically from this sort of premise.” He gives an example:

In some societies, people believe the earth is flat. In other societies, such as our own, people believe the earth is (roughly) spherical. Does it follow, from the mere fact that they disagree, that there is no “objective truth” in geography? Of course not; we would never draw such a conclusion because we realize that, in their beliefs about the world, the members of some societies might simply be wrong. There is no reason to think that if the world is round everyone must know it. Similarly, there is no reason to think that if there is moral truth everyone must know it.

What if we took cultural relativism seriously? Rachels points out one of the consequences: “We could no longer say that the customs of other societies are morally inferior to our own.” While one of the most compelling assumptions of cultural relativism is that it is good to be tolerant and understanding of another societies' values and beliefs, it does not follow that one should not be critical of another society's ethical standards. Rachels has an example:

Suppose a society waged war on its neighbors for the purpose of taking slaves. Or suppose a society was violently anti-Semitic and its leaders set out to destroy the Jews. Cultural Relativism would preclude us from saying that either of these practices was wrong. We would not even be able to say that a society tolerant of Jews is better than the anti-Semitic society, for that would imply some sort of transcultural standard of comparison. The failure to condemn these practices does not seem “enlightened”; on the contrary, slavery and anti-Semitism seem wrong wherever they occur. Nevertheless, if we took Cultural Relativism seriously, we would have to admit that these social practices also are immune from criticism.

Another fallacy of cultural relativism is that it implies that we should decide what is right and wrong by looking at the society within which we are operating. From this point of view, if a corporate policy conforms to a particular society's set of ethical standards, then it is ethical. This is a false assumption because few within any society think their society could not be improved; most think all societies can be improved. However, cultural relativism argues not only that we should not criticize the values of other societies, but also—by extension—that we should not criticize our own set of values. Cultural relativism assumes that values and beliefs do not change; this, of

course, is not the case. For example, views on human rights have evolved over time and, no doubt, will continue to progress.

While there are many differences between cultures, there are significant cross-cultural similarities, for all cultures have some values in common. For example, all societies value children in one way or another. All societies abhor murder, although they may acknowledge its necessity on occasion. All societies *strive to respect human dignity*, as they define it. Rachels gives another example:

Imagine what it would be like for a society to place no value at all on truth telling. When one person spoke to another, there would be no presumption at all that he was telling the truth—for he could just as easily be speaking falsely. Within that society, there would be no reason to pay attention to what anyone says. . . . Communication would then be extremely difficult, if not impossible. And, because complex societies cannot exist without regular communication among their members, society would become impossible. It follows that in any complex society there must be a presumption in favor of truthfulness. There may of course be exceptions to this rule: there may be situations in which it is thought to be permissible to lie. Nevertheless, these will be exceptions to the rule. . . .

The strength of cultural relativism is that it stresses tolerance and encourages people to learn more about a culture before passing judgment. The weaknesses of cultural relativism are that it assumes you cannot make judgments about another culture, even if horrendous acts are committed there; and that assume no culture can be improved by being criticized and evolving into a better society (even though this is exactly the case within a culture—that it evolves and become better or worse over time).

Most professionals today work for organizations affected by the global economy; many work for global corporations and, if not now, most are likely to work for a global enterprise sometime during their careers. Therefore, professional communicators should recognize not only the importance of tolerance and learning about other cultures but also the importance of establishing corporate communication policies that are global—that cut across and operate effectively in all cultures.

**Ethical pluralism is a strong concept because it claims there is no supreme cultural value, and its assumptions are plausible.**

Ethical pluralism (also referred to as value pluralism) claims that we have many incompatible and irreducible moral values, and that these values are not derived from a single “supreme value” or “hyper norm.” Expressed as values supporting specific duties, Ross identified several irreducible yet potentially incompatible values:<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Duties stemming from one's own previous actions:

1. *Fidelity* - duty to fulfill (explicit and implicit) promises/agreements into which one has entered

2. *Reparation* - duty to make up for wrongful acts previously done to others.

Duties stemming from the previous actions of others:

3. *Gratitude* - duty to repay others for past favors done for oneself. Duties stemming from the (possibility of) a mismatch between persons' pleasure or happiness and their "merit"

4. *Justice* - duty to prevent or correct such a mismatch. Duties stemming from the possibility of improving the conditions of others with respect to virtue, intelligence, or pleasure:

5. *beneficence* - duty to improve the conditions of others in these respects

Duties stemming from the possibility of improving one's own condition with respect to virtue or intelligence:

6. *self-improvement* - duty to improve one's own condition in these respects

Special duty to be distinguished from the duty of beneficence:

7. *nonmaleficence* - duty not to injure others

Ross claimed that these irreducible and sometimes incompatible values can create an ethical dilemma: no matter how a person decides among irreducible values, the final decision inevitably leads to a moral loss. Ross and others who make the case for ethical pluralism say conflicting, irreducible values are what people experience in their lives; it's realistic. Ethical pluralism makes the case that paradoxes and ethical dilemmas cannot be avoided; therefore, we should seek common ground among conflicting values—not with an expectation to find a supreme value but with the expectation that the search will generate new and better ethical insights.<sup>xxxv</sup>

These are the assumptions of ethical pluralism:

- There is no single truth; but seeking the truth, especially for professional communicators, is important.
- It's best to avoid the extremes of absolutism (that there is only one truth and one right set of answers) and relativism (that there is no truth and that what passes for truth is based on power and perceptions of reality).
- Seeking the middle ground between absolutism and relativism means accepting a certain amount of uncertainty and to acknowledge and appreciate the wisdom within all cultures and belief systems.
- A better understanding of the world—and, therefore, a better world—is possible from the interaction of multiple approaches to the truth, ethics and morality.

The purpose of ethical pluralism is to provide an intellectual framework for finding common ground: agreement, if possible; agreeing to disagree, if possible; agreeing to changing the situation, if possible; and mutual understanding, if possible.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The goal of ethical pluralism is the better understanding of the situation, yourself and others.

Ethical pluralism is not the same as multiculturalism. Multiculturalism emphasizes tolerance of others without necessarily celebrating the possibilities generated by diversity.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ethical pluralism is more than tolerating the cultural values and beliefs of others; it is expecting the interaction of multiple cultures to generate greater understandings between and among societies and a better world.

The weakness of ethical pluralism is that it does not satisfy extremists—neither absolutists nor relativists. The strength of pluralism is that it's a global version of the Golden Mean. It recommends avoiding extremes and doing what is right based not on a compromise but on the best ideas from the wisest men and women in the world.

Understanding and integrating ethical pluralism into professional communications is a competency that can be learned, according to business leader Jay Ogilvy, philosopher and co-founder of the Global Business Network:

In the next decade we'll be looking for a cultural competency that goes beyond manners—being rooted in your own values to where you can comfortably hear someone else's differences. ... In the past, there's a sense that if it's ethical then it has to be hierarchical and monistic; and if it's pluralistic, it's amoral or relativistic. I say no, that somewhere between there, there is ethical pluralism. There's a way of holding on to your values and letting others have theirs that doesn't say "whatever."<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **Cultural values affect strategies for making ethical decisions about media bribery**

By “fictionalizing” the media bribery case and putting it into a specific country that has been classified as more or less corrupt, we can identify cultural values and beliefs that affect ethical decision making. We used the Bribery Propensity Index developed by Transparency International.<sup>xxxix</sup> It is based on interviews with 11,000 business executives from the following countries who were asked the likelihood of a corporation in that country to engage in “extra payments or bribery.” The researchers then classified the countries into four clusters:

1. *Least-likely-to-bribe Cluster:* Switzerland, Sweden, Australia, Austria, Canada, UK, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, US, Japan
2. *Next-to-least-likely-to-bribe Cluster:* Singapore, Spain, United Arab Emirates, France, Portugal, Mexico
3. *Next-to-most-likely-to-bribe Cluster:* Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, South Africa, Malaysia
4. *Most-likely-to-bribe Cluster:* Taiwan, Turkey, Russia, China, India.

We recognize that bribery, including media bribery, occurs within all clusters: it occurs less frequently in the least-likely clusters, but it still occurs. We also recognize that conditions for bribery in these countries are constantly changing and that improvements are underway to decrease corruption and bribery.

For our analysis, we assumed the media bribery case took place not in an African country as originally stated but in Canada (Cluster 1), France (Cluster 2), South Korea (Cluster Three) and China (Cluster 4). In our analysis, we answered the following questions:

1. Who are the moral actors? Are they the same in each country; and if not, why not? Answer: The principal moral actors (public relations director, reporter and publisher) are the same, but the web of contacts and significant others who may become involved in the bribery scheme may expand in the more corrupt countries. For example, the concept of Guanxi in China emphasizes the importance of mutually beneficial relationships when conducting business: it supports the notion of an expanded network of good relations both for legitimate business dealings and illegal arrangements such as bribery schemes. The emphasis on individualism in Canada and France would suggest fewer and smaller networks of relationships for both legitimate and illegal activities than might be expected in South Korea or China where collectivism is a longstanding cultural value.
2. Is it an ethical situation, problem or dilemma? Is it the same in each country; and, if not, why not? Answer: If the bribery situation is not discussed (for example, it's assumed to be a regular part of business), it does not become a problem—it's

considered “business as usual.” If the situation is discussed, then it becomes an ethical problem with a possible win-win solution (for example, among co-conspirators new arrangements might be made—including one where the undercover bribery decreases and payments become more open, transparent and eventually legitimate). For example, we would expect a reporter’s attempt at bribery in Canada would be treated as an ethical situation: the publisher or public relations director would reject participation out of hand and report the actions of the reporter not only to professional associations but also possibly to law enforcement agencies.

3. What is morally permitted—and why? What is morally prohibited—and why? Is it the same in each country; and, if not, why not? Answer: Bribery, by definition, is illegal. But not everything that is illegal is necessarily unethical. If bribery causes harm, then the act is unethical. Even if there is little or no harm, bribery is unethical because it does not promote a greater good. Bribery might create short-term gains for a limited number of people; but it does not elicit the best from others or create a greater good for society. For example, in China media bribery may be more common than in South Korea or France; and not participating in a bribery scheme in China may have more harmful consequences than in France or South Korea. From a utilitarian point of view, engaging in bribery in France or South Korea may not be morally permitted because there are legal and ethical options for voiding it. But in China, in extreme circumstances (for example, when there’s the threat of violence if someone does not participate), it may be morally permitted to participate in a bribery scheme if not participating would create more harm. Highly corrupt economies can make conditions “on the ground” such that participating in bribery may be the lesser of two evils and, therefore, morally permitted, if other actions are taken to reduce bribery and other forms of corruption.
4. Would the Ideal Virtuous Person act differently in each country? If so, why; and if not, why not? Answer: Yes, the Ideal Virtuous Person would take into consideration cultural differences; but, the Ideal Virtuous Person would also synthesize the wisdom in all cultures and act according to principles that would apply across all cultures. For example, the core values of the a professional communicator traveling to and from and working in Canada, France, South Korea and China would not change dramatically; but in each country, the professional communicator would take into consideration specific cultural values and beliefs. If confronted with a media bribery scheme, the Ideal Virtuous Professional Communicator would try, in the short term, to make the transactions as transparent as possible—if not immediately, as soon as possible. And the professional communicator would work, in the long term, to reduced the root causes of the bribery in that economy and to turn the clandestine criminal activity into an openly discussed legitimate transaction.

Our analysis indicates the weakness of cultural relativism, which would argue that we cannot judge the rightness or wrongness of media bribery in other parts of the world. As we’ve demonstrated, you can and should make judgments about media bribery: wherever it occurs, it’s wrong. Even in extreme circumstances when violence is threatened and it may not be avoidable, media bribery is still wrong; it’s just the lesser of wrongs.

Our analysis also points out the strengths of pluralism. Ethical pluralism embraces the contradictions of values that force people to make choices among the lesser of evils. Ethical pluralism does not look for a supreme value or the

simple right answer but only the possibility of new ethical insights. Even in the most corrupt economy, a professional communicator using ethical pluralism as a framework for making ethical decisions will focus on long term solutions to the root causes of corruption, will acknowledge irreducible and conflicting values in society, and search for innovative and ethical solutions to the problem of media bribery.

Ethical pluralism allows the professional communicator to avoid the extremes of righteously saying “never, never ever” engage in media bribery; or the silly relativist’s expression of “whatever,” do it if that is what everybody else is doing. Applying the framework of ethical pluralism to media bribery keeps the focus on finding common ground among conflicting values and seeking new insights into ethical decision making.

### Summary

In this paper we examined the intellectual history of applied ethics in Russia and the United States of America. We argued that, over the centuries, the fundamental moral unit in applied ethics has shifted from a focus on the individual to a focus on relationships.

We demonstrated this point by imaging what these philosophers and writers would have said about a fictional case of media bribery. Examining the media bribery case allowed us to compare and contrast the historical development of applied and professional ethics in public relations in both the USA and Russia.

From our analysis, we have drawn the conclusion there are “relatively universal” principles governing professional public relations practitioners--not only over time but also over geographic space--such as seeking the truth, doing no harm to the innocent, being fair and treating others as you wish to be treated.

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## CHARLES WELLER KENT: THE UK'S FIRST 'PARLIAMENTARY LOBBYIST' (1913-1916)?

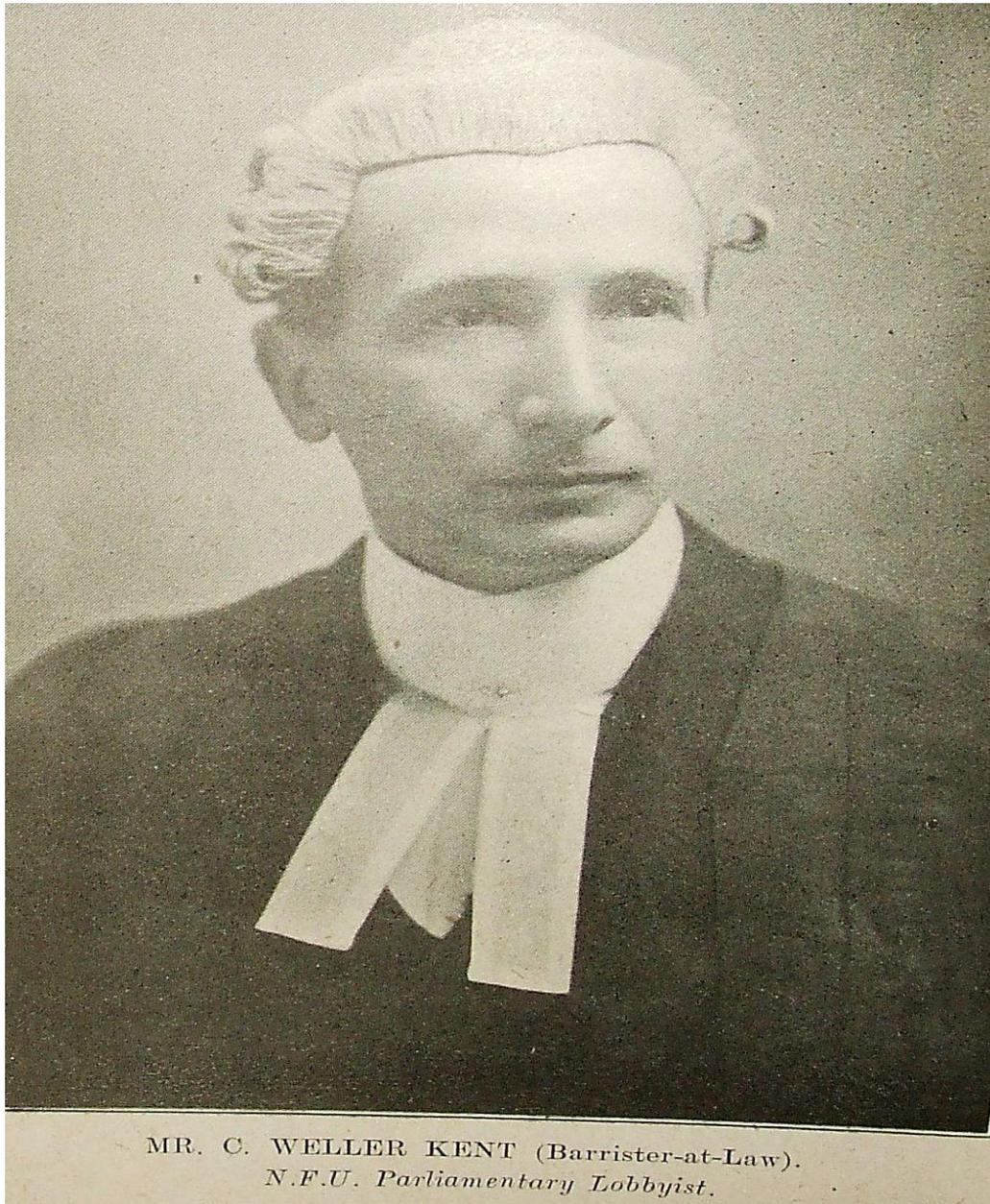
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It has been said that, 'Nobody knows who was the first American lobbyist or what interest he represented'<sup>1</sup>, and this is equally true of the United Kingdom. Certainly, no definitive history of lobbying in Britain has been produced – and cannot now be produced, given that no systematic archive exists of records kept by the very early lobby groups. Most likely, lobbying has been going on since government was established, as there will always have been those wishing to influence decisions about the distribution of resources. But it is a mistake to dismiss or ignore the historical evolution and development of interest representation. Although we cannot identify the first British lobbyist, we absolutely can pay greater attention to lobbying in Britain in historical context.

In fact, some scholars do assert that Britain's first professional lobbyist is known. There is remarkably little dispute among academics that the person on whom this title can be bestowed is Lt. Commander Christopher Powell. Powell – who died in 1989 – has been variously described as, 'The founding father of modern lobbying'<sup>2</sup>, the 'doyen of parliamentary lobbyists'<sup>3</sup>, the 'pioneer' of commercial lobbying consultancy<sup>4</sup>, and 'The country's founding lobbyist'.<sup>5</sup> Unquestionably, Powell was a very early lobbyist (although he personally seems to have rejected that term), establishing Watney & Powell as the first parliamentary consultancy firm in Britain in 1928 with his partner, Charles Watney. Perhaps Powell's most lasting contribution to British political life was the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, which brought together politicians and scientists and of which Powell acted as Secretary from its establishment in 1939 until 1978.<sup>6</sup> From 1945 to 1949, Powell also served as administrative secretary of the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, but had to resign that position following a statement by the Speaker of the House of Commons which raised questions as to how compatible that role was with Powell's lobbying work for outside interests.<sup>7</sup> As a lobbyist, Powell was singularly successful at shepherding private legislation and Private Members' Bills onto the statute book on behalf of his clients.

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The contention of this paper, however, is that modern professional lobbying in the UK can be traced back 15 years before Watney & Powell was established. To the best of my knowledge, the first person in Britain who had ‘parliamentary lobbyist’ as a job title was Charles Weller Kent – appointed in that capacity by the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) on 30 July 1913. Kent is by now an almost entirely obscure figure, whose name features in virtually no academic work on lobbying or lobbyists, but that neglect can and should be ended.



MR. C. WELLER KENT (Barrister-at-Law).  
*N.F.U. Parliamentary Lobbyist.*

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## THE NFU: FORMATION AND EARLY POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Explicitly intended as a group for ‘practical’ farmers – to the extent that landowners who did not actually farm the land themselves were initially barred from membership<sup>8</sup> – the NFU saw one of its functions as ‘bringing pressure to bear upon members of Parliament in agricultural constituencies’.<sup>9</sup> The Union’s first leaders were conscious that other professions and occupations were beginning to lobby Parliament<sup>10</sup>, and determined that farmers should also have a voice in policy making.<sup>11</sup> J.M. Parry (an NFU Executive Committee member from Leominster) noted in July 1913 that, ‘There was at present an organising movement among farm hands up and down the country, and one that had reached the “ear” of the House of Commons.’<sup>12</sup> The chairman of the NFU Highbridge branch asserted later that year that instead of simply accepting measures imposed on them, by combining together doctors had placed themselves ‘in a position not to ask but to demand better terms from the Government’.<sup>13</sup> According to a published report, an NFU member, Samuel Lean, received laughter and applause at one meeting when he opined that, ‘farmers should take a lesson from that powerful professional trade union, the British Medical Association, which had found Parliament squeezable.’<sup>14</sup>

And indeed, even at the early stage of its development, the National Farmers’ Union was having some measure of success in terms of interest representation. Addressing a meeting of the Newbury branch in June 1913, William May (NFU Treasurer) declared that the NFU ‘had received recognition from the heads of Government Departments, and the Board of Agriculture was in sympathy with it.’<sup>15</sup> Around the same time, J.M. Parry told a public meeting that the NFU’s influence over government ‘was growing. Very few measures affecting agriculture were now dealt with by the Government or Board of Trade without the help and guidance’ of the Union’s Executive Committee.<sup>16</sup> According to H.W. Palmer (NFU Secretary), within five years of its formation, the National Farmers’ Union was so well established among the farming community and in government circles that its Executive Committee was already being referred to as ‘the Farmers’ Parliament’.<sup>17</sup> However, NFU leaders recognised that more advances remained to be made. In particular, they wanted ‘direct’ representation in the House of Commons, by which was meant that men with practical experience of farming would be elected in some agricultural constituencies; and they wanted not just to be listened to by government but to be

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influential with ministers and civil servants – to ‘present their views to the Government before a Bill was brought in’.<sup>18</sup>

It was in this context, then, that the National Farmers’ Union decided to recruit its first lobbyist to place its increasing interaction with government on a more systematic and strategic footing. Some considerable progress had been achieved by the young organisation, but much more was possible. The Union faced a number of challenges, and wished too to maximise the opportunities which were opening up to it. Several of the NFU’s leaders were enthusiastic amateurs in the political arena, but the time had now come to seek more expert professional guidance. In its early years, the NFU was very deliberately attempting to plot a delicate course, playing a role in political discourse without itself becoming a participant in partisan politics.<sup>19</sup> The official files, and the reports in the *Mark Lane Express* (an agricultural weekly newspaper which became the official organ of the NFU), during this period reveal this to be a constant preoccupation; while there was internal debate with some members arguing that the NFU should align itself with one or other of the main parties in order to exert more influence, the views of the leadership that the group had to be apolitical and thus able to deal with whichever party was in government ultimately prevailed. How this was often expressed was that agriculture should be treated by politicians as a national issue rather than a political issue.<sup>20</sup> It was a position perhaps best summarised by Arthur Stratton (chairman of the NFU’s Devizes branch) thus: ‘We farmers should be more politic, and less political; holding to party politics has been our undoing.’<sup>21</sup>

#### **THE NFU’S FIRST ‘PARLIAMENTARY LOBBYIST’**

There is some confusion in the literature as to when exactly the NFU first appointed a lobbyist. Wootton sources this to the NFU’s 1913 Yearbook, while Norton dates the appointment to 1910, and Moore gives it as 1914.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the records allow us to be quite precise on this point. Minutes of the Parliamentary Committee meeting held on 10 July 1913 reveal that, ‘Mr. C.W. Kent, Barrister-at-Law attended the Meeting and expressed his willingness to act as Parliamentary Lobbyist.... It was decided to recommend his appointment to the Executive Committee.’<sup>23</sup> Kent was invited to attend the Executive Committee held on 30 July 1913, at which members were told something of the process which led to his selection.

William May (NFU Treasurer) reported that several members of the Parliamentary Committee had discussed with Colin Campbell (NFU President and

chairman of the Parliamentary Committee) the issue that the Union needed to be in more regular contact with those MPs who had pledged to support its parliamentary programme. As a result, 'it was decided by way of an experiment to put an anonymous advertisement in the *Times* for a Parliamentary Lobbyist.'<sup>24</sup> The NFU archive does not include a copy of the *Times* advertisement, and so it is now impossible to be absolutely certain on this point, but having reviewed the Situations Vacant classified adverts published in *The Times* in April – July 1913, I believe that the following ad (second from the bottom here; published on 18 and 19 April that year) is the one placed by the Union<sup>25</sup>:

## SITUATIONS, &c., VACANT.

(TWO LINES, 1s. ; EVERY EXTRA LINE, 6d.)

**WANTED.**—FIRST-CLASS SUB-EDITOR, highest credentials. Evening newspaper experience indispensable.—Address, N.903, The Times Office, E.C.

**A** N ARCHITECT is prepared to take an ARTICLED PUPIL into his office in the West-end. Premium required, part returnable as salary. Personal training given.—Reply "Pupil," N.876, The Times Office, E.C.

**A** BIG SALARY.—The CABLE and WIRELESS Telegraph Services offer splendid opportunities for youths and young men from 15 to 25. Commencing remuneration from £100 to £200 per ann.—The LONDON TELEGRAPH TRAINING COLLEGE Ltd., is constantly obtaining such appointments for its students. Apply for Prospectus to Dep. A., 262, Earl's Court-road, S.W.

**C**OLONIES.—Short practical training at Tunworth Agricultural College. Huge farm, vet science smith's work, carpentry.

**L**AW.—WANTED immediately, by a firm of Solicitors in Westminster, an ADMITTED SOLICITOR, capable of undertaking Chancery and Common Law work without supervision; one with knowledge of Local Government Law or Parliamentary work preferred.—Apply, stating age, previous experience, and salary required; to "Chancery," K.896, The Times Office, E.C.

**L**EADING FIRM in the MUSIC TRADE REQUIRES MANAGER for one of their branch houses; excellent position for the right man; must have had all-round experience and be energetic and up-to-date. When writing, state previous experience.—Box A.2339, The Times Book Club, 376, Oxford-street, W.

**P**UBLIC SCHOOL BOYS for the CITY.—The demand on Pitman's School for well-educated youths for positions in banks, insurance and shipping offices, &c., exceeds the number of students available. Boys who take the Business Course at Pitman's enter the City under the best possible auspices. Write for Pitman's Prospectus, gratis and post free.—Address (mentioning No. 40), The Secretary, Pitman's School, Southampton-row, W.C.

**T**O PARLIAMENTARY AGENTS, Political Organizers, Baristers, &c.—REQUIRED, to fill vacancy for lobby work in the House of Commons, a Gentleman having knowledge of Parliamentary procedure and journalism, to represent an old-established association, with a good following amongst members of Parliament.—Replies treated with absolute confidence, N.890, The Times Office, E.C.

**W**ANTED at once, for service in the Canadian Pacific Railway Dining Car Department, First-class CHEFS, Second, Third and Fourth COOKS, also first-class WAITERS—high wages paid and steady employment assured. Applicants to pay fare and sail within one month.—Apply personally, with references, to Mr. Watson, Canadian Pacific Railway Office, Craven Hotel, Craven-street, Strand, London, between the hours of 10 and 5 p.m.

**W**ANTED, immediately, for the SOUTH MON CONSERV...

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According to Mr May, quite a number of replies were received, and these were screened by Campbell, G.A. Bellwood (NFU Vice-President), and H.W. Palmer (NFU Secretary). That group felt that the candidate most qualified for the role was Charles Weller Kent.<sup>26</sup> Kent then addressed the meeting, telling them that he was a barrister on the South-Eastern circuit. In a rather curious use of words, he said that ‘he believed’ he had been *The Times*’ parliamentary correspondent ‘for some years past.’ He went on to state that he did not possess any great knowledge of agriculture, but did have expertise in parliamentary procedure and had an ‘intimate acquaintance’ with many MPs. Kent told the committee that he ‘would give expression to their views and would keep a watchful eye over the members who had promised to support them.’ The meeting then agreed, apparently unanimously, to appoint him as NFU Parliamentary Lobbyist. To this, Kent averred that it ‘would be his duty as well as his pleasure to attend as many of their meetings as he could to gather their views’, and went on (somewhat incongruously given that he had only just been employed as a lobbyist) to say that he believed that little would happen as regards agricultural policy over the next year as the government was likely to be ‘very busy with a life and death struggle to keep itself in office.’<sup>27</sup>

The appointment of Charles Weller Kent as the Union’s first Parliamentary Lobbyist in 1913 was clearly intended as a part-time role – he was already working as a barrister, and may also have had continuing journalistic commitments. At the Executive Committee which appointed him, Kent stated that ‘he was willing to accept a nominal sum by way of fees, in fact, whatever they could afford.’<sup>28</sup> And certainly, he was a relatively cheap adviser – according to the existing records, Kent was paid nothing between July 1913 and 7 May 1914 when a payment of 13 guineas was made to ‘C. Weller Kent Parliamentary Lobbyist fee.’<sup>29</sup> Similar payments are recorded on a more or less quarterly basis.<sup>30</sup> This position, then, was worth 52 guineas a year to Kent (roughly equivalent to earning £20,000 today<sup>31</sup>). To put this remuneration into context, by 1923, Charles Weller Kent was paying £61 12s in annual rent for three rooms on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor North at 3 Brick Court which he used as his legal chambers.<sup>32</sup>

### **CHARLES WELLER KENT’S LOBBYING ACTIVITIES**

Kent seems to have had a fairly positive impact on the NFU, although the existing files give little in the way of definitive evidence as to this. He must presumably have been regularly, if not constantly, advising its leaders and devising lobbying strategy

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and tactics, but the official archive does not contain any of this documentation. However, at the Union's annual general meeting on 25 February 1914, John Rimmer asserted that 'the meeting must view with satisfaction the reports they had had from their Parliamentary Lobbyist. They were most excellent, and he thought they would be read with great interest.' Another attendee supported these comments and said that, 'It was quite a step in the right direction.'<sup>33</sup> That Kent was actively engaged in lobbying for the NFU (albeit unsuccessfully) is evidenced from another reference to him in the files from an Executive Committee meeting on 20 October 1915, at which the issue of increased rates of income tax was being discussed. F. Herbert Padwick (the NFU's Vice-President) stated that: 'Mr Palmer [the NFU Secretary] and our Parliamentary Lobbyist have done their best in the Lobby of the House of Commons to get a pledge that this taxation shall be for the period of the war only, but they have been unable to do so.'<sup>34</sup>

Despite his relatively low compensation, Charles Weller Kent was regarded as a senior adviser to the NFU leadership – official minutes indicate that he routinely attended meetings not just of the Parliamentary Committee, but also of the full Executive Committee.<sup>35</sup> Certainly he had access to the Union's highest decision-making processes. Equally, though, it at least appears that he did not contribute frequently or substantively to Executive Committee discussions. The minutes of those meetings tend to be lengthy and comprehensive records (at times, virtually verbatim accounts). They reveal only two occasions on which Kent is noted as having actively participated. During a discussion on 20 October 1915 about a legal case relating to farmers' liability should their sheep escape from the field and cause a road accident, Kent provided the Executive with a newspaper cutting about the case.<sup>36</sup> On 18 March 1914, the Executive debated the merits of an Agricultural Holdings Bill introduced by Sir Luke White MP, with several members supporting the measure, Edward Mials Nunneley (later to become NFU President<sup>37</sup>) regarding it as being of 'such little good it was hardly worth the paper it was written on,' and another speaker describing it as 'this wretched Bill.' The discussion concluded with Kent asking for some decision to be reached and a resolution to be passed by the Executive which he could then 'put before members in the House of Commons.'<sup>38</sup> The committee agreed that it was prepared to support the Bill 'as far as it goes, while considering that it would be of little practical use.'<sup>39</sup> While this does not on the face of it appear to have been a

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particularly significant contribution by Kent, in fact the approach he adopted in dealing with this piece of legislation seems to have had results. At the NFU's 1915 annual general meeting, it was agreed to write to Sir Luke White thanking him for introducing the measure, which had by then become law. Mr Nunneley noted that he had 'almost damned this Bill as it was brought in', but the Bill had been usefully amended 'owing principally to the action of this Union.' According to the minutes, Kent informed the AGM that he had 'kept in touch with Sir Luke White all the time. [White] is, [Kent] added, a very good friend of ours, and on this occasion he went as far as he possibly could to meet our views.'<sup>40</sup> The inference here is that at least by his own account, Kent had been successful to some degree in influencing the final content of that legislation in a direction which favoured farmers. Over its first five years, the NFU had achieved some degree of recognition in Parliament, but its influence did not match this – its immediate ambition was to 'get in before a Bill which affected them in any way was finally drafted.'<sup>41</sup> This was essentially the reason for deciding to take on a lobbyist.

At the time of Kent's appointment, the NFU's 'Parliamentary Programme' – its list of public policy priorities, what we might today refer to as its manifesto – consisted of 15 items. The programme was developed by the Union's Parliamentary Committee over time as issues emerged and a degree of consensus was achieved on them. Among its proposals were: that central government should provide increased funding for education and public roads; that legislation be introduced to provide for establishment of a uniform system of weights for agricultural produce and to remove excise duty on the production of spirit from agricultural produce; that grants available under the Agricultural Rating Act be increased pending reform of the treatment of agricultural land under the rates scheme; that the term 'beer' should be restricted to beverages of a certain composition; that the laws on agricultural holdings, trespass and boundary fences should be amended; that the Hops (No. 2) Bill, and the Fertilizers and Feeding Stuffs (Amendment) Bill which had been 'drafted by the National Farmers' Union at the suggestion of the Board of Agriculture', should both be supported; and that 'if a definite scheme of Tariff Reform is promulgated the industry of Agriculture in all its branches shall receive an equal share of any benefits that may accrue to other industries.'<sup>42</sup> The NFU circulated its Parliamentary Programme among MPs and parliamentary candidates, asking whether they supported

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it. This was relatively innovative, although not unique. One scholar notes that teachers did much the same thing in 1900 and suggests that it was a tactic which marked interest group activity as entering a new, more sophisticated, phase: 'A further extension of the new pressure politics was the attempt to turn a number of "interested" M.P.'s into a bloc that would act independently of the two major parties on questions of direct interest to the outside organization.'<sup>43</sup> In the NFU's 1913 *Yearbook*, some 89 MPs who were 'in sympathy' with that programme are listed.<sup>44</sup> Even at this early stage of the NFU's development, however, there is evidence of some disillusionment regarding these 'pledged MPs', as they were called. The Union's archive, and the pages of the *Mark Lane Express*, record time and again a sense that while many MPs were willing to support the Parliamentary Programme and thus secure the votes of farmers at a general election, they could not be relied upon to actually defend farmers' interests in the voting lobbies of the Commons. So, for instance, F.F. Hand (a member in Lincolnshire) told a meeting that, 'I think [the pledged MPs] have neglected us considerably.... we have received very, very little support [from them].'<sup>45</sup>

One of the functions, then, which the Union's Executive Committee envisaged Kent taking on was indeed structured liaison with supportive Members of Parliament. As Gilbert Parker told a meeting at Frome, the NFU had pledges of support from 90 MPs, and 'further they had a paid lobbyist who was told off to see that these ninety members of Parliament were kept posted up with their ideas.'<sup>46</sup> At a meeting on 22 October 1913, attended by Kent, that committee adopted a resolution by which parliamentary candidates were to be urged to 'join a committee of MPs in the House for the purpose of watching over the interests of agriculture.' Moving the motion, J.M. Parry argued that while a number of MPs were pledged to support the NFU's programme, 'I do not know that we have had much effected by their pledges.' In reality, these MPs were (in Parry's words) 'no power at all' as they essentially acted individually rather than in combination. His view – which was shared by the Executive Committee – was that in order for the NFU to be in a position to materially affect agricultural policy, it was necessary that a parliamentary committee be formed so that those Members 'would be able to advise us, and our lobbyist would be there.' Parry foresaw the NFU reaching a position whereby such a committee (of perhaps 80 or 100 MPs divided roughly equally between both sides of the House of Commons) would be able to influence government whichever party happened to be in office since

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it would then be possible for a bloc of 40 or 50 MPs from the governing party to threaten to withdraw their support from the government if farmers' interests were undermined.<sup>47</sup>

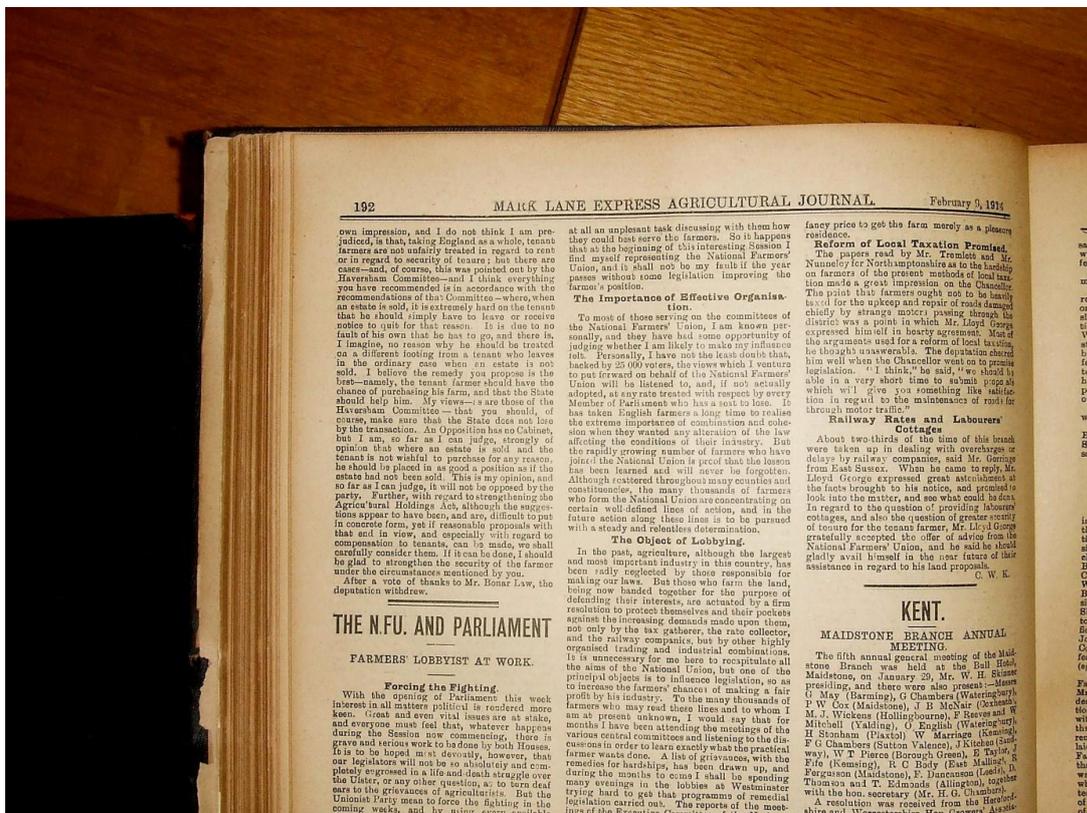
The original intent of the NFU was that they would select and fund their own candidates to run for the House of Commons explicitly representing agricultural interests.<sup>48</sup> This desire for what was called 'direct representation' is omnipresent throughout the official files in the NFU's first decade, motivated by a belief that only those with practical farming experience could properly articulate the interests of farmers in the Commons.<sup>49</sup> One member voiced both this intent and one reason why it ultimately failed to be delivered: 'The miners had found it beneficial to have direct representation, and if it was good for them it was good for the farmers. The miners were willing to pay, but the weakness of the farmers was their unwillingness to pay'.<sup>50</sup> NFU leaders thought that should one or two farmers' candidates get elected as independent MPs they would then be able to function essentially as whips of all those party MPs who were pledged to support the NFU.<sup>51</sup> As Colin Campbell (NFU President) put it at the first Executive Committee meeting following Kent's appointment, having MPs pledged to support the Union was all very well 'but unless you have somebody there to shepherd them it is no use'.<sup>52</sup> In 1909 the NFU set up a dedicated Parliamentary Fund for the purpose of funding agriculturalists as independent candidates/MPs; £480 had been donated by the end of 1913 and this sum rose by the end of 1916 to £640 10s 6d, but was still woefully short of the £10,000 which S. Ward (a member of the Executive Committee) asserted in February 1915 'ought not to be out of the reach of an organisation with 20,000 members'.<sup>53</sup> A member in Kent told an NFU meeting in April 1914 that, 'The Labourers Union, with 27,000 members, had started a Parliamentary Fund, and if they could subscribe out of their wages, surely the farmers could afford to contribute to such a fund'.<sup>54</sup> The issue of how much should be raised through the Parliamentary Fund, and how willing each county branch of the NFU was willing to contribute was one of the most regular features of committee meetings throughout the decade, and one of the most heatedly debated topics the fledgling organisation faced. In the event, though, the outbreak of the First World War – and the uncertainty as to when it would be concluded and how the political system would be altered in its aftermath – meant that no general election was held between 1910 and 1918.

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Given the absence of any direct representation of agricultural interests in the Commons during this period, it seems that in practice Charles Weller Kent acted as the communication channel between the NFU and those MPs who supported it. At a meeting of the South Herefordshire NFU executive, its chairman, J.A. Thompson stated that the Union's newly-appointed lobbyist would inform the pledged MPs of the NFU's wishes and would keep the NFU up to date with happenings in Parliament – 'In short, he would act as whip for the Union.'<sup>55</sup> It should too be noted that Kent was evidently greatly supported in this task by the group's Secretary, H.W. Palmer.<sup>56</sup> As Secretary, it was Palmer to whom the task of writing to politicians and officials on the Union's behalf often fell. One example indicates this – but there are literally dozens of others during this period. At the start of August 1913, Palmer met Sir Luke White MP at the Commons to discuss amending the Insurance Act, then briefed the NFU's solicitor who drafted two possible amendments. Palmer wrote to 85 pledged MPs but the effort was unsuccessful in the Commons so Palmer was then attempting to have an amendment passed in the House of Lords.<sup>57</sup> In the end, no peer was willing to introduce the NFU's amendment as it was clear that the government would refuse to accept it. Our source for this is an article in the *Mark Lane Express* on 18 August 1913 written by the 'NFU Parliamentary Representative' (presumably Charles Weller Kent, who had been appointed at the end of July). It seems, therefore, that Kent's first lobbying activity for the Union was to no avail.<sup>58</sup>

On 9 February 1914, Kent published the first of what would become a weekly column in the *Mark Lane Express*, headlined 'The NFU and Parliament.' That initial column was subtitled 'Farmers' Lobbyist At Work' (later columns were subtitled 'By The Farmers' Lobbyist'). Kent used his first outing in the paper to briefly introduce himself and his role, although partly in terms which seem unusual. He noted that he had 'been born and bred in an essentially agricultural county,' and had been writing about Parliament for more than 20 years, before stating that, 'I must have some hobby connected with politics.' In addition, he had found over the years that the MPs for rural constituencies 'were amongst the nicest men one could meet anywhere' so that 'it would not be at all an unpleasant task discussing with them how they could best serve the farmers.' So far as his role was concerned, he said that NFU leaders recognised that, 'in order to keep the needs of farmers constantly before our legislators, it was essential to have a representative ever at the elbow of the busy

politician.' Kent also reminded his readers that one of the key purposes of the Union was 'to influence legislation, so as to increase the farmer's chances of making a fair profit by his industry.' To that end, Kent had prepared a 'list of grievances, with the remedies for hardships' and intended over future months to spend 'many evenings in the lobbies at Westminster trying hard to get that programme of remedial legislation carried out.' Finally, he stressed the importance of the NFU's mass membership, asserting that he would be listened to with respect by politicians not so much in his own right but as the voice of the body's 25,000 members.<sup>59</sup>



own impression, and I do not think I am prejudiced in that taking England as a whole, tenant farmers are not unfairly treated in regard to rent or in regard to security of tenure; but there are cases—and, of course, this was pointed out by the Haverham Committee—and I think everything you have recommended is in accordance with the recommendations of that Committee—where, when an estate is sold, it is extremely hard on the tenant that he should simply have to leave or receive notice to quit for that reason. It is due to no fault of his own that he has to go, and there is, I imagine, no reason why he should be treated on a different footing from a tenant who leaves in the ordinary case when an estate is not sold. I believe the remedy you propose is the chance of purchasing his farm, and that the State should help him. My views—are those of the Haverham Committee—that you should, of course, make sure that the State does not lose by the transaction. An Opposition has no Cabinet, but I am, so far as I can judge, strongly of opinion that where an estate is sold and the tenant is not wished to purchase for any reason, he should be placed in as good a position as if the estate had not been sold. This is my opinion, and so far as I can judge, it will not be opposed by the party. Further, with regard to strengthening the Agricultural Holdings Act, although the suggestion appears to have been, and any difficulty to put in concrete form, yet if reasonable proposals will that end in view, and especially with regard to compensation to tenants, can I make, we shall carefully consider them. If it can be done, I should be glad to strengthen the security of the farmer under the circumstances mentioned by you.

After a vote of thanks to Mr. Bonar Law, the deputations withdrew.

**THE N.F.U. AND PARLIAMENT**

**FARMERS' LOBBYIST AT WORK.**

**Forcing the Fighting.**

With the opening of Parliament this week interest in all matters political is roused more keen. Great and even vital issues are at stake, and everyone must feel that, whatever happens during the Session now commencing, there is grave and serious work to be done by both Houses. It is to be hoped not only devoutly, however, that our legislators will not be so absolutely and completely engrossed in a life and death struggle over one or two of the grievances of agriculturists. But the Unionist Party mean to force the fighting in the coming weeks, and by using every available

at all an unpleasant task discussing with them how they could best serve the farmers. So it happens that at the beginning of this interesting Session I find myself representing the National Farmers' Union, and it shall not be my fault if the year passes without some legislation improving the farmer's position.

**The Importance of Effective Organisation.**

To most of those serving on the committees of the National Farmers' Union, I am known personally, and they have had some opportunity of judging whether I am likely to make my influence felt. Personally, I have not the least doubt that, backed by 25,000 voters, the views which I venture to put forward on behalf of the National Farmers' Union will be listened to, and, if not actually adopted, at any rate treated with respect by every Member of Parliament who has a seat to lose. It has taken English farmers a long time to realise the extreme importance of combination and co-operation when they wanted any alteration of the law affecting the conditions of their industry. But the rapidly growing number of farmers who have joined the National Union is proof that the lesson has been learned and will never be forgotten. Although scattered throughout many counties and constituencies, the many thousands of farmers who form the National Union are concentrating on certain well-defined lines of action, and in the future action along these lines is to be pursued with a steady and relentless determination.

**The Object of Lobbying.**

In the past, agriculture, although the largest and most important industry in this country, has been sadly neglected by those responsible for making our laws. But those who farm the land, being now banded together for the purpose of defending their interests, are actuated by a firm resolution to protect themselves and their pockets against the increasing demands made upon them, not only by the tax gatherer, the rate collector, and the railway companies, but by other highly organised trading and industrial combinations. It is necessary for me here to recapitulate all the principal objects to influence legislation, so as to increase the farmer's chances of making a fair profit by his industry. To the many thousands of an at present unknown, I would say that for months I have been attending the meetings of the various central committees and listening to the discussions in order to learn exactly what the practical remedies for hardships, has been drawn up, and during the months to come I shall be spending many evenings in the lobbies at Westminster trying hard to get that programme of remedial legislation carried out. The reports of the meetings of the Executive Committee of the

facery price to get the farm merely as a pleasure residence.

**Reform of Local Taxation Proposed.**

The papers read by Mr. Tremlett and Mr. Nunnely for Northamptonshire as to the hardship on farmers of the present methods of local taxation made a great impression on the Chancellor. The point that farmers ought not to be heavily taxed for the upkeep and repair of roads damaged chiefly by strange motor traffic passing through the district was a point in which Mr. Lloyd George expressed himself in hearty agreement. Most of the arguments used for a reform of local taxation, he thought unanswerable. The deputation cheered him well when the Chancellor went on to promise legislation. "I think," he said, "we should be able in a very short time to submit proposals which will give you something like satisfaction in regard to the maintenance of roads for through motor traffic."

**Railway Rates and Labourers' Cottages.**

About two-thirds of the time of this branch were taken up in dealing with overcharges or delays by railway companies, said Mr. George from East Sussex. When he came to reply Mr. Lloyd George expressed great astonishment at the facts brought to his notice, and promised to look into the matter, and see what could be done. In regard to the question of providing labourers' cottages, and also the question of greater security of tenure for the tenant farmer, Mr. Lloyd George gratefully accepted the offer of advice from the National Farmers' Union, and he said he should gladly avail himself in the near future of their assistance in regard to his land proposals.

C. W. K.

**KENT.**

**MAIDSTONE BRANCH ANNUAL MEETING.**

The fifth annual general meeting of the Maidstone Branch was held at the Hall Hotel, Maidstone, on January 23. Mr. W. H. Smeat presiding, and there were also present: Messrs G. May (Barming), G. Chambers (Watlington), P. W. Cox (Maidstone), J. F. McNair (Sheffield), M. J. Wickens (Hollingbourne), F. Reeves and W. Mitchell (Vidding), O. English (Walsingham), H. Statham (Plaxton), W. Marriage (Kemsing), F. G. Chambers (Sutton Valence), J. Kitchen (Sutton Valence), W. P. Pearce (Borough Green), E. Taylor & Effe (Kemsing), R. C. Body (East Malling), J. Fergusson (Maidstone), F. Jannacous (Lewisham), Thomas and T. Edmunds (Allington), together with the hon. secretary (Mr. H. G. Chambers). A resolution was passed from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Hon. Growers' Associa-

In his subsequent columns, Kent gave an overview of the agricultural issues which had been discussed in Parliament, often emphasising his role in speaking to MPs and peers on the Union's behalf and highlighting his access to them. His second column described the previous week as 'one of the most exciting and busy weeks that the Houses of Parliament have known for some considerable length of time. Personally I managed to be in the thick of it in both Houses'.<sup>60</sup> After another apparently busy week, Kent wrote that 'it was quite a relief occasionally to stroll about the lobby and engage in quiet conversation with some of the members for rural

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constituencies.’<sup>61</sup> Kent would also remind his readers that he was able to obtain information before its official release, as when he was ‘favoured with an advance copy of the new Agricultural Holdings Bill’ by its sponsor, Sir Luke White MP.<sup>62</sup> He did also, from time to time, ask that farmers contact him direct if there was something they wished to press for – on that Agricultural Holdings Bill, Kent requested that ‘some of the leading members’ of the NFU should ‘study the principal clause of the Bill carefully, and, should they decide that it needs amendment, if they would let me know’.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, though, he was willing to make points put to him by ordinary members but not necessarily to guarantee to achieve them: in early 1914 he had received a telegram from the Kent Farmers’ Union regarding a Hops Bill which had been introduced in the Commons by George Courthope MP, and Kent subsequently met a representation of the Kent farmers. They wanted an amendment to the Bill, so that the use of hop substitutes would be banned in the ‘preparation’ and ‘preserving’ of beer as well as in its ‘brewing’. Charles Weller Kent then met with Mr Courthope who told him that it might be possible to add the word ‘preparation’ but that in his judgement if ‘preservation’ was also added to the Bill, there was no chance of getting the measure through the Commons. Kent concluded therefore that ‘Mr Courthope has considered the matter in a statesmanlike way all round... if our very energetic friends in Kent want a Hop Substitute Bill passed this year, they must not insist upon too much.’<sup>64</sup> On other issues, Kent apparently did no lobbying – he noted the introduction of a Milk Bill in March 1914 and stated that the government had consulted with some groups beforehand. Although the NFU was not one of these, the Central Chamber of Agriculture had given its views, and Kent concluded (a little casually) that, ‘No doubt the views of the National Farmers’ Union have been put before the Minister because a good many of our members are members also of the Parliamentary Committee of the Central Chamber of Agriculture.’<sup>65</sup>

One role which Kent did not regularly assume which we might have expected him to do given his position, was to attend formal delegations the NFU would send to meet with politicians and officials. He was present as part of a delegation which met Lloyd George on 6 February 1914 (and another one to Bonar Law the same day<sup>66</sup>), and he similarly attended a meeting between the NFU and civil servants regarding the purchase of wool on 21 June 1916. But between these dates, Kent seems not to have taken part in other deputations. For instance, among the delegations he is not recorded

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as participating in were meetings with the President of the Board of Trade in December 1913, with War Office officials in April 1915 about compensation payable to farmers for damage done to the property by military forces, and with Lord Selbourne (President of the Board of Agriculture) on 20 October 1915 to discuss agricultural labour.<sup>67</sup>

### **CHARLES WELLER KENT'S RESIGNATION, AND SUCCESSORS**

As noted above, Kent was – if not a constant attendee – certainly present at the vast majority of Parliamentary Committee and Executive Committee meetings during his tenure. Although the files are remarkably silent on the reason and precise date of his resignation, it is possible to discern from the minutes of meetings the period during which he was evidently standing down. He did not, for instance, attend an important meeting of the Finance & Parliamentary Committee on 24 October 1916 at which it was decided to task a sub-committee with the drafting of ‘a manifesto on the agricultural policy of the Union’, nor that sub-committee’s meeting six days later at which the manifesto was agreed and a resolution passed that ‘any candidate [whom the NFU would support] must give a pledge that he would be free from all party ties on all subjects affecting Agriculture.’ And Kent was then also absent from both the Parliamentary & General Purposes Committee and the Executive Committee sessions on 7 November 1916 at which the manifesto was formally adopted. In addition to the pledge noted above, the manifesto set out four specific measures which the NFU advocated – increased security of tenure for tenant farmers, reform of the system of local taxation, improved transport facilities for domestic agricultural produce, and better ‘housing and general conditions for the agricultural labourer, so as to make his life more attractive.’<sup>68</sup> This series of meetings would clearly be of the highest priority and importance for anyone acting as the NFU’s Parliamentary Lobbyist, and it seems reasonable to infer from Kent’s total absence that he had by then left his post.

In fact, the last meeting at which Kent is recorded as having attended was an emergency conference between the Executive Committee and representatives of the War Office and the Board of Agriculture on 21 June 1916 to discuss the details of a scheme by which the government would purchase wool.<sup>69</sup> By the time of the 7 November 1916 meeting of the Executive Committee, Charles Weller Kent’s association with the NFU had certainly ended: the minutes indicate that one of the attendees was C.W. Atkins, who is listed as ‘Parliamentary Lobbyist.’ In parentheses

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following Mr Atkins' name is the phrase 'M.L.E.', which presumably stands for *Mark Lane Express*.<sup>70</sup> The files give no indication at all as to why Kent was no longer acting as the Union's lobbyist, nor of the precise date at which his resignation took effect. We know only that he resigned rather than was sacked, from one reference – on 28 March 1917, H.T. Hincks 'asked whether the Parliamentary Lobbyist was to be re-appointed, as he had not seen anything of his labours for some considerable time.' H.W. Palmer (the NFU Secretary) responded that 'the Parliamentary Lobbyist resigned some time in the middle of last year, and it was thought better to leave the appointment open until Parliament had settled down, at some future date.'<sup>71</sup>

According to the files, C.W. Atkins attended only three meetings as the NFU's second Parliamentary Lobbyist – in addition to the 7 November 1916 meeting mentioned above, he was also present at Executive Committee meetings on 6 December 1916 and on 24 January 1917.<sup>72</sup> There is nothing in the files to suggest who Atkins was, how he came to be the NFU's lobbyist, or that he made any contribution to those meetings; other than being recorded as having been at the three meetings, C.W. Atkins has left no substantive trace in the NFU archives. The Union then operated for the next 18 months with no suggestion that it had a lobbyist, until it is recorded in July 1918 that, 'The appointment of a Parliamentary Secretary was deferred.'<sup>73</sup> The following month, the Parliamentary Committee had evidently set in train some process for finding a new lobbyist (presumably through an advertisement, although the minutes do not make this clear), as the outcome of their review of a number of applications was that Mr George W. Daw was invited to attend an Executive Committee meeting on 20 August 1918, at which he 'was unanimously adopted (at a salary of £500) as Parliamentary Organiser of the NFU. He has been Parliamentary agent for the past fourteen years in the Borough of Wandsworth, and previously held a similar position at Leicester.'<sup>74</sup> It is noticeable that although he was in fact responsible for the Union's parliamentary affairs, George Daw was not described as the NFU's 'lobbyist' – rather, the files record him as being their Parliamentary Agent, or more often as Parliamentary Secretary.<sup>75</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

In the five year period between July 1913 and August 1918, the National Farmers' Union thus had three different lobbyists – Charles Weller Kent who held the post for three years; C.W. Atkins who attended three meetings in less than three months,

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followed by an 18 month interregnum; and then George D. Daw who assumed the role towards the end of the First World War. The files which exist in the NFU archive – and the pages of the *Mark Lane Express* – do give us some indication of the issues on which Kent worked and of some of his activities. However, it is much more difficult to conclude definitively from them what impact he had on both the NFU and the government – we have few precise details of the advice he tendered to the organisation, and nothing at all on the methods he used when lobbying parliamentarians and officials. It is fair to say that the Union appears to have been relatively sophisticated in its broad approach to political engagement before Kent's appointment, and that there seems to be no obvious shift in the group's thinking or tactics following his appointment. That might lead us to conclude that Kent was not outstandingly effective.

One particular caveat needs to be borne in mind: Kent was appointed in July 1913 precisely because the National Farmers' Union was expanding rapidly and was by then beginning to develop a strategy for engaging with the policymaking process. The Union felt itself to be on the verge of being able to exercise significant influence on government. Only one year into Kent's time in post, all changed with the outbreak of the First World War, and for the remainder of Kent's tenure the NFU was inevitably and necessarily unable to develop along the lines which had been envisaged when Kent was appointed. One example is illustrative here, though there are many others recorded in the files: at the end of 1916, the NFU considered the issue of reform of local taxation. Clearly this was an issue on which as their lobbyist Kent would have been active in normal circumstances. Ultimately, though, E.M. Nunneley noted that nothing could be done immediately beyond the preparation of a plan to be implemented following the war: 'The present was not a time when they should ask Parliament to meddle with thorny questions of that sort, but the time would come, and if it was not discussed and got ready beforehand they would be in a very poor plight.'<sup>76</sup>

Once the war was concluded and domestic politics began to be placed on a more regular footing, the National Farmers' Union did indeed step up its political engagement to a new level – as one writer notes, by the end of 1917 the NFU 'determined to play a more forceful role in agricultural politics', and appointed a full-time Secretary based in London to that end.<sup>77</sup> Having tried unsuccessfully to persuade

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the two main parties' whips to allow agriculturalists to run unopposed in a number of constituencies, the Union sponsored independent candidates in six constituencies in the 1918 general election<sup>78</sup>; the group urged that the 1917 Representation of the People Bill be opposed on the basis that the redrawing of constituency boundaries it proposed would have the effect of increasing the number of MPs representing cities at the expense of rural areas; and it asked that a system of proportional representation be introduced as a means of ensuring 'the permanent representation of agriculturalists' in the House of Commons.<sup>79</sup> Most particularly, as the prospect of an end to the war grew closer, the NFU's mass membership came to realise the importance of contributing to the Parliamentary Fund – so, while it had stood at £480 in 1913 when Kent began as the Union's lobbyist and was still only £640 by the end of 1916 when he left, the Parliamentary Fund increased rapidly thereafter and reached a total of £5,694 7s 1d by October 1918 (albeit now divided into a Parliamentary Election Fund and a Parliamentary Organisation Fund).<sup>80</sup> Had Charles Weller Kent been acting as the NFU's parliamentary lobbyist at this time rather than between 1913 and 1916, it seems reasonable to suppose that he would have left more of a mark on the Union's official records.

While some colleagues may have better information (in which case I would be delighted to hear from them), I know of no-one who had a job title of 'Parliamentary Lobbyist' in the UK prior to Charles Weller Kent's appointment in July 1913. If that is the case, we could then date the beginnings of modern professional lobbyists in Britain very precisely – and, rather nicely, be able to mark in some way the centenary of that profession in 2013.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to record my gratitude to Philip Norton and Graham Wootton, whose writings initially brought Charles Weller Kent's existence to my notice. We are extremely fortunate that the founders and early leaders of the NFU left relatively detailed accounts of the Union's activities, both in their own internal records and in the pages of the group's official journal, the *Mark Lane Express* – and moreover, owe a debt of gratitude to those later leaders who decided that the Union's official archive should be preserved at what is now the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at Reading University. (In the Notes below, all file references beginning 'SR NFU' indicate material held in the NFU archives at MERL.) Without ready access to that material, it would be impossible to reconstruct the formative years of the organisation at this remove. As it is, though, we have copious information on the group's development and activities – indeed, considerably more official material than is

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publicly available for most interest groups currently operating. (By way of an aside, the interest group scholarly community should collectively consider how best to obtain and store archival material produced by existing lobbying organisations.) The staff at MERL were exceptionally helpful: my thanks in particular to Nathan Williams, Jennifer Glanville, and Guy Baxter. In addition, current and former NFU staff have been most kind in aiding this research, including Barney Holbeche (the NFU's parliamentary lobbyist from 1979 to 2009), Julie Robinson (former head of the NFU's legal department), and Martin Haworth (Acting NFU Director General). Permission to use material in the NFU archive has been granted by both the NFU and MERL. All the staff at the British Library's Newspaper Reading Room at Colindale were tremendously helpful. The online archives of *The Times* and *The Guardian* both offer an invaluable resource to those researching interest groups in a historical context, as does the online archive of *Hansard*. My research was also greatly assisted by Celia Pilkington (Inner Temple Archivist), Lesley Whitelaw (Middle Temple Archivist), Dr Kevin Moloney, Prof. Wyn Grant, and Prof. Grant Jordan.

## NOTES

1. K. Schifftgiesser, *The Lobbyists: The Art and Business of Influencing Lawmakers* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1951), p. 3.
2. C. Souza, *So You Want To Be A Lobbyist?: The Inside Story of the Political Lobbying Industry* (London: Politico's Publishing, 1998), p. 247. Souza is Powell's most vigorous advocate, having worked for him during the 1980s. The details which follow of his career are largely taken from her 'tribute' to him on pp. 247-59. Also see S.E. Finer, *Anonymous Empire: A Study of the Lobby in Great Britain* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1958), pp. 53 and 54; and C. Powell and A. Butler, *The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee: The First Forty Years* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).
3. M. Hollingsworth, *MPs For Hire: The Secret World of Political Lobbying* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p. 5; also see pp. 112-3.
4. G. Alderman, *Pressure Groups and Government in Great Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1984), p. 72.
5. C. Souza, 'Lobby Fodder' [Letter to the Editor], *The Guardian*, 5 October 1993, p. 21.
6. See Alderman, *Pressure Groups and Government in Great Britain*, pp. 65-7.
7. 'Behaviour of "Stranger" in the Commons', *The Guardian*, 6 December 1949, p. 8; 'Stranger in the Commons', *The Guardian*, 14 December 1949, p. 6.
8. E.H. Whetham, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales. Volume VIII: 1914-39* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 68. Also see speeches by H.W. Palmer at Highbridge and Weston-super-Mere in 'Farmers' Union in Somersetshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 29 September 1913, p. 469.
9. 'Market Rasen', *Mark Lane Express*, 17 November 1913, p. 760. The speaker was H.W. Palmer (NFU Secretary).
10. This awareness came, among other sources, from friendly MPs. Beville Stanier MP told an NFU meeting that other groups 'did not fail to clamour after their needs. He was daily receiving shoals of resolutions', and warned that if the Union was to press its case effectively in Parliament 'the driving force must come from the farmers themselves.' See 'Shropshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 February 1914, p. 285. At another meeting, Cecil Harmsworth, the Liberal MP for Luton (and brother of the two great newspaper barons Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere) suggested that

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Parliament 'had been very neglectful of farmers' not because politicians were 'indifferent to the interests of agriculture' but rather because 'there were so many other pressing claims, and in the great press of subjects only those received attention that were able to press their cause with irresistible force.' Incidentally, Harmsworth also stated that at the time of the NFU's formation he had advised Colin Campbell on how to best frame its constitution. See 'Dunstable Branch Annual Dinner', *Mark Lane Express*, 9 March 1914, p. 394.

11. As William May (NFU Treasurer) put it: 'Every other trade had a proper system of organisation, and through those organisations a good representation in Parliament, so that no measure was introduced which would be likely to hurt their particular trades without a voice being raised against it, and an effort made to stop it. That was one of the great objects of the National Farmers' Union.' See 'Essex', *Mark Lane Express*, 30 March 1914, p. 488.

12. 'Huge Meeting at Builth Wells', *Mark Lane Express*, 7 July 1913, p. 49.

13. 'Farmers' Union in Somersetshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 29 September 1913, p. 469.

14. 'Essex', *Mark Lane Express*, 30 March 1914, p. 488.

15. 'Meeting at Newbury', *Mark Lane Express*, 30 June 1913, p. 961. The chairman of the Yorkshire Farmers' Union asserted that the NFU 'had received more attention from Parliament than any other organisation associated with the industry.' See 'New Branch Formed at Thorne', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 February 1914, p. 311.

16. 'Huge Meeting at Builth Wells', *Mark Lane Express*, 7 July 1913, p. 49.

17. 'Farmers' Union in Somersetshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 29 September 1913, p. 469; 'Crewkerne', *Mark Lane Express*, 24 November 1913, p. 735; 'Knighton Branch: Annual Meeting', *Mark Lane Express*, 12 January 1914, p. 61; and 'North Cambridgeshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 16 February 1914, p. 235.

18. Speech by S.A. Whittome in 'North Cambridgeshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 16 February 1914, p. 235. Whittome told another meeting the following week that, 'the Union could do more good by discussing with the Government Bills before they were presented to the House, in preference to waiting until they were on the Statute Book and then trying to get them amended.' See 'Huntingdonshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 February 1914, p. 311.

19. As one member put it, the NFU 'had nothing to do with party politics, but ... a great deal to do with politics'. See E.W. Shepperson speech in 'North Cambridgeshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 26 January 1914, p. 135. Around the same time, the NFU's Secretary, H.W. Palmer said that, 'any man who made party politics his job was better outside the Union.' See 'North Cambridgeshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 16 February 1914, p. 235. Another member was cheered when he told a meeting that the NFU 'consisted of practical, not party, politicians.' See 'Talybont Branch Annual Dinner', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 February 1914, p. 285. Or, in another's words, the NFU 'had nothing to do with parties, but much to do with politicians'. See 'Kent', *Mark Lane Express*, 6 April 1914, p. 525.

20. See, for instance, speech by Gilbert Parker in 'Somerset', *Mark Lane Express*, 2 February 1914, p. 181. The President of the Hampshire Farmers' Union discussed the role farmers might play in 'agricultural politics, which he characterised as being distinct from party politics.' See 'Oxfordshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 2 March 1914, p. 353.

21. 'Wiltshire', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 March 1914, p. 449.

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22. G. Wootton, *Pressure Groups in Britain, 1720-1970: An Essay in Interpretation with Original Documents* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), pp. 216-7; P. Norton, *Parliament in British Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.199; S. Moore, 'The Agrarian Conservative Party in Parliament, 1920-1929,' *Parliamentary History*, 10(2), 1991, p. 352. The appointment of a lobbyist after only five years in existence is difficult to square with Moore's assertion (p. 351) that the NFU 'at first tried hard to avoid political lobbying.'
23. SR NFU AD1(1), Parliamentary Committee: 10 July 1913, p. 219. (Note that page numbering in this original file stops at p. 239, so that any references below to later pages in SR NFU AD1(1) are simply based on my own page count.)
24. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 30 July 1913, p. 223. The record of this meeting is also reproduced in the NFU's 1913 annual report (also known as the *Yearbook*), pp. 67-9; and in the NFU Supplement to the *Mark Lane Express*, 4 August 1913, p. 2.
25. This advertisement was published in the 'Situations, &c., Vacant' column in *The Times* on 18 April 1913 (p. 16) and on 19 April 1913 (p. 14). Two other advertisements in *The Times* during April – July 1913 were found which could conceivably be the NFU, but both seem less consistent with the position and thus less likely – one (on 9 April 1913, p. 15) was seeking a full-time Secretary with a knowledge of Parliament for a business association, and the other (on 23 June 1913, p. 15; repeated on 24 June 1913, p. 16, and again on 10 July 1913, p. 15) was for a Secretary to an 'important council (now forming)'
26. None of the files in the NFU archive refer to him as 'Charles Weller Kent', but his Christian name was revealed in the course of biographical research which will be reported in a forthcoming paper. His name is given incorrectly as 'Mr G. Weller Kent' in both G. Wootton, *Pressure Groups in Britain, 1720-1970* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), p. 216, and in P. Self and H.J. Storing, *The State and The Farmer* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp. 42-3.
27. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 30 July 1913, p. 223.
28. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 30 July 1913, p. 223.
29. SR NFU AC2(1), NFU Income and Expenditure Ledger: 7 May 1914, p. 23.
30. SR NFU AC2(1), NFU Income and Expenditure Ledger: 15 July 1914, p. 24; 21 October 1914, p. 26; 31 December 1914, p.27; 28 April 1915, p. 29; 10 August 1915, p. 30; 18 October and 31 December 1915, p. 31; 3 May 1916, p. 33; 8 August 1916, p. 34; 12 October 1916, p. 35.
31. This comparison was calculated using average earnings as a measure on <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweuk/> (calculation made on 14 September 2009).
32. Personal communication to the author from Lesley Whitelaw, Archivist of Middle Temple, 17 September 2009.
33. SR NFU AD1(1), Annual General Meeting: 25 February 1914, p. 262.
34. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 20 October 1915, p. 370.
35. See, for instance, SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 10 December 1913, p. 251; 9 June 1914, p. 288; 28 April 1915, p. 343; and 3 May 1916, p. 398.
36. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 20 October 1915, p. 371.
37. SR NFU AD1(2), Annual General Meeting: 27 February 1918, p. 74.
38. In fact, Kent had recently discussed the Bill with Sir Luke White but 'in view of the Bill not having been officially considered yet by the National Farmers' Union, I

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- was not in a position to commit the Union to supporting Sir Luke White.’ See C.W. Kent, ‘The NFU and Parliament’, *Mark Lane Express*, 23 March 1914, p. 446.
39. SR NFU AD 1(1), Executive Committee: 18 March 1914, pp. 278-9.
  40. SR NFU AD1(1), Annual General Meeting: 24 February 1915, pp. 320-1.
  41. See H.W. Palmer speech in Weston-super-Mere in ‘Farmers’ Union in Somersetshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 29 September 1913, p. 469.
  42. *NFU Yearbook*, 1913, pp. 108-9.
  43. S.H. Beer, *Modern British Politics: A Study of Parties and Pressure Groups* (London, Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 110-1.
  44. *NFU Yearbook*, 1913, pp. 109-10.
  45. ‘Lincolnshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 13 October 1913, p. 511.
  46. ‘Branch Formed at Frome’, *Mark Lane Express*, 3 November 1913, p. 629.
  47. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee, 22 October 1913, p. 238. This echoed the suggestion which was put to an NFU meeting by D.A. Thomas (a former Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil) that if the farmers organised themselves at elections they could have a decisive outcome in the results in perhaps 100 constituencies, and those 100 MPs could then ‘nine times out of ten, sway the Cabinet in whatever might happen to be in power.’ See ‘Newport’, *Mark Lane Express*, 8 December 1913, p. 801.
  48. For an interesting case study on this point, see D. Rolf, ‘The Politics of Agriculture: Farmers’ Organisations and Parliamentary Representation in Herefordshire, 1909-1922’, *Midland History*, 2/3 (1974), pp. 168-86.
  49. See C. Featherstone speech in ‘Oxfordshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 16 February 1914, p. 233. This notion was put – more starkly than was his custom – by H.W. Palmer (NFU Secretary) at a meeting in Donington: ‘The stupendous ignorance of agricultural questions of some members of Parliament who represented agricultural constituencies was amazing. If they could get one or two practical farmers in the House they would be able to bring agriculture to the front.’ See ‘Lincolnshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 12 January 1914, p. 34.
  50. ‘Annual Dinner of the Barnsley Branch’, *Mark Lane Express*, 15 December 1913, p. 878.
  51. See report of speech by Gilbert Parker: ‘Wiltshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 8 December 1913, p. 805.
  52. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 22 October 1913, p. 242.
  53. SR NFU AD1(1), Annual General Meeting: 25 February 1914, p. 263; 24 February 1915, pp. 325-6. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 7 November 1916, p. 424.
  54. See W.S. Austin speech in ‘Kent’, *Mark Lane Express*, 6 April 2009, p. 525.
  55. ‘South Herefordshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 25 August 1913, p. 299.
  56. In one of his newspaper columns, Kent himself noted this, saying that he and Palmer ‘together, have been interviewing a good many members of Parliament in the lobbies, and explaining to them the cardinal points in the programme of the National Union.’ See C.W. Kent, ‘The NFU and Parliament’, *Mark Lane Express*, 16 March 1914, p. 407.
  57. ‘Lincolnshire’, *Mark Lane Express*, 11 August 1913, p. 239.
  58. ‘The Insurance Act Amendment Bill’, *Mark Lane Express*, 18 August 1913, p. 267.
  59. C.W. Kent, ‘The NFU and Parliament’, *Mark Lane Express*, 9 February 1914, p. 192.

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60. C.W. Kent, 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 16 February 1914, p. 230.
  61. C.W. Kent. 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 23 February 1914, p. 283.
  62. C.W. Kent, 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 2 March 1914, p. 351.
  63. C.W. Kent, 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 2 March 1914, p. 351.
  64. C.W. Kent, 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 16 March 1914, pp. 407 and 409.
  65. C.W. Kent, 'The NFU and Parliament', *Mark Lane Express*, 30 March 1914, p. 486.
  66. See 'Deputation to Mr Bonar Law', *Mark Lane Express*, 9 February 1914, pp. 191-2.
  67. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 10 December 1913, p. 252; 28 April 1915, p. 348; and 20 October 1915, pp. 371-2.
  68. SR NFU AD1(1), Finance & Parliamentary Committee: 24 October 1916, p. 414. SR NFU AD1(1), Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee: 30 October 1916, p. 417. SR NFU AD1(1), Parliamentary & General Purposes Committee, 7 November 1916, pp. 418-9. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee, 7 November 1916, p. 423.
  69. SR NFU AD1(1), NFU Emergency Meeting: 21 June 1916, p. 409.
  70. SR NFU AD1(1), Executive Committee: 7 November 1916, p. 423.
  71. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 28 March 1917, p. 25.
  72. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 6 December 1916, p. 5; and 24 January 1917, p. 12.
  73. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 17 July 1918, p. 99.
  74. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 20 August 1918, p. 102.
  75. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 15 October 1918, p. 105; and 17 December 1918, p. 124. SR NFU AD1(2), General Committee: 16 October 1918, p. 107.
  76. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 6 December 1916, p. 7.
  77. A.F. Cooper, *British Agricultural Policy, 1912-36: A Study in Conservative Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 35.
  78. *NFU Yearbook*, 1918, p. 99. The NFU continued to sponsor a small number of candidates in the general elections of 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1935, before abandoning the practice. See F.W.S. Craig, *Minor Parties at British Parliamentary Elections 1885-1974* (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 56 and 121.
  79. SR NFU AD1(2), Annual General Meeting: 21 February 1917, p. 19. SR NFU AD1(2), Parliamentary & General Purposes Committee: 11 April 1917, p. 31; 14 June 1917, pp. 36-7. SR NFU AD1(2), Executive Committee: 12 December 1917, p. 63; 20 August 1918, p. 102.
  80. SR NFU AD1(2), General Committee: 16 October 1918, p. 107.

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**HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF RIGHT TO KNOW:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to explore the historical development of *right to know* in the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act (EPCRA) as an example of “legislation for revelation” approach to public policy and its influence on risk communication. Following a historiography approach based on identifying primary sources, contextualizing, interpreting, and narrating both legal and academic literature, this study traces briefly the origins of the ideological concept of the public’s right to know, the historical development of the right-to-know concept in EPCRA, and ending with the effects of EPCRA in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, analytically observing how the legislation generated opportunities for the field of public relations. Several major findings include: (1) the right to know in EPCRA cannot be traced to one single origin; (2) EPCRA’s unique characteristics were an effort to experiment with the right to know as a new approach to policymaking; and (3) although full of loopholes and being targeted by opponents, EPCRA seems to have partially achieved its main goals of reactivating and boosting local and state legislations, creating a database on the release of toxic materials, reducing the use of toxic and hazardous materials in general, and allowing citizens, scientists, and private organizations to participate in the decision making on such issues. This study is important to public relations because the enforcement and success of the right-to-know policies depend almost solely in the ability of the public to receive, understand, process, use, and distribute information.

**KEY WORDS:** Risk communication, right to know, EPCRA, history, public relations

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## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF RIGHT TO KNOW: IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

The right-to-know approach to public policy—also known as regulation through revelation – is based on the ideas of self-governance and public participation in the decision-making process (Florini, 2007; Hamilton, 2005) and was made into a U. S. federal law in the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act (EPCRA) of 1986.<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA has served as a model for more than 80 other countries since and was the first federal law in the United States to fully embrace the right-to-know approach to public policy.

The purpose of this research is to explore the historical development of *right to know* in the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act (EPCRA) as an example of “legislation for revelation” approach to public policy and its influence on risk communication. Following a historiography approach based on identifying primary sources, contextualizing, interpreting, and narrating both legal and academic literature, this study traces briefly the origins of the ideological concept of the public’s right to know, the historical development of the right-to-know concept in EPCRA, and ending with the effects of EPCRA in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, analytically observing how the legislation generated opportunities for the field of public relations. As the community-right-to-know idea at the core of EPCRA created communication opportunities for different groups in society, this paper also provides a critical discussion on how these opportunities came to be and what they mean for the practice and research of public relations. Overall, while the fundamental concepts of community right to know mirror public relations guidelines and ethical codes of conduct, the field falls short in the implementation of its basic philosophy and tenets. This study is important to the study of public relations because the enforcement and success of the right-to-know policies depend almost solely in the ability of the public to receive, understand, process, use, and distribute information.

### MODERN RISK SOCIETY

The principles of the public’s right to know, self-governance, and community involvement may constitute the core of EPCRA, but EPCRA’s adoption was firmly grounded in actual historic events as much as in ideological principles. In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, authors including Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck started to see how the rapidly growing complexity of modern social organizations

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made it virtually impossible for any governmental institution to deal with social problems relying solely on governmental apparatuses (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). At the same time, more and more authors in the social sciences and humanities have pointed out the failure of exclusively market-based policies in providing just and desirable conditions to society as a whole. The context in which the 21<sup>st</sup> century society begun became known as what Beck called “the risk society.”

In 1986 Beck published *Risikogesellschaft - Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, translated to English six years later as *Risk Society*. In it, Beck portrayed a constantly changing world in its process of modernization and free of the traditional gridlocks of the industrial society. Beck’s thesis was that society was “witnessing not the end but the *beginning* of modernity – that is, of modernity *beyond* its classical industrial design” (p. 10). For Beck, that new stage of modernity will be what Beck called *reflexive modernization*, one of his central theories: “The argument is that, while in classical industrial society the “logic” of wealth production dominates the “logic” of risk production, in the risk society this relationship is reversed” (p.12).

Although many other authors, like Rachel Carson (1962) for example, identified environmental problems as a serious threat to society, Beck’s work created a new lens for the social sciences to study the concept of environmental risk as the central focus of analysis, replacing the role of social institutions. Beck (1992, 1999) also proposed that, with the failure of social institutions to deal with the broad concept of risk, society would need to turn more and more to civic participation and self-governance in all stages of government and society. For Beck, only through the inclusion of the public in the decision-making process would governments be able to prevent and ameliorate environmental problems. He also defended the concept that well-informed local communities would be more able to monitor and react to local risks.

According to Beck (1992, 1999), the critique of the scientific development in a reflexive examination belongs in the public sphere, putting the lay public and the scientists at the same level of importance in the political process. Environmental sociologist Rosa (2000) wrote that Giddens’ and Beck’s theories on modernization and risk society should be considered “theories of society and environment” because of the present concern for hazards in the contemporary world and over the

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vulnerability of the environment. For Rosa, risk is a “valuable analytic lens for evaluating past and future impacts of humans on the environment” (p.96).

### **Risk and EPCRA**

In response to past and future impacts of humans on the environment, and specifically the chemical industry, EPCRA, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1986, listed 400 out of 60,000 chemicals in commercial use in the United States as extremely hazardous. The right to know observed in environmental impact statements obligates risk-generating organizations to provide complete, truthful, and accurate reports about toxic and hazardous materials to the local governments.<sup>xxxix</sup> The burden of revelation fell on the risk-generating organization, not on the government, which, according to Hadden (1989), should “ensure that the other parties can exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities . . . [by] designing and, if necessary, redesigning public policies” (p.217).

EPCRA allows citizens to enforce the law through civil suits<sup>xxxix</sup> based on any of the civil, administrative, or criminal penalties listed on section 325, which include the failure to provide complete, truthful, and accurate information. However, to be able to enforce the law, citizens needed first to be able to access, understand, and process the information into action (Bass and MacLean, 1993). According to Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA, 2007) own regulation, it has an “affirmative responsibility” to collect and disseminate information to further public health and environmental goals: “Empowering the public with information helps assure [industry] compliance with existing laws and encourages companies to take additional measures to reduce industrial chemical releases” (p.3).

One way EPCRA promotes public participation in the decision-making process is through the requirement of the formation of Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC), which are designed to plan for manufacturing emergencies and to serve as monthly community forums where local residents, government officials, industry representatives, health and safety officials, and any concerned individuals and organizations can request information and voice concerns.<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA and LEPCs have four major provisions: emergency planning,<sup>xxxix</sup> emergency release notification,<sup>xxxix</sup> hazardous chemical storage reporting requirements,<sup>xxxix</sup> and the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI),<sup>xxxix</sup> which requires a publicly available EPA database that contains information on toxic chemical releases and other waste management

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activities reported annually by certain covered industry groups as well as federal facilities.

### **Risk Communication**

For this study, it is important to understand a critical intersection between risk communication and the role played by environmental risks in society of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Cox (2006), for example, credited the importance of risk communication to the way in which it looks at the effectiveness of communication strategies for conveying information about health and environmental risks, the impact of cultural understanding of risk on the public's judgment of the acceptability of a risk, and the ways to develop more democratic methods to involve affected communities in evaluating risk.

According to the National Research Council (1989), risk communication is a means to open, responsible, informed, reasonable, scientific and value-laden discussion of risks associated with personal health and safety practices involved in living and working in close proximity to harmful activities and toxic substances – a concept that was early adopted by EPA. This view of risk communication typically involves large organizations whose activities can pose a risk to members of a community.

According to Leiss (1996), risk communication started as a source-oriented approach based on the locale where risks are present. It then evolved to its present approach of communication based on shared social relations, focusing on experiences in common and public relations practices. “As such, there is no single psychology or sociology of risks . . . Risks are not necessarily selected and perceived due to their scientific merit or personal benefit, but out of a combination of social and cultural factors, denotative and connotative reasons” (Palenchar, 2008, p.3). Lundgren and McMakin (2004), for example, listed nothing less than 12 approaches to the study of risk communication: communication process, the NRC's approach, mental models, crisis communication, convergence communication, three-challenge, social constructionist, hazard plus outrage, mental noise, social network contagion, social amplification of risk, and social trust.

Hadden (1989) developed a four-level concept of right to know applied to environmental risks involving toxic and hazardous chemicals. The “basic” level has the purpose of ensuring that citizens can find information about chemicals and holds

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the government accountable for ensuring that data are created and available. The “risk reduction” level aims to reduce risks from chemicals, “preferably through voluntary industry action but also by government if necessary” (p.17). The “better decision-making” level allows citizens to participate in the decision-making process about the appropriate levels of hazardous materials in their communities. Finally, the “alter balance of power” level empowers citizens to participate in the decision-making process in the same or higher standing than government and industry. Ultimately risk communication is educational and culture-forming processes much in line with the understanding of the role of informed and educated citizenry.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the origins of the right-to-know principle in EPCRA?

RQ2: How was EPCRA developed and discussed in the process of writing and implementing the law?

RQ3: What are the implications of EPCRA on the field of public relations?

### **METHODOLOGY**

History, as a methodological approach, is a powerful tool to reveal what no other scientific methodology can: a contextually rich understanding of how phenomena and events are born and developed and, most importantly, how they relate to other phenomena and events. Fischer (1970) argued that history, when properly done, can be useful in “several substantive ways” (p. 315). Mark Jarzombek (2000) called historiography “the dialectical equivalent in history of the modernist notion of self-consciousness” (p.8). The work of historiography is to reveal the holes, viewpoints, interests, and discontinuities in history in order to provide a fair closure to the historical narrative, which usually tends to be absolutist.

According to Barzun (2002), the criteria by which history may be known are four: narrative, chronology, concreteness, and memorability. History is, before all things, a story (narrative) that gives particulars of change within time and place (chronology) based on what actually happened (concreteness) – and not on ideas and philosophical conjectures – about an event that is both worth remembering and capable of being remembered (memorability).

With this in mind, the purpose of this research is to explore the historical development and importance of the ideological concept of right to know in EPCRA as an example of the “legislation for revelation” approach to public policy and its

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implication for public relations and specifically risk communication. Such an approach is important to the study of public relations because the enforcement and success of the right-to-know policies depend almost solely in the ability of the public to receive, understand, process, use, and distribute information.

In order to answer the research question, a review of the academic, scientific, and legal literature was conducted on EPCRA, right to know, environmental justice, environmental communication, risk communication, risk society, accidents involving the spill of toxic and hazardous materials, lawsuits (especially the ones that reached the Supreme Court), community participation in decision and policy making, environmental history, environmental sociology, and environmental policy and law.

The second step was to look into official documents on EPCRA's implementation, the first writings about EPCRA during the process of its proposal and after its adoption, and the legal and academic literature addressing EPCRA since then. It is important to highlight that, during this process, the amount of disagreement in the literature forced the researchers to take a deeper look into the original writings of authors whose ideas were instrumental to the development of a concept of right to know. Overall, more than 5,000 letters, newspaper articles, official records, and other documents were reviewed for this study.

The historiographic work consisted of: (1) identifying primary sources, including triangulation of the text in different digital collections; (2) contextualizing the literature since there were conflicts about certain generalizations. In order to recreate the historical context, the researchers went back to the primary sources and tried to identify the events that were happening as the authors of the original documents were writing to avoid temporal biases; (3) interpreting each document offered a clue to both its causality and its intentionality, especially the transcriptions of the Congressional meetings about the first Constitution of the United States, the deliberative open sessions about the enactment of EPCRA to inform the letter of the law before its constituency, and the writings of the Founding Fathers of the United States; and (4) narrating, creating a historical narrative style that allowed for revisionism as required by the conflicting literature.

## **THE IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A "RIGHT" TO KNOW**

The right to know, as an idea and not a legal right,<sup>xxxix</sup> evolved in two distinct periods. In its pre-conceptual form, it was a right to be educated about the purposes of

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government and to be informed about the actions of government as formulated by John Milton, William Bolla, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, George Mason, John Wilson, and James Madison. In its contemporary understanding, especially following Susan Hadden's (1989) definition, the people's right to know is a mechanism to empower people through education and knowledge so they can watch over their governments and industries and improve their lives. In this section, the ideological concept of a right to know will be briefly presented in a historiographic narrative of the academic literature and original documentation of two distinct periods. The first part focuses on the conceptualizations of a right to know from the period before the War for Independence to the enactment of the Bill of Rights. The second presents the evolution of the right to know in the American legislation from the publishing of Harold Cross's *The People's Right to Know* in 1953 to the implementation of EPCRA.

### **An Instrumental Right**

Since the earliest debates on American independence and during the period from the *Articles of the Confederation* to the enactment of the *Bill of Rights*, the ideas of freedom and self-governance were in the forefront of the revolutionary discussions (Rabban, 1985). Among those rights, Uhm (2008) argued that the right to know can be found in the text of the Declaration in which Jefferson accused King George III of England of making it virtually impossible for the American people to find out information about the British government's actions. For Jefferson, the concept of a right to know was more than a simple right to access information, but it included the right to be educated about the functions of the government.

In the period of the American and French revolutions, political activist and inventor Thomas Paine,<sup>xxxix</sup> author of *Common Sense*, wrote later in his life in 1791 *The Rights of Man* as he participated actively in the preparation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens by The National Assembly of France. In *The Rights of Man*, he included the text of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," which brought a version of the right to know in one of its seventeen items: "Fifteen: Every community has a right to demand of all its agents an account of their conduct."

Referring to the right to know, Uhm (2008) said that "eighteen-century Americans clearly understood its conceptual implications for democratic republicanism" (p.397). Although, Uhm's remark might be exaggerated, the letters

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from Jefferson, Madison, Mason, and Paine, are evidence that at least, some (very few probably) knew in different levels the instrumental importance of a right to know.

Although the right to know was expressly included neither in the Constitution nor in the Bill of Rights, it became a pillar in the defense of openness in government and of democratic processes in the American society. Uhm declared that the idea of the right to know was not only present, but was part of the daily discussions among the Founding Fathers of the United States and the framers of the American Constitution.

### **Agitation and Legislation**

Before EPCRA, the first attempts to establish a right to know came from a few legal scholars and from journalists, notably from Sigma Delta Chi (precursor of the Society of Professional Journalists) during the 1950s. Harold Cross, a retired attorney for a newspaper, made the term “right to know” popular with the publication of *The Public’s Right to Know*, in which he wrote his findings in a study of access to government information, focusing especially on the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) of 1946. Cross (1953) found that the vague text of the law and the poorly defined exemptions were used by agencies to deny access to information and not to make it available. Cross’s findings prompted a series of analyses and essays on the right to know, especially on the 11 years of hearings for the Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (FOIA), an amendment to APA.

Parks (1957) listed the main complaints of journalists and difficulties faced by the public, even legislators, while trying to get access to governmental activities, including: records, background reports, and proceedings frequently are not available or open to the press; many releases and publications are inadequate, tardy, slanted, politically motivated, or paternalistic; and indirect restrictions are applied to scientific, press, and other communications outside the government. Parks also argued that the right to know had constitutional standing<sup>xxxix</sup> as the Ninth Amendment that protected other rights not expressly protected in the Constitution and that those rights could have equal standing as the enumerated rights. Moreover, he argued that an interpretation of the First Amendment through the words of James Madison and some Supreme Court rulings gave the right to know a very important constitutional standing as it was fundamental to secure other rights:

It is clear that the primary purpose of the freedom-of-speech and press clause of the First Amendment was to prevent the government from interfering with the communication of facts and views about

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governmental affairs, in order that all could properly exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a free society. This clause was intended as one of the guarantees of the people's right to know. Its pivotal importance to other freedoms was recognized clearly. In Madison's words, "... the right of freely examining public characters and measures, and of free communication thereon, is the only effective guardian of every other right." The Supreme Court has recognized this connection repeatedly.<sup>xxxix</sup>

By 1966, FOIA was the first statutory regulation that included a right-to-know instrument. However, as legal scholar Jacobson (2003) noted, the FOIA was "a broader effort to establish a statutory right to access government information" (p.344). Although the FOIA was modified and amended several times throughout the years, the right in the FOIA is only for the public to be able to gain access to information upon request. However, in 1977 Ivester (1977) recharged the discussion on the right to know in his article *The Constitutional Right to Know*. Ivester proceeded to argue for the constitutionality of the right to know, and that the intent of the framers of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to secure the right to know, especially through the First Amendment:

Although the quest for the intent of the framers is fraught with perils, it can reasonably be said that some recognition and protection of the right to know was contemplated or presumed by many of those who participated in the process of producing the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Indeed there is some evidence suggesting that the Founding Fathers intended to guarantee the right to know per se, that is, that the First Amendment was specifically intended to extend to the people a directly enforceable right to know about governmental affairs. (p.119)

Ivester's article can be seen as another attempt to prevent the idea of a right to know from succumbing to government secrecy, but it also reflected the struggles of the late 1970s on government secrecy. More importantly, the right to know still had no recognized legal or constitutional support.

### **THE RIGHT TO KNOW AS APPROACH TO PUBLIC POLICY**

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act of 1986 is such a different approach to law and policy that it has been heralded both as the "most successful piece of environmental legislation" and a "complete waste of time" by different people and, sometimes, by the same analysts. Bolstridge (1992), for example, mentioned that EPCRA has been considered "a model of information

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development and access in environmental regulatory circles,” and that “legislation similar to EPCRA is being evaluated by several other nations” (p.1). At the same time, Bolstridge observed that “the law has been criticized for many reasons” (p.2).

Since 1976, when Gerald Ford signed the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) – the first major piece of legislation that addressed the specific problem of toxic waste management – and throughout Jimmy Carter’s presidency, there were many attempts to create a law that successfully controlled the massive amount of toxic and hazardous materials being released into the environment (Mowrey and Redmond, 1993).

A piece of legislation written by James Florio, a Representative from New Jersey with experience in both environmental and commerce issues, was described by some in the Anti-toxic Movement as its last hope to get comprehensive legislation against toxic waste dumping passed before the administration of President Ronald Reagan took power (Mowrey and Redmond, 1993).

Florio’s law, named Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), started out with a dispositive that, besides being more aggressive and specific previous regulations, put the burden of paying for control and cleanup of toxic spills on industry and not on government. However, Congress passed CERCLA stripped clean from its liability clauses.

The Anti-toxic and other environmental movements needed a new push to get the fight back to the federal level once more and end the stalemate. Although thousands of toxic spill sites were being revealed in the U.S. between 1980 and 1985, the push came from elsewhere, in the form of a tragic accident in India. On December 3, 1984, an accident in a Union Carbide pesticide plant caused the release of a cloud of toxic gas over Bhopal, India. Thousands died and many more fell ill from breathing the gas.<sup>xxxix</sup> The news hit home in the United States less than a year later when another Union Carbide plant released a cloud of toxic gas over Institute, in West Virginia. Though less tragic than Bhopal almost two hundred people were hospitalized.

The tragedy in Bhopal and the accident in the West Virginia at Union Carbide plants gave new life to the Anti-Toxic Movement. Representative Florio saw an opportunity to reinstall some of the provisions that were stripped from the previous

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version and to add a few more features based on the right-to-know laws as developed in New Jersey and the city of Philadelphia.

Putting together all he learned from the failures of Superfund since the enactment of CERCLA in 1980 and aiming to provide citizens a weapon to protect them even from the EPA if necessary, Florio (1985) and his staff worked on the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). Among the goals of SARA was to reactivate the liability provisions of CERCLA, and re-empower local toxic-waste and right-to-know laws that were made moot by the lack of federal standards. However, according to Florio and, later, to legal analysts (e.g., Bolstridge, 1992), the most important part of SARA was its Title III, a stand-alone piece of legislation focused on community empowerment based on emergency preparedness and the right to know.

Finally in 1986, after committee and congressional conferences, the EPCRA was enacted. The national campaign against toxic waste had won the war for the right to know. However, it had also won the responsibility of proving that informed citizens would do their part. And for that purpose, they needed more than information: they needed education.

### **Public Relations and Risk Communication**

The enactment of EPCRA provoked a surprising change of tone from the industry representatives. Many large chemical companies tried to be among the first to voice their support for the law against which they had fought so fiercely. Newspapers reported a series of examples where industry worked with citizens groups to diminish the use of toxic and hazardous materials in the years following the enactment of EPCRA. Politicians also jumped on the bandwagon declaring how all sides were cooperating for the success of EPCRA (Melamed, 1988).

Beyond education, one consequence of EPCRA was the expansion of a whole area of expertise in public relations. Because of the toughening of public attitudes on environmental problems, industry needed to deal with the situation in a different way. Crisis management and risk communication became buzzwords as industry executives named liability and corporate responsibility as the forces behind the new approach. According to Swetnic (1988):

Companies are going to have to put information in perspective so people are not unduly concerned about the data that are being supplied to the local committees. To that end his staff is prepared to develop

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brochures, videos and slide presentations to explain a company's compliance with the law. He also has a sensitivity-training program to teach employees to communicate with a plant's neighbors. (p.23)

For some companies, which believed EPCRA was a beneficial evolution, risk communication was used not only to improve relationships with local communities and government, but also to identify new possibilities for future profits. For many companies, risk communication quickly became a synonym for a practice later known as "green wash."

Two years after the enactment of EPCRA, the deadline for the first Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) was approaching and newspapers reported on the "revolution" created by EPCRA's right-to-know approach. More than 200,000 people distributed in approximately 3,000 committees were set up to handle the flood of information coming from an estimated 30,000 industrial facilities (Millar, 1988). However, the greatest "revolution" according to Charles Elkins (1988), director of EPA's office of toxic substances at the time, was that data on chemical hazards in communities were going to be in people's homes.

The expectations around the results of the first TRI to be released in July 1988 were very high. The most important concept at stake was Florio's idea that the right to know would really get people to act and do their part. "The ultimate question is, will we achieve the Jeffersonian ideal of informed citizens who can take a responsible role in making public policy?" Michael S. Baram, (Millar, 1988, p.8) professor of law at Boston University's Center for Law and Technology, summarized.<sup>xxxix</sup>

However, industry, government, and citizens noted a difference in how the roles of industry in communities changed as a result of EPCRA. The results of the first TRI showed an amount of toxic chemicals much higher than anyone expected.<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, which required the creation of local emergency committees, forced industry to deal with the consequences of its production face-to-face with local communities for the first time.

Not long after the first TRI, President George H. W. Bush's administration and Congress passed a new Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. After a few years TRI brought the confirmation that EPCRA was, at least in part, a success. "The total releases in 1989 were 1.3 billion pounds less than that reported in 1987, and 723 million pounds less than industries released in 1988," reported *The New York Times*

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(Hulse, 1999, p.32). However, there were still 22,650 industrial plants releasing 5.7 billion pounds of toxic chemicals into the environment, which added to the cumulative effects and the spreading of contaminated sites. From 1991 to 1994, most of the news mentioning EPCRA or related topics referred to specific contamination issues and health problems in different localities.

EPA would respond in part, by doubling the list of chemicals in 1994, during the administration of Bill Clinton, who openly defended EPCRA's right-to-know provisions against a legislative attempt to weaken EPCRA that failed to pass in the Senate in 1995.<sup>xxxix</sup> In 1997, EPA finally published the expanded TRI. The new TRI included more analytical tools for its interpretation, making it easier on the general public, especially environmental justice organizations, to understand its reports. However, a new law in 1999 stopped the improved TRI information from being published because Congress thought such information might be used by terrorists in planning attacks. OMB Watch,<sup>xxxix</sup> a watchdog organization for open government and the right to know in environmental issues, took on the responsibility predicted by Florio and published on their website what EPA was forbidden to publish (Hulse, 1999). OMB later created the *Right-to-know Network* based on that report.

From that point on, and over and over again, the "terrorism argument" would come back, made either by industry or government, and especially after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001. Today, EPCRA still remains the most comprehensive example of a right-to-know approach in the United States. This showed the resilience of EPCRA even when it was under attack by industry, Congress, and the Executive power. Florio's intent to create a law that would resist the lethargy of EPA resulted in a law that, based on the right-to-know principle, kept creating opportunities for citizens to organize and hold both government and industry accountable for pollution and environmental injustices.

### **RISK COMMUNICATION IN EPCRA**

Beck (1992) argued presciently that only with community involvement in resolving public policy issues will nations be able to reduce risks by increasing personal and public responsibility on one side, and governmental and corporate accountability on the other. The intent behind EPCRA was to bring the public into the policy process. Since its adoption, the public has been invited to voice their opinions and to participate in the process, especially in EPCRA's enforcement and

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reevaluation. The structure of EPCRA, as seen above, differs from the structure of most laws as it follows a tripartite-dialogical approach between public, industry, and government based on information, as Bolstridge (1992) wrote:

Most importantly, EPCRA did not require the EPA to evaluate or interpret the information collected, but only to make the information available in its original form and through some specific types of reports and analyses. The law is based on the premise that it is the responsibility of the public to ask questions and of facilities to address questions as they arise. (p.3)

The contribution of EPCRA to the policy process after the failure of previous legislations, in consonance with Beck's description of the failure of governmental institutions in *Risk Society*, was to provide a way for society to achieve a necessary social goal – the reduction of environmental and health risks related to toxic and hazardous materials – despite the inefficiency of government. However, as noted by Bolstridge (1992), EPCRA intentionally did not provide some of the tools to transform simple information into a true participatory system.

One of the most important results of EPCRA was forcing industry representatives and government officials to sit down with community members and talk to them: explain what they were doing, how they were doing it, and why they were doing it. EPCRA was not a law made to regulate toxic chemicals but to compel the enforcement of other laws that were already in place and to foster the creation of new and better ones. In order to make this approach work, citizens need to be supplied not only with information, but also with an understanding of their role in the political process. If, as Jefferson said, the people are the “depository of the ultimate powers of society,”<sup>xxxix</sup> members of the public need to know how the decision-making process in their society works and how they can exercise their “ultimate powers.”

However, the “languages” of scientists, bureaucrats, and businessmen are not the “language” of the majority of the people who live in the communities where those risk-bearing facilities are located. It is difficult for communities to understand statistical assessments, biomedical descriptions, detailed environmental analysis, economic estimations, and insurance evaluations, and so forth. The majority of the population in the areas of risks, as research has shown,<sup>xxxix</sup> is usually composed of lower income workers who are too busy finding ways to keep their jobs, feed their

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families, and give an education to their kids. TRI is said to be too complex even for some specialists.

Volokh (1992) listed some of the most common problems found in EPCRA. Among them, he mentioned that a) TRI data are self-reported and are not checked for accuracy, b) TRI data are highly sensitive to changes in reporting guidance estimation methods and changes in production levels, c) EPCRA does not apply to facilities with under ten full-time employees, and d) many toxic substances are not included in the over 600 TRI reportable chemicals as they are not currently used in large enough quantities, which may be an incentive to replace listed chemicals with non-listed chemicals.

The process Volokh described reveals the importance of the involvement of communication professionals. Specialized science, health, environmental, financial, risk, legal, and political communicators, analysts, journalists, and public relations practitioners are able to compile and synthesize the information given by experts in different areas and transform it into something meaningful and relatable to the daily lives of the affected communities (Shermer, 1999).

As Hadden (1989) explained, risk communicators can educate community members to know how to protect themselves through environmentally healthy practices, legal actions, and political negotiations. Understanding how the “system” works, citizens can make use of a number of tools to get their voices heard. The functions of public relations fit well with Florio’s intent for EPCRA. The academic and legal literature analyses of right-to-know provisions in general have shown that, based on the use of communication tools and techniques to educate the public, such provisions are usually cheaper, more efficient, and more democratic than provisions based on either on “command-and-control” and “market-based” approaches alone, specially on topics involving a complex set of variables. The history of EPCRA represented in this paper is evidence that a right-to-know provision can be a powerful complement to other types of legislation.

The right-to-know approach of EPCRA opened a number of opportunities for the public relations practice and research that entails more analyses to be adequately understood. Consequently, new laws based on the right-to-know principle being enacted in more than 80 countries are opening a vast new market for communication research, but also for professional journalists, public relations practitioners, and

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communication specialists in health, science, legal, and political communications. The global trend identified by Florini (2007) and Shrivastava (2009) of right-to-know legislation has become a new phenomenon, reflecting Beck's (1992) predictions, but it all started with one piece of legislation, born from the failure of the political process and the claims of citizens in 1986 (Karkkainen, 2000).

## **CONCLUSION**

A few conclusions can be made from the history of EPCRA. First, the right to know in EPCRA cannot be traced to one single origin as it was born from the cries of thousands of citizens and the Anti-toxic and Environmental Justice Movements. However, the theoretical and philosophical construct found in the legal and academic literature after EPCRA (Hadden, 1989; Uhm, 2008) could be verifiably related to the ideas of self-governance and the right to know about the purposes of government championed by Thomas Jefferson during the times of the American Revolution.

Second, EPCRA's unique characteristics – which go beyond the text of the law and allowed for non-governmental organizations, grassroots groups, and a few private organizations to build analytical and educational tools to complement and maximize the force of the law even against Congress and EPA – were not a coincidence or fluke of the system. They were, in fact, a conscientious effort of the legislators, like James Florio, to experiment with the right to know as a new approach to policymaking to correct what they saw as fatal flaws in CERCLA. The governmental failure to enforce and the private sector refusal to comply showed them that neither “command-and-control” nor “market-based” approaches were enough to get industry to reduce the use of toxic chemicals.

Third, although full of loopholes and being targeted by opponents throughout the more than 20 years of its existence, EPCRA seems to have partially achieved its main goals of reactivating and boosting local and state legislations, creating a database on the release of toxic materials, reducing the use of toxic and hazardous materials in general, and allowing citizens, scientists, and private organizations to participate in the decision making on such issues.

Most of the criticisms directed to EPCRA, strangely enough, were part of what EPCRA was supposed to accomplish. As Bolstridge (1992) pointed out, one of the worst criticisms made against EPCRA is that it provides the right to know, but not the right to understand. However, both by following Hadden's analysis (1989) and by

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reading Florio's (1989) intentions for EPCRA, that burden to educate was built into EPCRA to be part of what citizen organizations would do. These organizations were to work with, and demand participation from if necessary, governments and private corporations to improve understanding of the topic. Florio (1989) and others predicted that, once the information was put out there in an organized form, scientists, policymakers, and citizens' organizations would study the database and improve it. The newspaper stories from the 1990s and early 2000s proved that EPCRA did that.

What Florio couldn't have predicted was that the next step: the expansion and improvement of the law in consequence of the needs discovered through the information gathered in the Toxic Release Inventory, the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and by corporations and citizens organizations. Such improvement has not happened in the United States<sup>xxxix</sup> because of the change of political focus in the face the threat of terrorism after 1999 and, especially, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As Rena Steinzor told the Senate's Subcommittee on Superfund and Environmental Health in 2007, "More than any other environmental program, Superfund is a victim of compassion fatigue and political doublespeak."<sup>xxxxix</sup>

The history of EPCRA allows researchers in the fields of communication, history, sociology, law, political sciences, social service, toxicology, waste management, environmental studies, and any other field related to emergency preparedness and public policy issues to understand how information can be used to improve the social-political process involving the release of toxic and hazardous materials. It also serves as stepping stone for extrapolation and exploration of how right-to-know provisions can affect other areas.

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## Notes

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, 1986. 42 U.S.C. 11001 et seq., partially codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 9601-9675 (1988). EPCRA was initially written as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, but it was enacted as a free-standing law.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, section 302.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, section 326.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, section 303.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, sections 301-303.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, section 304.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, sections 311 and 312.

<sup>xxxix</sup> EPCRA, section 313.

<sup>xxxix</sup> In this paper, the "right to know" will be used as an ideological concept and not as a legal right, except when expressly identified otherwise.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Among many of Thomas Paine's writings *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* were instrumental in the preparation of three of the most important documents in American history: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States of America, and the Bill of Rights, not to mention that his fundamental principles, greatly inspired by John Milton and Thomas Locke, were in the center of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists debates.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> The Supreme Court had not yet had the chance to directly analyze the constitutional standing of the right to know at the time.

<sup>xxxix</sup> It is important to point out, though, that Parks' list of the Justices opinions focused on freedom of the press and not freedom to acquire information or the right to know. "It was not of accident or coincidence that the rights to freedom in speech and press were coupled in a single guarantee with the rights of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition for redress of grievances." *Thomas v. Collins*, 323 U.S. 516, 530 (1944) ; "Without a free press there can be no free society. Freedom of the press is not an end in itself. . . ." Mr. Justice Frankfurter (concurring) in *Pennekamp v. Florida*, 328 U.S. 331, 354 (1946). Note the words of Mr. Justice Black, dissenting in *Milk Wagon Drivers Union v. Meadow Moor Dairies*, 312 U.S. 287, 301, 302 (1941): ". . . I view the guarantees of the First Amendment as the foundation upon which our governmental structure rests and without which it could not continue to endure as conceived and planned. Freedom to speak and write about public questions is as important to the life of our government as is the heart to the human body. In fact, this privilege is the heart of our government. If that heart be weakened, the result is debilitation; if it be stilled, the result is death."

<sup>xxxix</sup> Amnesty International counted 7,000 deaths immediately after the release and another 15,000 due to associated illnesses in the following years. More than 100,000 still suffer from diseases associated with the toxic gases. "A Bitter Wind in Bhopal." <http://web.amnesty.org/wire/December2004/Bhopal> (accessed June 28, 2007). The official numbers vary from agency to agency and from country to country. The number of immediate deaths varies from 2,000 to 15,000 and the illness linked to the disaster from 50,000 to 550,000. Amnesty International's numbers were a conservative average of the official tolls and were cited by a number of publications.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Baram. *Ibid.*

<sup>xxxix</sup> A report showed, among other unexpected results, that even the Capitol and the White House were threatened by poor storage of chlorine in the water treatment plant for the District of Columbia. Philip Shabecoff, "The early returns of a toxic poll," *The New York Times*, November 20, 1988, Section 3, p.10.

<sup>xxxix</sup> A group of Senators headed by J. Bennet Johnston and Trent Lott wanted to reduce the list of toxic chemicals in TRI and include a list of exceptions to EPCRA.

<sup>xxxix</sup> The acronym comes from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

<sup>xxxix</sup> Jefferson, letter to Williams Charles Jarvis.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Centner, Terence J., Kriesel, Warren, and Keeler, Andrew G. 1996.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Other right-to-know laws have been discussed at the federal level, but none were enacted up to May, 2009.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Subcommittee on Superfund and Environmental Health of the U.S. Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee Regarding Oversight Hearing on the Federal Superfund Program’s Activities to Protect Public Health. October, 2007.

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**THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS BODY OF KNOWLEDGE  
IN ASSOCIATIONS: GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS**

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One critical element in constructing a history of public relations is separating perception from fact. Although perception has a power in of itself, ultimately the distortions perceptions create may not provide the accuracy or foundational understanding necessary to assess a field of study. First, this article establishes the state-of-the-art of public relations education in the United States as the impetus for the growth of research in associations. Second, the research examines the diversity of disciplines and the evolution of the body of knowledge in the associations where public relations divisions/interest groups/tracks were founded. Third, the evolution toward a more global outreach is assessed through the associations' mission statements with reference to the global research presented.

Prior to the 1980s the common perception expressed by disciplines through associations reflected a limited, if any, purview of the scope of public relations research. For example, presenters from the one association having a public relations division in this early period (1960s through 1980s) presented findings in public relations as if the research outcomes reflected the status in the field as a whole when actually only the members of one association were involved in the research. Other studies reported on master and doctoral levels represented a similar narrow perspective and thus this belief about the nature of public relations was perpetuated. Obviously, for those faculty not in a journalism department, these reports and findings were not as representative of other departmental contexts. However, this obvious gap allowed a major question to be posed: Why was this "gap" happening in the academic arena? Why was one discipline reporting out findings so narrowly limited in scope that other qualified academic faculty in public relations were not addressed nor responding to the limited viewpoint? There were two areas to investigate: first, one path led to a close examination of the curriculum offered in public relations and

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second, another path of scrutiny led to an investigation of a key infrastructure in the public relations discipline-- the associations. Academic associations are viewed as the prime entities for delivering scholarship and research to the academy. Thus two areas of resource development, the academic curriculum and the associations output in terms of scholarship, were reviewed and analyzed for verifying the contributions to public relations curriculum and scholarship.

### **The “Emerging Theoretical Perspectives in PR” Documented in 1987**

Around 1987 the need to identify where public relations is taught seemed to be a high priority. A conference “call for papers” on public relations theory served as an opportunity for addressing this enigmatic dilemma in the field of public relations.

To find the public relations courses, a content analysis of course titles and course descriptions for public relations were identified in the U.S. university and college catalogs (a legal contract with the student). The courses were identified by the words “public relations,” “public affairs,” or “public information” in the title or the course description. A total of 324 departments programs (21 programs on the graduate level) were identified with courses having such language. (Neff, 1987)

The results revealed a rich mix of department homes in the mid 80s for public relations: communication(s), journalism, business, interdisciplinary, mass communication, public relations, and those grouped as “miscellaneous.” This outcome yielded a variety of disciplines with public relations courses and confirmed the experience of many in the public relations discipline—the field of study was very multidisciplinary.

As listed below, the concentration of courses in public relations (around seventy-nine per cent of the courses) were in departments outside of journalism. The array of departments having public relations established the serious commitment of communication(s), journalism, and business to the public relations curriculum. There was some representation from mass communication and interdisciplinary departments. The stand-alone public relations departments were an interesting find. The breakdown overall is the following:

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| communication(s) departments   | 41% |
| journalism department          | 21% |
| mass communication departments | 7%  |

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|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| business departments          | 17% |
| interdisciplinary departments | 8%  |
| miscellaneous departments     | 4%  |
| public relations departments  | 2%  |

Most communication(s) departments offered a wide range of public relations curriculum courses. In contrast, business departments generally offered one course on “image.” However, the strongly felt assumption held was that public relations could only occur within an act of communication (Pearce & Cronen, 2003). More importantly, this data strongly supported the need for a public relations platform that reflected various disciplines involved in public relations. Around 1980s, the movement for establishing public relations divisions/interest groups in communication(s) and business associations was just beginning (obviously with the one established exception).

#### **Theory Development Identified by Establishing Public Relations Perspectives**

In the 1987 national study of the United States curriculum, these diverse curriculum findings were discussed within four areas of theoretical development related to the public relations process (see “The Missing Theoretical Perspective in PR” in *Public Relations Theory*, 1989). The first theoretical area was primarily a management approach as in situational analysis and the term today reflecting this approach is often discussed as strategic thinking. A second area of theoretical development contributing to public relations was the systems theory. Again an organizational construct but useful for viewing public relations within an organizational setting. The third theoretical perspective was persuasion theory. The rhetorical —often considered the major approach to public relations processes as “the prime technique for implementing public relations efforts.” However, in 1987 another theoretical perspective, communication through speech for action (Neff, 161-165), was proposed and involved several elements and a proposal for “developing a public relations metatheory.” This theoretical perspective was best articulated by Flores in 1982: “languaging is not a mere “transmission or processing of information.” (Flores, 1982) On the nexus of this premise a new area of public relations theory was born— communication for action. The development of the public relations role as leadership was further contextualized when Seward noted in 1987 that “the public relations

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professional should have a primary role in the complex social events of our world” (Ibid. 171). These premises were outlined as an opportunity for public relations leadership in the following descriptions:

1. Public relations is a discipline closely tied to the applied orientation.
2. Public relations is necessarily based in social interaction and thus intricately tied to the communication process.
3. Public relations is increasingly a boundary-spanning activity and technology only increases the potential for interaction.
4. Professionals must be trained to see that people live in their interpretation of experiences and actions (Burke, 1985).
5. Public relations training must illustrate how language structures one’s existence and how the languaging, as Flores (1982) wrote, is not a mere “transmission or processing of information” (Flores, p. 1).

Much of this approach is based on Searle and Austin’s work in the United Kingdom as applied by Carlos F. Flores whose seminal thesis on *Management and Communication in the Office of the Future* was supported by John Searle and published in 1982. (Flores, 1982 & Searle, 1987).

Now twenty-three years later, public relations professionals are confirming these perspectives as the key components of the public relations theoretical constructs. These perspectives are also identified as the four approaches on issues management by Coombs and Holladay in their 2010 book published on *PR Strategy and Application: Managing Influence* (Coombs, 192-200). Coombs and Holladay call the four areas: systems approach, strategic approach, rhetorical approach, and engagement approach.

The overview research established on U.S. curriculum in 1987 was a watershed moment in transforming our insights into the nature of public relations. The data supported the following:

1. Public relations was practiced in several disciplines.
2. Public relations was primarily practiced in academic departments outside of journalism and the leading area for course development was in communication(s) departments.
3. Public relations perspectives were recognized as existing in four areas: systems, strategic, rhetorical, and the one introduced during this national

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study on curriculum public relations findings was developed and proposed as speech acts for communication for action based on the functions of leadership (Neff, 1989).

Such an insight into the status of public relations education and theory provided the foundation for the need for examining the academic infrastructure for the role of public relations scholarship development in associations, the key organizations generating the body of knowledge for the public relations discipline. It is in this second stage that the momentum for public relations research is established and the widening of the theoretical perspectives is made possible.

### **Developing the Public Relations Association Infrastructure: Leadership**

A review of the association infrastructure for public relations professionals clearly identified a major gap between the curriculum leadership and the association leadership in public relations. Whereas academics had developed a wide variety of curriculum programs, there was really only one academic association or venue with a public relations division (PRD) for presenting academic research in public relations.

Having established the well-developed public relations curriculum in a variety of disciplines, communication, journalism, mass communication, business, and public relations per se, the analysis turned to examine the association infrastructure supporting these public relations professionals. There were some perceptions that public relations was a practitioner area of study, the theory-to-practice nature of public relations was not well established. Academic associations as such were not as inclined to accept a more applied discipline.

For example, the practitioners dominated the associations early on in their respective organizations, particularly the practitioner-based public relations associations. It was much later that academic association allowed public relations divisions (PRDS) but note these developments were at least twenty years after the first established division in a journalism association. One could note that many academics perceived public relations as a negative perhaps unethical field of study. These attitudes and perceptions certainly made the development of these divisions and interest groups much more difficult.

As mentioned, the distribution of newer association divisions, interest groups, and/or tracks, clustered across the timeline. The earliest association was affiliated with journalism. The Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass

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Communication (AEJMC) established a PR division in 1965 and it was over thirty years later when public relations academic subgroups developed in other associations. Initiatives for public relations divisions were really started around the mid 1980s in primarily the academic associations. In 1984 the International Communication Association (ICA-division) was established and the National Communication Association (NCA formerly named SCA-division) established a public relations interest group three years later in 1987. This same year the International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC is also called the “Miami Conference”) was established and affiliated with the Institute of Public Relations (IPR)—a practitioner-academic partnership. A year later in 1988, the Central States Communication Association’s (CSCA) public relations interest group was established representing a regional initiative (sometimes held joint conferences with Southern Communication Association). The International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) emerged two years later in 1989 with public relations as two tracks: Public Relations and Corporate Communications and Global Corporate PR.

The more practitioner associations were also engaged. The Public Relations Society of American (PRSA’s Educators Academy) began in 1983 after the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) effort failed to establish an educational subgroup. The Association for Women in Communication, Inc. (AWC) remained a practitioner based organization.

However, the addition of six association divisions/interest groups/tracks in public relations has truly placed the public relations discipline into a leadership position as a serious critical mass of scholarship or body of knowledge developed. In fact, coupled with the number of journals developed in this area (for example: *Public Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Strategic Communication*), the public relations professionals are truly in a position to be recognized fully for their contribution in the academic arena and to the professionalism of the practitioner. The following table details the founding and founders of these associations.

| <b>Table 1: ASSOCIATIONS WITH A PUBLIC RELATIONS MEMBERSHIP And/Or SUBDIVISION</b> |         |       |      |               |            |      |            |      |        |
|--|---------|-------|------|---------------|------------|------|------------|------|--------|
| Date Founded   | 1907    | 1965  | 1970 | 1983          | 1984       | 1987 | 1987       | 1988 | 1989   |
| Associations   | AWC     | AEJMC | IABC | PRSA          | ICA        | NCA  | IPRRC      | CSCA | IABD   |
| PR Subdivision   | Members | PRD   | Mem  | Ed-Acad       | PRD        | PRD  | Conference | PRIG | Track  |
| Founders*  | ---     | Young | ---  | Sharpe Newsom | Hamilton * | Neff | Sharpe     | Neff | Nelson |
| Conferences  | ---     | 45    | ---  | 24            | 23         | 22   | 22         | 21   | 20     |
| * Primary Founders   |         |       |      |               |            |      |            |      |        |

Comparing and contrasting academic and practitioner associations with a public relations focus frames the discussion around the various disciplines developing public relations. On one level the associations that are primarily practitioner oriented generally establish an individual membership category rather than a subdivision. In sum, these type of associations are represented by the following:

- Association for Women in Communication, Inc. (AWC-members include PR and includes a few academics)\*
- International Associations of Business Communicators\* (IABC-includes PR members—both academic and practitioners)\*
  - The more practitioner oriented associations AWC and IABC focus on “advancing the field of public relations education by collaborating with college and university public relations educators and practitioners.”

\*An asterisk indicates the association has student chapters

To assess the degree to which these associations with public relations subdivisions are global in intent, the mission statements are reviewed. These agreed upon statements serve as a guide to the fundamental focus for the public relations divisions/interest groups/tracks and include:

- Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC-division)
  - AEJMC’s PRD, for example, focuses on PR research with themes on education, professional freedom and responsibility,

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and graduate international research. Within a journalism and mass communication context, the emphasis is on diversity and developing liaisons with professionals in the field.

- Central States Communication Association (CSCA-Public Relations Interest Group-PRIG)
  - The Public Relations Interest Group highlights scholarship and pedagogy dealing with issues, strategies, and teaching materials related to public relations. The Interest Group encourages members to engage students and each other in the study, analysis, evaluation, and participation in public relations activities. The Interest Group encourages networking and relationship building among students, faculty, and professionals in public relations.
- International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD-track)
  - IABD's track in Public Relations/Corporate Communication is considered one of the "support disciplines of business." As the only business academic association supporting a PR discipline, the Academy bridges "theory and practice" and seeks "to increase individual awareness of business problems and opportunities in the international marketplace."
- International Communication Association (ICA-division)
  - ICA's PRD, a global intense association, focuses on "theory and laboratory/practice between publics and organizations; theory advancement for solving pragmatic PR problems; consultant clients or corporate employers." ICA's PRD has transnational PR research teams focusing on cultural issues.
- Institute for Public Relations (IPR-100% PR) with practitioners and academics partnered for conference
  - The only association fully devoted to public relations, the Institute for Public Relations (IPRRC Conference) "bridges the academy and the profession, supporting PR research and mainstreaming this knowledge into practice through PR education."

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- National Communication Association (NCA-division)\*
    - NCA, the largest academic communication organization, “seeks to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders.” The NCA PRD, as the largest division among all the academic associations, offers the International PRide Award for outstanding publishing in public relations.
  - Public Relations Society of America (PRSA-Educators Academy)\*
    - Vision - The PRSA Educators Academy seeks to be a leader in enhancing the value, professionalism and global understanding of the field by bridging research and education with the profession.
    - Mission - The mission of the Educators Academy, in partnership with the profession, is to prepare and advance the public relations practice through education and research in the global arena.

### **The Body of Knowledge Produced by These Associations**

Most importantly, what you are seeing is the shift from the narrow focus of efforts to “define” public relations to an emerging infrastructure capable of handling intense research into the very nature of public relations functions thus allowing the body of knowledge to bring the necessary clarification to the surface. The contribution of associations to public relations scholarship is essential to understanding the evolution of public relations history in the United States. This scholarship eventually moves into publications and/or serves as a body of knowledge for teams working on long-range projects. The overall immensity of the contributions of these public relations units in associations to the body of knowledge is outlined in the table below and reflects the sheer number of scholarship presentations now possible in the public relations discipline from a variety of perspectives.

**Growth in PR BOK.** The founding of several PR divisions/tracks/interest groups in the 1980s allowed for the rapid growth of the Body of Knowledge in public relations. Through the support of associations, public relations research more than quadrupled in quantity. It is important to note that the association expansion of public relations research also brought into the mix different perspectives. Whereas the original PRD

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was focused on journalism and mass communication, the subsequent PRDs were heavily focused on communication(s) and expanded to business associations. Through the mission statements, it is evident these associations were interested heavily in the theory and practice connect. These mission statements also stress a global thrust with different approaches such as: “graduate global research”-AEJMC, the “transnational research teams”-ICA, the International PRide Award”-NCA, “global understanding”-PRSA’s Educator’s Academy, and another phrase addressed the “international marketplace”-IABD. The global emphasis in these mission statements strongly suggests the research produced will have a global perspective. In this sense, it is important to realize the potential for truly reaching a transnational level of public relations research could be very possible in the near future. However, one caution to this thinking was sounded by Sriramesh and White noting “that Western public relations theory might not be extensive enough to account for worldwide cultural variance” (Gaither & Curtain, 284). Banks further challenges this area by stating: “By what standards should we measure the effectiveness of public relations communication in culturally diverse settings?” (Banks, 23).

In the table below, the key areas of interest are focused on the research contributions per association as generated on an annual basis. Note that these organizations have different founding dates and that not all data has yet been codified. It is also important to realize that a regional association (CSCA) is in the mix and is compared with primarily national/international associations. Plus there is obviously a very strong academic membership in most of the associations with a distinct practitioner membership in PRSA with the academic component represented by the Educators Academy. Note, too, the unique guidelines outlined for partnering between academics and PR practitioners for IPRRC. These “cultural” differences produces unique perspectives within an association and this is in addition to the discipline emphases which influence research in the areas of journalism/mass communication, communication(s), public relations, and business.

| <b>Table 2: TOTAL NUMBER OF RESEARCH PAPERS ANNUALLY<br/>(Growth of Body of Knowledge in Public Relations: US-based Associations)</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | <b>1984</b> | <b>1985</b> | <b>1986</b> | <b>1987</b> | <b>1988</b> | <b>1989</b> |
| <b>AEJMC</b>  | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |
| <b>CSCA</b>   | --          | --          | --          | X           | 5           | X           |
| <b>IABD</b>   | --          | --          | --          | 5           | X           | X           |
| <b>ICA</b>  | --          | 17          | 17          | 28          | 23          | 32          |
| <b>IPRRC</b>  | --          | --          | --          | X           | X           | X           |
| <b>NCA/SCA</b>  | --          | --          | --          | 5           | 18          | 18          |
| <b>PRSA</b>   | --          | --          | --          | X           | X           | X           |

| <b>1990</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1992</b> | <b>1993</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>1995</b> | <b>1996</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 27          | 39          | 21          | 34          | 40          | 30          | 24          |
| 27          | 10          | 6           | X           | 19          | 16          | 17          |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |
| 31          | 19          | 18          | 30          | 40          | 32          | 31          |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |
| X           | X           | 36          | X           | X           | 59          | X           |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |

| <b>1997</b> | <b>1998</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 20          | 22          | 38          | 44          | X           | X           | X           |
| 3           | X           | 16          | X           | X           | 19          | X           |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |
| 25          | X           | 28          | X           | 50          | 79          | X           |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | 59          |
| X           | X           | X           | 97          | 63          | X           | 74          |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | X           |

| <b>2004</b> | <b>2005</b> | <b>2006</b> | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 40          | 64          | 60          | X           | X           | 59          | Aug         |
| 25          | X           | X           | X           | 22          | 26          | 14          |
| X           | X           | X           | 16          | 12          | 14          | 11          |
| X           | 75          | 88          | 91          | 70          | 72          | 70          |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | 87          | 112         | 104         |
| X           | X           | 62          | 65          | 87          | 47          | Nov         |
| X           | X           | X           | X           | X           | 24          | Nov         |

**TOTALS**

|                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| <b>AEJMC</b>   | <b>572</b> |
| <b>CSCA</b>    | <b>225</b> |
| <b>IABD</b>    | <b>53</b>  |
| <b>ICA</b>     | <b>966</b> |
| <b>IPRRC</b>   | <b>362</b> |
| <b>NCA/SCA</b> | <b>631</b> |
| <b>PRSA</b>    | <b>24</b>  |

**TOTAL PAPERS            **2834****

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Table 2 reveals the number of panels/sessions with research papers. These “total number of papers per conference” do not include discussion panels or workshops without research papers.

The growth of the body of knowledge is particularly strong for IPRRC, ICA, NCA, and AEJMC (in order of the highest number of papers per association). One must remember that ICA, NCA, and AEJMC are only one of many PRDs in their organization and research opportunities are restricted by membership and/or conference space. IPRRC is solely devoted to public relations research and handles many more research presentations at a conference.

The more regional associations (CSCA) and/or associations that are noncommunication but include public relations (IABD) or those with a heavier practitioner base (PRSA) have fewer PR research papers listed. However, if you add the three associations together in terms of their research contributions, these associations do have an impact. It also might be valued that a regional association involves different public relations professionals (may not have the money to travel) and IABD public relations professionals are bridging new vistas by expanding to more unique associations such as those involved in business disciplines. Perhaps this might lead to further expansion of public relations into associations willing to sponsor a PRD (political science, sociology, health, tourism associations, for example).

However, the total impact of the associations across the board reveals the astounding growth of public relations scholarship since the founding dates, primarily from the 80s. From all indications, the vision for public relations seems to be strongly global and rich with the theory-to-practice connect. Furthermore, other studies examining non-US founded associations having public relations research presentations are needed. Perhaps comparing with such statements as “the Dutch claim to have the oldest professional association in the world, established in 1946” and yet the authors go on to say: “Despite its (Europe) long history, little is known about public relations in Europe” (Van Ruler & Vercic, 2002). Such a comprehensive view of the history of the public relations discipline around the world most likely will document the dynamic evolution of a much needed profession in society.

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**PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION:  
A STUDY OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY PR-SPECIFIC EDUCATION IN THE  
RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

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## **1.0 Background**

Since Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays first looked at the practice of public relations in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century America, there has been continuing debate about professionalization, education and training. In the UK, Tallents' suggested in his 1949 IPR presidential address that members' "first function...was to educate themselves" (L'Etang, 1999). Edward Bernays introduced the first vocational PR course at New York University in the 1930s (Tobin, 2004) and, from 1956, the IPR has sought for IPR practitioners to have professional parity with solicitors, doctors and accountants – recognised by the public for their robust qualifications and codes of practice (Tobin, 2004).

In the year of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the current CIPR Diploma [2009], this research paper explores the role of PR-specific education in the professionalization of the PR industry and the PR recruitment process in the UK.

This paper is based on two assumptions. First, that the PR industry, and the CIPR in particular, wants public relations to be seen as a profession – on a par with law, medicine and accountancy. Secondly, that a substantial difference in opinion exists between academics who value PR-specific education and practitioners who see experience and softer skills such as communication and relationship management as more important.

## **2.0 Literature review**

### **2.1 Professionalism and professionalization**

Friedson defined a 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' (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006).

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Grunig and Hunt comment that ‘we could say that an occupation becomes a profession when the majority of its practitioners qualify as professionals’ (Pieczka and L’Etang, 2006).

Common to the definitions of a profession researched for this paper [including Millerson, Elliot, Grunig, Hunt, Cutlip and Elton] is reference to the familiar troika of body of knowledge, ethics/values and certification/licensing (Pieczka & L’Etang, 2006).

## **2.2 The established professions**

PR is frequently compared with established professions such as law, medicine and accountancy. It is not compulsory to be registered or qualified in order to practice PR and this, according to academics including L’Etang and Grunig, is one of the key issues inhibiting the professionalization of the PR industry (L’Etang, 2002) – ‘It is clear, therefore, that PR education is the key to advancing the PR profession to a level comparable to that of established professions such as medicine, law or teaching’ (Grunig & Grunig, 2002). At an address given in June 2009, former CIPR President and director of Liquid PR, Liz Lewis-Jones commented:

We are already a profession... but, hopefully, with CPD and Accredited/Chartered status we can weed out the people dressing themselves up as PR people... to be on the same level as solicitors and accountants, we need to have that gravitas that comes from being Chartered” (Lewis-Jones, 2009)

Both Wilcox and Theaker echoed this association with established professions, suggesting that a lack of education, training, apprenticeship or regulation prevent PR from qualifying ‘as a profession in the same sense that medicine and law do’ (Wilcox, 2007; Theaker, 2005). James Petre argues that the ‘older man professions such as law and accountancy have the statutory basis which PR does not – PR has not been around long enough to reach the same professional and reputational standing’ (Postle, 2009).

## **2.3 Academics vs. Practitioners**

It is clear from the literature that there is a difference in the value allocated to PR-specific education by those in academia and those practicing PR.

Academics such as Gruning & Grunig, Tench & Yeomans and Pieczka &

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L'Etang appear to see the future of the PR industry as reliant on its professionalization and the development of education and training. In contrast, practitioners such as Chris Lewis, CEO of Lewis PR, are of the opinion that 'real professionalism is driven by passion and spirit – a love of one's work, pride and a determination to do it better. You do not need to be educated (or rational) to exhibit any of these qualities' (Lewis, 2003).

However, as more practitioners seek to become qualified in PR through part-time study, the two groups – academic and practitioner – are beginning to merge. Graduates of the CIPR Advanced Certificate and Diploma have commented positively about their increased salary, promotional opportunities and professional development as a result of completing the course (Yaxley, 2007). One student commented, 'although there is no 'hard and fast' rule that qualifications lead to automatic promotion, the skills and knowledge that you gain will certainly do you no harm. The Diploma in particular should help you become a more critical and strategic thinker, naturally helping you to operate at a higher level' (Bowden-Green, 2008). However, there is a natural bias as both Yaxley and Bowden-Green are supportive CIPR members whose comments appeared in *Profile* – the magazine produced by the CIPR about education and development opportunities for students and members.

## **2.4 The studies**

This research paper explored four studies into stakeholder perceptions of PR-specific education and the required skills and knowledge for those entering the industry. In 2005, Fawkes and Tench found that, for 100 PR employers, knowledge of PR theory was placed last in importance in a list of 11 competencies with an understanding of business principles coming in 10<sup>th</sup>. Writing skills and an understanding of media relations were rated as most important (Moncur, 2006; Fawkes & Tench, 2005).

More recently, and an indication of the importance of the PR education debate in 2009, both professional body the PRCA and recruitment consultancy JFL Search & Selection carried out research among PR employers around the value of PR degrees. 43% of 47 PRCA members who responded to a Leaders'

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Panel survey believe having a PR degree makes graduates no more or less employable than any other degree subject, with 34% saying it makes them less employable (PRCA Leaders' Panel, 2009). This research prompted a feature in trade publication *PR Week* in which, on the whole, academics and CIPR ambassadors defended the reputation of PR education while practitioners stated work experience was far more worthwhile. The letters page the following week was also devoted to the debate.

The Graduate Survey Report by JFL questioned 600 senior PR respondents on their recruitment practices and the advice they would give to graduates seeking a PR role in the current economic climate. When given a multiple choice option, 65.2% of respondents favoured a traditional academic degree such as English or Politics over a vocational degree, degree of passion (such as fine art) or 'new' degree (such as media studies). 73% said the most important quality for graduate recruits was fluent, grammatically correct writing skills while 68.5% looked for previous work experience as an intern (JFL, 2009).

In 2003, the DTI and CIPR looked at both academic and practitioner perspectives of the professionalization of the industry. The report found that, while the percentage of qualified people in the PR industry is increasing, PR graduates are still viewed as less qualified than those graduates with degrees such as business (DTI/IPR, 2003).

## **2.5 PR education**

In 1956, the IPR established its first Diploma at London's Regent Street Polytechnic (L'Etang, 1999). The first UK undergraduate PR degree was launched in Bournemouth in 1989 and was followed up with courses at Leeds Metropolitan University and the College of St Mark & St John in Plymouth in 1990. Postgraduate courses followed shortly after (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). To achieve Chartered Status, the IPR had to demonstrate 50% of its members held an approved qualification (L'Etang, 1999) and so, in 1998, the IPR introduced a new Diploma qualification as the basis for entry to membership. A similar decision had to be revoked after just two years in the 1960s when a decision was made to allow only those qualified to become members of the

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IPR which led to a significant drop in membership and income (L'Etang, 2002).

In 2003, there were 23 PR or similar undergraduate degrees in Britain; 13 were approved by the CIPR (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). In 2007-8, there were 40 approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in 26 UK institutions. Numbers coming forward for the CIPR qualifications in 2008 were the highest to date – 291 UK students took the Diploma [6% increase on 2007] and 169 took the Advanced Certificate [2% increase on 2007] (CIPR Annual Report, 2008). In total, around 1,750 students have been awarded the CIPR Diploma in the UK and 950 the Advanced Certificate (Teji, 2009). The growth in PR courses suggests a body of professional education, knowledge and research is building in the UK to match the growth in the profession and the maturing of the discipline (Sykes, 2002). However, Theaker argues the growth of degrees at undergraduate and Master's level and the development of vocational qualifications have been greeted with suspicion rather than as evidence of professionalism (2004). Again, this is borne out by the research findings of Fawkes & Tench as well as the PRCA and JFL.

## **2.6 The education debate in 2009**

2009 saw a resurgence in the debate about PR education and PR degrees. In a recessionary economy, the PR industry was hit by redundancies and more people chasing every communications job – PR is still a top five graduate career choice (Lewis-Jones, 2009). Job prospects had been positive for 2007 PR graduates; 77% of graduates from CIPR approved courses secured work after university – 54.6% in consultancy and 44.1% in-house (Profile 63, 2007). Former CIPR director general Colin Farrington said 'when faced with choices between the professional and the unprofessional, the trained and qualified compared to the untrained and the cowboy, the market will look to quality' (2008/09).

The CIPR has, throughout its history, sought to establish qualifications that would set it on an equal footing to the established professions. However, the various qualifications the CIPR devised achieved neither widespread acceptance within its membership or practice more widely, nor academic

credibility (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). Ten years after the first students graduated from the CIPR Diploma, the focus of this study was to determine whether PR qualifications really do make the difference when it comes to securing a PR role in a highly competitive marketplace.

### 3.0 Methodology

#### 3.1 Data collection

Quantitative data was obtained from the author's analysis of job advertisements in *PR Week* and *Media Guardian* as well as the results of studies conducted by other organisations. Qualitative data was gathered from interviews undertaken by the author, the keynote address from a PR conference held at Birmingham City University as well as statements presented in the trade media.

#### 3.2 Content analysis search terms

The author analysed studies completed by the PRCA, PRSA, IPRA, JFL, Fawkes & Tench and the DTI/IPR and used their findings to draft a list of terms which formed the structure for a content analysis of job advertisements. This list was revised during the analysis as the author discovered different ways of wording the same sentiment (see Fig 1.0).

*Fig 1.0 Full list of reference terms*

| Skills   | Traits  | Requirements  |
|--|---|---|
| Literacy – written/ verbal communication<br>Public speaking and presentation<br>Communication skills | Enthusiasm/ Passion/<br>Motivation/ Drive/ Energy             | Relevant marketing/ PR/<br>journalism experience<br>Experienced<br>Track record |
| Numeracy   | Creativity<br>Imagination<br>Innovative ideas                 | PR degree/ qualification  |
| IT skills<br>Technological and visual literacy<br>Web skills/ new media                              | Credibility and integrity                                     | Degree – any subject specified  |
| Interpersonal skills<br>Relationships and relationship building/ management<br>Sensitive             | Analytical thinking/ strategic planning<br>Corporate strategy | Qualification – any subject specified   |
| Crisis/ issues management  | Attention to detail   | CIPR Advanced Certificate   |
| Problem solving/ negotiation   | Flexibility   | CIPR Diploma  |
| Fluency in a foreign language  | Ethical decision-making                                       | Professional  |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Management of resources and people / Leadership  | Understanding of business commercially savvy | Participation in professional PR community – ie membership of CIPR      |
| Ability to persuade and influence people         |  | Continuous professional development                                     |
| Teamwork   |  | Training and development opportunities                                  |
| Media relations/ contacts/ handling/ Media savvy |  | Communication and public relations theories<br>Public relations history |

### 3.3 Selecting the data set

The author analysed all job ads in print editions of *PR Week* and *Media Guardian* over a six week period, 20 February to 3 April 2009. These publications were chosen because, in the author's experience and based on an informal survey of other PR professionals, these are the key publications that PR job-seekers will turn to and hence the publications most used by recruiters. *PR Week* has a circulation of 16,078 and is published on Fridays. Annual subscription is approximately £114 and CIPR members receive this subscription free of charge or at a discounted rate as part of their membership. *The Guardian* has a circulation of 335,615 and the *Media Guardian* supplement appears on Mondays. *The Guardian* currently costs 90p per edition (MediaDisk, 2009).

The time period was chosen for convenience – the author had copies of both publications from these dates – and also because the period December 2008 to March 2009 saw a large number of firms announce redundancies as a result of the troubled economic climate. As such, there would be more people in the marketplace seeking new roles and it was hypothesised that this would lead to job advertisements being more specific about requirements. Once analysis was completed for 2009, the author decided to make comparisons with other time periods. The author examined ads from February 2008, a period slightly prior to the full impact of the recession – redundancies had not kicked in on a large scale. It was hypothesised this would provide a control group with more ads per publication in 2008 than 2009. It proved prohibitively expensive to obtain access to the job advertisements from *Media Guardian* for the same time period in 2008 and so the author analysed a four week period in February 2008.

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Finally, the author analysed ads from a three week period in February 1999. This period was half-way through the first teaching year of the ‘new’ IPR Diploma and Advanced Certificate. As such, recruiters were not yet able to ask for the IPR qualifications but would be aware of their existence. Only three weeks were analysed as this provided an equivalent number of job ads to the six weeks analysed in 2009.

When selecting ads for analysis, the following criteria applied:

- Exclusion of ads placed by recruitment consultancies which did not name the end client. Could not be analysed in terms of sector and often included multiple roles on the same ad.
- Exclusion of non PR/Communications ads within *Media Guardian* to avoid bias from administrative roles.
- Where an ad has been duplicated – either in both publications or over multiple dates – that ad has been recorded only once.

### **3.4 Conducting interviews**

Once the data had been collected from the job advertisements, the author obtained qualitative research to complement the findings. Interviews were conducted as follows:

- Angela Podmore, Managing Director, Kinetic Communications – experience recruiting in the small consultancy she owns as well as previous agencies. She was selected due to her existing relationship with the author.
- Claire Barker, former director, Kinetic Communications and now in-house, public sector communications role – experience recruiting in previous roles. This person was selected due to her existing relationship with the author, her recent experience in the job-seeking marketplace and finally her undergraduate PR degree (albeit completed 11 years previously).

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- Claire Summerfield, recruitment consultant, Blue Skies – this person was selected for her knowledge and experience of the sector and the requirements of employers of all sizes and backgrounds.
  - James Petre, Head of Qualifications and Education at the CIPR – this person was selected for his experience in heading up the qualifications team at the Law Society before moving to the CIPR and overseeing the CIPR qualifications.

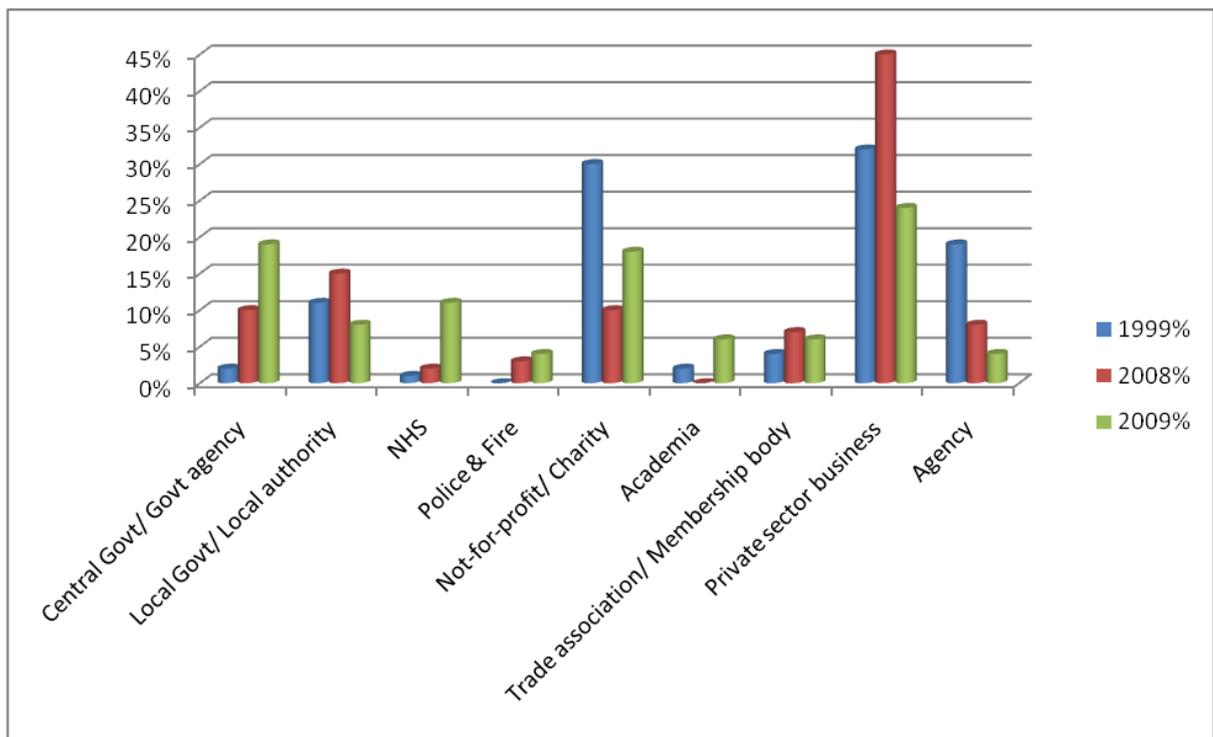
Where possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face or by phone.

However, due to convenience for the interviewee, some interviews were conducted through email. The author attended a conference on the future of the PR industry held at Birmingham City University and information was gathered from the keynote address given by former CIPR President, Liz Lewis-Jones. The author also had access to preliminary findings of a survey conducted by one of the lecturers among PR employers attending the conference. Finally, comments were taken from secondary research – the letters pages of *PR Week* and the feature the publication ran on PR degrees on 5 June 2009.

## **4.0 Findings**

### **4.1 Sector**

*Fig 2.0 Content analysis by sector*

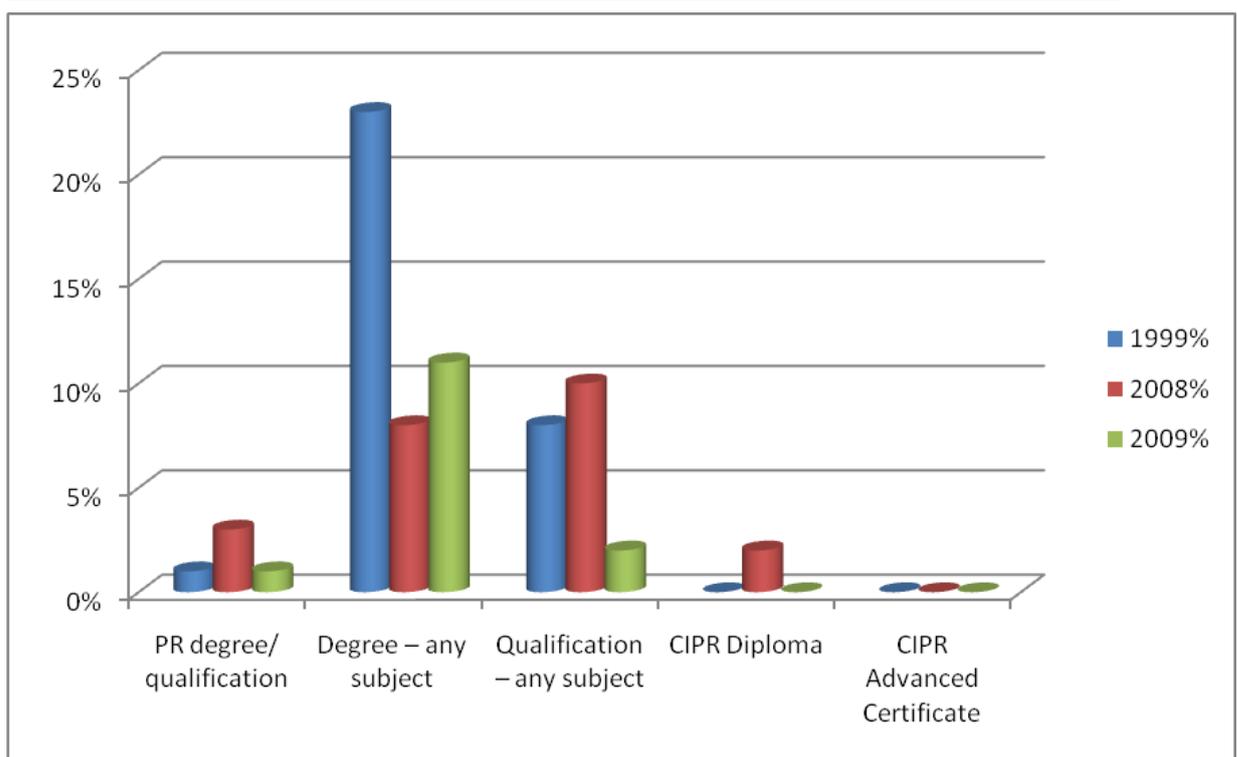


The percentage of jobs advertised in the central and local government arena rose from 13% of 101 jobs over three weeks in 1999 to 27% of 97 jobs over a six-week period in 2009. The number of jobs in the NHS also rose over this time period – from one job in 1999 to 11 in 2009 – and in the police and fire services from zero jobs to four.

There was a reverse trend in agency roles advertised – down from 19% in 1999 to 4% in 2009. Finally, roles in not-for-profit organisations fell dramatically over the decade before rising again in 2009 – down from 30% in 1999 to just 10% in 2008 and back up to 18% in 2009.

#### 4.2 Qualifications and education

*Fig 3.0 Content analysis – qualifications and education*



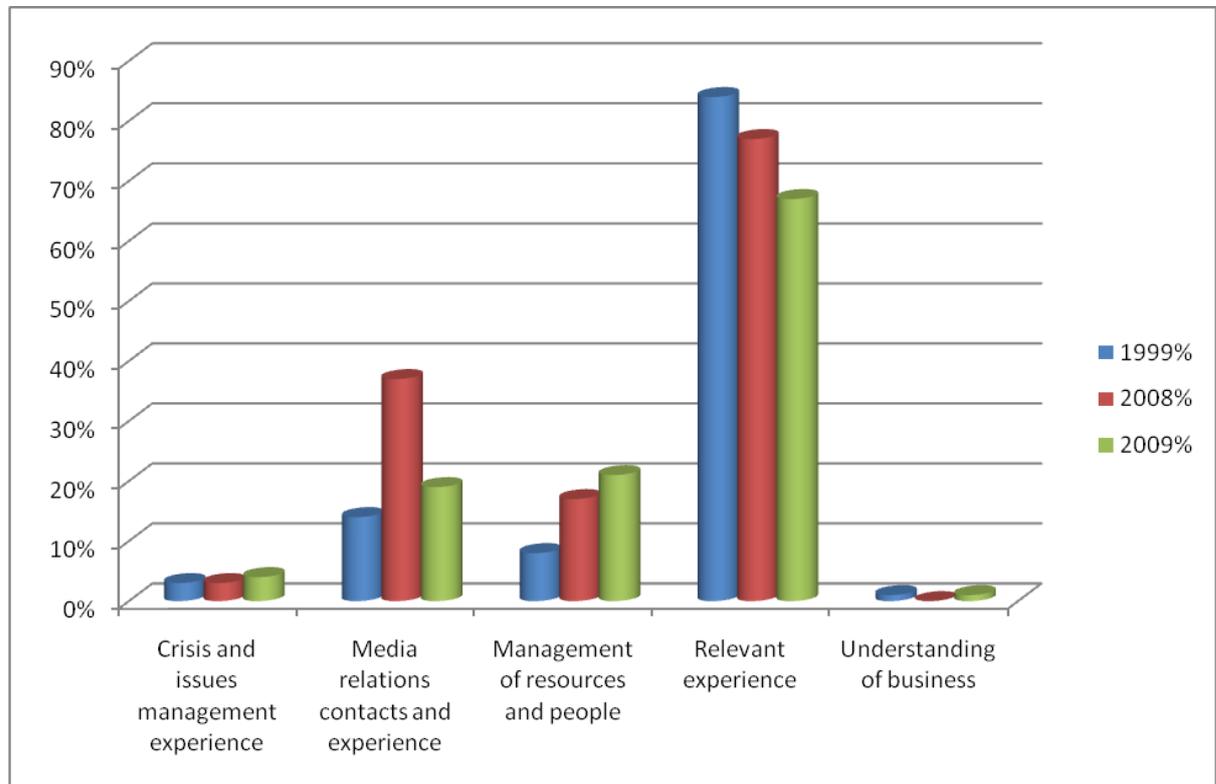
The number of employers requesting either PR qualifications or degree-level education fell over the decade. CIPR qualifications were mentioned only once in 258 job ads – a role with the PDSA, advertised 8 February 2008. The ad requested ‘extensive journalistic experience OR be degree educated with a CIPR Diploma or equivalent in a relevant discipline together with PR/Communications management experience.’

A specific PR degree or qualification was requested in only 1% of job ads in both 1999 and 2009. However, the requirement to be degree-educated or of degree-calibre (ie sufficient knowledge and experience to complete a degree if chosen) was cited in 23% of ads in 1999 and 11% in 2009. In most cases, education was desired or preferred and could be replaced with equivalent, relevant experience. Very few roles specified that education or qualifications were compulsory.

In 1999, the private sector was most specific – 52% of the ads requesting degree education/calibre were from this category. In 2009, this was spread more evenly among the different sectors.

### 4.3 Experience

Fig 4.0 Content analysis – experience



The requirement for relevant experience is high throughout all periods analysed although it does drop slightly – from 84% to 67% over the decade.

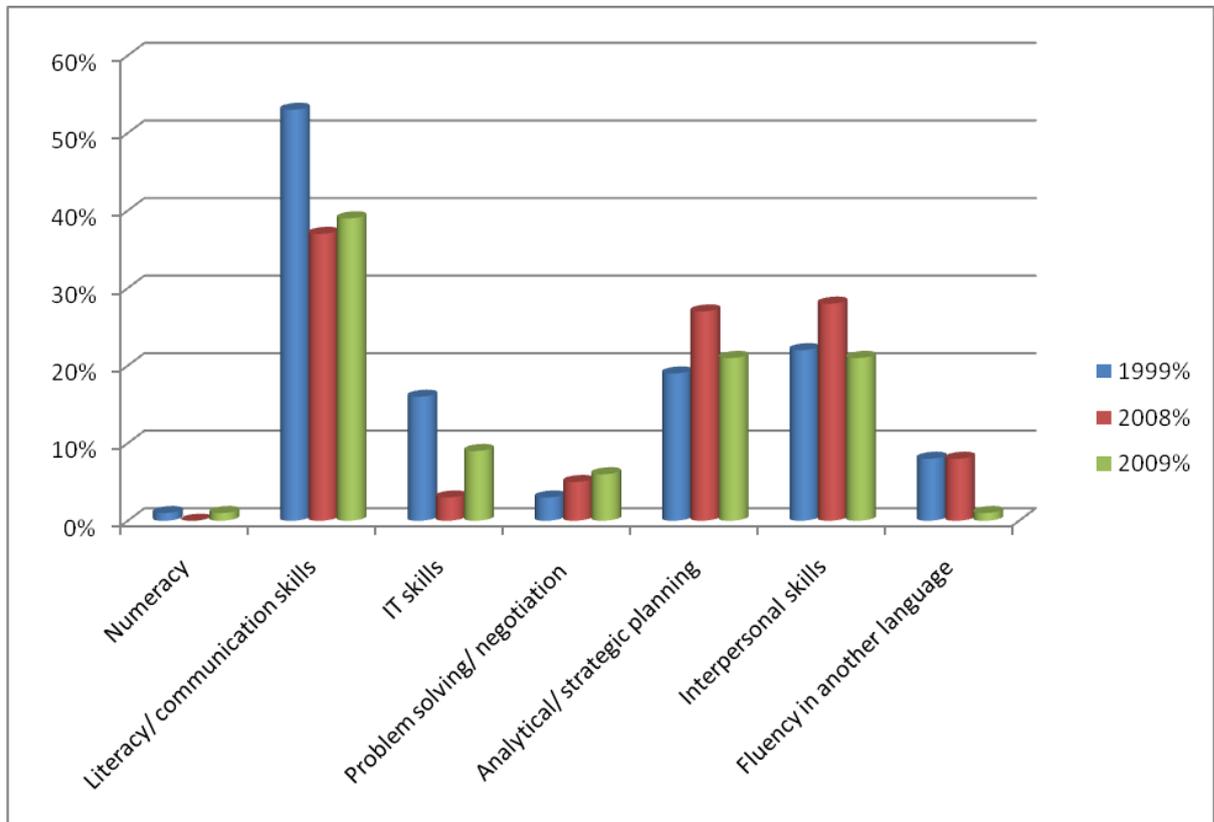
Mentions of crisis and issues management appeared primarily for the private sector and trade association roles (five ads and two ads respectively). Media relations and media contacts were most sought-after among not-for profit organisations (12 roles) and the private sector (19 roles). 14 of the ads seeking people/resource management experience were also in the private sector and ten were in the not-for-profit sector. Only two of the 258 job ads mentioned a need for understanding of business and commercial awareness – one in 1999 and the other a decade later – both within the private sector.

In 1999, relevant experience was cited by 28 of 32 private sector roles (88%), 25 of 30 not-for-profit roles (83%), 13 of 19 agency roles (68%) and all 13 central and local government roles (100%). 75% of the trade

association roles (three out of four) required relevant experience while all NHS and academic posts also mentioned previous relevant experience (three roles in total). In 2009, 19 of 23 private sector roles requested relevant experience (83%) and 11 of 17 not-for-profit roles (65%) had the same requirement. 10 of the 11 NHS roles required previous experience (91%), as did 11 of the 26 local and central government roles (42%). Two thirds of academic (four of six posts) roles required previous experience, as did half of agency roles (two of four). Finally, 83% of trade association roles (five of six) required previous experience.

#### 4.4 Skills

*Fig 5.0 Content analysis – skills*



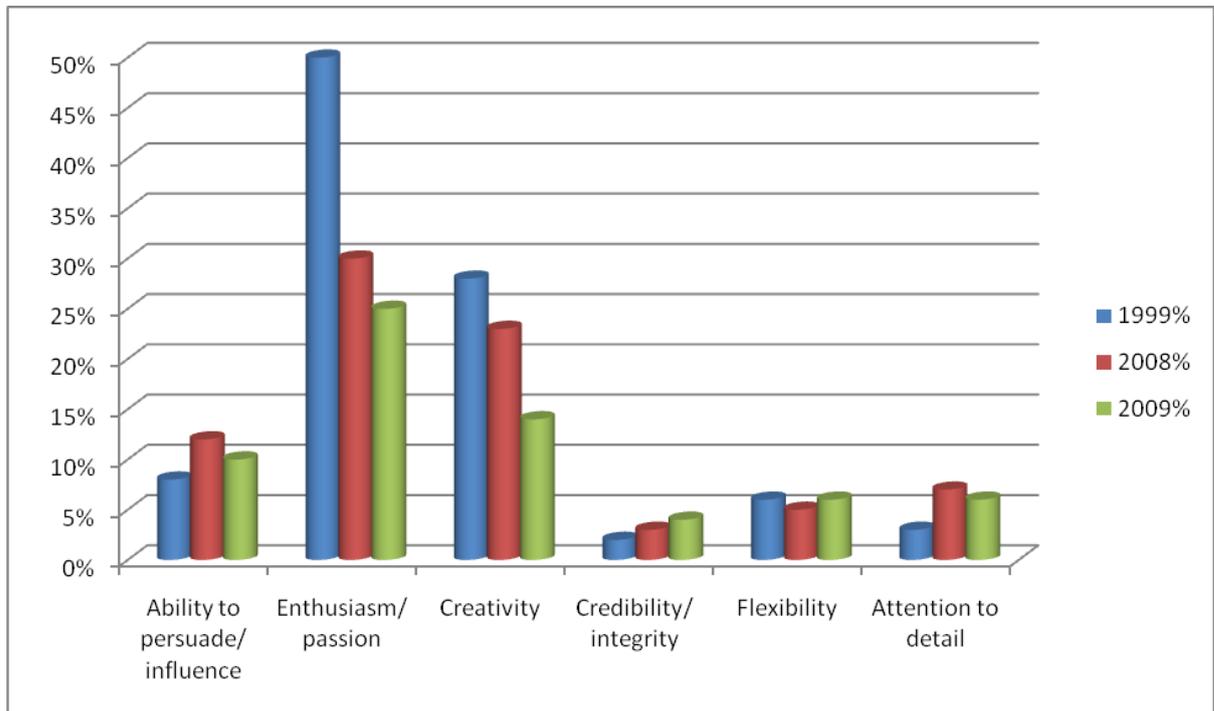
The various studies – DTI/IPR, Fawkes & Tench and the PRSA Port of Entry – suggest a number of skills and characteristics which PR professionals should possess. When analysing the job ads, these keywords were measured to see which came out as the most important for employers when advertising a role.

Literacy/communication skills came out on top. However, mentions of literacy decreased from 1999 (53%) down to just 39% in 2009. Of the 38 roles requiring literacy skills in 2009, 13 came from local/central government (50% of 26 roles), six from not-for-profit (35% of 17 ads), five each from academia and the private sector (83% of ads for academia and 22% of private sector roles), four from the NHS (36%), two each from trade associations and agencies (33% and 50% respectively) and one from police and fire services (25%).

In comparison, in 1999, nine of 13 government roles required literacy skills (69%), 16 of 30 not-for-profit roles required literacy (53%), and 63% of private sector roles (20 out of 32) required literacy. Just 26% of agency roles specified literacy (five of 19) while academia saw 100% (two of two) and trade associations had a 50% rate (two of four roles). In both 1999 and 2009, academia was most specific about the requirement for literacy, with central and local government not far behind. Agencies and the private sector were at the lower end.

#### 4.5 Characteristics

*Fig 6.0 Content analysis – characteristics*



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Enthusiasm and passion topped the list of requested characteristics in the job ads. However, the figure – which stood at 50% in 1999 – dropped to just 25% of job ads requesting these attributes in 2009.

Creativity was the second most popular characteristic mentioned in the job ads. However, like enthusiasm, mention of this halved between 1999 and 2009.

Attention to detail and credibility have both risen in popularity – however, the change is negligible.

## **5.0 Analysis**

### **5.1 Sector**

These sectors were chosen to establish whether there was a difference in viewpoints from agency, in-house, private business and the public sector. Also, Theaker argued there had been a discernable rise in the number of not-for-profit and public sector companies seeking formal PR qualifications (2004). The number of not-for-profit and public sector roles advertised rose over this time period while agency and private sector roles being advertised fell.

As a potential limitation to the study, placing job ads is often a last resort – after contacting universities, placing vacancies on the company's own website, reaching out to PR professionals through LinkedIn and working with recruitment consultancies and their existing pool of jobseekers. Ads tend to be expensive and do not always yield results.

### **5.2 Qualifications and education**

Employment and discrimination legislation have changed over the decade, meaning that employers need to be wary about how they phrase their ads. In essence, they should only ask for specific qualifications if they can argue that it is essential to hold these qualifications in order to carry out the role competently. As seen from comments made in the 2009 *PR Week* feature, many practitioners do not feel a PR degree is necessary to carry out a PR role. The data reflects this with CIPR qualifications mentioned

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only once and specific PR degrees or qualifications mentioned in just four job ads across the three time periods.

In none of the advertisements analysed was a CIPR qualification, specific PR degree or qualification specified as necessary for the role. So, although one of the prerequisites of the IPR becoming Chartered was that over 50% of members would have an approved qualification, this element of professionalism (mastery of a body of knowledge) still does not feature strongly in job advertisements. In most cases, education was desired or preferred and could be replaced with equivalent, relevant experience. However, professional qualifications such as the CIPR are viewed positively by some practitioners. In an interview with a consultancy MD, the author was told that “the CIPR qualifications separate the lambs from the sheep. If you are prepared to spend your weekends and evenings studying for a professional qualification – like the CIPR or CIM – then it shows you are taking your career seriously” (Postle, 2009). This sentiment was also echoed by practitioners in *PR Week* in June 2009. A former company director, now working in the public sector, commented that ‘new’ degree courses tend to be more vocational, which has obvious benefits for employers, but ‘traditional’ degree courses seem to produce candidates who are better at the basics required for the industry (Barker, 2009).

A small scale survey (22 respondents) carried out at a Birmingham City University PR conference in June 2009 found that, for the minority who mentioned professional qualifications, CIPR and CIM were seen as very important. However, the top degree titles were described as media & PR, business & PR, media & communications, straight PR and Masters in PR (Donnelly, 2009).

A recruitment consultant commented those with PR undergraduate degrees are rated slightly higher by clients than candidates with more traditional degrees – in contrast to the PRCA’s findings. There has also, in her opinion, been a real sway towards clients seeing the benefit of professional and vocational qualifications – ‘the ongoing training, combined with practical experience, can only be beneficial to the industry

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as this provides an environment for continued improvement and best practices within the industry’ (Summerfield, 2009). Meanwhile, CIPR deputy director general Ann Mealor comments, ‘PR is a profession with its own skill set and so firms should be looking to take on a graduate with a PR degree or someone who has undertaken PR training or a professional qualification’ (Mealor, 2009b).

### **5.3 Experience**

Whereas, in 1999, it was quite common to request a specific amount of experience, the 2009 ads are more likely to request appropriate experience – without stating a time requirement. The 1999 advertisements were, in the author’s opinion, far more prescriptive as to what an ideal candidate would require for the role – a brief person specification. In 2009, it appears jobs ads are more focused on presenting the challenges of the role for the candidate to answer in their application.

The high incidence of people and resource management experience in the private and not-for-profit sectors suggests high-level communications roles. However, these roles also requested media relations experience and the need to have strong existing media contacts. The DTI/IPR report highlighted commercial awareness as one of the key requisites for practitioners, however, this was mentioned only twice over the time period – an indication that not all requirements highlighted by employers are actually explicitly mentioned in job advertisements.

Regardless of what the experience actually entails, the results of this content analysis suggest that appropriate, relevant experience is the most sought-after quality across the different sectors and roles. This was echoed by the interview with the managing director of Kinetic Communications who said, “Work experience is definitely important. If someone comes to me with plenty of work experience, I definitely take them a lot more seriously than someone who hasn’t bothered... if I find someone who is very good, who demonstrates literacy, numeracy and common sense, then the lack of a degree is not necessarily a problem” (Postle, 2009). This viewpoint is echoed by the recruitment consultant who commented that

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valuable industry skills can be learnt ‘but the best graduates entering the marketplace are candidates who have undertaken either a placement year... or work experience’ (Summerfield, 2009).

#### **5.4 Skills**

Literacy and communication skills near the top of the list in the DTI/IPR, PRSA, and Fawkes & Tench studies. So, it is unsurprising that many of the job ads mention this as a requirement. However, it is surprising that the number is not higher – just 53% of job ads mentioned literacy or communication skills in 1999, and this went down to only 39% in 2009. The director of a small public relations consultancy highlighted that “literacy and communication skills are vital.” However, she also suggested that literacy skills among graduates are on the decline with grammar and syntax no longer being taught in schools (Postle, 2009). Numeracy was the skill least frequently referred to. The consultancy MD interviewed by the author suggested that numeracy and IT skills are important – employers who have had to learn how new technology works expect graduates who have grown up in the digital age to have at least a minimal mastery of the Microsoft Office suite. She also suggested that numeracy was important the more strategic the role became – “numeracy becomes more essential as you begin to manage client budgets and accounts, or if you run your own business” (Postle, 2009).

A small-scale survey of 22 PR employers conducted at Birmingham City University reflected this skills hierarchy highlighting the top five skills as basic IT, interpersonal, oral, written and organisational (Donnelly, 2009). This list reflects basic office skills rather than role or sector-specific skills and characteristics like creativity.

#### **5.5 Characteristics**

It is unsurprising that enthusiasm and passion topped the list of requested characteristics in the job ads – public relations is a business which requires energy and passion about a product/service or company and the ability to communicate in such a way as to convince others to feel loyalty to that brand. However, it is perhaps more surprising that the figure dropped over

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the decade. The consultancy MD interviewed by the author suggested that what she prizes most in recruits is attitudes – like energy, commitment, passion and enthusiasm (Postle, 2009). Like enthusiasm, mention of creativity in the job ads halved between 1999 and 2009.

## **6.0 Conclusions and recommendations**

This study suggests PR-specific education has a long way to go before it overcomes the scepticism surrounding its value. While there are limitations on the study – job ads do not tell the whole story of what is required to carry out a role – the inference is that PR-specific education is not a requirement for a job in PR. However, increasingly, PR graduates are joining the profession and shaping the expectations of the next generation (Tench & Yeomans, 2006) and an average of 85% of those who complete CIPR-approved courses gain employment in the industry (Theaker, 2004). Rawel argues ‘it is for public relations associations to promote the value of education in pursuit of knowledge, in order that practitioners are empowered to set organisational strategy rather than simply promote it’ (2003).

It can be hypothesised that, firstly, the public sector has seen an improvement in the way that PR and communications are treated and valued. Secondly, that in the recessionary economic climate of 2009, the public sector is most immune to the crisis and still able to hire – hence the rise in vacancies advertised over the decade. Also, the reduction in advertising costs as a result of the recession may have made advertising job vacancies more accessible for not-for-profit organisations over the last year.

Equally, it can be hypothesised that the recession has made an impact on agencies which may be losing clients and being forced into cutting costs/making redundancies – hence fewer job ads. There are also alternative methods of recruitment – for example LinkedIn and Twitter. A large number of those graduating with PR qualifications will have spent, or be looking at spending, their work experience and first PR role in an agency. Finally, a number of agencies will have featured in the recruitment consultancy blanket ads which were discounted in this analysis for not naming their client – it may be that agencies do not wish to let on to competitors which business they may recently have won or which sectors are doing well.

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Employment and discrimination legislation have changed over the decade, meaning that employers need to be wary about how they phrase their ads. It can also be suggested that, as more and more people attend university, it is considered the norm to be degree educated or of degree calibre and, as such, it is not necessary to mention it as a requirement. Few ads specifically mention degrees and even fewer mention PR-specific education. It can be argued that the requirement for degree-level education comes down to the individual employer rather than the sector. It can also be hypothesised that employers are putting less detail into job ads as they know that in the current market they are guaranteed to receive interest for the job.

The author suggests that this study form only the first stage of research into PR-specific education. While exploring job ads and interviewing employers and academics can give one perspective, it is arguably the hard facts which will sell PR-specific education to practitioners. The author suggests that an annual study is conducted among graduates to assess the impact of their studies – whether PR degree or CIPR Diploma – on their salaries and job roles. Much like *The Economist* tracks graduates of MBAs every year for at least ten years after they graduate, it is recommended that the CIPR track the prospects of PR graduates over a sustained time period. However, the head of qualifications and education at the CIPR – James Petre – suggests that this is idealistic. While agreeing that it would provide valuable information, he just does not believe the CIPR has the resources for such an endeavour (Postle, 2009b).

It is suggested that, if carried out consistently, this could conclusively prove the anecdotal evidence of one or two Diploma students who have received promotions. It could also serve to form the basis of a league table of study centres so that it would eventually be possible to say that, after a set time period, those with PR qualifications earn more than those without and, also, those from one study centre outperform those from another. The author suggests it is only when the financial and career benefits of PR-specific study are proven that the scepticism of the industry will begin to fall.

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## HISTORIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: COMPARING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BRITISH, GERMAN AND US PUBLIC RELATIONS

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### **Abstract**

Purpose – This article compares different national PR histories in order to unfold the degree of abstract reflection in PR history writing. Based on the comparison we provide some suggestions for a future PR historiography.

Design/methodology/approach – Our article compares British, German, and US (American) PR historiography. The study is based on a qualitative comparison of 29 PR histories. We use a triple matrix of theoretization in order to differentiate the histories.

Findings - Within our comparison American PR historiography counts 18 public relations history approaches, whereas Great Britain (1) and Germany (10) count fewer histories. However, this richness in quantity does not lead to theoretical diversification. Due to the paradigmatic obligation to a progressivist understanding American PR historiography actually entails only one theoretic approach, while its German equivalent includes three different theoretic approaches and British PR historiography – being at its start – at least contains an explicitly non-progressivist, methodologically well-informed fact-oriented example. The prevailing American PR historiography paradoxically on the one hand conceptualizes PR as a modern phenomenon but on the other hand claims even ancient beginnings.

Research limitations/implications – The corpus of analysis only contains studies which attempt to supply an encompassing overview over (national) PR history.

Practical implications – Public relations managers may use these findings to achieve a more nuanced critical understanding of the history of their occupation and thereby reflect on its current state, which may lead to intensified ethical endeavours.

Originality/value – The paper presents a pioneer systematic comparison of the three national PR histories. This may lead to enhanced national and general PR historiography. Another value is the establishment of a theoretically informed comparative measuring instrument, which (in future) can be applied in order to compare and improve other national PR historiographies, as well.

Keywords - Public relations history; Comparison; Historiography; PR Theory; Constructivism; Pluralism

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## Introduction

Although leading textbooks in the field of public relations let us assume that the practice of public relations was invented in the United States of America (Hoy et al., 2007), there is enough evidence in the world telling another story (L'Etang, 2008). Modern public relations is a product of modernity and modernity has its roots (also) in Europe. Given this insight, one has to accept that there can be no single, unified history of public relations, but only a multiplicity of histories.

In this paper we analyze the historiography of public relations. We compare the PR historiography of three different countries (US, Germany, UK) firstly in order to analyze differences and similarities of the approaches to PR history. Secondly we want to detect whether the PR historians present history as a fact based story or as an analytical text looking for abstractions, general patterns and theoretical reflection. The central criterion of our comparison is to measure the theoritization of the historiography. Therefore we differentiate between fact-based historiography, periodizing historiography and theory oriented approaches as modes of historiography (Wehmeier et al., 2009). As we show below, we prefer the latter one for being the most adequate in academic discourse. Furthermore we want to investigate a) which perceptions of history the different national historiographies provide, b) where they mark the starting point of PR-activities – respectively if they conceive public relations as a modern phenomenon, and c) to what extent each national historiography also takes the public relations history of the other examined countries into account. Like metatheoretical investigations in general (Averbeck, 2008), we wish to contribute to the self-conception and to the development of new pathways of (inter-)national public relations historiography.

We start our analysis with a short depiction of the methodological implications of our pluralistic understanding of historiography (section 2), which is directly connected with the development of the guiding modes of historiography (section 3). In the following sections we analyze the histories structured along our three modes of historiography (section 4–6). The closing section summarizes our findings and addresses ideas for further research (section 7). In favour of a systematic reading, throughout the paper we follow four suppositions:

1) According to its longer academic establishment, American PR historiography counts more approaches than the British or the German one.

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- 2) In line with this numerical dominance the American historiography also encapsulates a higher number of periodizing and theoretical exponents.
  - 3) According to the widespread assumption of PR being a modern category, we assume that the British as well as the German and the American PR historiography mark the beginning of PR history in the modern era.
  - 4) American PR history does not take the histories of Great Britain and Germany into account, whereas the German and the British PR historiography show a vital interest for their American equivalent.

### **From history to histories**

Whilst history – at least in the context of the prominent historiographical notion of Historism – traditionally was defined as being a unified entity consisting of ideographic facts (Jäger and Rösen, 1992), modern epistemological thought has led to a fundamental transition. According to the insights of modern theories like radical constructivism, historiographic works strongly depend upon the cognitive and social contexts of their emergence (Schmidt, 2003; Goertz, 2001). The (academic) display of an historic event is deeply connected with a) the current horizon of (academic) problems, b) the utilized background theory, and c) the corresponding selective access to the available sources. That is why one has to accept the plurality of histories not only as a disturbing empiric fact, but as an epistemological necessity: There is no neutral access to historic reality, which could help to select the ‘true’ history and eliminate its rivals. It only can supply consistent and plausible histories, which, like different theories in general (Raaz, 2010), in their plurality may irritate each other and thus lead to a more nuanced “emplotment” (White, 2000) of the past.

### **Modes of public relations historiography**

Because of being especially interested in the degree of theoritization of the historiography, we distinguish three modes of description which are relevant for this study. Principally, historiography can be performed in two ways: firstly, chronologically and narratively, and secondly, systematically and analytically (Schulze, 1996). Within this continuum we differentiate (1) date- and fact-oriented storytelling, (2) the periodizing approach, and (3) the theorizing analysis.<sup>1</sup>

The narrative storytelling is the underlying concept of all historical description (Fuchs and Raab, 1990). The storyteller collects knowledge about facts and brings them into a chronological order. Although each historiographic selection at least

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depends upon a minimal theoretic disposition (Hardtwig, 1990), here it is diffuse and only rudimentarily developed. Partially, fact-oriented approaches structure the presented chapters along particular criteria like important events in PR history (e.g. declaration of independence) or significant persons or enterprises (e.g. Ivy Lee). But unlike the periodizing approach these structures only help to arrange the texts and have no deeper historiographic meaning. Despite of this, the fact-oriented approach fulfils a fundamental function in relation to the two higher levels of abstraction. The retrieved facts and sources represent the raw material for theoretically advanced analysis (Bentele, 1997).

The intention of the periodizing approach is to give history a clear structure in its chronology and a characterization of its developmental stages (Vogler, 1998). Not single events, but a plurality of characteristics helps to define the relevant periods. According to Lutz (1997) four formal requirements for the parameters of periodization exist: (1) sufficient integration of the various aspects of historical events (society, politics, etc.), (2) suitable classification of a time period's dimension and structuring; (3) sufficient spatial relevance of the periodization pattern; (4) reasonable embedding in the real-life frame of reference of the respective present.

While the periodizing approach offers a first abstraction which still grounds on facts and events, the theory driven analysis contributes to the selection and organization of historical knowledge by trying to visualize structural conditions and to explain certain developments. Here, historical theories help in identifying, understanding and clarifying specific objects that require differentiation and which cannot be sufficiently derived from the sources themselves (Kocka, 1977; Meran, 1985). Theories enhance the rationality of scholarly discussion because they help to uncover structural clusters of historical processes (Wehler, 1980). They frame and summarize empirically produced knowledge, which otherwise would be degraded to a status of hardly comprehensible juxtaposition (Luhmann, 1990). Then it remained unclear, why an event just like the "Boston Tea Party" (the summit of the clinch between Great Britain and 13 North-American colonies) was documented for its relevance for PR history instead of others and which explanative status it possessed. But when operating on a level of systematic and analytical abstraction it is possible to visualize developmental lines behind the facts and to legitimate their selection. Consecutively, the theorized approach enables the scholar to compare historic events,

structures, and processes. Due to these arguments we assume that a theorizing analysis represents the most appropriate version of PR historiography.

Table 1: Three approaches of (PR-) historiography (author's illustration partially based on Bentele, 1997)

| Criteria                 | Approaches   |   |  |
|--------------------------|--|---|--|
|                          | <i>Fact gathering, historical order</i>                  | <i>Periodizing</i>  | <i>Model/theory-oriented</i>   |
| <i>Methods</i>           | Description  | Periodization, characterization of development stages         | (a) Theory-guided gathering; systematization; (b) structural-historical procedures |
| <i>Objectives</i>        | Description  | Description and partly explanation                            | Description and explanation  |
| <i>Theory Foundation</i> | None   | Notions, theoretic constructs                                 | Notions, typologies, theories  |
| <i>Functions</i>         | Attraction for occupational field, scientific beginnings | Attraction for occupational field, first level of abstraction | Scientific functions   |

### **Fact- and event-oriented approaches**

Biographies, autobiographies, and single studies are typical parts of this category. The huge amount of these genres especially circulating in the USA notwithstanding, we do not take them into our corpus of analysis, because they do not aim at a holistic portrayal of PR history.

Apart from these genres, the US-American PR historiography counts at least ten fact- and event-oriented approaches. Two of them, “The Unseen Power. A History of Public Relations” (Cutlip, 1994) as well as “Public Relations History: From the 17th to 20th Century” (Cutlip, 1995), both written by Scott Cutlip, probably belong to the most prominent examples of public relations history in the USA. Cutlip provides biographic and fact-based data, but he does not strive to explain the emergence and the growth of PR or even to develop a genuine theory. The same applies to the rather social-historic interested work of Ewen (1996) and the business related PR history, which Tedlow offers (1979). Further on, the majority of the examined textbooks follows a mere storytelling fact-based approach.<sup>2</sup>

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In Germany two monographs belong to the fact- and event-oriented model. The first is Kincaid (1997), who explicitly presents the German PR history in the fact-oriented style of Cutlip. He highlights distinct German developments in public relations like the constitution of a “Literary Office” in Prussia under the control of the famous Prussian reformer Karl August von Hardenberg in 1816, Alfred von Tirpitz’ fleet campaign after 1897 or – relating to the private sector – the foundation of the “news office” in the Krupp enterprise in 1893. The second one is Hategan (1988, 1991), who writes a history of the German profession. Although these works do not attempt to reach a higher theoretical level, they support the refutation of the thesis of a “big bang” of PR in Germany (Fröhlich, 1997). This assumption considers German public relations to be an American import after the Second World War and was especially promoted by German post World War PR nestors like Albert Oeckl (1976).

Turning the attention to the British PR historiography, one has to state, that there is “[...] hardly any history written of British public relations” (Harrison and Moloney, 2004, p. 206). Smaller academic investigations do exist, like Harrison’s and Moloney’s (2004) comparison of the two public relations pioneers Ivy Lee and his British equivalent John Elliot, Watson’s (2008) case study of today well-known communication strategies applied in 10th century England, or Miller’s and Dinan’s (2000) analysis of the emerging British public relations industry between 1979 and 1998. However, they don’t provide the reader with a full picture of British public relations history.

Today only one comprehensive account exists, written by Jacquie L’Etang (2004) (some essential parts of it have appeared as book chapters and journal articles). In line with our categorisation, L’Etang’s prior intention is “[...] to establish the basic historical facts about the development of public relations in Britain and to gain some insight into the characters who shaped the occupation” (L’Etang 2004, x). Engaging herself in the public relations history of the 20th century, L’Etang is especially interested in the attempts of achieving professional status. Understanding professionalisation as an agonal social process, one of her main findings is “[...] that of the failure of the public relations profession to professionalise, despite its rapid growth and contribution to the development of promotional culture” (L’Etang 2004, 220). She explains this “paradox [...] by the inability of the professional body to establish control over the practice” (L’Etang 2004, 220). Throughout her history, she

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focuses on those persons, institutions and processes, which mainly influenced the formation of the public relations occupation.

Due to the fact that the work of L'Etang is the only British contribution we can build on, we address the question of the perception of PR history, as well. Although L'Etang primarily aims at developing a narrative account of British public relations history, it is also informed by sociological literature and rich of historiographic reflection. This in detail becomes obvious when discussing her perception of PR history. She explicitly refuses the simple transfer of the idealistic American model of the progression to a morally and technically advanced profession to other countries, because this transfer neglects the singular social and cultural conditions which prevail in each country.

Albeit L'Etang addresses the question of the beginning of PR just in the context of the discussion if PR was a neutral or rhetoric means of communication, referring only to the 20th century she implicitly seems to conceive it as a modern phenomenon. Due to her specific interest in building a first encompassing British PR history, there is no urgent need for L'Etang to deal with foreign PR histories. That is why, as we have seen, she only indirectly (and concisely) touches the American public relations history for being no adequate role model.

By summing up we conclude that the American approaches nearly invariably (only with the exception of Ewen and Tedlow) on the one hand portray PR as a modern phenomenon, but on the other hand paradoxically trace it back to the American Revolution (Lovell and Simon) or even to ancient beginnings (the six remaining approaches). None of the American event- and fact-oriented histories take German or English PR developments into consideration.

The two German approaches take different pathways: Like his historiographic model, Cutlip, Kunczik assumes "precursors" and starts his remarks with the Investiture Controversy. Furthermore he is at least implicitly interested in the American historiography, for the reason that for one thing he uses Cutlip as a historiographic model and for another thing as L'Etang he wants to show the independency of the German development. On the contrary, Hategan in a modern account observes the take off of German public relations in governmental activities of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has no inherent interest in English or American developments.

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## **Periodizing approaches**

The corpus of analysis contains two American proposals of periodization: Bernays' historic ideas from 1952 (Bernays, 1952) and the historiographic chapter of the textbook from Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006). In particular Bernays' periodization – which was slightly modified in 1956 – has proved to be influential. It was followed by a theoretically advanced version in 1977 (Bernays, 1998 [1977]). For reasons of coherence and due to their exceptional status we examine both versions together in the following and in table 2.

Bernays' first proposal encompasses seven periods. The first one for instance involves Samuel Adams' "Propaganda" for the independence of America. The second period ("PR of Expansion") proceeds from the start of the nineteenth century to the end of the Civil War. It is characterized by the growing influence of the "Press Agency". The titles of the two following periods, "The public be damned" and "The public be informed" have reached high prominence in public relations history. They trace back to dicta of (at that time) famous persons, William H. Vanderbilt (owner of a railway company and so called "robber baron") and Ivy Lee, one of the first PR counsels. The three last periods mark the alleged progress from a PR qualified by mutual understanding ("Rise of a new Profession") over the foundation of PR departments and first steps of academic reflection ("PR comes of Age") to the proliferation of modern techniques during the Second World War ("The Era of Integration").

Taking Lutz' formal conditions of periodizations into account, Bernays most of all integrates economic and political aspects of the historic evolution. His periods seem to comply with the experiences of the respective presence. Nevertheless a suitable temporal qualification of the periods can not be stated before the third period, because a period of 200 years ("American PR, 1600 – 1800") in this context is devoid of historiographical meaning. In a modification of this version Bernays (Bernays, 1956) abandons the first two periods and raises the PR historic status of the world wars – which in his point of view played an essential part in the development of new PR techniques – by granting them two genuine periods instead.

Bernays' last proposal only slightly varies the determined time intervals. Apart from that it plainly separates the "The public be damned" and the "The public be informed" period and adds the "Mutual Understanding" period as a summarization of

the process of maturation in his first periodization. Even though Bernays still uses the term “period”, these intervals de facto represent theoretical stages. These stages can grasp different tendencies in the understanding of public relations and serve for explanation. They completely orient themselves by the change in the understanding of PR. Especially the inherent idea of the maturation from a degenerated to a morally superior form of communication turned out to be of crucial influence.

Table 2: Bernays’ PR historiographic approaches

| 1952                                | 1977                                |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| American PR, 1600-1800              |                                     |
| PR of Expansion, 1800-1865          |                                     |
| “The public be damned”, 1865-1900   | “The public be damned”, 1865-1906   |
| “The public be informed”, 1900-1919 | “The public be informed”, 1906-1923 |
| Rise of a new Profession, 1919-1929 | Mutual understanding, 1923-present  |
| PR Comes of Age, 1929-1941          |                                     |
| The era of Integration, 1941-1951   |                                     |

The historiographic periodization of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) is equally committed to this notion of maturation. After a merely fact- and event- oriented presentation of PR history from the ancient world to 1900, they continue with six periods, which are limited by political and economic events and altogether compose the “Evolution to Maturity”. In one chart they even use Bernays’ stages, add the stage of “mutual adjustment” and match important events. But the chart rests without further explanation. These periods are explicitly specified and dated, contain heterogeneous aspects of the PR historic happenings and convince with an adequate magnitude. Only the last period (“Global information society”) meanwhile lasts since 1965.

These two American approaches face five German periodizing attempts. However, only two of these attempts meet the above formulated criteria. Oeckl’s public relations history, consisting of the three periods “Intellectual Precursors”, “The Development of Public Relations in the USA” and “The global development of Public Relations after 1945” (Oeckl, 1976), is not appropriate, because it confuses German and American history without further explication and therefore lacks not only a suitable temporal but either a suitable spatial amount. For the same reason the periods of PR history provided by Nessmann (2000) and Jessen and Lerch (1978) are also problematic.

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As opposed to the mentioned shortcomings, Szyszka's four periods of the German post-war PR display an adequate length and spatial relevance (Szyszka 1998). They focus the development of the profession and closely periods of the history of industry. This procedure is plausible insofar the change of public relations within this time-span was eminently influenced by economic processes like the so-called economic miracle during the 1950s or the energy crisis during the 1970s. The other appropriate periodization is constructed by Bentele. To the benefit of keeping the inner coherency of Bentele's work, we discuss it in the next chapter within the context of his holistic theorizing approach of PR history.

In summing up we conclude that the works of Cutlip, Center and Broom and of Bernays extensively promote the idea of an evolutionary progress from a one sided communication to a form of mutual understanding. In agreement with the majority of the American event- and fact-oriented approaches, they construe PR as a modern phenomenon. However, they emphasize the existence of PR in the "earliest times" (Bernays) or its "ancient genesis" (Cutlip et al.). Both interpret (modern) PR history as a specific American domain and do not take English or German PR history into account.

By importing the approach of Bernays, Oeckl and Nessmann are also trapped in the paradox of the modern concept and the ancient beginnings. Devoting their first periods to the American history and only the last one to the German case, one could say that they even too much take the American example into account. The same applies to Jessen and Lerch, though they do not support the idealistic perception and do not assume pre-modern public relations. Szyszka's and Bentele's – as will be shown in the following chapter – approaches both do not strengthen the idealistic view and interpret PR as a modern phenomenon. As both approaches aim to embrace periods of German history, they do not encompass English or American developments.

### **Theory-oriented approaches**

Analysing American PR history, one can detect five further theorizing works. Yet, these approaches are far away from establishing distinct new theoretical perspectives. In contrast, they only appear as simple variations of the 'Bernays' notion of a linear maturation process from a morally corrupted, unidirectional form of communication to a professional, symmetric way of producing agreement. This finding does not only holds true for three of the analysed textbooks<sup>3</sup>, which partial theoretical identity we

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demonstrated elsewhere (Hoy et al., 2007), but similarly for the approaches of Vasquez and Taylor (2001) as well as of Cropp and Pincus (2001). Whereas the paradigmatic maturation process in the role continuum of Cropp and Pincus manifests itself in the evolution from the unilateral “Press Agency” to the bilateral “Relationship Management” to a stage of “Organizational Positioning”, in the example of Vasquez and Taylor the same process ends in the stages of “Maturation” [!] and “Professionalism”. Although the paradigmatic influence of Bernays pertaining the textbooks could not be proven by means of citation analysis – probably because particular forms of knowledge quite fast transform into “tacit knowledge” (Polanyi, 1967) which then is treated as common property that needs not to be cited anymore (Hoy et al., 2007) – the seemingly six theory-oriented approaches actually can be reduced to one relatively simple theoretic pattern of moral and technical progression of PR.

Taking a closer look at the German theory-oriented approaches, Bentele’s functional integrative stratification conception, which is inspired by evolutionary biology, stands out (Bentele, 1997). The temporally preceding layer determines their followers and conversely is encapsulated in them. Nevertheless, they experience a change in function. More precise the last stage – “PR As a Social System” – is chronologically preceded by the theoretic stages “Interpersonal Communication”, “Public Communication”, “Organizational Communication”, and “Public Relations (as Profession and Occupational Field)”. In contrast to the periodizing approaches, which do not link their caesuras to the form of communication itself, Bentele offers guiding principles for the transition of the form of PR itself. With a periodizing ambition Bentele substantiates the two last stages in respect of the German PR history. He starts with the “Formation of the Occupational Field” (middle of the 19th century until 1918) and closes with the “Boom of the Occupational Field, Professionalization” (1985 until now). The termination of his periods is mainly based on outstanding political data.

Saxer (1992) provides another theory-oriented approach. His historical account deems the socio-historic change to be responsible for decisive PR developments. In line with this hypothesis his first PR historical stage of a merely “Reactive PR” corresponds with the industrializing society, which is characterized by the somehow paradox combination of seller’s markets and the ideological necessity to

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legitimize one's entrepreneurial acting. Here, PR widely adapts advertising instruments. The shift to buyer markets and the emergence of electronic mass media in the industrialized society lead to a massive economic concurrence and thereby to the sector-specific establishment of economic PR, which in a homogeneous (medial) surrounding and a successively professionalized way legitimizes whole practices and branches. PR seizes public opinion and learns to simulate news factors. Social trends like individualization and the growing societal complexity impede social communication and provoke an omnipresent need for PR. Thus the post-industrial society corresponds with the encompassing diffusion of PR from economics to the other social subsystems. Now PR commands a plurality of channels and is able to observe the highly differentiated news factors of a fragmented media system. Besides a critical alignment with American PR history and the alleged chronological primacy of economic PR the approach pleases because of its theoretical accentuation of PR immanent transitions.

The third German theorized approach (Merten, 1997), which is exclusively based on constructivist thought, even terminologically strongly patterns itself on the well known American example of Grunig and Hunt (1984). Merten one-on-one copies their first two stages, "Publicity" and "Information", into his conception. Although the following stages "Communication" and "Management" do not literally converge with the respective concepts of Grunig and Hunt, namely the "Two way asymmetric model" and "The two way symmetric model", as regards content they are very close together. In a sense Merten – by copying Grunig and Hunt – imports the paradigmatic model of Bernays with its assumption of a systematic improvement of PR. Yet, he untightens the idea of progression from its moral connotation. Situated in his background theory of radical constructivism, he ceases to understand PR as something like a transfer of objective information, but comprises it as a process of "construction of desirable realities".

As we have demonstrated, the seemingly six different American theoretic proposals can be reduced to one paradigmatic progressivist account. In terms of marking the beginning of PR, they largely share the opinion that PR history can be traced back at least to the American Revolution or even "[...] is as old as history itself" (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 21.), although they interpret PR as a modern mode of communication. Only Vasquez and Taylor as well as Cropp and Pincus do not

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follow this paradoxical scheme. In addition, all the theoretic approaches concentrate on American history.

The three German accounts do not provide an idealistic perception. Although Merten closely refers to the model of Grunig and Hunt, by maintaining his constructivist basis theorems he avoids this questionable perception, as well. With the exception of Merten, who also borrows the idea of early beginnings, the German approaches understand PR as a modern phenomenon. Furthermore, Saxer and Bentele provide highly abstract models of PR history, which are not only designed to be suitable for the German experience but also can be utilized for other national contexts. In view of a genuine German PR historiography, Saxer even finds his first two stages too much with American material. Hardly surprising, Merten strongly bases his history on the American PR history, too.

### **Conclusion and research perspectives**

As expected, the comparison between US-American, British and German PR historiography underlines the numerical dominance of American PR historiography. Even though we did only consider the most common textbooks and a few older ones, the USA counts (more than) 18 PR histories, whereas German PR history counts 10 and British PR history only one encompassing exponent(s). In contrast, our suggestion of a corresponding prevalence in terms of theoretical advancement is partially wrong. The higher numbers of theory-oriented approaches in America (6) (versus Great Britain (0), and Germany (3) notwithstanding, the American approaches are altogether obliged to the same theoretical perspective of a linear technical and moral process of maturation. Although (outside the corpus of our analysis) some American scholars like Olasky (1987), who rather interprets PR as a persuasive form of control techniques, criticize this notion of maturation, their ideas have not diffused into the broad historiography (Hoy et al., 2007). In contrast, at least the German histories conduce to a plural scientific discussion, as they serve a constructivist (Merten), a biological inspired (Bentele) and a socio-historic perspective (Saxer). Additionally, German history involves two (out of five) separate periodizing approaches not sticking to the idea of linear maturation. In contrast, the American examples in this category also promote the progressive ideal. Moreover, one should keep in mind that L'Etang's British account is explicitly formulated against the progressivist American notion. In its reflective character and its richness in facts it

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represents a promising first step to a pluralistic discourse of encompassing British PR historiography which could also be rich of theoretic abstraction.

In contrast to our assumption, especially most of the American approaches (14) do not fully promote the view of the modern beginning of PR but instead claim either ancient or at least pre-modern antecedents. As Duffy (Duffy, 2000) has already stated in case of the American textbooks, throughout American PR historiography PR is defined as a modern phenomenon with Hill's words "[...] brought into being by the ever-increasing complexity of the economic, social, and political problems" (Hill, 1993, p. 2), but paradoxically permanently combined with chapters about pre-modern intervals (4) or – more often – even to ancient times or the beginning of history itself (10). The British and the German PR history mainly refuse this paradox concept, which confuses (rhetorical or technical) precedents with the whole social sphere. Only the four German approaches, which closely relate themselves to American historiography (Kunczik, Oeckl, Nessmann, Merten) also support the 'antecedents-view'.

Our last assumption seems to be right: none of the American approaches shows any interest for the PR development taking place in Great Britain or Germany. They implicitly put forward the idea of PR as an original American invention. While British and German PR historiography do not pay attention to each other, they at least often consider (at least implicitly) the American counterpart. This happens out of different motives. L'Etang and in part Kunczik refer American historiographical work ex negative in order to charge the claim of being the historic homestead of PR, the other German approaches consider parts of American history due to the lack of German historiography (Oeckl, Nessmann) and to their basic reference to American approaches.

These findings given, further PR historiography should more intensively take the history of (the) other (two) countries into account. At the best case, this interest in multinational PR history could lead to a comparison of different PR histories generating an abstract theoretical account, which nevertheless is still sensitive for national characteristics. Furthermore, American PR historiography should be stimulated by the reflective English historiographic style and the multiplicity of German theory-oriented approaches to overcome the simplistic maturation perception and variegate its theoretical perspectives. British PR history especially requires more

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theoretical efforts as well, whereas German PR historiography, apart from Kunczik, should be stimulated from the others to expand its fundament of facts through basic historic research.

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### Notes

- 1) This triple matrix expands Bentele's (1997) two-dimensional approach to PR history. Bentele divides PR historiography in fact-based and theory-based approaches.]
- 2) This group of textbooks consists of Marston (1979), Moore and Kalupa (1985), Seitel (2001), Nolte (1979), Lovell (1982), Simon (1986). Even though the three latter authors employ the term "period", this application of the term cannot be rendered as suitable. It contradicts the given criteria of Lutz, because the subsumed phenomena remain diffuse and the narrative event-oriented mode clearly dominates (Hoy et al., 2007).
- 3) The mentioned textbooks are: Grunig and Hunt (1984), Newsom et al. (2004) and Lattimore et al. (2004).

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**THE WORLD'S WORK: ARTHUR W. PAGE AND THE MOVEMENT  
TOWARD SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CORPORATE  
COMMUNICATIONS, 1913-1927**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper explores the early work of Arthur W. Page, who served as editor of *The World's Work* magazine prior to becoming the first public relations leader in America to serve on the executive management team of a major corporation, American Telegraph & Telephone Company. In editorials, Page often described the obligations of corporations in a democratic society. Page's editorial vision reflected a movement toward social responsibility in corporate communications.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Examining Arthur W. Page's vision involved textual analysis of nearly 180 issues of *The World's Work*, from January 1910 through December 1926. Personal correspondence, speeches, and transcripts of oral interviews were also reviewed.

**Findings** - Five themes of corporate social responsibility emerged: environmental protection, labor rights, consumer protection and education, child welfare, and corporate transparency.

**Originality/value** - The concept of corporate social responsibility was not formally defined and documented until 1953. This study of Page's editorial vision, and the themes of corporate responsibility that emerged in his editorial work prior to joining AT&T, enriches our understanding about the movement toward social responsibility in corporate communications.

**Category:** Research paper

**Keywords:** History; Public relations, Corporate communications, Corporate social responsibility. Arthur W. Page; *The World's Work*

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**THE WORLD'S WORK: ARTHUR W. PAGE AND THE MOVEMENT  
TOWARD SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CORPORATE  
COMMUNICATIONS, 1913-1927**

A business-driven push for efficiency and economic growth exemplified American life in the 1910s and 1920s. As evidence, production nearly doubled during the 10 years following World War I, despite a population increase of only 12 percent (Groner, 1972). Increased industrialization and urbanization brought with it increased demand for social responsibility. In fact, the number of national organizations promoting social welfare nearly tripled from 1900 to 1920 (Cutlip et al., 1995). The post-war economy entered a depression in 1921, bringing even more attention to issues such as public health and literacy (Bernstein, 1998).

Mass media helped interpret the growing role of business in American society during this time of change. This study identifies examples from the early work of Arthur W. Page, who from 1913 to 1927 edited *The World's Work*, a popular magazine about business and commerce. In the magazine's editorials, Page often described the special obligations of corporations and other businesses in a democratic society.

Notable is the fact that Page left *The World's Work* in 1927 to become a vice president of the American Telegraph & Telephone Company (AT&T) and the first public relations leader in America to serve on the executive management team of a major corporation. His transition from editor to public relations executive reflects a broader movement toward social responsibility in corporate communications.

## **1. Literature Review**

### *Early Insights on Social Responsibility*

Scholars define corporate social responsibility as organizational sensitivity to greater societal good (Morsing, 2006). Historians generally agree that the concept of corporate social responsibility began to emerge in the 1930s and 1940s, and became formalized in 1953 with the publication of *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (Carroll, 1999; Freeman, 1984). Understanding how corporate social responsibility developed is important; some scholars argue that the corporation is the central institution of society, enabling economic progress and growth (McDermott, 1991).

Business was not always viewed as the center of American society, though. Muckraking and public criticism of business were the norm during the first two

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decades of the twentieth century. However, the practice of public relations expanded dramatically following World War I, helping improve the reputation of business.

AT&T was a leader in these efforts (Folkerts et al., 2009).

Arthur W. Page, *The World's Work*, and AT&T

From its beginnings in November 1900, *The World's Work* was devoted to social responsibility and the public interest. Its founder, Walter Hines Page, used the magazine as a forum to discuss business economics, democracy and social conditions (Rusnak, 1982). His son, Arthur W. Page, succeeded him as editor in 1913, when the elder Page was named a U.S. ambassador (*Time*, 1932). The younger Page continued his father's commitment to the public interest, and *The World's Work* ultimately enjoyed a 32-year run, outliving the editorships of both men (Griese, 2001).

In 1927, five years before *The World's Work* folded, AT&T hired Arthur W. Page as vice-president. In the words of chief executive Walter S. Gifford, Page would “bring more prestige and energy to the company's public relations efforts” (Marchand, 1998). Indeed, Page's interest in advocating for the greater good was sorely needed. By 1928, the federal government had begun investigating the public relations practices of the nation's utilities, including AT&T (Olansky, 1987).

Page responded candidly to the call for an investigation, saying, “All business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval. If that be true, it follows that business should be cheerfully willing to tell the public what its policies are, what it is doing, and what it hopes to do. This seems practically a duty” (Griswold, 1967).

America in the Early Twentieth Century

Page edited *The World's Work* during a time of significant change and growth in America, including World War I and national prohibition (Kyvig, 2002). The U.S. Census of 1920 revealed that – for the first time in history – more than half of all Americans were living in cities (Walton, 2005). Additionally, women had gained the right to vote and many were entering the workforce (Walton, 2005).

Business became the focus for many women and men, including the readers of Page's magazine, particularly after the post-war recession ended. In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge declared that “business is America's business” (Andrist, 1987). By the end of the 1920s, the number of manufacturing operations owned by corporations had increased by more than 50 percent (Bernstein, 1998).

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As the economy grew, so too, did American livelihood. During the 1920s, for example, the number of homes with electricity nearly doubled (Bernstein, 1998). However, not everyone benefited equally. From 1923 to 1929, per capita disposable income for the lower 93 percent of non-farm workers fell slightly, while the top 1 percent grew their share of disposable income by 63 percent (Bernstein, 1998). Social responsibility was a growing concern.

Still, the gross national product grew by nearly a third from 1921 to 1927, nearly \$100 billion for the first time in America's history (Andrist, 1987). The nation was caught in a frenzy of economic growth, and until 1927 and his departure for AT&T, Page witnessed it all from his perch as editor of an influential national magazine.

#### *AT&T and Corporate Social Responsibility*

To understand American business in the early twentieth century is to understand the legacy of AT&T, one of the largest and dominant companies of the time. AT&T stock was more widely distributed among stockholders than any other major American corporation (Marchand, 1998). In fact, AT&T began promoting itself in 1911 as an "investment democracy," a position that continued throughout the 1920s, including Page's first few years as vice president of public relations (Marchand, 1998). The concept of an investment democracy was intended to imply that the public could help ensure the fulfillment of their own interests and needs by purchasing AT&T stock and becoming involved in the growth and direction of the company.

AT&T distinguished itself by being responsive to customers and employees. In fact, AT&T became one of the first companies in America to provide its employees with pension insurance and savings plans (Groner, 1972). This commitment reflected the company's view of itself as a democracy, in which people investing and working together could create a greater common good.

The early part of the twentieth century was not without blemish for AT&T, particularly with regard to social responsibility and public relations. Prior to the 1920s, AT&T fiercely defended its regulated monopoly by pressuring local governments for competitive advantage and repeatedly hiring freelancers to develop editorials on behalf of supportive third parties. These columns, favorable to the regulated monopoly concept, were then pitched to local media with no mention of their tie to AT&T (Olasky, 1987).

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In 1915, then AT&T president Theodore Vail defended the company's position, writing in an *Atlantic* column, "Some corporations have not as yet quite got on to the new order of things. Relations between the public and corporations have not fully adjusted themselves to that nicety of balance which is possible, and which will give each of them all that either is entitled to, or could get" (Olasky, 1987). He believed that corporations would benefit by being more emphatic with and responsive to the public.

The balance Vail desired seemed to come in time. During the Roaring Twenties, as AT&T focused more heavily on customer relations, public investment in the corporation boomed. The number of AT&T stockholders increased from 139,000 in 1920 to 567,000 in 1930 (Groner, 1972). AT&T had won the public's confidence and established itself as a dominant player in the American economy. In Arthur Page, the leaders of AT&T saw a visionary who could help strengthen the corporation's reputation and sense of goodwill.

## **2. Methodology**

How might Arthur W. Page's years as editor of *The World's Work* have informed his view of a corporation's responsibilities to society? This study explores Page's editorial work and his personal writings for clues.

As exploratory research, this is a qualitative study. The methodology involved four steps. First, nearly 180 issues of *The World's Work* from 1910 to 1927 were reviewed, inclusive of Page's early work as a reporter and all of his years as editor. Textual analysis focused on editorials and used the constant-comparative method, in which each editorial was read to identify central themes. First readings of each editorial helped identify central themes; subsequent readings helped identify exemplars of each theme, ensuring that the list of themes could not be further narrowed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Next, personal correspondence during Page's time as editor and during his transition to AT&T was examined. These artifacts provide important context for the study. Thirdly, copies of several speeches Page delivered during his first year as vice president of AT&T were examined to identify any continuing themes about corporate social responsibility. Finally, a transcript of Page's oral self-history was reviewed.

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### 3. Findings

In analyzing *The World's Work*, five themes of corporate social responsibility emerged: environmental protection, labor rights, consumer protection and education, child welfare, and corporate transparency, or the degree to which a corporation should share information with the public.

The genesis of the five themes may have been the lead editorial from the June 1913 issue, the edition in which Walter H. Page's departure was announced:

“For fifty years the criterion by which the United States judged itself was business. If a measure was good for business, it was good for the country; if it were bad for business, it was bad for the country. To change the standard by which the country judges itself from the narrower classification of the special welfare of business to the broad foundation of the welfare of the consuming man – to do this without destruction and without animosity requires a man of patience and quiet courage. It is our good fortune that President Wilson is such a man”  
(Page, W.H., June 1913).

The five themes of social responsibility are evident in *The World's Work* from 1913 to 1927, the duration of Arthur W. Page's tenure as editor. However, the themes are most dominant in the years following World War I, when the nation's attention shifted to economic growth.

#### Environmental Protection

Three years before taking the helm as editor of *The World's Work*, Arthur Page wrote his first bylined article for the magazine. In the November 1910 issue, Page reported on the proceedings of the Second National Conservation Congress held in St. Paul, Minnesota, a precursor to social movements regarding environmental protection (Page, A.W., November 1910).

As editor, Page continued to advocate for the environment, particularly by urging logging companies to adopt more sustainable methods. In November 1924, an editorial addressed the fact that only half of every log was being converted to usable lumber. The editorial highlighted a new cutting method developed by a West Coast logger and adopted by a growing number of mills nationwide. Page stressed the importance of adopting this more socially responsible practice: “Experienced lumbermen judge that the process will effect a saving of at least 13 percent of the cubic contents of each log that by the present system is entirely wasted. It is a percentage too large to continue to cast upon the waters, even in a country whose

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regal forests seem inexhaustible” (Page, A.W., November 1924). A draft of this editorial was shared with Herbert Hoover, then United States Secretary of Commerce, prior to publication. Hoover, in a June 21, 1924, letter to Arthur W. Page, confirmed the merit of this new sawing technique yet acknowledged the lack of available funding to actively promote it nationally (Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, 1924).

In April 1926, the forestry theme continued. An editorial promoted “The Forestry Primer,” a pamphlet produced by the American Tree Association. It is praised as an example of industry collaborating to raise awareness about environmental protection (Page, A.W., April 1926).

A unique industry coalition on behalf of the environment also earned praise from *The World’s Work*. In 1923, the United States Chamber of Commerce launched a national campaign to reduce litter. Businesses were commended by *The World’s Work* for working cooperatively to bolster citizenship, pride and the environment (Page, A.W., November 1923).

In yet another issue of *The World’s Work*, Page and his guest contributors addressed concern about possible depletion of domestic oil reservoirs. The message in this 1926 editorial was more about exploration than conservation. However, the use of environmentally sensitive tools was lauded: “Within the year the larger companies have brought science into play in the location of potential fields” (Page, A.W., July 1926).

### Labor Rights

Three of Arthur Page’s earliest bylined articles as a reporter for *The World’s Work* focused on labor rights, including the emancipation of African-American cotton workers, working conditions in the steel industry, and safety measures for miners working underground (Page, A.W., December 1910, February 1911, March 1912). As he grew into his editor role, Page continued advocating for workers (Page, A.W., August 1913, February 1916, June 1917).

In 1925, for example, “The March of Events” featured an editorial about the high price of coal relative to fuel oil and gas. The message, though, was not about the need to cut labor costs in order to reduce price. In two paragraphs, a miner’s average income was compared with that of other laborers, and it was shown that, all things being equal, the miner was not earning an exorbitant wage compared with workers in other industries (Page, A.W., October 1925).

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The coal miner received even stronger defense in an April 1922 editorial. At the heart of this editorial was a complaint lodged against operators for developing too many mines. As a result, under-production at each mine forced laborers into part-time, as-needed employment rather than ongoing, full-time work. The editorial outlines defensive tactics miners could use to force their employers' hand and secure more steady employment. With a curt sentence, the editorial concludes: "The remedy for high prices is not to reduce the miners' wages, but to correct the economic errors of the whole system of producing, marketing and consuming coal (Page, A.W., April 1922).

Page went to bat for other laborers, as well, including farmers and sailors. In 1923, one of *The World's Work* editorials focused on improving the condition of the American farmer by encouraging wheat farmers to band together, gain control of the Armour Grain Company of Chicago, and essentially transform the company into a wholesale marketing arm. The end result of such an effort, according to *The World's Work*, would be "higher prices and new prosperity in the agricultural states" (Page, A.W., August 1923). The underlying message was that grain exchanges do not necessarily work for the mutual benefit of farmers, and that sometimes drastic measures are necessary to achieve a true and lasting change.

In 1924, *The World's Work* praised the maritime industry, and specifically the American Marine Library Association, for installing more than 3,000 libraries on ships for the edification of young sailors (Page, A.W., April 1924). Most of the content of *The World's Work* focused on commerce and economic growth from the perspective of business or government interest, but occasional editorials such as this one about sailors' need for education and entertainment provide evidence that Page and his team had greater social responsibilities in mind.

In other ways, too, Page reinforced the importance of responsible business practices, specifically related to labor. Praising automaker Henry Ford, an editorial in *The World's Work* stated, "When he raised wages to \$5 a day he was not practicing a new principle. He was merely making a dramatic presentation of the fact that the best managers get the best labor and pay for it" (Page, A.W., August 1925). Discussing the growing popularity of pensioning aging workers by industrial corporations, Page and his guest contributors in September 1926 wrote:

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“Introduced as a form of social justice, it has proven valuable in other ways as well. It helps corporations to weed out men whose brains or muscles are no longer productive. It builds organization by giving the workers the feeling that they are being fairly treated. It removes an old source of community ill will, and replaces it with good will” (Page, A.W., September 1926).

### Consumer Protection and Education

In addition to espousing the rights and well-being of workers, Page demonstrated editorial concern for consumers and their protection, as well. More than a half-dozen editorials in *The World's Work* expressed the need for greater consumer education about advertising, life insurance, investment banking, stocks and real estate financing (Page, A.W., November 1913, December 1913, April 1918, March 1919, March 1922, April 1922, May 1923, May 1926). For example, federal efforts to control “loan sharks” were spotlighted in a 1913 editorial, and by 1919, similar concerns were voiced about the “pirates of promotion,” get-rich-quick operators who were convincing unsuspecting consumers to purchase doubtful securities with Liberty bonds (Page, A.W., November 1913, March 1919).

In these editorials, the plea for greater social responsibility by business was often clearly made. For example, a 1922 editorial about faulty promotion of stock investments contained this message: “Another positive remedy which reliable banking and brokerage houses could very easily apply to help cure these evils would be to refuse to advertise in any medium that accepts the announcements of houses which do not enjoy good reputations” (Page, A.W., April 1922). In this spirit, Page and his editorial team periodically made explicit suggestions to an entire industry about adopting more socially responsible practices.

Advocacy for consumer education carried through *The World's Work* editorials in other ways, as well. For example, in 1922, an editorial about reducing financial losses from fires urged homeowners to purchase only those devices carrying the Underwriters' Laboratories, Inc., label. The Underwriters' Laboratories was a non-profit organization, financed by fire insurance companies, to research the causes and prevention of fire (Page, A.W., April 1922). The insurance industry was praised by *The World's Work* for doing work that would benefit the greater good.

### Child Welfare

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A particularly sensitive theme in *The World's Work*, relative to corporate social responsibility, was the topic of child welfare. When this theme emerged, it was often in criticism of child labor practices. In 1922, for example, an editorial flatly stated: "Child labor, even when there is an economic gain – that is, when the children actually add to the nation's wealth – is a great evil" (Page, A.W., November 1922). The following year, *The World's Work* contained a lengthy editorial detailing the prevalence of child labor practices in America and pointing to infractions at textile mills in North Carolina and Rhode Island, coal mines in Pennsylvania and sugar beet fields in California and Colorado (Page, A.W., August 1923). The editorial called for state legislatures to become more aggressive until the national conscience had been raised about the injustice of such practices.

Other editorials on child labor followed, including a 1923 editorial regarding the coal industry and the lack of appropriate child welfare in coal mining communities (Page, A.W., November 1923). The problems cited included unsanitary living conditions, poor nutrition and inadequate education.

*The World's Work* pointed to other issues emerging in America with regard to child welfare. In November 1922, an editorial focused on the connection between the "viciousness" and "demoralizing influence" of motion pictures and crimes committed by boys who saw these films as well as predatory acts against boys and girls committed by adult patrons (Page, A.W., November 1922). The editorial stressed the need for greater censorship, legislation and self-regulation. Specifically, the editorial chastised moving-picture houses for employing adults to recruit and escort children into the theatres despite laws prohibiting such practices. *The World's Work* drew attention to the National Association of Motion Picture Industries' effort to rally moving-picture theatre owners to work collaboratively to address this illegal and morally questionable practice.

#### Corporate Transparency

Perhaps the most prolific of the five social responsibility themes that emerged in *The World's Work* from 1913 to 1927 was that of corporate transparency, or the degree to which a corporation or other business should share information with the public. A dozen or more editorials addressed this theme during the time period studied, anchored by a March 1914 in-depth feature story by Waddill Catchings titled "If Business Were All in the Open" (Page, A.W., August 1913, February 1914, April

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1922, July 1923, December 1923, November 1924, June 1925, July 1925, October 1925, April 1926, May 1926, August 1926 and October 1926; Catchings, 1914).

Still, Page and his editorial team at *The World's Work* assured readers that a lack of corporate transparency was not always a sign of trouble. In a 1925 piece citing writer Mark Sullivan, the editorial contributors declared:

“[Mark Sullivan] disposes of many of the old impressions about our industrial life. Not only does he strike at that old idea that there is no lifelong continuity in the history of American business houses, but he also points out effectively that those who cried out in the past against ‘big business’ really were afraid of the dark; the bogeys have not materialized” (Page, A.W., July 1925).

More often than not, though, *The World's Work* called attention to the ways in which corporations could or should make their organizations more transparent to the public. For example, in 1925, an editorial explained how “at least one great corporation successfully practices advertising in a new way.” The editorial praised leaders at this unidentified company for sharing working drafts of advertisements with all employees for their feedback. The idea was to build an unspoken contract between the organization and its workers so that claims made in public would be consistent with the actions and character of individuals employed by the corporation. In the words of Page and his editorial team, “In this day of great business, this use of advertising is enormously valuable in unifying a business organization, giving its members a common purpose, consistent ideas, and a uniform public character to maintain” (Page, A.W., October 1925).

In an examination of the growing trend toward stock ownership in corporations, Page and *The World's Work* editorial team raised concerns about the increasing number of inexperienced investors owning stocks. Specifically, the 1926 editorial questioned whether new investors understood their responsibilities as stockholders or the responsibilities of the organizations in which they had purchased stock, beyond making money and generating dividends. Succinctly, the editorial provided this advice to investors:

“[T]he first criterion by which to judge great companies is their service to the public. The second is, do they provide proper returns to those who take responsibility for serving the public – the civil service of these companies. The third criterion is, do these companies play fair with the people who lend them money” (Page, A.W., May 1926).

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This editorial, which appeared just a few months before Page resigned from *The World's Work*, reflects how corporate social responsibility had emerged as a concept and a concern during Page's tenure as editor of the magazine.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The editorials from Page's years with *The World's Work* indicate that what is now known as corporate social responsibility was a concern of the man who in 1927 became vice president of AT&T. Other primary evidence exists, as well. In a letter to Morton Fullerton, an acquaintance living in Paris, France, Page made the following statement about his departure from *The World's Work*: "[T]his change from the printed to the spoken word in no way lessens my interest in public affairs" (Page, A.W., February 1927). Later in his life, Page commented on what he had told people regarding his transition from *The World's Work* to AT&T, saying, "[N]othing would please me more than to try to do something instead of telling everybody else to do it" (Page, A.W., June 1956).

Page kept his passion top of mind while transitioning to AT&T in 1927. The first transcribed speech of Page's career with AT&T contained an opening sentence summarizing his passion for corporate social responsibility: "I think that idealism is to find out the place where our interest and the public interests coincide and to hit that place" (Page., A.W., April 1927). In a subsequent speech to the AT&T General Operating Conference a month or so later, Page did not talk explicitly about corporate social responsibility. However, he did allude to a few of the themes of corporate social responsibility that had emerged in his final few years as editor of *The World's Work*. He said:

"The first and greatest limitation [of public relations] is that it cannot change the facts. It can act as a kind of loud speaker to broadcast the good service that you people provide, but its effectiveness has a very fading quality if there is any bad service. In other words, it will not act as a substitute for service if you should ever need such a substitute" (Page, A.W., May 1927).

Indeed, throughout his career, Page advocated for businesses to operate in a socially responsible manner. Editorials from *The World's Work* provide early clues of that lifelong passion.

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This study fills a notable gap in scholarly research regarding social responsibility in corporate communications. More than 25 years prior to the first published works about corporate social responsibility, Arthur W. Page echoed related themes through his editorial leadership at *The World's Work*. He held fast to this vision of social responsibility when he took charge of corporate communications at AT&T. Reviewing Page's career in greater detail may help scholars better understand early perspective on the role and responsibilities of business in society.

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## THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA: CHARTING THE EARLY PUBLIC RELATIONS IDEOLOGY OF EDWARD L. BERNAYS, 1919-1929

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### Introduction

In 1923, former press agent and World War I Committee on Public Information (CPI) employee Edward L. Bernays published *Crystallizing Public Opinion* and laid out the idea of a new public relations profession that had a set of clearly demonstrable practices coupled with a theoretical grounding. Bernays had been greatly influenced by the “moving the masses” experiences of the CPI, which played out on the international stage and which, Lippmann (1922, p. 218) argued, led to a new publicity man who gave “shape to the facts of modern life.” In *Crystallizing*, Bernays articulated that public relations could identify inchoate sets of interests within the masses so as to align them with a client’s needs. As the decade continued, Bernays sought to expand on mass persuasion concepts that applied to coercing or regimenting the crowd, in part or in whole, with a more affinity-based approach in which audiences were matched with particular minority interests of a client. In fact, by 1928, he had established that the crowd could be “herded” by establishing that different clients’ interests resonated with the needs of different groups. In an early approach to segmentation, Bernays’ controversial book *Propaganda* advocated for a “good” propaganda, one that attempted to link underrepresented ideas, products, and services with other potentially receptive groups within the wider public sphere. He maintained new, emerging concepts were offered by wide sets of minority viewpoints in society – from women’s rights groups to hat makers – and propaganda was well-suited to put these interests before the people.

Thus, this paper examines selected key aspects of Bernays’ writings and work from 1919-1929, a crucial decade that featured active postwar debate about the implications of national and international propaganda, to document this imperfect evolution from regimenting the masses toward resonating with targeted publics. In doing so, we also consider how Gustave Le Bon, Wilfred Trotter, Walter Lippmann,

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and Harold Lasswell influenced Bernays, men whose ideas he referenced extensively in his own during this time. [1]

This work finds, however, that Bernays' progression toward a more targeted appeal to discrete audiences did not evolve in a continuous way. In fact, up until 1928, he often digressed into notions of "regimenting" the public. Rather than Ellul's (1965) claim that propagandistic ideology develops upon the completion of propagandistic actions, this work displays that Bernays proceeded through a sometimes wandering evolution of propaganda ideology during the 1920s. While he did not make a clean ideological shift from mass persuasion to segmentation, Bernays nonetheless expanded his own practices to demonstrate what he believed to be pro-social applications of propaganda, of lifting a client's minority interest by connecting with similarly matched subsets of the crowd. The Torches of Freedom parade, often pointed out as an example of Bernays' showmanship was, in fact emblematic of this expanded practice.

With this approach, then, this study provides insights into Bernays' role in establishing public relations' still-enduring self-justificatory and self-sustaining rationales for its own existence and suggests some key implications of Bernays' evolving ideology and practice of public relations.

### **The CPI, Lithuania, and lessons about publicity**

Several have labeled Bernays as a central pioneer in the professionalization of public relations (e.g., Cutlip, 1994; Olasky, 1987). However, others have specifically aligned him with the discipline of propaganda. For example, Ewen (1996) observed that Bernays exemplified "an emerging class of propaganda specialists," who took the ideas of Le Bon, Trotter, and Edward Ross and called for an elite leadership who could control the masses (and avoid the dangers of social upheaval) through social scientific methods (173). Lasswell observed in 1927 that Bernays was part of a propaganda profession, a rising industry that featured "a corps of men who do nothing but study the ways and means of changing minds or binding minds to their convictions" (34). Bernays himself did not shy away from the label "propaganda," but instead argued that there was "propaganda and impropaganda," and that he employed the former to enhance society and to bring underrepresented voices to the marketplace of ideas (Bernays, *Propaganda and Impropaganda*, 1928c).

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Bernays, however, would not come to such wider notions of a pro-social propaganda until he had completed World War I publicity work for the Committee on Public Information (CPI), also known as the Creel Committee. He brought to the Bureau what he characterized as his “Broadway publicity and press agency” skills, and toward the end of the war he was asked to “initiate propaganda that would counteract efforts being made by the German-Austrian propaganda machine” (Bernays, 1965, pp. 157-158). His description of those efforts included a strategically timed news announcement that would take advantage of a slow news day (and that would garner coverage in Europe and the U.S.) and a rally at Carnegie Hall to demonstrate solidarity between Czechoslovakia and Poland, two countries seeking to break from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (Bernays, 1965, pp. 158-159)

One outcome of the CPI experience was that Bernays learned that “foreigners thought they knew more about American public opinion and how to influence it than Americans did” (Bernays, 1965, p. 183). This led him to conclude that nation-building publicity “might be a fascinating, constructive career” (Bernays, 1965, p. 183). Bernays also learned the value of what he termed “strategic intelligence,” the collection by countries and companies of “adequate information about trends, movements and events that might affect their position” (Bernays, 1965, p. 185).

When Bernays returned to New York from Europe in the spring of 1919, he wanted to move beyond “musical and theatrical press-agentry and publicity” (Bernays, 1965, p. 187). Soon Carl Byoir, associate director of the CPI’s Foreign Division (and future founder of his own public relations firm), invited him to freelance for the newly created Lithuanian National Council of the United States, an initiative of Catholics and Protestants of Lithuanian descent designed to generate U.S. support for a newly independent Lithuania. (Bernays, 1965, pp. 187-188). Bernays accepted Byoir’s offer and the firm produced six feature articles a week for 12 weeks on Lithuanian lifestyle, culture, and society for American (New York) readers to generate clips for the Lithuanian Press Bureau. [2]

With his CPI and Lithuanian campaign experiences top of mind, Bernays published two articles in early 1920 that focused on the constructive role of publicity. In the American newspaper trade publication *Printer’s Ink*, Bernays challenged the negative image of publicity as “surreptitious” and effective only through “back alley approaches” to “second-rate publications” (Bernays, 1920a, p. 107). Publicity men, he

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wrote, added value by providing leads and/or contributions to news. They worked for some of the great American corporations either by retention as an outside consultant or through in-house employment, and their purpose was to represent a company's views (Bernays, 1920a, p. 107). "What the lawyer does for his client in the court of law, we do for our clients in the court of public opinion through the daily and periodical press," he wrote (Bernays, 1920a, p. 108).

In a similar vein two months later, Bernays expounded on how the publicity person could constructively inform mass audiences so as to promote the health of both American economic and political interests. He outlined a plan for using export trade channels as communication channels, something applied by the CPI but, Bernays observed, not continued, despite its effectiveness. In *Association News*, the newsletter of the American Manufacturers Export Association (AMEA), he explained that during the war South America, the Near and Far East, and Africa were blanketed with competing sources of crafted "propagandist news"; when the CPI entered the fray, it approached AMEA and another export association and arranged to have any correspondence going abroad to have a stamp that conveyed America's purpose. Every piece of business correspondence overseas had the potential for transmitting America's message at no cost to those businesses, demonstrating that ". . . political propaganda and commercial advancement can go hand in hand" (Bernays, 1920b, pp. 2-3). "We sold them American war aims," he wrote, "and concomitantly they learned to be enthusiastic about American manufacturers and were won over to a desire to deal further with American business men" (Bernays, 1920b, p. 3). In this article, Bernays maintained that America needed to revive the positive messaging approach used during the war, advocating that all correspondence from the U.S. to South America be channels for explaining "our political point of view, our difficulty with Mexico, our attitude toward South America" (Bernays, 1920b, p. 4). He reminded his readers that although the letters "U.S." can represent "a threat or a promise," nothing had been done since the war to "make them stand for a promise." (Bernays, 1920b, p. 4) And this, he wrote, was a challenge best met by exporters and manufacturers because government is no longer actively seeking to cultivate "good-will abroad" (Bernays, 1920b, p. 4). "Mutual co-operation for the purpose of selling America, American products generally and a group of American products specifically," was the

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key, he said. Such a widespread publicity effort would benefit all involved by “giving a lifting hand abroad to everything American” (Bernays, 1920b, p. 5).

### **Crystallizing Public Opinion – The Mass Suasion of Crowds**

Indeed, without such an effort to provide the public with guiding information, a client (whether a business or a nation) might find itself at the mercy of an ill-informed herd. Thus, Bernays’ postwar ideas about publicity work evidenced a viewpoint concomitant with writers who had been affirming the need to regiment the masses. By 1923, Bernays articulated that mere publicity was no longer in play; the new public relations professional – an expert in moving the masses – was stepping forward. That year he introduced this new role in his first book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. Its purpose, Bernays wrote, was to “stimulate a scientific attitude toward the study of public relations” (p. vi) and to show the ways in which these ideas could be applied in government and in the marketplace and deliver to the public the information it demanded.

Although he cited a number of sources in this work, it was in *Crystallizing* that Bernays acknowledged the influence of ideas posited by social psychologist Gustave Le Bon, British neurosurgeon Wilfred Trotter, and American journalist and former CPI employee Walter Lippmann. Of the three, Le Bon provided a particularly cautious view of the masses. The crowd, he wrote, should be considered a threat to an orderly society. Full of like-minded individuals who were bent on implementing their collective understandings, the crowd was a politically active population that identified itself through common areas of interest and concern, such as labor unions or political assemblies (Le Bon, 1896, p. xvi). The challenge, then, was not to master the crowd, but to avoid as much as possible being mastered by it, using psychology as a last resort. (Le Bon, 1896, p. xxi). As such, Le Bon observed, leaders focused not on logic, but “sentiment,” reinforcing arguments with evidence and actions and avoiding justifications as they were often insufficient to act effectively even “on cultivated minds” (1896, pp. xxii, 52).

Similarly, Trotter argued that individuals sought to rationalize, to justify the herd’s positions, working from an “*a priori* syntheses” [sic] that concluded theirs was the correct position, blind to problems that others outside the herd might detect (Trotter, 1916, p. 37). Belief, he wrote, came first, whereas explanations or rationalizations “[masquerade] as the cause of the belief” (Trotter, 1916, p. 38).

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“Instinct,” then, consisted of “inherited modes of reaction to bodily need or external stimulus” that are “complex,” “delayed,” require “quite elaborate mental processes,” and are “for the most part matters of feeling.” (Trotter, 1916, p. 94-95). Additionally, while man, like other animals, was instinctual, his ability to choose from a variety of responses could veil those impulses. His actions were significantly constrained by a fear of solitude, a need to conform to the crowd and a marked susceptibility to pack leadership (Trotter, 1916, p. 99).

Lippmann similarly concluded that groups were inherently limited in what they could accomplish. They could resist, or coerce, but “by mass action nothing can be constructed, devised, negotiated or administered” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 229). Facts had to be formulated, choices presented, and symbols attached that reverberated with individual opinion. Accordingly, he noted, came the rise of the “publicity man,” the paid persuader, who

is a clear sign that the facts of modern life do not spontaneously take a shape in which they can be known. They must be given shape by somebody, and since in the daily routine reporters cannot give a shape to facts, and since there is little disinterested organization of intelligence, the need for some formulation is being met by the interested parties (Lippmann, 1922, p. 345).

*Crystallizing Public Opinion* was greatly informed by Le Bon’s cynicism of the crowd’s capacity to contribute to societal stability but revealed that Bernays favored a more positivist framework: society could achieve progress through regimenting the masses. Building from Trotter’s and Lippmann’s observations, Bernays maintained that it was possible to move the masses by understanding the “social implications of an individual’s thoughts and actions.” The social milieu, rather than individual knowledge, was key to opinion formation. Because individuals often followed group leaders in a logic-proof way, the best approach toward the intractability of such dynamics, Bernays said, was through the ability of the new public relations person to “either discredit the old authorities or create new authorities by making articulate a mass opinion against the old belief or in favor of the new” (Bernays, 1923, p. 68). The public relations counsel was needed as an “impartial observer” who understood the group and individual mind to “project his client’s point of view” (Bernays, 1923, p. 122). The counsel used propaganda, he argued, as a tool to overcome the censorship of the group mind and herd reaction.

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According to Lippmann, Bernays wrote, when the country was smaller, one person had enough power to impose his viewpoints and “was able single-handed to crystallize the common will of his country in his day and generation” (Bernays, 1923, p. 125). However, the growth of heterogeneity and the lack of common heritages within a community now required a public relations counsel, “an expert who must know how to reach groups totally dissimilar as to ideals, customs and even language” through existing channels (Bernays, 1923, p. 126). Lippmann, he wrote, suggested three ways to establish cohesion among these groups: legislative force, imposing “government by terror and obedience,” and government as a “highly developed system of information, analysis and self-consciousness”; of those, only the latter fit public relations, Bernays argued, and was similar to the CPI’s use of “education by information” (Bernays, 1923, pp. 128-129).

Therefore, the public relations counsel, instructed by the successes of the CPI, worked to inform the crowd so as to lead it away from its inertia. He would do this, Bernays wrote, by subdividing groups and then developing appeals for them, capitalizing on the commonalities of the individuals within as well as between the groups (Bernays, 1923, p. 139). In this way, public relations could establish “interlapping group formations” to benefit the interests of the client. The transmission of ideas could then occur through the “rearrangement of the thought of the individuals in these groups with respect to each other and with respect to the entire membership of society.” In turn, these changes could make for group “receptivity and open-mindedness” that could be “accelerated and directed by conscious effort” through public relations (Bernays, 1923, pp. 139-150).

Realizing that the public’s views could be modified, the public relations counselor identified in the clients’ causes ideas that would “capitalize on certain fundamental instincts in the people he is trying to reach, and then set about to project these ideas to his public” (Bernays, 1923, 152). Just as headlines and cartoons distill and impart particular ideas, Bernays wrote, so does public relations. He explained that the public relations counselor brought unique value to societal interests because of his “capacity for crystallizing the obscure tendencies of the public mind before they have reached definite expression” (Bernays, 1923, pp. 172-173). Echoing Le Bon’s observation that persuasive tools, whether employed consciously or not, include understanding the words and symbols that would be most effective in speaking to the

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crowd, (Le Bon, 1896), Bernays concluded that the public relations practitioner knows how to “create those symbols to which the public is ready to respond.” He speaks “in the language of his audience” with deliberate expectation of a favorable response. In this way, “the appeal to the instincts and the universal desires is the basic method through which he produces his results” (ELB, 1923, p. 173).

### **Vascillating between segmentation and regimentation**

Heading into the mid-1920s, Bernays continued to work through how public relations appealed to audiences, particularly building on Lippmann’s earlier observation about how the government could effect meaningful mass education. In a 1925 speech, Bernays asserted good governance called for good selling. This required knowing the public being sold to and understanding the community in which that public lived, their leaders, and the different values those leaders represented (Bernays, 1925, p. 1-2). Displaying an evolution in thought about the segmentation of audiences, he said the first step in “selling good government” was to analyze “existing thought” (Bernays, 1925, p. 3). The second step was to analyze how the project would appeal to the community, using the “very small number of fundamental desires and emotions and instincts” that sway individuals and groups. (Bernays, 1925, p. 3). Understand the group’s composition and its “natural cleavage,” he said, realizing the masses fall within “religious, social, economic, sex, school, political, professional, medical, fraternal, racial, geographical lines” and that people and groups can be members of different groups, intersecting or overlapping at different times (Bernays, 1925, p. 3). The third step was to understand the importance of the newspaper as a “potent force in influencing public opinion” (Bernays, 1925, p. 4) If a minority acts upon these three steps in a democracy, he said, it “can ‘sell’ a good cause to the public and keep the public ‘sold’ on that cause” (Bernays, 1925, p. 8).

Despite his increasing pronouncements about the need to appeal to audiences based on understanding the functioning of individual groups, Bernays still described public relations as a mechanism to regiment the public. In February 1927, he highlighted how public relations could be applied to business. He ran a full-page ad in *Advertising and Selling*, the same issue in which he published a piece advocating the work of the public relations counsel. The ad was signed by Bernays, but it is clearly from the firm, down to mentioning that “Contact,” was “free upon request.” In the ad, Bernays defined public relations vis a vis the press and advertising, explaining the

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public relations counsel “uses every method of approach to the public mind.” The counsel, he wrote, can be engaged by an advertising firm to expand selling opportunities via “a broader and more general moulding [sic] of public opinion in favor of the individual product” thereby “building public acceptance for an idea or product” (Bernays, 1927a, p. 9). With a public relations counsel, he continued in his article, business should adopt the same “technique in regimenting the minds of the public,” as governments did during the war. (Bernays, 1927b, p. 31). Public relations can “breathe life into an idea and make it take its place among other ideas and events.” (Bernays, 1927b, p. 76).

A few months later, mass suasion was still on his mind as Bernays emphasized that the crowd was in need of coercion if society was to progress (Bernays, 1927c). In “The Minority Rules,” Bernays observed that mass public rule within the modern democracy was problematic as the public displayed an inertia that stemmed from entrenched biases and predilections. Citizens needed direction through propaganda, he wrote, so that they can focus on new minority ideas that can allow American society to progress. He argued that propaganda wielded by “the intelligent few” can “color the mind of the mob [so] that it will throw its newly gained strength in the desired direction” (Bernays, 1927c, p. 155). Propaganda, through the new field of public relations, appealed to audience “prejudices, notions and convictions” so as to achieve a “passionate adherence to a given mental picture” (Bernays, 1927c, p. 151). By getting an indolent public to pay attention to new ideas, progress can more readily occur, wrote Bernays. In this way, he maintained, public relations can use propaganda to serve a pro-social end.

In his 1927 book, *An Outline of Careers*, Bernays also stressed that propaganda benefited society. The public relations person, he said, used propaganda technique to instigate societal questioning of widely-accepted assumptions and viewpoints. This new, sophisticated special pleader approached the cleavages in society with the goal of fostering “important movements that are socially constructive and to secure public cooperation and approval for them” (Bernays, 1927d, p. 289). In this way, the public relations person echoed another aspect of the social reform leaders of previous ages – he spoke for the voiceless in a democracy by stating “the ideal is to take worthy minorities and plead their case before the public” (Bernays, 1927d, p. 289). The modern propagandist, as exemplified in the emerging public

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relations profession, should never take on a client whose cause is “anti-social.” Rather, the public relations person was “continually engaged in the interesting pursuit of making what is good available to the greatest number” (Bernays, 1927d, p. 296).

### **Public relations and the public good through pro-social propaganda**

Later that year, however, a landmark study observed similar dynamics about propaganda’s mass suasion abilities and raised questions about the good that could come of it. Unlike studies of wartime propaganda that often emphasized how such mass persuasion was duplicitous, both in the war theatre and on the domestic front, Harold D. Lasswell’s 1927 book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, focused on the psychology of managing public opinion and identified the mechanical attributes of propaganda during the war. Despite his rather technical approach, Lasswell was well aware of the reformist concerns that propaganda threatened to hollow out true democracy – that the word “propaganda” had come to have an “ominous clang” and that an increasing vigilance existed against propaganda as citizens felt cynical and disenchanted about how they had been sold the war (Lasswell, 1927, pp. 2-3). The “despondent democrat” had become resolute to the idea that even when interested publics can come together to work on an initiative that can benefit society, the citizenry at large had to be informed, coerced, tricked, or seduced to accept that course of action “in the name of the public good” (Lasswell, 1927, p. 5).

In response to such manipulations, Lasswell (1927, p. 12) offered a “provisional study of technique” that could inform future historians’ attempts to explicate how propaganda operates on, and within, a society. A significant lesson about war propaganda, he wrote, was that propagandists developed an aptitude for targeting their appeals to segmented audiences to better persuade or even indoctrinate them as to specific messages. In reviewing how the British, Germans, and Prussians addressed propaganda to various cultural groups, he noted that persuaders kept in mind more than just wider societal prejudices; the propagandists also addressed the inclinations and predilections of various “constituent groups” (Lasswell, 1927, p. 186). All loyalties within a nation were spoken to and “every possible line of cleavage in the nation is appealed to by some direct or indirect device”; World War I propagandists displayed this acumen by not only targeting those groups predisposed to receive their messages, but by also downplaying inconvenient events, and making sure distinct truths were communicated to each subgroup (Lasswell, 1927, p. 201).[3]

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They were largely effective with this approach because they researched what their “proposed subjects of stimulation [were] doing” so as to find opportunities to reach them with targeted messages (Lasswell, 1927, p. 211).

The war had shown that “propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world” and that a society cannot

fuse the waywardness of individuals in the furnace of the war dance; a new and subtler instrument must weld thousands and even millions of human being into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope ... The name of this new hammer and anvil of social solidarity is propaganda (Lasswell, 1927, pp. 220-221).

There is some evidence that Bernays was familiar with Lasswell’s work and, much like his earlier attempt to nullify Lippmann’s concerns about the rise of the special pleader, Bernays worked to ameliorate the dark aspects of the picture of propaganda offered by Lasswell. [4] Within a year of the publication of Lasswell’s book, Bernays’ articulation and justification of domestic propaganda began to show some subtle shifts. Whereas Lasswell had questioned the extent of a pro-social rationale for propaganda, Bernays added to the equation increased assertions that underrepresented viewpoints, through propaganda, could put forth emerging ideas that could resonate with targeted audiences and, thereby, serve a wider public good.

In the spring of 1928, several months after the publication of Lasswell’s book, Bernays expanded on these concepts in a piece published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. Groups within a society, he explained, were often reactionary and tended toward stasis as they became accustomed to established concepts and routines. For society to advance, the propagandist advocated minority ideas or products, he wrote. This effective persuader examined groups to determine what motivated them, essentially making this new special pleader a sociologist as he examined how leaders influenced groups and the resultant habits of their followers (Bernays, 1928b). The propagandist then approached each distinctive group, using language and events designed to either activate dormant concepts, provided insights to existing perspectives, or offered a compelling new idea. Bernays claimed that a variety of emerging interests – from the NAACP to the hat and velvet industries – used propaganda to create circumstance that would captivate various parts of the public and garner support. By using such a seemingly disparate clustering of clients, Bernays emphasized that, regardless the nature of the viewpoint, product, or issue, propaganda

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had demonstrated it can convey an idea so that it “may strike the fancy and arrest the attention of hundreds of thousands of people, and as such can be communicated to them through every form of thought-transmission of which modern business avails itself” (Bernays, 1928b, p. 969). The propagandist revealed his true efficiency and worth when he reached and prodded groups within the public, guided by a desire to “move in the direction of ultimate social and individual benefit” (Bernays, 1928b, p. 971).

Soon after this, Bernays delivered a speech to the 25<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Advertising Affiliation in Rochester, New York, and continued to describe propaganda as a new social force that attempted to reach beyond the mass and tap into the views of segmented publics. The aftermath of the world war had led to the growth of a new profession – public relations – that advised clients on how to use propaganda to address the established prejudices, principles, morals and class-based biases of various groups, he said. His unpublished draft of the speech included, as an example, a description of how the backers of presidential candidate Al Smith took into account the religious prejudices against Catholicism and tried to address them in the national news media (Bernays, 1928c, p. 2). [5] The public relations person, he said, made these appeals to various audiences because he understood that their predilections can be modified, that they can be controlled consciously by creating circumstances that will garner public attention and support. Therefore, the propagandist was anybody – military leaders, priests, politicians, statesmen – “who [tries] to convince other people that his idea is acceptable” (Bernays, 1928c, p. 3). An efficient propagandist not only examined carefully how he attempted to lead his own constituency, but also what is happening within other groups. “It is through the cooperation with these groups that events of sufficient importance can be created to secure the attention of vast hordes of unhomogeneous people throughout the country,” he said (Bernays, 1928c, p. 3).

In still another article that spring, Bernays also asserted that propaganda could benefit society by helping politics to run more efficiently. Political campaigns, he said, were often filled with “bombast, glitter and speeches” that failed to connect with the concerns of an increasingly segmented America (Bernays, 1928d, p. 470). Politicians needed to understand a basic business lesson of competent outreach: effective campaigns analyzed various audiences so as to not spend time re-selling to the committed nor waste resources on the resistant. However, Bernays wrote, too many

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election campaigns were unfocused, filled with broad emotional appeals, too strong a reliance on the candidate's personality, and scattershot use of special events. These approaches failed to engage the citizenry in public politics; instead, he said campaigns should focus on the interests of overlapping groups.

Bernays asserted that various sectors of society increasingly understood the power of reaching overlapping groups and that with this awareness of such a power came a pro-social sensitivity. Indeed, he pointed out, universities, charities, and "scores of other social-service projects" observed the success of wartime propaganda and borrowed from its persuasive techniques to attract donations (Bernays, 1928d, pp. 198-199). As such, propagandists, he maintained, realized they must plead for a cause that is socially sound.

With the elevation of minority ideas, he wrote, public relations was charting a course that emphasized a duty to society and, therefore, minimized the potential for abusing the public. Such pro-social outcomes for propaganda had historical precedent, Bernays argued, from the persuasive techniques used by social movement advocates over the previous decades. The leaders of various social movements, he argued, unconsciously practiced mass persuasion techniques that were later consciously emulated, and improved upon by the evolving "special pleader" of the public relations occupation.

Bernays' attempts to elucidate both the sophistication and pro-social attributes of propaganda came to fuller fruition by late 1928, with the publication of his book *Propaganda*. Just a year before, Lasswell had commented on how propaganda was an emerging force that worked to modify the "willfulness" of groups so as to achieve cohesion behind a course of action. While Lasswell wrote of propaganda as attempts to manage such crowd intransigence, Bernays asserted that America's love of individual choice meant that the country would not accept "committees of wise men who would choose our rulers, dictate our comfort, private and public, and decide upon the best type of clothes for us to wear and the best kinds of food for us to eat" (Bernays, 1928e, p. 39). Instead, Americans had chosen to allow the competition of ideas, bolstered by propaganda, to vie for attention and consent. In contrast to Lasswell's view of propaganda as coercion, Bernays argued that the propagandist understood that emerging concepts, products, and services were made compelling if they were clearly communicated to various sectors of the public so as to clearly align

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with each group's mental and emotional predilections (Bernays, 1928e, p. 55). Therefore, "intelligent minorities," whose distinctive viewpoints inherently had difficulty cracking into the consciousness of self-contained groups, needed to use propaganda to actively proselytize. With such special pleading "lie[s] the progress and development of America" (Bernays, 1928e, p. 57). Accordingly, throughout the book, Bernays claimed that propaganda filled a pro-social role by fostering new ideas and approaches within the business, political, educational, arts, science, and social movement realms – from initiatives to raise taxes for better parks to campaigns to lower infant mortality rates. Indeed, he wrote, "social service, in fact, is identical with propaganda in many cases" (Bernays, 1928e, p. 150-151).

As the end of the 1920s neared, Bernays was convinced that the public needed to know that propaganda could serve as a beneficent force in an increasingly complex world. In the March 1929 issue of *The Forum*, a few months after *Propaganda* was released, Bernays wrote a counterpoint to Everett Dean Martin's comments about propaganda. Martin, who was an American philosopher, adult education advocate, and author of the 1920 book *The Behavior of Crowds*, maintained a skeptical view of propaganda. Bernays argued, however, that because the complexity of modern life inevitably tied each person's well-being to a cohesive and evolving economic order, businesses propagandized to add to "economic stability of their own communities" and contribute "to the happiness of the people generally" (Bernays, 1929, p. 147). Society advanced because progenitors of new ideas could visualize how the private benefit of their offering would coincide with the interests of various groups. In fact, he wrote, there had hardly been any new ideas, inventions, or products that had garnered public acceptance without propaganda showing the link between private gain and public good. A wide range of special interests – from vacuum salesmen to charity drive promoters – had used propaganda, demonstrating that "the mere fact that propaganda may have an ulterior motive does not preclude the possibility that the final end accomplished may ... coincide with some great public good" (Bernays, 1929, p. 147). One of propaganda's greatest "social advantages," he wrote, was that it had given a voice to many "minority groups of all factions," allowing them to bring forward views and advance progress in the face of the inertia of dominant groups (Bernays, 1929, pp. 147-148).

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It was within this framework, then, that Bernays engineered the Torches of Freedom parade in New York City for the American Tobacco Company on Easter Sunday, 1929. Combining many of the techniques he had espoused throughout the decade, he staged a pseudo-event for the purposes of matching American Tobacco's interest in getting more women to smoke with women's desire to stake their independence. Easter was a traditional time for fashion-watching among New Yorkers, and throngs of media, fashion designers, retailers, and the general public waited for the elite, dressed to the nines, to leave the prominent churches along Fifth Avenue and promenade in their new outfits (*New York Times*, 1929). This event revealed Bernays' attempt to put into action his evolving ideology of a pro-social propaganda that attempted to leverage the concerns of a target audience. According to his memoirs, Bernays first sought to know his public. He consulted with A. A. Brill, who advised him that women saw the cigarette as a torch of freedom. Second, he pursued leaders within this group; that is, he enlisted debutantes – the celebrities of the time – to march in the parade and to hold up their lit cigarettes as a sign of independence. Third, he focused not on the idea of women smoking per se, but on a message of social betterment for women: freedom to smoke *in public* (Bernays, 1965. [italics added]). As propaganda, then, the parade attempted to elevate a pro-social theme of increased independence for women, matching a client need (more women customers) to the subgroup of women who sought more autonomy. [6]

### **Discussion/Conclusion**

By 1929, Bernays clearly staked out his belief that the new field of public relations, through propaganda, offered a force for social good in a democracy that was often mired by the passivity of crowds. Throughout the 1920s, he developed an ideology that evolved from mass suasion experiences he had encountered in his early work as a theatre publicist, CPI employee, and publicity director for post-war campaigns in Europe. Early in the decade, Bernays was influenced by thought leaders, such as Le Bon and Trotter, who grounded him in ideas about regimenting the public. Then, Lippmann, in his 1922 *Public Opinion*, wrote in unflattering terms about the post-war rise of the publicity man who attempted to manipulate crowds by framing facts for the press. With his own *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), Bernays attempted to re-cast that portrait by emphasizing that the public relations person used propaganda to appeal to group values and inclinations so as to overcome the inertia of the mob and

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achieve societal progress. Over the next several years, however, Bernays struggled to amplify on this message of targeted group appeals to achieve a greater social good. Instead, he often co-mingled ideas of crowd regimentation with notions of subgroup appeals as he attempted to elucidate a theory of public relations and propaganda as a tool of efficiency. Then, Lasswell's 1927 *Propaganda Technique in the World War* similarly examined propaganda's efficiencies and found propaganda to be insidiously effective. By 1928, Bernays responded again through a series of writings that revealed, by 1929, a pro-social justification for public relations' use of propaganda. The public relations practitioner, he claimed, used propaganda to ethically elevate minority viewpoints so as to resonate with various groups, cause these subgroups to explore new ideas and products, and thereby afford society the opportunity to progress. In the process, Bernays employed the word "propaganda" itself as a function that was distinct from public relations and as a function that served as a kind of subset, a particular set of tools, within the larger public relations function.

What is particularly striking is that Bernays' evolution of a public relations ideology during this decade provides an interesting corollary to one of the more prominent works on propaganda, Jacques Ellul's 1965 book *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. In that work, Ellul, at the end of a long criticism of propaganda's utilitarian approach to ideology, made this striking assertion:

...Action creates ideology, not vice versa, as the idealists who relate to past situations would like to believe. Through action, one learns to believe in "some truth," and even to formulate it. Today, ideology progressively builds itself around actions sanctioned by propaganda (201).

Similarly, we found that Bernays attempted, in fits and starts, to build an ideology for public relations that followed two major actions: 1) his foundational international experiences at the CPI and 2) his attempts to build on those experiences through publicity, especially his continued work in Europe. However, in Bernays' case the "action" involved appeared to also be his exposure to fundamental criticisms of propaganda by both Lippmann and Lasswell. As he came to more fully formulate an ideology that claimed public relations, through propaganda, had pro-social benefits, he actually exemplified the inverse of Ellul's claim: he did in fact work throughout the decade on developing an ideology that was then tested by *Torches of Freedom*.

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Bernays' progression during this time period is notable, because this development of a claim for a pro-social public relations endures. In fact, by 1948, Glen and Denny Griswold had developed a widely-known definition of public relations that the field acted with the "public interest" as a key objective (Griswold and Griswold, 1948, p. 4). This pro-social understanding of public relations continues with the assertion that the function focuses on maintaining "mutually beneficial relationships" between various organizations and their relevant publics (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2008, 1) This ideal of a beneficent public relations clearly has roots in Bernays' activities and writings of the 1920s. Although, by the end of that decade, he did not provide a clear, or by any means perfected evolution of a public relations ideology, the essence of Bernays' justification for public relations persists today.

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## Notes

- [1] It should be noted that although Bernays was quite proud of being Sigmund Freud's nephew and was a driving force behind the U.S. publication of Freud's 1920 *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, and was influenced by Freud's ideas concerning the conscious and subconscious, Freud's ideas, his influence on Bernays' ideas is not emphasized in Bernays' works during this time.
- [2] It appears from the Bernays papers collection that much of this work was written, if not also researched, by Bernays' then-employee but soon to be wife and partner, Doris E. Fleishman. See also Henry, S. (1997), "Anonymous in Her Own Name, Public Relations Pioneer Doris E. Fleischman", *Journalism History* Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 51-62.
- [3] As an example, Lasswell observed on page 208, "There is comparatively little danger in telling the Protestants through their official organs that the war is a great Protestant crusade, and in encouraging the Catholics to regard it as a great Catholic movement; but it would be absurd to mix the appeals to the same audience."
- [4] "Contact", the Bernays firm newsletter, reprinted long passages from *Propaganda Technique in the World War* just months after its publication.
- [5] Bernays' manuscript for the speech shows that this particular example was stricken from his presentation.
- [6] Not everyone agreed with the accuracy of Bernays' premise that women couldn't smoke in public until that point. Also, the same issue of the *New York Times* mentioned at least one other demonstration for the homeless that Easter morning, inadvertently reinforcing Bernays' contention that social service was propaganda.

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## THE HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND LOBBYING IN AUSTRALIA: A PARASITICAL GROWTH

Peter Sekules  
Canberra, Australia

### **Introduction**

From a government relations perspective Australia is a valuable historical viewing platform. All aspects of government relations practice – corporate, government, non-for-profit and consultancy – have had their rises and falls much as they have in the rest of industrialised world. For public relations in general and government relations in particular the Australian experience is a microcosm. Australia has a Westminster style of government, our national security is dependant on the United States and our economy is dependant on Asia particularly China and Japan. Whether one is a communication professional working for World Vision, the Red Cross, Vodafone, Coca-cola or WPP, Australia represents a small but perfectly-formed market both of itself and as a gateway to Asia, the fastest growing region of the world.

For reasons of internal history and geography, government relations in Australia has had a distinct development because the national capital and seat of government is located in a small inland city, Canberra, remote from the centres of population, business, social and cultural life. The various efforts to regulate the industry are not central to this paper but they do provide useful material to identify and describe the participants and activities at a particular point in time. As a prelude to the first and subsequently abandoned lobbyists' registration scheme the government published A Discussion Paper in September 1983 entitled 'Lobbyists and the Australian Government and Parliament'. It stated that the topic had attracted a good deal of public attention.

Lobbyists have been criticised as a parasitical growth on the business of government, exploiting public ignorance or reticence about the best ways to make approaches and put particular cases to politicians and public servants.

After more of the same, the paper sought to even the score.

On the other hand, lobbyists are claimed to be a legitimate and necessary channel of communication between the executive government and the community, assisting both the public, who may want help in their approaches to government, and ministers and officials who may find it easier to deal with a relatively limited group of contacts who are skilled in presenting complex cases.

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In summing up, the Paper seemingly reluctantly concluded that lobbyists were 'probably' an inevitable part of the democratic process.

In Australia, as in other countries, lobbyists make their representations on behalf of their clients at various levels. The location of government departments under the direct control of government ministers in Canberra means that ministers and senior officials are themselves a prime and conveniently concentrated target. But lobbyists also seek to influence individual members of parliament, both through their electoral offices and in Canberra. The growing importance of parliamentary committees such as the Public Works Committee and the Public Accounts Committees have increasingly attracted the attention of lobbyists. The fact that in recent years there has been an imbalance in party strengths between the two Houses of Parliament has provided lobbyists with a double opportunity to achieve their objectives.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The lobbying industry's response was to propose self-regulation but for the purposes of this paper the interesting part of that response is a description of who the lobbyists were at that time.

- This submission emphasises that the role of making direct representations to government is undertaken by a wide range of people in the community, both commercial and non-commercial, other than the commercial government relations consultants, who comprise a relatively small group. In the commercial area these now include - in addition to Canberra-based government relations consultants:
- accounting firms (there is a definite trend to the establishment of management consulting or public affairs divisions to expand business from existing client bases)
- national organisations of all kinds from business to environmental, consumer, welfare, education, etc
- law firms
- management consulting firms
- single-issue groups
- public relations consultants based outside Canberra who visit Canberra on government relations assignments
- corporate or government relations staff of large companies who visit Canberra on government relations assignments
- Canberra-based full-time staff of companies whose function includes government relations (e.g. chief managers of banks in Canberra, representatives of major defence, energy and computer companies).<sup>xxxix</sup>

A quarter of a century later the composition of the lobbying industry remained much the same but it had grown considerably in size. According to Julian Fitzgerald in 'Lobbying

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in Australia' published in 2006, there were at that time four lobbyists in the national capital for every MP.

There are over 1,000 lobbyists in Canberra, at least 150 lobby groups, and perhaps a dozen top gun international lobbying companies. The 150 lobby groups would spend, on average, about \$6 million each on their operations, a total of nearly one billion dollars a year. Who is lobbying? Just about every interest group - secular or religious - able to open an office or finance an individual or company to represent them in Canberra and keep an eye on the Government's legislative program.<sup>xxxix</sup>

## **Oral History**

The announcement of this Conference came at a fortuitous time in that I was starting a series of interviews for National Library of Australia oral history project on government relations and lobbying. This paper is based on those interviews plus my own research and previous publications. The National Library of Australia has an active oral history and folklore collection in that it commissions new audio recordings in addition to housing, cataloguing and conserving the existing collection. I had conducted interviews with individuals in the past and, early last year, in discussion with the senior curator, Kevin Bradley, we identified the history of government relations and lobbying as a suitable area for a dedicated oral history program consisting of 15 to 20 two hour interviews.

The rationale for the project was that in relation to the process of government and national life, the narrative and research material is deficient in the area of influencing government as opposed to the politicians themselves, bureaucrats and the media. Hence, the historical narrative is biased towards ego driven Ministers and MPs, officials who resent anyone but themselves being a source of advice to "their" Minister, and the media which is being analysed to death. So the history of government is all about the personalities and structures that make decisions not about the people and interests they are supposed to serve i.e. the organisations and interests we work for or represent.

Of course, we collectively are part of the problem. We have done a very ordinary job communicating our own history. No-where have I read, heard or seen, anything like the description by one of the interviewees for this project, Geoff Allen, of how Australia broke down the barriers of trade and industry protection which were a key factor in Australia's current prosperity. In Allen's narrative, the crucial factor was the struggle within individual companies, particularly the big miners, and subsequently industry associations. It was the business, farming and other interests that persuaded the political parties of the need for free trade and the rest followed.

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But what is actually on the historical record?

Institutional and corporate histories tend to be commissioned works which are entirely self-serving and rarely see the light of day. I have written two, one of which is entirely inaccessible outside the organisation which commissioned it. Books by practitioners tend to be of the How-To-Lobby-Government genre. Again, I have written two. While they contain snippets of value for the historian, I freely concede their main purpose was to market the services of my consultancy. Case studies produced for websites and as presentations for industry conferences bear little relationship to historical accuracy.

On the negative side, public interest advocates, especially the green movement, have identified public relations and lobbying as a major bogeyman of capitalism - even though they do it themselves. Politicians turned lobbyists have given government and public relations a bad name. Three ex-Blair Government Ministers had to be stood down for offering their services while still in office. In Australia itself, a former State Premier - a position similar to a State Governor in the US - has had sensational and adverse headlines in relation to his lobbying activities.

In summary, an oral history program was considered suitable for this topic because of the dearth of reliable other primary and secondary material.

### **The Project**

My project is a work in progress. Nine interviews have been conducted, totalling some 20 hours of audio. The project is approximately half completed. The starting point was two scoping interviews with an academic and a distinguished practitioner. In the case of both, I was particularly keen for their recommendations on interview subjects to balance my personal preferences and biases.

Interview #1: Professor John Warhurst<sup>xxxix</sup>

I talked first with, Professor John Warhurst, a political scientist from the Australian National University, with an interest in government relations. In addition to his academic interest in aspects of the topic, notably the registration of lobbyists, he has practical experience as an active member of the Australian Republican Movement. Warhurst's input was valuable in that he stressed the need to cover broad social movements which have had considerable impact on Australian history. He included the environment movement, immigration and women's issues. He also stressed the need where possible to include interviews with subjects who had both been lobbyists and been the subject of lobbying, such

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as those who had used lobbying positions as stepping stones to political success and vice versa.

His point is well taken. During each of the past half centuries a major interest group within the community has been powerful enough to form a political party in Australia. In the late nineteenth century the trade union movement took a conscious and deliberate decision to form a political arm to achieve its objectives. This followed directly from the humiliating defeat of the Australian Workers Union representing sheep shearers when a colonial government called in the troops at the behest of farming interests. The resulting Australian Labor Party - the current Government - is Australia's oldest political party.

In the 1920s farming organisations themselves felt they needed a separate political voice and formed the Country Party. Now called the National Party, it has always been the junior partner in Australian conservative coalition governments. In the second half of the twentieth century, as in other countries, the environment movement spawned The Australian Greens which at various times has held the balance of power in one State Government and at the national level.

Also of note have been other powerful interest groups such as the Returned Services League, representing the veteran community, which have considered forming political parties and direct parliamentary representation but decided against it in favour of exerting pressure through traditional lobbying. Arguably this was the correct strategy. Australia's RSL had had a dedicated Minister and separate bureaucracy - currently the Minister for and Department of Veterans Affairs - for more than ninety years.

In Australia the advent of second wave feminists in the early 1970s crystallised into a lobbying movement which actually called itself the Women's Electoral Lobby. Its trade mark tactic was direct pressure on politicians by distributing, demanding and publicising pre-election questionnaires to each individual political candidate. They too secured their own bureaucracy, the Office of Women, and ministerial portfolio as a result. In relation to Warhurst's comment on immigration, this of course has involved massive social movements but is beyond the scope of this paper.

Interview #2: Geoff Allen.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The second scoping interview was with Geoff Allen, an obvious choice as he was the inaugural CEO of the Business Council of Australia, the first business organisation which represented business leaders collectively as opposed to their individual industry associations. He went on to establish the Allen Consulting Group, a leading economic government

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relations consultancy. For the purposes of this project, Allen's extensive experience of business-government relations balanced that of the academic Warhurst. In his interview Allen makes a persuasive case for looking at the history of government relations and lobbying via the issues rather than chronologically. As referred to earlier, in Allen's interview he places lobbying in its proper context as the prime mover in effecting change.

Allen draws on two areas of reform which have been of vital concern to Australian business: the removal of protectionist barriers and industrial relations. Allen's point is that the centrality of those exerting influence in these two fundamental areas of government policy is overlooked in academic and political discourse. The record needs to be corrected. Notwithstanding Allen's point, I sought to adopt a chronological approach with interviews, beginning with the longest serving living practitioners.

Interview #3: Ray Pelham-Thorman<sup>xxxix</sup>

Pelham-Thorman began work with the Australian Chamber of Commerce in the still young Australian national capital of Canberra in 1958. Pelham-Thorman traces the growth of and changes in lobbying by business organisations over thirty years. With the advantage of hindsight, he traces the development of business lobbying from the cosy club like relationship national associations enjoyed with government in a small evolving national capital through to wholesale changes in the relationship between business and government and the business organisations themselves. The particular value of this interview is that, in conjunction with the Chamber's written records, a clear picture of the changing nature of business lobbying of the Australian Government over a crucial period of change emerges.

Pelham-Thorman is admirably frank. This can be the great value of a good oral history interviewee. Details and views often unlikely to be committed to writing can be elicited. Moreover, the facts presented can invariably be tested against the written record. Whatever the result, the outcome is a dimension that only personal reflection and perspective can produce.

For instance, he sees taxation reform as the major and abiding pre-occupation of business lobbying as opposed to Allen's focus on protection and industrial relations. However, he does not resile from criticising the Chamber's failure to address the great challenge of Australian national organisations that are entrenched in the interstate rivalry within our federal system. Finally, he details the extent to which national associations had increasingly to compete with the new phenomenon of government relations consultancies.

Interview #4: Peter Cullen<sup>xxxix</sup>

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Peter Cullen established one of the original Government relations consultancies in Canberra in the late 1960s. His background was with the Australian Labor Party as a political staff member. This interview is a cautionary tale for oral historians. Cullen was initially reluctant to be interviewed as he had doubts about the accuracy of his memory. On consideration however he agreed to the interview provided the subject matter was confined to the topics he covered in his own book, *No is not an Answer*.<sup>xxxix</sup> The interview therefore is mostly anecdotal. This is not without its worth.

Cullen was instrumental in obtaining the single mother's pension in Australia - and was notable for at one time being the only male member of the Single Mother's Association. This is all well recorded. The value of Cullen's reminiscence is the focus on the key strategic points. Cullen and the single mothers had to overcome the prejudice that single mothers were fallen women - this was in the late 60s and early 70s. A small conservative Roman Catholic party held a pivotal position on the issue in the Australian Senate. The interview records how Cullen engineered a meeting between the key Senator and one of the single mothers who told him her story. This meeting broke down the prejudice and single mothers went on to get their pension. His own book prompted his memory but the lesson is to do oral histories when people have had sufficient time to distance themselves from the action so reflections can be considered and placed in context, but not so late that memory is faulty.

Interview #5: David Trebeck<sup>xxxix</sup>

David Trebeck is another Australian government relations pioneer. He played a formative role in the establishment of the National Farmers Federation in 1979 and established one of the first economic consultancies in the 1980s. The NFF became a leading national association at a time when such organisations were building a formidable lobbying capability in Australia and attracting talented staff.

Trebeck describes his role in helping to bring together the previously fragmented primary industry organisations. Part of the dynamic of government relations is the ebb and flow of the representation of various interests. As noted earlier, rural interests in Australia had formed their own political party. Obviously the emergence of a new and powerful voice for primary industries outside the political process created tensions.

That Trebeck went on to establish the first of the economic consultancies more than justifies his inclusion as an interviewee. The economic consultancies did not replace public affairs and government relations consultancies. On many campaigns they worked in tandem. Their emergence was a clear indication of the growing sophistication of government relations

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as a whole. While Trebeck has never been a public relations practitioner, his contribution is invaluable to this oral history project. As a professional economist, he saw his role both at the NFF and as a consultant as presenting an evidence-based case, and arguing it.

The economic consultancies that became part of the Australian government relations scene in the 1980s were distinctly different from the government relations and consultancies which had emerged a decade earlier.

Interview #6: Stephen Carney<sup>xxxix</sup>

Stephen Carney is one of, if not the, longest serving independent lobbyists in Australia's national capital. He established his consultancy after a period as a staffer with a Minister in a conservative Australian government in the mid 1970s. Unlike most leading lobbyists, Carney was never absorbed into or bought out by one of the national - or international - firms, he remained independent by choice. His interview is valuable because it gives an insight into his relationships with his often distant clients. He, like other lobbyists, both sole operators and larger firms, learnt to use the regular provision of political, legislative and regulatory information out of Canberra as a marketing vehicle to service clients. One of the features of government relations and lobbying in Australia is that the political centre is remote from the centres of population, business, commerce, social and cultural activity.

Interview #7: Dr Barbara Carney<sup>xxxix</sup>

Dr Barbara Carney is married to Steve Carney but has pursued an independent and entirely separate career. In her wide-ranging career, she has been the subject of lobbying and a lobbyist. Her background is in both academia and the bureaucracy before joining the staff of a conservative shadow Treasurer. When the Liberal National Coalition took office in 1996, Dr Carney became principal adviser to the incoming Health Minister. She later set up her own consultancy and subsequently worked in-house for the Institute of Chartered Accountants and then the Australian Private Hospitals Association.

Her interview reflects Professor Warhurst's injunction to include people who have been on both sides of the lobbying fence. Particularly worthwhile is her insight that in numerical terms most who seek to lobby government are seeking special favours, "rent seekers" she called them. Notwithstanding the disparaging description, her experience in both opposition and government was that those who lobbied politicians in Australia are mostly professional and respectful in their operations.

Interview #8: Ian Smith<sup>xxxix</sup>

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Ian Smith was interviewed principally in relation to his former role as Australian CEO of the Omnicom owned financial and public affairs consultancy Gavin Anderson & Co., and more recently head of Bespoke Approach. His innovative approach to his new venture involves teaming up with two former national government Ministers from opposing political sides.

Smith became intimately involved in major projects consulting for government as part of the extensive privatisation of government assets over the last decade and a half in Australia. It has always been a feature of government relations consulting in Australia that the larger firms have actively sought to work for government as well as seeking to influence it on behalf of private sector clients. The extent to which PR and communications firms played a central role in the government privatisation program is an interesting study. Smith describes how communications consultancies worked alongside investment bankers and legal advisers as part of the sale process, bringing the skills of finance and financial PR to the sale of public assets.

In his post-Omnicom career, he has gone against the US trend in establishing Bespoke Approach as bipartisan. Over the previous decade the trend in Australian lobbying was, as in the US, for firms to base their credentials on their alliances with one or other of the major political parties. Bespoke Approach is also part of a growing trend of former politicians joining the ranks of lobbyists both in consultancies and in national associations.

Interview #9: Christine Bundesen<sup>xxxix</sup>

Christine Bundesen was the inaugural chair of the association representing English Language Colleges in Australia. International education only began in Australia in the mid-80s but has grown to become the nation's third largest export earner. As the focus of international education has been Asia - China, Korea and Japan - teaching English has been a vital element to this export success. The Bundesen interview adds diversity to the project because she describes how what began as a small professional association was thrust into a hectic and intensive lobbying role in response to the stormy birth of the industry and the efforts of successive governments to regulate the industry out of existence.

English Australia, as the association is now known, is a \$2 billion industry in its own right and has its own professional staff. Bundesen describes the early struggles with a voluntary committee unpractised in the art of lobbying government and facing the public wrath of government Ministers.

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## **Conclusions**

As the interviews demonstrate the government relations and lobbying process has been dynamic over the past half a century.

Consultancy: The most innovative sector has been the public relations, economic and polling consultancies. In the 1960s and 1970s independent operators and PR firms responded to the information and representation needs of clients. In due course some of these consultancies were absorbed by the international marketing conglomerates. The current trend is back to smaller, politically aligned government relations firms which due to improvements in communications no longer have to be based in the national capital.

In the 1980s economic consultancies emerged which challenged the government monopoly on the expertise necessary to develop sound macro and micro economic propositions. This enabled those outside government to set the agenda and be proactive in government relations.

In the 1990s polling organisations added another dimension to the strategic and tactical tools readily available to those in government relations. One of the most prominent, Crosby Textor, is well-known in the UK as Lynton Crosby role in Boris Johnson's campaign to be elected Mayor of London was widely publicised.

National associations: Business, professional and not-for-profit associations whose principal activity is government relations have always been far more numerous than lobbying consultancies. Their development has also been dynamic as they wrestle with the constant dilemma whether it is better to be close to the political and bureaucratic decision-makers or members of the organisation.

Direct representation: Competitive pressures and communication improvements have seen a definite shift in the past decade of individual companies and not-for-profit organisations taking direct responsibility for their government relations at the expense of national associations and consultancies. This reflects the growing importance of stakeholder communication and reputation management. Among the individuals organisations are turning to fill these mostly in-house positions are former senior politicians as well as the corporate and communication professionals who mostly fit under the broad umbrella of public relations.

### The Role of Oral History

It is true of oral history in all disciplines that actual interviews bring a more intimate perspective to past events than manuscripts, Hansard and old newspapers. There is an added

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advantage in the case of government relations. As a relatively experienced oral history interviewer, I conclude that government relations professionals and lobbyists are less egotistical than politicians and more forthcoming than bureaucrats. Possibly because they are accustomed to communicating effectively, they tend to hone in on the pertinent facts and tell their story without apology or padding. I believe this would be true of most public relations as well as government relations professionals. Hence oral history is a valuable tool for the history of public relations and for the wider narrative of which PR is an integral part.

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## A HISTORY OF REPUBLICAN PARAMILITARY PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND FROM “BLOODY SUNDAY” TO THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

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### Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge and the emerging critical debate on public relations (PR) in conflict and conflict resolution contexts. More specifically it examines the significant investment in, and the role and use of, public relations strategies by the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and their political wing Sinn Fein (who for much of the period known as the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ were a proscribed illegal organisation). Within PR literature previous approaches to analysing the subject of PR and terrorism have tended to endorse the ‘official’ perspective (Schlesinger, 1983) and regard it as an activity engaged in by ‘crazies or criminals’. Our approach gives space to the ‘alternative’ perspective which problematizes the definition of ‘terrorism’ and at the same time widens the application of the term to include state actors. In this regard it is in opposition to the current Western media and governmental usage of the term. In respect to the republican movement in Northern Ireland our key findings differ from the conclusions of some previous research in this area. For example previous research (Picard, 1989) traces a trajectory or common pattern for terrorist organisations which views them as beginning with large scale ‘propaganda of the deed’ type activities and then moving away from ‘spectaculars’ and toward more typical PR activities when their ‘message’ begins to be heard. This is at best a pattern that is only partially true in the case of the history of the republican movement. Likewise Ross and Gurr (1989) argue that it is the case that efforts at accommodation in peace settlements virtually never acknowledge the demands of terrorist groups but rather negotiations with more moderate spokesmen (who may articulate some of their views) are engaged in. Again this was not the case in the Northern Irish context where the republican movement through the use of a highly sophisticated media relations machine and strict internal discipline pushed itself to the forefront and remained central in the efforts to develop a peace process.

**Keywords**– public relations, terrorism, conflict, conflict resolution, Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein, IRA.

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## **Introduction**

For a variety of reasons, largely to do with significant global geo-political events, recent academic scholarly activity in PR has turned its attention to analyzing issues such as the relationship between PR and terrorism (Richards, 2004), terrorism and crisis management in the US (Wright, 2004; Ulmer and Sellnow, 2002), government PR in response to terrorism (Heibert, 2005; Zhang, 2007) and the uses of PR tactics by armed state and non-state actors (Loew, 2003). This paper aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge and the emerging critical debate on public relations in conflict and post-conflict contexts by focusing on the role and use of, public relations strategies by the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and their political wing Sinn Fein (who for much of the period known as the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ were a proscribed illegal organisation). Analysis of IRA/Sinn Fein PR strategy will examine their use of what Gerry Adams (Sinn Fein President) described as ‘spectaculars’, their day-to-day publicity efforts, their foreign and domestic media relations and their internal organizational communication. Public relations disasters, PR ‘turning points’ and critical incidents will also be analysed in relation to key historical events including Bloody Sunday, Internment, the Hunger Strikes, censorship and the broadcasting ban, the Enniskillen bomb and finally the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. This study traces the transformation of Sinn Fein from being the political wing and public face of republican violence to mainstream political party or as Spencer (2006) puts it ‘from political pariah into a party which is representative of democratic change and peace in Northern Ireland’ (p. 356). In many important ways this is a significant PR (hi)story and is without doubt is a key story in any attempt to analyse the period known as the Northern Ireland ‘troubles’.

### **1.0 Public Relations, Terrorism and Conflict Societies**

As noted above recent academic scholarly activity in PR (and for a considerably longer period media studies and political communication) has turned its attention to analyzing issues surrounding terrorism and PR. This is a significant body of work which is important in helping to develop a critical understanding of the role and function of PR in contemporary society. It should be noted that much of this recent analysis of terrorism, public relations and the media echoes the ‘propaganda of the deed’ (Picard, 1989, p.12) explanations of terrorist activities which go back to, if not before the work of scholars like Laqueur (1977) who noted that: ‘Terrorists have learned that the media are of paramount importance in their campaigns, that the

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terrorist act by itself is next to nothing, whereas publicity is all...They are, some respects, the super-entertainers of our time' (p. 223).

Any discussion of terrorism, as with most topics, cannot get very far without an engagement with definitional issues. Best et al (2007) have suggested that this is particularly important in recent debates surrounding terrorism: 'In the post-9/11 climate, intense controversy brews around the discourse of "violence" and "terrorism." And so the questions arise: Who and what are "terrorists"? And, conversely, who and what are "freedom fighters"? What is "violence," and who are the main perpetrators of it?' (p.5). In a classic work on terrorism and the media Schlesinger et al (1983) argue that the mass media is the forum where different perspectives on 'terrorism' struggle for dominance in contemporary liberal democratic societies. Public relations resources are utilized by proponents of the different perspectives in an attempt to influence media representations and ultimately public perceptions of terrorism. Schlesinger et al (1983) define two of the key perspectives the 'Official' perspective and the 'Alternative' perspective. The official perspective is articulated by those who speak for the 'State' (e.g. government ministers, conservative politicians, top security 'experts' etc) and while not always a coherent set of ideas it tends to stress terrorism's criminality and sometimes argues that responding to the 'threat' of terrorism may require suspending due process (for example the right to trial). The official perspective therefore usually tends to seek to present the 'terrorist' as beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour as either criminals or madmen. Schlesinger et al (1983) note that the 'Alternative' perspective is articulated by those who dissent from the official view of terrorism but accept that violence is not legitimate within liberal-democracies (e.g. civil libertarians, critical academics, some journalists, some politicians). The alternative perspective treats the term 'terrorism' as partial, as a term which tends to be harnessed for propaganda purposes but which explains very little. For critical academics like Chomsky and Herman (1979) the terms "terror" and "terrorism" 'have become semantic tools of the powerful in the Western world' (p. 85). They argue that terrorism is widespread in the contemporary world but that it is important to recognize the distinction between: 'official' violence, that is, that produced by States actors which they label 'wholesale terror' and 'unofficial' violence, that produced by individuals/small groups, which they label 'retail terror'.

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Best et al (2007) adopt and update this 'alternative' view when they point out that: "'Terrorism' has become an increasingly ubiquitous part of everyday life, and yet the meaning of the term proves to be elusive' (p.6). This is, they note:

largely because "terrorism" is a highly loaded, complex, and malleable term whose use and meaning are influenced by emotion, political ideology, and even culture. All too often, its sense depends on those who monopolize the means of communication ... Speakers routinely brand their adversaries as "terrorists" in order to discredit their opponents and avoid inquiry into the conditions that motivate their actions. ... If dissenting individuals or groups are successfully demonized as "terrorist", they are painted as fanatics, as people not to be reasoned with, as individuals who need to be dealt with in a harsh or violent way and to whom laws and constitutional rights do not apply.' (p. 6)

This critical inquiry into what terrorism is, how it is defined and who is defining it is important because arguably much of the academic literature from a public relations perspective has tended to adopt what Schlesinger et al (1983) would term the 'official' view. For example, in his definition of 'terrorism' Richards (2004) seems to limit it to what Chomsky and Herman (1979) referred to as 'retail terror', that is, it is an activity that individuals or small groups engage in not State actors. In his musings on the relationship between public relations and terrorism he devotes some space to analyzing the motivation of the 'terrorist' and reiterates the 'official' perspective. At one point he notes that 'terror can be seen as fuelled in part by a sort of madness within the terrorist ... a form of psychopathology, indeed as a form of psychosis' and he goes on to point out that 'the psychotic is incapable of the kind of accurate reading of the feelings and perceptions of others which underpins good and effective PR' (Richards, 2004, p. 171). Richards largely restricts his analysis of the relationship between terrorism and public relations to the issues surrounding, and the significance of, the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 Al Qaeda attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. It may be argued that his classification, of terrorists as psychopaths, may have significance when applied to those who carried out the atrocities of 9/11 although it should be pointed out that most liberal Muslim scholars would disagree. For example, Mohamed Charfi, the noted Islamic legal scholar and opponent of Islamic fundamentalism, noted of the Islamic fundamentalist 'violence is for him a normal means of action, legitimated by the noble goal of establishing the Kingdom of God, especially as it reminds him of the jihad that he has heard praised so much. ...

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Such a rank-and-file militant is the product of a culture and a history, and above all of a particular kind of education' (2005, p. 16).

Applying Richards judgment to those classified for example as 'IRA terrorists' is problematic to say the least although of course in the past just such an analysis has been applied to Northern Ireland context. Hacker (1976), for example, argued that terrorists were either 'crazies' (motivated by beliefs arising from mental illness) or 'criminals' (who use terrorism for personal gain). Opposing Hacker's analysis in respect to Northern Ireland Borum et al., note that key motivational themes in regard to IRA membership were identity, belonging and most of all the experience of injustice (political, economic and social). Citing Field's (1979) study of the 'troubles' they note: 'common sense and experience can tell us that people who are badly treated, and/or unjustly punished, will seek revenge. It should not be surprising, then, that young adolescents, who have themselves been terrorized, become terrorists' (Borum, et al, 2004, p. 39). This is not to argue that the adoption of violence is a legitimate response but rather to point out that an analysis of 'terrorism' which defines it only as a spectacular stunt carried out by small groups of criminals or psychotic militants ultimately lacks any real explanatory power or coherence. One could go further and point out that such a partial perspective on 'terrorism' seems to remove the concept of 'state terrorism' from the debate which no doubt would be welcomed by many governments around the world today.

In an early work on PR and terrorism Picard (1989) noted that in respect to academic research and scholarly debate:

'A significant amount of discussion has been devoted to media activities but most of it has assumed terrorist groups to be indirect manipulators of media coverage, relying upon their violence to induce coverage and thus help achieve their goals. ... These discussions, however, have generally ignored the existence of significant press relations activities of terrorist organizations that go beyond the propaganda of the deed and involve extensive direct contacts with media. If one is to understand the broader context of terrorism, one must understand the nature of these press relations activities and how such publicity efforts affect news coverage after and between incidents' (p. 12).

According to the propaganda of the deed thesis the main function of such publicity is to spread 'fear' but Picard argues that another key function of the communicative activity of terrorist groups is the engagement in publicity to raise public awareness and influence public opinion. Picard notes 'Publicity is an organized form of persuasion that attempts to influence

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opinion by focusing attention on causes, persons, or institutions.... Terrorists have an advantage in gaining this type of publicity because the public and violent nature of their acts guarantees that media will provide some coverage' (1989, p.13). Picard does agree that obviously in some ways a distinction can be drawn here with 'normal' PR practice. He notes: 'Publicity of negative information is usually not sought by public relations practitioners, but it is clearly sought by terrorist groups, and its effect must differ from publicity of positive information' (1989, p. 13). However Picard disagrees with the view that terrorist groups are exclusively engaged in 'press agency' PR. According to him:

Some critics of media coverage have argued that terrorists seek publicity for its own sake, not caring whether the news and its meaning is harmful as persuasive communication. This view equates terrorists to press agents who cares only about media exposure, not about message content... Labelling perpetrators of terrorism as seekers of publicity for its own sake is simplistic and ignores their very significant efforts to direct news coverage to present their cause in favourable ways and to disassociate groups from acts that will bring significant negative responses to the cause... Some groups plan and implement extensive publicity campaigns... Those that seek publicity, however, use most of the techniques normally employed by public relations professionals' (Picard, 1989, p. 13-14).

Picard's study goes on to examine how a range of terrorist groups utilise typical PR tactics and employ recognisable techniques such as press releases, statements, articles for publications, and background information in the form of press kits, fact sheets, press conferences, interviews, and the provision of visual materials.

Our study deals with the role that public relations had or was perceived to have by republican PRO's in the terrorist campaign of the IRA and the rise and development of Sinn Fein as a key political actor in the period known as the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'. In the conclusion to his analysis Picard makes the observation:

If a terrorist group has or gains wide popular support, it may be difficult for officials to perpetually refuse to deal with its leadership. Some groups, understanding the on-going nature of political struggle, begin their activities with significant levels of violence, then reduce its scale and replace the propaganda of the deed with other forms of publicity and lower levels of violence, and may indicate that they will give up perpetrating terrorist acts in exchange for official recognition... Many of the groups are directed by intelligent, well-educated individuals who are well aware of the impact of media on public opinion and politics. Some receive training and support in their media efforts and many are adopting the same publicity techniques used by governments to convey their views and messages (Picard, 1989, p. 21).

In many ways his comments accurately describe the story of republicanism in Northern Ireland from the end of the 1960's to the IRA ceasefire and political peace process

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of the 1990's. As we shall see however the concept of the well planned unfolding strategy described above does not really reflect the lived experience of those who planned and directed publicity and public relations activity for the IRA and Sinn Fein.

## **2.0 Methodology**

The substantive part of this study is based on interview responses which were conducted as part of the 'Northern Ireland Public Relations Oral Project 2003-2010'. This project has as its central aim the provision of an archive of interview data from actors in engaged in PR and professional communication in the political, economic and social/cultural spheres in Northern Ireland since 1960. The respondents used for this study are republican press officers and political strategists, Danny Morrison, Jim Gibney, Richard McAuley, Danny Devenney, Brendan McFarlane and Gerry Adams. The interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2007 and on average lasted 45 minutes, they were semi-structured in format and the interviewees answered all the questions that were put to them. In these elite interviews the participants reflect on the PR strategies and tactics deployed by the armed republican movement and articulate their understanding of political PR. It is important to make clear, as L'Etang (2008) points out there is always the risk in conducting elite interviews with participants who are 'masters and mistresses of impression management' and the researchers conducting this study were under no illusions that they were dealing with individuals many of whom over a period of thirty years has become highly skilled at presenting a particular 'narrative' to interviewers. Nevertheless, while there is clearly an element of staying 'on message' all interviewees were asked to reflect as individuals on issues raised in the interview and many of them did speak candidly about key decisions and policy surrounding the development of republican PR during the 'Troubles'.

It should also be made clear that this study, like Spencer's (2006) study of republicans during the 1998 Northern Ireland peace process, was not concerned with a textual analysis of the media to try to arrive at some assessment of the strengths and limitations of the IRA and Sinn Fein's media relations strategies. This would be an interesting but quite different study. Our research focused on gathering the perceptions and attitudes toward the role and function of various aspects of public relations practice; publicity, media relations, stakeholder communications and issues management. This research project also utilized the extensive research data on the 'Troubles' held in the University of Ulster's CAIN archive and the resources of the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE).

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We present our findings below in three sections based loosely on three strategic phases of the republican movement's involvement in the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'. The three sections focus in turn on: the use of violence or 'armed struggle' and the publicity or PR activities surrounding that; the development of political PR in relation to the decision to engage in electoral politics; and thirdly the PR and media relations underpinning the attempts to build a peace process and share power in Northern Ireland. These phases are in some senses chronological with one strategy de facto replacing the previous one but as was noted above our findings indicate that there was no fully worked out overall strategic direction and in important ways these phases were as reactive as they were proactive. It should also be noted that in significant ways these phases overlap, for example the IRA were still exploding bombs in London in 1996 in the middle of what was meant to be the peace process phase.

The research questions which underpinned this study were:

1. What were the key developments in the PR practice of the republican movement over the period of the 'Troubles'?
2. How did the republican movement manage the PR surrounding 'critical incidents' or events of the 'Troubles'?
3. How do the participants understand and define PR?

### **3.0 'Bloody Sunday', censorship and the development of republican PR**

The development of republican media skills took time to develop. Despite early British government public relations disasters like internment<sup>xxxix</sup> (indefinite imprisonment without trial) and the Bloody Sunday massacre (where 13 civil rights marchers were shot dead by the British army) republicans failed to gain the full propaganda value as they demonstrated little skill in exploiting these stories outside their own 'active' communities. As Danny Morrison noted 'if we, in 1971, had the PR skills we had twenty years later we would have ran rings around the British government'.

#### **Political violence and public relations: Propaganda of the deed**

In these early days some media relations opportunities were successfully organised like the Ballymurphy press call organised by Gerry Adams to declare that the IRA were still intact despite internment (August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1971). While such events showed the 'media and PR skills that were to follow' on the whole most opportunities were stifled by lack of experience (Moloney, 2007, p. 101) Our interviewees frequently make the point that although they understood the PR implications of many of the key events in

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the early 1970's it was their immediate impact internally on political structures and institutions in Northern Ireland which was significant at the time. These events accelerated the collapse of the legislature at Stormont and in doing so changed forever a political entity controlled by what James Craig, the first Northern Ireland Prime Minister, called a "Protestant parliament for a protestant state" (Moloney, 2007, p 42). Richard McAuley acknowledges the negative PR for the British government stemming from decisions like permitting the introduction of internment or the British army's shooting dead of 13 protesters on Bloody Sunday were PR disasters but also emphasizes it was their political fallout which gave a boost to the republican cause.

He notes:

Internment wasn't simply a PR disaster for the unionists or for the British, it was a political disaster...the British hadn't yet managed to get in place entirely this view of this conflict as sectarian ... and they were here keeping the peace, they were still in the early stages of promoting that view of themselves and that view of the conflict, so the PR in that sense was a disaster, but it was also a political disaster because... it strengthened the republican struggle in immeasurable ways and it weakened the unionists and although Bloody Sunday is often given as the reason for it I think the fact is there is clearly a connection between internment in August '71 and the prorogation at Stormont in March '72.

It is worth noting that McAuley also points here to what he regards as the initial failure of the British Government to 'frame' the conflict as sectarian strife with the British military offering a peace-keeping role. This battle over what frame to use to explain the conflict would be played out over the subsequent decades and is particularly evident in the media relations of both sides. Arguably the political chaos left by the collapsing institutions of unionist rule could have been exploited to a wider audience more skilfully and to the advantage of the republican cause but the reality was that the violence was ratcheted up on all sides which resulted in the republican movement primarily communicating through the 'propaganda of the deed' (Picard, 1989, p.12). Throughout the 1970's there was an unremitting level of violence with the mid-1970's in particular being characterised by an almost daily diet of bombings and shootings. The destructive power of the car bomb was shown on 'Bloody Friday' (July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1972) when 20 car bombs exploded in Belfast killing 9 and injuring 130. The incendiary bomb was added to the tactics that created further civilian disasters like the tragedy at the La Mon Hotel on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1978 which burned alive 12 and injured 33. Later the use of the 'human bomb' like the killing of Patsy Gillespie

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at a Derry cross border army checkpoint in 1990 with the reasoning that he was a 'legitimate target', 'shocked a community which was by now almost immune to shock' (Taylor, p. 317). Of this period McAuley articulates a view on the IRA bombing campaign in the 1970's and 1980's which reinforces very directly the 'propaganda of the deed' thesis on terrorist violence. He states:

every operation that the IRA carried out wasn't just about that operation, it was about the political affect that operation would have in conjunction with all the others and also the propaganda factor would happen, it was often said that one IRA action, one bomb attack in London was worth 100 here, because over the years the international media, unless some huge atrocity happened, the media tended to ignore this place whereas if something happened in London it became headlines around the world.

The IRA accompanied their attacks, as most terrorist organisations do with a statements to the press and it is clear that there was frequently a conscious attempt to create sound-bites for the media. After the killing of the Queen of England's cousin, Lord Louis Mountbatten on the 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1979, and then later that day the killing of 18 British soldiers in roadsides bombs, wall murals sprang up in Belfast which read '13 gone and not forgotten (reference to those killed on Bloody Sunday), we got 18 and Mountbatten.' Danny Devenney who designed the *Republican News* and was also in charge of co-ordinating wall murals in Belfast during this period noted that this was a key and very effective way to get the republican message across. He suggests: 'You have to follow Saatchi and Saatchi's theory of advertising, the best murals are the one's with the simplest message, so people drive on and get the message immediately... They might agree or disagree with the point you're trying to make, but at least it has soaked through into their consciousness'. On the 12 October, 1984 after almost wiping out the entire British government with the bombing of the Tory Party conference at the Brighton Grand Hotel the IRA statement was reported widely in the Press, 'to-day we were unlucky, but remember we only have to be lucky once; you will have to be lucky always. Give Ireland peace and there will be no war'.

However the urge to vary the 'spectaculars' to keep the media interested also brought devastating tragedy for ordinary citizens as well as public relations disasters for the republican movement. One of the worst of these came on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1987 when the IRA planted a 40lb bomb in Enniskillen as people gathered for a Remembrance Sunday service at the town's war memorial. The blast killed 13 and injured 63, 19 of them seriously. Morrison remembers how 'difficult' it was as the

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Republican spokespersons were put through the “moral mill”. While ‘regret’ was given, he remembered that they stopped giving interviews soon after the event because ‘to attempt to explain it or put it in context would have appeared to have been justifying it’. Reflecting on Enniskillen and previous tragic blunders by the IRA Morrison stated:

I was the first Sinn Fein representative to do an interview after Enniskillen and it was on Talkback [BBC radio] and it was about half an hour long and it was extremely difficult. First of all I wasn’t going to defend what happened and couldn’t defend what happened. And there were other incidents like that down the years. Le Mon when twelve people were, a bomb went off and they were burnt to death. Horrific deaths, you can’t put a gloss on things like that.

Similar public relations disasters can be evidenced in 13 tragic days in 1988 that put the Province in the international spotlight for all the wrong reasons. On 6 March 1988, in Gibraltar, the British SAS shot dead three members of the GHQ staff of the IRA. Ten days later at their funerals in Milltown cemetery in West Belfast a protestant terrorist Michael Stone killed three and injured 60 men, women and children. Then on the 19<sup>th</sup> March at Kevin Brady’s funeral, one of the victims of Stone’s assault, two British soldiers, Derek Wood and David Howes were caught in a car close to the cemetery and butchered by the crowd while live television crews filmed the tragic incident. Danny Morrison recalled “the images that went around the world from then on were awful and did depict the community as being a lynch mob...I got a call from America saying ‘what the hell have you done over there?’”.

### **Media censorship**

Public relations disasters involving the slaughter of innocent civilians were damaging for the republican movement, which relied on projecting the key message that it was the oppressed group, but in many ways a much more significant issue in respect to communicating with audiences outside Northern Ireland was the increasing levels of British government censorship in respect to press coverage of the conflict. At the beginning of the Troubles ‘pressure’ was exerted by the British government in various ways upon the media covering the developing conflict in Northern Ireland. So much so that in late 1971, 200 mainly British journalists met to sign a ‘declaration of intent’ about the ‘the intensification of censorship on TV, radio and the press coverage of events in Northern Ireland and pledge ourselves to oppose it’ (CAIN. The British Media in Ireland, p. 2-3). Although there was no legal ban on coverage at this time

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according to all of our interviewees government pressure on the media did have a significant impact. According to McAuley ‘the fact is that most journalists, not all, turned a blind eye to what was going on here for a very long time’.

Difficulties in getting their message across to the media led, by the mid-1970’s to a much more focused attempt to organise and improve republican PR and media relations. The first significant initiative was the establishment of the press centre on the Falls Road in Belfast. As Curtis (1984) points out it wasn’t long before ‘the telex machine was put to increasing use, and became a crucial tool, allowing Republicans to convey their version of incidents immediately to the press, and for the first time enabling them to compete seriously with the various British public relations operations’ (p. 265). Secondly, Danny Morrison, despite being on the run at the time, had taken over the editorship of the *Republican News* and became Sinn Fein Director of Publicity. Morrison explains his role in terms that most PR practitioners would understand:

I became the national Director of Publicity for the party and tried to explain to people... [that] journalists are particularly lazy people. So we would try and present the story as written so that they so that they would have to do the minimum amount of work. And also we learnt things about deadlines- you could manage to get your story quite prominent on the news depending on how you leaked it. Or if you gave an exclusive or you gave somebody more details than others... if a journalist continually messed us around or misrepresented what we were saying I would just cease to give that journalist invitations to press conferences and that would hurt that journalist. ... we had to create a situation were they respected us and the only currency, the only negotiating power we had was access to us or access to the IRA if they were requesting an IRA interview through me or through the paper or whatever. And we had to use those cards we had as best we could. Not only did we send out statements but we learn that when you send out statements you then phoned up the newspaper to talk to some named journalist- “Did you get it?” ... Then you monitor the newspaper and you chase it up. And if this journalist is somebody who needs you at some stage then you can also put pressure on him or her in the newspaper- “What’s happening our statement?” “Where’s it going?” We did all of those things.

Morrison also makes it clear that he sought to bring a more image conscious approach into the republican movement’s media relations especially in respect to its broadcast interviews. These became much more carefully stage managed and Morrison made sure it was always hand picked Sinn Fein representatives who were interviewed. He notes:

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Instead of Panorama interviewing an IRA spokesperson in silhouette wearing a hood which is a very bad image. Which is a terrorist image. It was far better for the republican cause if they were interviewing me or someone like me who was giving an opinion and analysing why the IRA was doing the things that it was doing. Ok, the risk was it was putting a public face on but at the same time the perception and the subliminal affect on the English audience was that these are no longer sinister shadowy people, these are people that have an articulate position so we used that to our advantage.

His appointment as editor of *Republican News* was also to turn out to be a very significant in the internal power struggles which lay ahead for Sinn Fein. The newspaper was an important organ for the republican movement in its effort to communicate with its own support and more widely but initially it was every under-resourced. As Devenney remembers:

The *Republican News* at that time was almost like a local news-sheet. It wasn't a professional publication that people see today because of resources ...we didn't have any photographers at the time – it was all voluntary, people came in and assisted us by giving us photographs. But we couldn't say, like other newspapers, to a photographer 'Go and take a picture'.

All this changed however, and Morrison's importance and influence increased, when in 1979 the republican newspapers *An Phoblacht* and *Republican News* merged. The thinking behind the merger, according to an editorial in *Republican News* of January 20th, 1979, was: "To improve on both our reporting and analysis of the war in the North and of popular economic and social struggles in the South... the absolute necessity of one single united paper providing a clear line of republican leadership... [and] the need to overcome any partitionist thinking which results from the British-enforced division of this country and of the Irish people." The significance of the newly merged paper can be measured in its rapid growth into a 12-18 page format, a 30,000 weekly distribution and the fact that even the British government eventually used it to try to reach the republican mass audience. Moloney (2007) notes that the merger of the paper was also a success for Gerry Adams, bringing him further power by isolating the *An Phoblacht* editor Gerry O'Hare and consequently his wing of the republican movement. It meant that the republican movement had one main media organ and that it therefore now spoke with one voice. It also arguably meant that the republican movement was arguably now making the first steps to move beyond the propaganda of the deed approach to communication. Picard (1989) pointed out the strategy of developing a party newspaper to communicate and educate ones own

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support is a common feature of larger groups 'It should also be noted that well established and supported groups that employ terrorism often operate their own media to publicise their efforts among supporters and group members' (p. 20).

The newspaper was to become even more significant when the UK followed the Republic of Ireland in introducing a broadcasting ban in 1988. The Irish Minister who introduced the Irish ban in 1976, Conor Cruise O'Brien, used Section 31 of the Republic of Ireland's 1960 Broadcasting Authority Act to impose a media ban on Sinn Fein rejecting the argument that they were a legitimate political party he in fact labelled them 'a public relations agency for a murder gang' (Wilkinson, 1997, p. 61). The British government led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher followed the Republic of Ireland in imposing a broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein from October 1988 to the September 1994 in order, as she put it, to starve IRA/Sinn Fein of the 'oxygen of publicity'. While the use of sub-titles and voice over made the broadcasting ban an issue of ridicule for some and suspicion by others it did have a negative impact on Sinn Fein. Richard McAuley does however acknowledge that the ban did have a major impact on the republican's media relations and points to a survey Danny Morrison conducted of media coverage before and after the ban was imposed. He notes:

In the previous two years the number of interviews done by Sinn Fein with the broadcast media namely the BBC, UTV and Downtown [radio] had run into the hundreds. In the same period after the broadcast ban it was a handful the broadcast restrictions were very clever in that they didn't say that you couldn't do an interview with me and broadcast it you just couldn't use my voice... I don't think we overcame the issue of censorship we probably didn't even hold our own. I think it was a time in which the enemy won the PR battle, we within our own area held our own but not on the wider stage. I mean holding your own within your own group isn't enough, if you have big political goals you have to get beyond that you have to be able to attract new members.

Despite all the issues standing in the way of the republican PR activity there were issues in their favour which generated important favourable coverage in the world media. The first was the gradual 'outings' of British injustice. Parkinson (1998) concludes that because of the "knee-jerk response of the British judiciary in the mid-1970s," that led to the wrongful imprisonment of the "Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Maguire Seven and Judith Ward...the press and a number of TV programmes focused on the inadequacies of the prosecution's argument in the original trials and presented what they claimed to be 'new'

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evidence.” He noted that the “release of those convicted for the Guildford (19<sup>th</sup> October, 1989) and Birmingham bombings (released 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1991) earned substantial headlines in the British press and the experiences of the cleared men and woman resulted in a number of them (notably Paul Hill and Gerard Conlon) becoming minor ‘celebrities’.

Interestingly both of these widely publicised stories came out during the broadcasting ban nevertheless as Richard McAuley acknowledged above the ban had a significant negative effect of the ability of Sinn Fein to communicate with a wider audience outside their base support. It certainly also had a knock on effect on their electoral support. However one thing should be noted in respect to the republican movement and that is that it was a fundamentally different organisation by the end of the 1980’s than the republican movement at end of the 1979’s. For one thing republicans were engaged in electoral politics and this was a shift in strategy and policy which changed the nature of the organisation fundamentally. To understand why this transformation occurred we must go back to 1981 and assess what was the most important event of the whole conflict for the republican movement, and perhaps in many ways for Northern Ireland as a whole, the ‘Hunger Strikes’. Arguably as a result of the hunger strikes the republican movement moved from a ‘propaganda of the deed’ communication model to an organisation engaged in recognisable political public relations.

#### **4.0 IRA/Sinn Fein: From Hunger Strikes to electoralism**

The republican movement by the end of the 1970’s was stuck in what they later admitted was an unwinnable ‘war’ even if it also seemed that they couldn’t be effectively completely defeated militarily either. To move from this situation of stalemate required a different strategy and in 1979 after the election in the UK of a new Conservative administration led by Margaret Thatcher this different strategy emerged as a reaction to the new British government’s policies. The Thatcher government’s key policy in respect to Northern Ireland was to put more resources into defeating the IRA militarily while at the same time withdrawing legitimacy from them by changing key policies in respect to the classification of IRA prisoners. Chiefly this involved the removal of ‘political status’ by forcing prisoners to wear standard issue prison uniform and the enforcement of internal prison structures controlled by prison authorities rather than by prisoners themselves.

#### **The ‘Hunger Strikes’**

The republican movement has always strove to present itself as the ‘oppressed’ fighting for national self-determination against a colonial power. The 1981 Hunger Strikes which led to the deaths of 10 prisoners and the election of their leader Bobby

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Sands as a British MP brought this ‘noble’ struggle to an international audience and garnered enormous support from around the world. The Hunger Strikes, as Brendan MacFarlane points out, was a decision taken by the prisoners inside the Maze prison to resist the new policy on paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland jails. It was not part of an IRA/Sinn Fein strategy and was in fact opposed by the IRA leadership outside the prison:

The Hunger Strikes came about by - pure accident is the wrong word - by no intent of part of a strategy [but] as a direct result as to what the British were doing, because the Hunger Strikes came about as a response to a set of circumstances that the British enforced, the Hunger Strike was an evitable consequence of prison protest, because the stakes were so high, we were not going to allow ourselves to be used to criminalise a struggle and it got to that stage that literally there was no alternative route.

Nevertheless despite internal dissension over the strategy the Sinn Fein PR team moved quickly to secure the best coverage. Danny Morrison suggests that they were able to draw on what they had learnt from the previous decade when he compares the media relations effort surrounding the hunger strikes to that of ‘Bloody Sunday’ ten years earlier:

So when you look back you can see that there’s a lot of missed opportunities. I mean for example, look at Bloody Sunday. The publicity that came from Bloody Sunday, it happened by the local people themselves. Whereas years later for example if the British Army shot somebody dead I would be trying to get a photograph of that person to the Press Association. So that we could put a face to the person who was wounded or fatally injured very quickly because that was an embarrassment to the Brits. And a photograph is an embarrassment. You see in 1981 when Bobby Sands went on hunger strike and when Bobby stood for election. We brought out a poster of Bobby where he has long hair and he’s smiling. It was actually taken in jail, when he was in jail the first time in 1973. But he looks like a hippy in this photograph, he looks quite pleasant, quite affable, and dignified. We got that image around the world and the British government realised “Fucking hell, this is bad for us.” So they get on to the Press Association and they try to get the media to use a photograph of Bobby Sands when he had been arrested with a number plate beneath him, like a mug-shot. But it was too late, we’d got out there in front. You can see the importance. We wouldn’t have had that knowledge back in 71, to put photographs out.

Compared to previous critical incidents the republican movement was able to exploit the coverage successfully for PR purposes. Rolston and Miller (1996) note that visits from international figures gained significant international media coverage that there were 47 negative editorials of British policy in the American media. The exposure of the conflict to an international audience was significant but the Hunger

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Strike's biggest outcome was that it "made it possible, much sooner than anyone imagined, for Sinn Fein to fully embrace electoral politics" (Moloney, p. 210).

### **Electoral Politics**

One thing that all of our interviewees are in agreement on is the significance of the election of Bobby Sands as a Westminster MP. Sinn Fein's official policy was abstentionism in respect to both the British House of Commons, which they regarded as having no jurisdiction over Northern Ireland and the Irish parliament, the Dail Eireann. Their official position dating from the 1920's was the incongruous notion (which most disavowed in private) that the Dail was a puppet of the British state. The result for Sinn Fein was that it boycotted both political institutions and when it did stand candidates in either jurisdiction it always described this activity as a 'political intervention'. Gerry Adams makes this clear: 'Bobby's election was an intervention as opposed to an electoral strategy, but his success accelerated that entire process'. This point that Sand's election was the beginning of a new phase in Sinn Fein's thinking about the conflict and its strategic approach is made even more forcefully by other republicans. Jim Gibney makes it clear that in his view that without the hunger strikes and subsequent elections of prisoners Sinn Fein may not have gambled on going down the political route.

Bobby's election result I think made it clear ... gave republicans the confidence to believe that there was a section of the electorate out there who would vote for them. And you know we took risk of putting Bobby Sands forward, because there was always a chance that he could've been defeated, and that would've been a story in itself, but ...by the end of, by the mid 80s Sinn Fein, the political leadership of Sinn Fein is beginning to see the importance of elections as a way of building a political party right across the island, so abstentionism comes on the agenda of the party leadership.

Danny Morrison however rejects any notion that the hunger strikes and putting prisoners up for election was in any way part of some overall political or PR strategy that Sinn Fein had worked out to propel the party into electoral politics. It worked out like that but in many ways they were merely reacting to events and taking advantage of them. He agrees with Gibney that at the same time they were taking a huge gamble. Reflecting on the period Morrison states:

a lot of journalists and writers who come in here and look back are looking back with the advantage of hindsight. They only see history as it developed and not the difficulties and the difficult decisions people had to make at any one time. And they think, "Look how clever the Republicans were. They got

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Bobby Sands to stand and he got elected. They got Owen Carron to stand and he got elected, then they stood in the Assembly elections, then Gerry Adams got elected as MP the next year.” It’s as if everything was part of a pearl on a string that followed logically and it didn’t happen like that. It was high risk putting up Bobby Sands. If he had lost that election Thatcher would have said “Even your own people reject you” and that would have been very demoralising circumstances against which those men died. Instead Bobby Sands got elected and not only got that Kieran Doherty elected to the Irish parliament. So that was a tough decision but we took it and we took the risks. But had it gone wrong what sort of credibility would Gerry Adams or Danny Morrison or Martin McGuinness have had?

### **Internal communication**

Moving into electoral politics however was a far from easy transition for the republican movement. The chief opposition to such a strategy was from within which meant that the key communication effort for the Sinn Fein leadership was focused on its internal audience. Picard (1989) notes that key changes in policy require addressing publicity and PR effort to specific internal audiences ‘Specific publicity attempts can also single out specific audiences... In some cases the publicity is aimed at terrorist colleagues’ (Picard, 1989, p. 17). Spencer argues that one shouldn’t underestimate the enormous struggle which occurred within the republican movement in regard to the change from an abstentionist policy to one of political engagement.

The move toward democratic politics (although violence continued during the early years of the peace process) created great difficulties within the republican movement, requiring continuous debate and strategic management. The leadership of Sinn Fein had to sell the idea to the republican grassroots that the political path could deliver more in terms of future goals and this demanded careful planning and repeated manoeuvring within leadership meetings, which faced stiff opposition throughout (Spencer, 2006, p. 362)

All changes to Sinn Fein policy had to be passed by the membership at the annual *Ard Feis* (party conference) and this arena became the scene of the struggle between those who wished to move the party into democratic politics and those who opposed this. It was the scene of many set piece persuasive attempts to change policy. In 1981 Morrison made what was to become a famous speech which attempted to push through this fundamental change to the Sinn Fein constitution. Morrison stated ‘will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in one hand and an armalite in the other we take power in Ireland’ Of that speech Morrison notes: ‘I used graphic stuff

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like taking power with an armalite in one hand and a ballot box in another etc. It was used to sway people at a particularly sensitive time, a crucial time and we won the vote.’ Commenting on the famous sound-bite of Morrison’s Gerry Adams notes:

I was never comfortable with the remark, it was a very internalised remark, ... it was a remark which Danny made to other republicans and more importantly, I suppose, I understand this retrospectively, but I didn’t at that time, was that a small group of people lead by Ruairi [O’Bradaigh] and others were totally opposed to any involvement in electoralism apart from interventions and you can see why that was the case, because clearly that took you a certain direction from their point of view and from their standing point that was a way they didn’t want to go, but I mean there’s no other way to go, if you want to win a struggle, you can only do it by winning the maximum amount of support possible.

The process of change was finally achieved and it was a speech at the Sinn Fein’s *Ard Feis* in November 1986 by Martin McGuinness which hammered the final nail in the abstentionist’s coffin. In his speech McGuinness stated:

We must accept that after sixty-five years of Republican struggle, Republican agitation, Republican sacrifice and Republican rhetoric, we have failed to convince a majority in the twenty-six counties that the Republican movement has any relevance to them. By ignoring reality we remain alone and isolated on the high altar of abstentionism, divorced from the people of the twenty-six counties and easily dealt with by those who wish to defeat us. (cited in Feeney, 2002, p. 331)

The resolution was carried by the required two-thirds majority, Sinn Fein would no longer abstain from taking their seats in the Dail however, while they would stand for election for the British parliament they would abstain from taking seats at Westminster.

##### **5. ‘Ourselves alone’: Sinn Fein and the public relations of peace-building**

These key policy shifts were highly significant and changed the nature of Sinn Fein and ultimately of the whole republican movement but the reality was that in the latter years of the 1980’s the IRA were still heavily engaged in political violence. While it could be argued that the most significant change in the republican movement was the embracing of electoral politics it is clear that ending the ‘armed struggle’ involved just as much effort in respect to persuasive internal communication and public relations. The key problem, as Spencer (2006) points out was that ‘negotiating a resolution to conflict contradicted the idea of ‘struggle’ by military means, which had sustained the ideology of republicanism and IRA activism (p. 362)’.

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Ironically, as discussed above, not long after Sinn Fein voted to embrace electoral politics and thereby indicted a shift away from their long held ideological position of no official engagement with British institutions the British government, under Margaret Thatcher, introduced legislation, in 1988, to ban media interviews with representatives of the party. Despite this it was clear that the republican movement was inching towards abandoning armed struggle as a central plank of its strategy to achieve a United Ireland. Jim Gibney describes this internal communication process within the republican movement, central to which he suggested was negotiating with your base:

the organisation and the individual activists of the organisation had to be contacted on an ongoing basis, they needed to know what was happening to the peace process, they needed to be involved in so far as they could be involved in making decisions about the development of the peace process and as often as possible, especially around big decisions that had to be made, they needed to be brought together and the political thinking behind the strategic move needed to be put to them as well. So, this whole, I mean there's obviously the public external presentation of the project to people, the peace plan and what have you, but internally its probably as important if not more important that you bring your activist base with you as you go along this journey of dramatic political change.

At the same time that this internal communication effort was going on Sinn Fein also had to demonstrate to this audience that a peace strategy could achieve political results. Spencer notes that its external media relations and its internal communication are intimately related. He suggests:

Sinn Fein's ability to shape news is connected both to the structural cohesion of the party (where internal planning, organisation and discipline are key to decision making) and a sophisticated understanding of communication skills. ...The organisation, presentation and distribution of messages, along with intense dialogue and control to avoid splits and open dissent, (Spencer, 2006, p. 380)

It was the announcement of an IRA ceasefire in August 1994?? which gave impetus to the process. In January 1994 Albert Reynolds had lifted an 18 year old ban on radio and television interviews with Sinn Fein in Ireland and as Moloney notes this took Sinn Fein closer to "being treated like a normal, respectable political party" (p. 419). Then came the 'Clinton card' when in February 1994 President Clinton granted Gerry Adams a visa to visit the USA after a 20 year ban and against the wishes of the British government.

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Adams's work in America throughout 1994 and the publicity he gained are testament to his networking abilities and PR skills. Bill Flynn (Chairman of Mutual Life Insurance Company) who had facilitated the visit of Gerry Adams and recalled 'He was on coast-to-coast TV programmes, he was a tremendous hit...thoughtful, reasonable, thinking person not a "terrorist"...curiously what made the thing a public relations success of the first order was the fact he had been drowned out by the British rules and regulations' (Feeney, 2002, p. 404).

### **The 'Good Friday Agreement'**

Again it was electoral change which gave fresh impetus to the peace process in Northern Ireland. It was the election in 1997 of a Tony Blair's Labour government and Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fail /Progressive Democrats coalition that created flexibility and stimulated the moves to the Good Friday Agreement. On the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998 the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The corner stone of the agreement was the setting up of a new Assembly in which unionists and nationalists would share power. In addition, a North-South ministerial Council was established to oversee a series of cross border bodies.

Spencer (2006) notes that Sinn Fein's media management expertise was especially evident in the final hours of negotiations before the Good Friday agreement was signed. He points out 'in comparison to Unionists who would appeal to the cameras too quickly and in doing so reveal a certain desperation which symbolised a lack of confidence and control, Adams and McGuinness would use the power of non-verbal communication to reflect the opposite' (p. 364). According to Spencer that at this crucial stage Sinn Fein used the watching media outside the talks venue to broadcast key messages to different audiences. He observes:

Rather than merely running to the cameras to appeal about elements of the agreement which would be unacceptable, Adams and McGuinness would often walk around the car park smiling to each other and looking relaxed. This was picked up by the cameras and screened to audiences who interpreted the signs quite differently. For republican constituencies the signs were that Sinn Fein were doing well in the talks (although this was, of course, a performance with political intent), but for unionists the opposite perception was more likely. Images of Sinn Fein representatives smiling could only mean for many unionists that the talks were going badly, and would lead to intensified pressure on unionist participants to do more in the talks' (Spencer, 2006, p. 364).

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One must not overlook the role of the media themselves as key drivers of the peace process. Wolfsfeld (2001) in a comparative study of peace processes in Northern Ireland and Israel notes the significance of the media in promoting the 'peace frame' in their news coverage and editorial comment. He notes: 'when the media do adopt a particular frame, it can have an impact on the political process. An important example of this change occurred when the Unionist *Ulster Newsletter* and the Nationalist *Irish News* published a series of common editorials in favour of the peace process. As the political camps began to move closer together on the peace process, so did the newspapers. As the culmination of this cooperation, both newspapers asked their readers to vote yes in the referendum' (p.32-33). This role of the media is thrown into sharpest relief when we compare attempts to derail the peace process. He notes that the Beit Lid bombing by Hamas had a negative impact on the Israel-Palestine Oslo peace process with the major of the Israeli media calling on Prime Minister Rabin to withdraw from the negotiations with PLO President Arafat. This is compared with the Omagh bombing by the dissident republican group the Real IRA (RIRA). All the newspapers united in pushing for the peace process to be accelerated. The response of the Belfast Telegraph typifies this. Wolfsfeld (2001, p. 34) points to the front page (August, 16<sup>th</sup> 1998) which prints photographs of the 29 dead victims it also printed the following message:

Let our entire community unite against this evil. Let us commit ourselves to peace alone. Let us back the forces of law and order. Let us resolve to build a new future together, unionist and nationalist alike. Let this be our sincere and lasting tribute to the victims of Omagh.

Wolfsfeld in his study of the peace process cites a senior Sinn Fein leader who told him that with media rage both North and South of the border targeted on dissident republicans like the RIRA the result was significant for the peace process. The Sinn Fein leader stated:

The media coverage made it very difficult for anybody to oppose the Good Friday Agreement, particularly from within Republicanism or Nationalism. A lot of people I know who are very anti-agreement but not necessarily pro-armed struggle just went into hiding for a week or two.... because people would say "well it's the agreement or its over." I think the media very definitely did the opposite of inflaming the conflict. It genuinely and probably very consciously worked overtime to make conflict, in terms of military conflict, all the more difficult. (Wolfsfeld, 2001, p. 36)

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The result of the referendum was a 71% yes vote. In the Republic it was a massive 94%. On the 25<sup>th</sup> June the new 108 member assembly was elected and a new history began.

## **Conclusions**

With a handful of revolutionary exceptions, political terrorists rarely achieve their announced objectives. It is often the case, though, that some progress toward some of their objectives is realized....Of course such efforts at accommodation virtually never acknowledge the demands of groups using terrorism, but rather are addressed to grievances that are expressed by more moderate spokesmen using less extreme means' (Ross & Gurr, 1989, p. 413).

It should be noted that the republican movement clearly doesn't adhere to this pattern. While they have not achieved their overall political objective of a United Ireland outside of British jurisdiction but they have made substantial progress as a political movement. They are now the largest party, in respect to electoral success, in the nationalist or republican tradition. In fact they achieved the highest share of the vote of all political parties in Northern Ireland in the 2010 general election (26%). They sit as joint leaders of the power sharing government of the new devolved legislature in Northern Ireland. In addition the Good Friday Agreement constructed a constitutional arrangement which contains an all-Ireland element of governance, the North-South Ministerial Council which decides on a range of cross-border issues. The reasons for these achievements are a combination of the development of a highly sophisticated media relations and publicity operation and the maintenance of a tightly disciplined and hierarchical military organisation. As Spencer notes these two elements reinforce each other:

Overall, Sinn Fein's ability to shape and influence the media ...derives from its capacity to function as a tight, organised and unified whole. ...However, such control exists because of the hierarchical nature of the party, its ability to manage and stifle dissent, and because of party unity which is supported by a closeness of relationships within the party, a clear sense of planning and direction, and a sophisticated understanding of the communicative possibilities afforded by publicity (Spencer, 2006, p. 380).

Picard's (1989) analysis of the publicity and PR approach of terrorists groups traces what he sees as specific kinds of historical developments in respect to these groups over time. He notes for example that a common pattern is that:

A group that begins using large-scale propaganda of the deed actions may reduce such violence if the group's cause or the group itself receives some recognition by the

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public, authorities, and other parties...Among terrorist groups, the larger and more organized groups employ more and highly sophisticated publicity techniques intent on portraying their continuing – although usually smaller scale – violent acts as rational and justified’ (Picard, 1989, p. 15).

This is at best partially true in the case of republican movement who continued to employ large scale propaganda of the deed type actions up until the actual negotiations surrounding the Good Friday Agreement in late 1997. The year before this they were still employing ‘spectaculars’ to deliver ‘serious’ messages’. On the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1996 the IRA bombed Canary Wharf in London killing 2, injuring over 100 and causing £85 million of damage and followed this up with a huge bomb in Manchester on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1996 which injured 200 people and caused £100 million worth of damage.

Interestingly if we were to think about the republican movement in Grunigian terms the key public relations figures or ‘communication czars’ during the troubles were also at the heart of republican strategic decision making, being part of what Grunig et al (2002, p141) refers to as the ‘dominant coalition’. This was important because it allowed the leadership of the republican movement to gradually move from war to peacemaking. Richard McAuley a key republican strategist and PRO notes that while they were naïve in PR terms in the early days they rapidly came to understand its importance:

We were always very conscious of PR and its importance... We were always looking for different angles and different ways to get the message of the party across. As we tried to develop the party and build Sinn Fein then the party leadership at different levels became of conscious of having the need to have PR people within the structure.

However, aside from sharing this notion of PR as central to an organisation’s ability to succeed it would be wrong to suggest that there is any other conceptual similarity with the Grunigian approach. There is no articulation of a two-way symmetrical approach to communication except when that communication concerns its internal stakeholders. Jim Gibney describes a conception of PR where evaluation is central but again it is very much a one-way communication model that he envisages:

built into any PR system has to be review, assessment and so that’s where I think anything that can go wrong, its just the ABC, if you’re into publicity, whether its armed propaganda or ordinary publicity then yes you have to build a review mechanism into it, an assessment mechanism into it to be able to say,

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well did we get our message out there yesterday or not? Was our message understood or misunderstood? So yes, there has to be a process of review and assessment impact.

Ultimately it is PR as advocacy or propaganda that is offered as the main understanding and definition of the activity by the participants in this study. Richard McAuley puts this view most forcefully:

I don't believe you can distinguish between PR and Propaganda...its basically all the same thing, its about selling a message and the message can be a good message or a bad message and its how you present it, its how package it, its how you sell it, its how effective it is in how you want to deliver your message and if that's propaganda in the sense of war or PR in terms of politics, essentially it's the same thing, I think. Propaganda is normally a term that is associated with war and conflict so most PR people will not use the term propaganda, your not going to present a propaganda strategy to a cosmetic manufacturer who wants to sell their product you would present them with a PR strategy.

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## ABSTRACT

### POLITICS, PUBLICITY AND THE PRESS: The South Sea Bubble and the Eighteenth Century Birth of Modern Public Relations

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This paper presents a hypothesis that public relations as we know it in the twenty first century, rather than being the offspring of modern American industrial-military hard power, surfaced and was shaped as a profession — along with journalism and politics — in Britain in the early eighteenth century. It takes as its starting point the investment vehicle known as the South Sea Company and investigates and analyses the roles played by publicists, politicians, and journalists in what became the first truly global financial crisis for the relatively newly framed institution of democracy.

In the course of the eighteenth century there was a shift in intellectual, social and cultural thinking from outward to inward – while sense of self was becoming more important, sense of place in western hemisphere hard power was increasing globally through trade and mercantile adventures. This early period of the Enlightenment in Britain began stressing the rights of the individual over the collective and thus, personal rights against the ruler. Scottish and English Enlightenment thinkers provided secular legitimation of capitalism and free market ideology. But at the same time protectionist policies were being invented to make the free market less free. As the global market for trade developed, matters of government and property were considered too complex for the average citizen. Some, however, notably Shaftsbury (1729), argued that ‘people’ were a ‘public’ and the public was an important factor in global trade. Without the intervention of the people — if they were not included — there could be no public. This is an interesting early position which assists in the construction of an image of public relations as professional agency.

The big increase in public interest in the financial markets in the early eighteenth century was due to the “rapid rise of a journalism that operated on a public who were still comparatively unsophisticated. The government press, from Swift in *The Examiner*, downwards, made full use of its opportunities, pointing with one hand to the triumphant solution of the financial problems and with the other to the need for expansion for the support of our established way of living” (Carswell 1993: 46). The financial collapse of the South Sea Company, and the subsequent bursting of the ‘South Sea Bubble’ had the effect of re-aligning British foreign policy (Carswell 1993). A strong link can be drawn from this all the way to the 2009 global financial bubble.

Thus the paper examines the various roles acted out in the ten years leading to the South Sea Bubble: the roles of journalism and journalists, the transformation of the pamphleteer from publicist to public relations professional and the overlapping of these with politics, foreign policy and diplomacy. It argues the instruments of globalisation that emerged three hundred years ago provided the institutional framework for the establishment of modern public relations; that the strategies and

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tactics of public relations as ‘agency’ may be technologically different to those employed in the eighteenth century, but socially and politically they remain the same; that they have developed directly from the strategies and tactics of the South Sea Company and its predecessor, the Sword Blade Company.

The paper’s argument is underpinned by an examination of the relationship of politics, public relations and the press to a number of important philosophical tracts of which Oz-Salzberger notes “The polity envisioned by Smith and Hume was no longer a body politic accommodating a prince and his subjects but a community of individuals pursuing multiple private interests” (Oz-Salzberger 2001: 58).

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## ABSTRACT

### RETHINKING NATIONAL IMAGES MANAGEMENT: FROM PROPAGANDA TO NATION BRANDING.

Toward an Alternative Genealogy of Knowledge in the Field of National Perception Management.

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Historically documented examples demonstrating deliberate perceptions management of states go as far back as Ancient Greece (Kunczik, 1997; Taylor, 2003). Today political communication underpins many practices in international relations. This combination has led to the development of an academic area of inquiry aiming to conceptualise and analyse perception management of states and of their nations. In fact, the term ‘field of national images management’ covers an area of propaganda studies and its intellectual offshoots.

The academic literature reveals that the *dominant* concepts in this area include: ‘propaganda’ (Britz, 1986; Taylor, 2007); ‘national images projection’ (Tallents, 1932); ‘public diplomacy’ (Snow & Taylor, 2008); ‘new public diplomacy’ (Melissen, 2005); ‘international public relations’ (Kunczik, 1997); ‘headline diplomacy’ (Seib, 1997); ‘media diplomacy’ (Cohen, 1989; Gilboa, 2000); ‘strategic communications’ (Heller & Persson, 2008); and ‘nation branding’ (Dinnie, 2008). Initial reading of the literature reveals terminological competitiveness in this academic area as well as an increasing influence of corporate public relations models on propaganda, the conceptual history of which has a longstanding academic tradition.

Given the academic underpinnings of the field, theoretical concepts in this area should historically, in the Kuhnian (1970) sense, be subject to evolution and progress. This paper argues otherwise: given the pre-science status of public relations and marketing, considering the discourse in terms of structural and historical paradigm changes proves counterproductive to understanding of the field of nation images management. A closer examination of the academic literature in this area reveals a growing ‘corporatization’ of this field, i.e. focus on comparative conceptualizations (Szondi, 2009), adaptation of normative public relations models (Yun, 2005), replacement of existing political science terminologies with those derived from corporate lexicon (Chong & Valencic, 1999).

The influence of corporate public relations models as well as marketing concepts in the field of national images management results in a terminological fragmentation. This area is also characterised by ontologies and epistemologies borrowed from more advanced academic disciplines i.e. international relations or social theories.

In this academic field, the exchange of paradigms in the process of knowledge formation has been supplanted by conceptual ‘laissez faire’ based on models rather than theories or a set of axiomatic statements (Kuhn, 1970).

Therefore, rather than exploring this field through the prism of Kuhnian structural academic revolutions, this paper takes up a Foucauldian discourse analysis and reveals how, over the years, the academic field has re-contextualised propaganda.

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This “work in progress” paper merges academic practice with construction of particular type of discourses (Wodak & Meyer, 2008; Leeuwen, 2008). It builds on an extensive review of Anglo-Saxon and European academic literature and offers a genealogy of knowledge in the field of national images management.

Following Foucault’s (1980) approach to the relationship between knowledge and truth, this paper offers a historical perspective on the academic works in the area of national images management. It considers knowledge formation as a historically embedded form of power, which is constructed in the academic institutional settings and has potential of constructing different political realities (Danaher *et al.*, 2000).

**KEYWORDS:** national images management, conceptual discourses, academic field, archaeology of knowledge, Foucault

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**ABSTRACT – See also Proceedings in PowerPoint**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS IN COMMUNIST HUNGARY – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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In November 2009 Europe celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which marked the birth of market economies in Central Europe. According to the popular view, the fall of communism also marked the birth of the public relations industry in many Eastern European countries. Based on the case of Yugoslavia, Grunig, Grunig and Vercic (2004) incorrectly concluded that “there was no public relations in Eastern Europe before 1989 because the concept was not acceptable for socialism” (p. 137).

In Hungary - one of the neighbours of the former Yugoslavia - public relations emerged during the 1960s when the country embarked on economic and political liberalization. January 1968 signalled the official launch of a series of economic and social reforms, called the ‘New Economic Mechanism’, which attempted to combine features of central planning and those of the market mechanism. It was also in 1968 that the first public relations book was published in Hungarian which was the first book entirely devoted to public relations in Eastern Europe. The book was unique in many senses, as it brilliantly adopted and applied public relations as a ‘capitalist tool’ to the socialist economic conditions. The first Hungarian Ph.D. dissertation on public relations was defended two years prior to the publication of the book.

As Jacquie L’Etang (2008), a British PR historian and critical scholar notes, PR history writing is a neglected field of research in many parts of the world. This is particularly true in Central and Eastern Europe, a region, which remains largely underrepresented in public relations scholarship. L’Etang criticises the heavy dominance of American interpretations of public relations history as too simplistic and somewhat ill-advised given that so little is known about the histories of other nations. This paper’s aim is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the history of public relations by focusing on the birth and early years of Hungarian public relations practice. Its aim is to explore the evolution and different lines of development of ‘socialist ‘ public relations during three decades of the communist era. Public relations during this time remains under explored and undervalued by Hungarian PR scholars as well as practitioners who tend to increasingly distant themselves from this period.

The above mentioned quote from Grunig et al. also demonstrates that history is interpreted through the lenses of US liberal contemporary PR practice and theory whereby the US is used as a benchmark for writing PR history. Anything different from the evolution and development of American public relations history is interpreted as a ‘distorted’ or ‘twisted’ line of evolution (e.g. Tsetsura and Kruckeberg, 2004).

With this paper I would like to pay tribute to those practitioners who planted the seeds of PR in Hungary. Many of them are in their 70s, 80s or have recently

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passed away, and a new generation of ‘capitalist’ PR practitioners are quickly replacing them. My aim is to retrospectively understand what public relations meant for these people, how they viewed and practised their ‘profession’, and identify the challenges they faced.

This paper adopts a historical perspective to analyse and understand the first 30 years of Hungarian public relations. Besides archive research, which examines artefacts and documents, emphasis is placed on oral history told by public relations practitioners. Narrative approaches will be used to analyse these “stories” and to understand how practitioners made sense of a phenomenon called public relations. Oral history gathers data not available in written records about events, people, decisions, and processes. Oral history can reveal how individual values and actions shaped the past, and how the past shapes present-day values and actions. (Truesdell, 2002)

Keywords: history of public relations; Hungary, communist PR, narrative research.

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## ABSTRACT

### PUBLIC RELATIONS IN GERMANY – OWN OR COMMON HISTORY? Empirical findings – theoretical foundation – methodological consequences

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#### Problem and approach

The typical picture of German public relations history, taught in the past and sometimes in the present, tells the tale that public relations as an organizational management function don't exist in Germany before the Second World War. As part of the American re-education program they are an 'imported product'. This tale was coined by the first generation of public relations practitioners, starting when a German professional association was founded in 1958. Even though the historical public relations research found exhibits for the existence of public relations management in the time before the World War II and before. So firstly we have to ask: Can we find an own public relations history in Germany or is it part of a common history? If we find an own history, is this typical for Germany or are there arguments, that we would have to expect this also in other countries? And at last: If the tale of practitioners is a myth or legend with a very resistant nature, what is the reason for it?

To find answers to these questions we started by empirical findings concerning the present of public relations practice in Germany. A central finding in our own study but also in similar German studies and a Study from Switzerland consist in the essential features that public relations operations firstly deal with public communication and press or media relations. With a view of Web 2.0, social media and so on we can discuss, whether this will be the same way in the future? But if we have a look in the past we can search for references of organized forms operating in the sense of media relations or for their effects of media relations operations. On the level of theoretical foundation this approach assumes to differ the term "Public Relations" in three different levels of scientific questions to get differentiated findings: (1) public relationships, (2) public relations management and (3) public relations operations. This means: If we find advices for the existence of media relations as a type of public relations management we can look for its operations and effects. And in the contrary way: If we find vestiges of public relations operations we can suggest back to the existence of public relations management.

In the German public relations research starting in the middle of the eighties we know a hypothesis called "Determination thesis" to characterise as high and illegitimate rated influences from media relations to journalism. Based on this hypothesis, many advices of different historical case studies and central books of the history of journalism and public communication of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century we started a first systematic literature study in 2008. Based on theoretical studies of the organizational sociology and from a system theoretical position we operate with the assumption that public relations management is part of modern types of organizations after the end of absolutism and feudalism

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because this was the precondition for the development of public communication and journalism we have to observe.

### Findings

Starting with the Vienna Congress 1815, where the states and borders in Europe had been redefined, we can observe first attempts of the direction to install an organizational function like pr-management firstly in the political area by the Prussia. If we differ in “propaganda” as communication to create or assume a situation of power to achieve only one concept of meaning and “public relations” as communication in a situation of competition between positions and meanings, early forms of media relations activities of the Prussian State operated in the first instance in the modus of propaganda. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century corporations firstly copy this modus, but when they are noted on the stock market they had to change their communication behaviour in direction of public relations. Because trade associations and also towns and communes adjust media relations activities around the turn of the twentieth century, in the time before the World War I we find media relations activities in Germany on different places in the political and economical area.

In the time between the both world wars the influences of media relations activities was so important that the congress of German Sociologists in 1930 made this to its main topic. If we are looking for this influence in a systematic way we can find a number of documents to attest this. Among others for example there exists a plan for structure and functions of a public relations office for a head organization of the German economy published in 1924. In another way we can show that the term “public relations” had been known in parts of the German economy, because the I.G. Farben started to cooperate with the prominent American pr-counsel Ivy Lee in 1929. Later Lee meets Hitler and Goebbels when he came to Germany. So we can document that not only the function of media relations and public relations but also the term public relations was know at least in central parts of the beginning of the Third Reich in 1933. Furthermore an actual dissertation, written at the Free University of Berlin, can show that pr-activities of corporations didn’t change radically after the Nazi Party came into power. Instead of that it was a slow process of change in witch their economic interests dominated political influences for a long time. This radical changed with the beginning of the World War II. So on one hand we can see that the first generation of pr-practitioners in the post-war period coming from corporations and partly get their communication expertise in the pre-war time. Because they also worked in communication roles in the war period with all Nazi influences, on the other hand they created a “new history” of German PR.

### Methodological consequences

Historical books, biographical studies, documents from or about organizations and not least case studies are authorities. On their own they are not able to declare longer ranged coherences. In this a way the paper and presentation will show that we are able to reconstruct longer ranged coherences. Beyond this case study about a perspective historical picture about the German Public Relations development we can generalize some aspects for other countries of Western Europe. If we operate with the categories “development of a pluralistic society” as assumption for the types of modern organizations with the right of demands of their own interests and the development of media systems more and more independent from political influences we can describe basic conditions for the development of the public relations function in organizations. In this way we firstly have to reconstruct the political basic

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conditions of every Western European country so that we secondly can search for signs for the existences and the development of media relations as indicator for the existence of public relations management.

Literature

This paper founds on different articles published in USA, Europe and especially in Germany. Because there are not many colleagues in Germany with historical interests in public relations this paper was written without the declaration of bibliographical references.

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**\* SEE SUPPLEMENTARY PROCEEDINGS FOR FULL PAPER**

**ABSTRACT**

**HISTORICAL HERITAGE: PARADIGMATIC CHANGES IN THE PR FIELD IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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Public relations as a field developed through world history hand by hand with society, in a very logical manner. We can find five paradigmatic paradoxes in the public relations processes from societal changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: (1) Confused relations with propaganda and conflict between different political ideologies together with arise of totalitarian societies; (2) Internal communication as part of PR and blossoming of capitalism; (3) Opening period and collapse of the Soviet Union, which ended with planned economy in crisis; (4) Postmodernist PR, blossoming of consumption and market economy in crisis; (5) Network PR, computer-mediated communication and relations.

The present paper will explain contradictions in this historical chain from the societal perspective. Theoretically we will define public relations through communication management paradigm. It means we will analyze public relations as a managed communication flow which ends always with different type of relations and which is always influenced also by four factors: social, cultural, political and economic.

Through this perspective this paper will open up different ideological variances in the history of public relations. Also the arise of public relations as a professional field in the post communist society, as an ideological turning point, will be analyzed in more detail. As a result of historical heritage analyses this paper will suggest some scenarios for the future to make the field's mission and vision clearer. Philosophical question, *quo vadis* PR will be discussed as a result of empirical study done for this paper. Some new roles, as an integrative and diversity management role will be proposed for PR practices in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – A NEW IMPERATIVE?**  
A View of the Social Dimension of Public Relations Through the Rearview Mirror of  
Time

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**Abstract**

**Purpose** – This paper takes a closer look at the nature and extent of the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in history.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper uses a broader interpretation of CSR than traditional views to include non-corporate entities – ie. government and non-governmental organizations – in a sweep of history that extends beyond commonly-accepted notions that such organizational behavior can be traced at its earliest to early twentieth century US industrialists.

**Findings** – The historical record shows that examples of CSR as counseled by institutional advisors and practiced by those who exercised authority can be found in various civilizations including second-century B.C. Mauryan dynastic life in India, the Southern Song dynasty of tenth and eleventh century China, early African societies generally, and the seventh century Northumbrian kingdom of Oswald.

**Research limitations/implications** – The practice of CSR by early cultures can teach modern society much about the common good and its centrality to institutional behavior in general and to public relations practice in particular. Further research may reveal still other ancient antecedents of CSR, in particular African and Latin American civilizations. It should not go unnoticed that socially-responsible behavior as examined has often had a foundation of faith upon which to stand, and such a commonality of the intersection of faith and institutional practice merits a closer look.

**Originality/value** – This research extends the history of CSR beyond traditional limits and builds upon earlier work by the author including some of the first studies of public relations and social responsibility. It also illustrates an important connection between certain ancient practices that seem to have inspired present-day CSR behavior, particularly in that of corporations in India and NGOs in China.

**Keywords** Public relations, Corporate social responsibility, Religion and communication, Historical periods

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## Introduction

*“There is nothing new except what is forgotten”.*

Mademoiselle Bertin, milliner to Marie Antoinette

In the wake of recent global economic unrest, the unraveling of the social fabric and concerns for the environment there has been a collective cry for institutions, especially corporations, to be more socially responsible. Various public relations associations, embarrassed by practitioners who often shared the spotlight with unsavory clients and employers explaining their behavior before government boards of inquiry into questionable business practices that swamped global economies in 2008 and 2009, have led the call for a higher professional standard. And, business having generally fallen from grace has expressed its intent to regain public, customer, investor and employee trust through proper conduct (Tilson, 2010). The seeming turnaround has been such that “the concept of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) is now high on the priority list of executives and their public relations staffs who are charged with improving the reputation and citizenship of their employers” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 445). Indeed, some are calling CSR “the new imperative” for the twenty-first century (ibid., p. 67).

The road to Hell, of course, is paved with good intentions, and institutions and their staffs must prove through performance that they genuinely mean to reform. And much needs to change, from corporate trends to relegate public relations staffs to a support function reporting through legal, finance, human resources and marketing, to an obsession with ROI (return-on-investment) that has been driving boardroom decisions, to a mentality within public relations itself that has de-emphasized the social imperative and taken a more client-employer-exclusive notion of the practice. The “more assertive definition [of public relations that] has emerged over the past decade” that contends the practice should be “the strategic management of competition and conflict for the benefit of one’s own organization – and when possible – also for the mutual benefit of the organization and its various stakeholders or publics” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, pp. 6-7) reinforces parochial self-absorbed notions by institutions to the exclusion of a much needed sense of social responsibility and invites corporate misuse of public relations.

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As institutions endeavor to regain credibility through good behavior, it may be helpful for them to take a longer and broader walk down memory lane to examine organizational conduct – and public-relations-like practice – and apply the lessons learnt to their initiatives. In particular, they will quickly discover that social responsibility is neither a new nor a Western concept but one that is ancient and global in nature. For, if, as Botan (1992) suggests, public relations is an age-old concept “dating from early Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations ... used in different ways by ... governments, religions” (p. 153) to facilitate relationships, then, it would seem that social responsibility as counseled by institutional advisors and practiced by those who exercised authority also has a long history and one that spans many cultures. By studying past civilizations, modern-day practitioners – and those they counsel – not only will guard themselves against the old admonition – “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Santayana, 1905) – as regards errant behavior but, more constructively, may be reminded of the positive effects that social responsibility can and has had on institutions and the common good.

#### **“Spinning” and “stretching” CSR history**

Traditionally, US scholars have pointed to the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as the dawn of corporate social responsibility, lauding such industrialists as John R. Rockefeller, Sr. and Theodore N. Vail and their public relations counsel for their pioneering efforts on behalf of the community, which stood in stark contrast with the mentality of Western industrialization. In the US in particular “between the fall of the aristocracy of wealth and the emergence of middle-class revolt in the early 1900s ... it was truly the era of ‘The Public Be Damned’” epitomized in the words of railroad tycoon William Henry Vanderbilt, “‘I don’t take any stock in this silly nonsense about working for anybody’s good but our own’” (Cutlip, 1995, pp. 188-189). It was a callous sentiment that would echo through the twentieth century in the position of economist Milton Friedman who insisted that “the only social responsibility of business is to maximize profits ... The sole constituency of business management is the stockholders, and the sole concern of the stockholders is financial return” (Friedman, 1970, p.30). Such lack of social conscience became a lightning rod for public protest (both in the early and late twentieth century) with the rise of the Progressive Era when “large segments of the population were now irritably questioning the whole role of large-scale industry ... and believed that big

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businessmen ... operated usually as a force against the general welfare” (Goldman, 1965, p. 6).

As muckraking journalists and social reformers assaulted corporate “robber barons” and government responded to public demands for redress, Ivy Lee and other public relations pioneers emerged as counselors to the leaders of industry, in much the same way as Lords Chancellors advised the royalty of England for centuries as “Keeper’s of the King’s Conscience” (Cutlip, 1995, p. xi). While “public relations ... emerged as a defense of ... business ... [with] many of its leading firms ... founded for precisely that purpose” (Goldman, 1965, p. 14), practitioners like Lee did manage to exercise some influence on the private sector in favor of the common good. For example, as counsel to Rockefeller, Lee mounted a “full-scale renovation of the Rockefeller name [tarnished by his strike-breaking efforts at a family-owned coal mine in Colorado] ... and advised the Rockefellers to announce publicly the millions of dollars that they gave to charitable institutions”; while Lee has been credited with prompting Rockefeller to donate to charity, he maintained he “merely convinced Rockefeller to let news photographers show what he had been doing for years” (Wilcox, Ault, Agee and Cameron, 2000, p. 37). Lee, the son of a Georgia minister, and his partner, George Parker, who later went to work for the Episcopal Church, were to enshrine social responsibility forever as a principle of business with the issue of a “Declaration of Principles” promising to provide “prompt and accurate information ... of value and interest to the public”, which “marked the emergence of a general doctrine of public relations in the United States; the public was no longer to be ignored, in the traditional manner of business ... It was ... to be informed” (Goldman, 1965, p. 12). Lee was to insist upon public relations as having a dual function – “informing the public and ... advising the client about how to align activities with public interests” (Miller, 1996, p. 513), arguing that “publicity in its ultimate sense means the actual relationship of a company to the people, and that relationship involves far more than *saying* – it involves *doing*” (Goldman, 1965, p. 13). It was a standard that, according to Edward Bernays, considered the “father of modern public relations” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006, p. 55), required counselors “to refuse to represent clients who were ‘unsocial or otherwise harmful’” (Miller, 1996, p. 518). Arthur Page, the first corporate vice-president of public relations in the US, was to embody this philosophy at AT&T, advocating “be sure our deeds match our words”

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(Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004, p. 146) and reminding his corporate colleagues that “in a democratic society no business could exist without public permission nor long succeed without public approval” (Block, 1982, cited in *ibid.*, p. 34). His boss at AT&T, Theodore Vail, often has been portrayed as a counter-industrialist – a “business executive in this public-be-damned era who saw the long-term profit in accommodating the public interest” and someone who “saw that for the company to flourish and for it to be accepted as a ‘natural monopoly,’ that it would have to earn the goodwill of the public – a most revolutionary idea in the business world of the 1880s” (Cutlip, 1995, pp. 197-198), a sentiment shared by Henry Ford, “America’s first major industrialist” who once commented that “‘business is a service, not a bonanza’” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 48). Today, the views of Page and Vail live on through the Arthur Page Society, an association of public relations professionals, and its Center – established in 2004 – at the Penn State College of Communications, which supports research, educational, and public service projects that foster “ethics in public communication and the role of public relations in advancing corporate responsibility” (<http://comm.psu.edu/pagecenter>).

But, while such historical accounts are worthy of note given their social context, portraying them as “early points of light” in an otherwise darkened era – “he [Lee] is remembered today for... advancing the concept that business and industry should align themselves with the public interest... an important contribution to public relations” (Cameron, Wilcox, Reber and Shin, 2008, p. 68), “Theodore N. Vail Sees a More Enlightened Way” (Cutlip, 1995, p. 197) and Ford’s “idea [is] reiterated by many of today’s top corporate executives who believe in what is now called ... CSR” (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 48) – misrepresents the origins of social responsibility as being a consequence of US corporate behavior, of being distinctly corporate in nature and having developed within only the last century and a quarter. A deeper examination of CSR activity, on the other hand, reveals that public acts of social responsibility extend well beyond the US, corporations and the age of Western industrialization. If anything, an earlier sense of social responsibility was one of the casualties of the era as the captains of business became the new ruling elite, the public their subjects, and “the close connection between owners or managers and their employees and customers” was lost in the complexity of organizational hierarchy (Miller, 1996, p. 510).

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In stretching the origins of CSR back into time, examples abound throughout history and societies even just within Europe. For example, Henriques (2003, cited in Werther and Chandler, 2006) notes that:

“There has been a tradition of benevolent capitalism in the UK for over 150 years. Quakers, such as Barclays and Cadbury, as well as socialists, such as Engels and Morris, experimented with socially responsible and values-based forms of business. And Victorian philanthropy could be said to be responsible for considerable portions of the urban landscape of older town centres today” (p. 11)

Other examples of CSR-like behavior in Europe push its practice even further back in time. Wilcox and Cameron (2006) note that fifteenth and sixteenth century Venetian bankers “were probably the first, along with local Catholic bishops, to adopt the concept of corporate philanthropy by sponsoring such artists as Michelangelo” (p. 45). In northeastern England, Oswald, who ruled Northumbria from 625 to 642 A.D., was “renowned as a man of justice and compassion” (Delap, 2005, p. 13) particularly toward the poor; on one occasion, during a feast at the castle to celebrate Easter, he “snatched up a large silver platter and had both food and pieces of the platter distributed among the crowd” (ibid.).

But Britain, and Europe in general, have not been alone as “points of light” where the common good is concerned, and a quick litany of other, still earlier civilizations underscores the ancient history of social responsibility. For example, in Peru, the social basis of the Incan empire, headquartered in Cuzco, required the elite ruling class to exercise social responsibility toward citizens – “the member of the elite helps others. He does not remain inert. He acts for the common good. His action takes on a moral value” (Baudin, 1961, p. 44). Such an attitude toward society was a fundamental characteristic of the administration of various “sovereigns” from Sinchi Roca, a legendary, “mythological character”, through Pachacutec, an early fifteenth-century ruler (ibid., pp. 19-20). In early Thailand – circa 1283 A.D. – Anantachart (2002, cited in Newsom, Turk and Kruckeberg, 2004) reports that the king “established a two-way communication system with his people by setting up a big bell in front of his palace. Citizens could ring the bell, and the king would judge, help or otherwise solve people’s problems” (p. 24). In Africa, Davidson (1971) notes that in the nineteenth century the continent “was already in the broad noontime of a long and fruitful social development... [that] was ... peculiarly African – more concerned with

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the amenities of personal relationships than with material progress” (p. 60). African societies specifically “practiced a simple but effective social welfare in their concern for widows and orphaned children” and generally “put social harmony and the welfare of the group above all else” (ibid., p. 21, 60). Moreover, many African peoples believed that “the community consisted of the dead ancestors and the generations still unborn, as well as the living”; admonitions of the guardian spirits of the Shona people of Zimbabwe to “good behavior, respect for elders, and conformity to the life led by one’s fathers, seeking little or no wealth or position” were more the rule than the exception (ibid., p. 60, 169). And, those who ruled African societies derived their legitimacy more from the consent of the people – and the positive expectations of those who recognized and acceded to it – than from sheer force (Haviland, 1978). As Davidson (1971) observes:

“Parallels have been noted between King John of England, who was forced to agree ... to let his barons ‘distress and harass’ him if he acted unjustly, and the treatment of unjust kings in a certain East African kingdom. Such a king, wrote the 10<sup>th</sup> Century Arab historian al-Masudi, ‘if he depart from the rules of justice,’ was killed and his heirs debarred from succession”. (pp. 60-61)

### **Ancient traditions – from the Asian Crescent to China**

Even more ancient civilizations, however, were noted for their civic sense, and certain of these merit closer examination. As Werther and Chandler (2006) observe, “ancient Chinese ... writings often delineated rules for commerce to facilitate trade and ensure that the wider public’s interests were considered” (p. 11), and Indian *mai-baap* traditions of government subsidies and political promises of public assistance (Nilekani, 2009) have deep roots in Indian culture.

On the Indian subcontinent, the Mauryan (322-183 B.C.) was among the most notable indigenous dynasties, which at the time occupied a substantial portion of India (King, 1964) including the Punjab and Indus Valley. According to Lensen (1960), the first Indian empire was established by Chandragupta Maurya in the fourth century B.C. shortly following Alexander the Great’s invasion and subsequent withdrawal from the region. As a military ruler-turned emperor, Chandragupta, nevertheless, “devoted himself to public business and the public good... and worked unstintingly for his subjects’ happiness and welfare” (Schulberg, 1968, p. 78). A manual of politics, the *Arthashastra*, attributed to his chief minister, Kautilya, a Hindu *brahman*, speaks clearly of the king’s philosophy of good government:

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In the happiness of his subjects lies a king's happiness,  
In the welfare of his subjects, his welfare.  
A king's good is not that which pleases him,  
But that which pleases his subjects. (ibid., p. 78)

Under his rule, “the empire enjoyed a time of general prosperity and busy trade ... [and] to Indians of later times, the reign of Chandragupta Maurya came to represent the beginning of a golden age” (ibid.). Toward the end of his life, according to one tradition, he embraced Jainism, abdicated his throne to become a monk and entered the temple of Shravana Belgola, a still-existent monastery in Mysore (ibid.).

His grandson, Asoka (Ashoka), considered “one of the truly great leaders of world history, tempering politics with idealism”, became “the Constantine of Buddhism”, extending the Mauryan realm from northern India to the Deccan plateau (Lensen, 1960, p. 17). Converted to Buddhism about 261 B.C. following a military campaign on the eastern coast of India, Asoka was its royal patron and apostle. Buddhism flourished as a “missionary faith” as Asoka sent representatives to evangelize the kings of Egypt, Macedonia and the Near East (Schulberg, 1968), gathered and distributed relics of the Buddha among some 84,000 *stupas* or burial mounds (many of which he built), went on pilgrimage to the sacred sites associated with Gautama Buddha's life, and, most important, in “promoting the faith ... establish[ed] the ideals of Buddhist kingship” (Barnes & Branfoot, 2006, p. 110) by benevolent rule; a second century A.D. Sanskrit text of the *Legend of Asoka* recounts his devotion and pilgrimages (ibid.).

His rule, and his edicts, disseminated by scribes throughout the empire and also carved on rocks, in caves and on specially erected pillars (ancient billboards, perhaps?) found as far north as the Hindu Kush and east as the Bay of Bengal, attest to “the first time in Indian history [when] a great state was led by a man who preached goodness, gentleness and nonviolence and who based his policies on a high ethical code” (Schulberg, 1968, p. 78). His “devotion to Buddhist ideals” was expressed in practical ways – for example, in his appointment of “Officers of Righteousness” to oversee local officials and ensure that they “promoted ‘welfare and happiness ... among servants and masters, brahmans and rich, the needy and the aged’ ... prevent[ed] all ‘wrongful imprisonment or chastisement,’ and ensur[ed] special consideration for ‘cases where a man... has been smitten by calamity, or is advanced

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in years” (ibid., pp. 79-80). And, his edicts testify to royal support of society ranging from medical assistance for people and animals (including the planting of medicinal herbs) to the welfare of prisoners and their families to the care of peoples of bordering regions (Nikam and McKeon, 1966). Less than a generation or so after his death, the Mauryan empire collapsed as descendants fought for control, local governors reasserted their independence, and “Buddhist ideals no longer inspired government policy” (Schulberg, 1968, p. 80). Forgotten were Buddhist ethics “rightly ... admired for the total demand which they make upon the faithful” (Bradley, 1963, p. 113), in particular the notion of *Mahayana* Buddhism that calls a believer to “devote himself to helping others” (King, 1964, p. 578), as was Asoka’s “golden rule”, “the precept that a man should behave toward others as he would wish them to behave toward himself” (Schulberg, 1968, p. 80).

While Buddhism was to eventually fade from prominence in its native land with the ascendancy of Hinduism, it never completely disappeared from India’s collective consciousness. Writing from prison, Jawaharlal Nehru attested that “his [Asoka’s] edicts still speak to us in a language we can understand and appreciate. And we can still learn much from them” (ibid.). Asoka’s passionate concern is reflected in the Indian government’s decades-long *mai-baap* “tradition of expanding subsidies”, political “promises of free water, electricity, free televisions and even free computers” and social programs of reform (Nilekani, 2009, p. 280). That litany of socially responsible actions, as Nandan Nilekani, co-founder and co-chairman of Infosys Technologies – “India’s first truly global company” – notes in his runaway best-seller, *Imaging India*, is at the “core entrepreneurial insight” of his company, a belief that “spectacular success can be achieved through innovative, ethical and transparent business-management practices” and “civic-minded individual[s] keen to shape public policy” (Swarup, 2009, p. 68). Social responsibility also is an increasingly common ingredient for the success of non-Indian companies, particularly those like PepsiCo that are directed by Indian management. Indra Nooyi, CEO and chairman of the PepsiCo’s board, hails from southern India, holds undergraduate and graduate degrees (MBA) from Indian universities, and “draws on lessons learned at the family dinner table in India”, namely, “‘bringing together what is good for business with what is good for the world’” (Goodman, 2007a, p. 4C). As one of only a few women to preside over a Fortune 100 company, Nooyi has moved PepsiCo to develop healthier

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and more environmentally-friendly products, provide employees with time and opportunities to volunteer with nonprofits, and mentor women as they move up the corporate ladder – all part of what she describes as her “leadership philosophy” – “performance with purpose ...not just delivering products but creating a better community” (Goodman, 2007b, p. 6C).

In China, two faith traditions – Buddhism and Confucianism – have served as inspiration for socially conscious behavior that spans the ages and continues into the twenty-first century. Lin (2006) notes that “the word ‘charity’ didn’t exist until it was introduced to China with Buddhism from India in the late Han Dynasty (2 B.C.)” (p. 11). Buddhism, which flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), “fostered philanthropic giving and social action that are relevant to the charity concept that has evolved in Chinese society for thousands of years” (Meng, 2006, cited in Lin, 2006, p. 11). In particular, Buddhist monasteries and temples provided ““hospitals and dispensaries for the sick, feeding stations for the hungry, and havens for the aged and decrepit”” (Ch’en, 1964, cited in Smith, 1987, p. 310). During the Sung Dynasty (960-1279), these were supplemented by local granaries that served general welfare and famine relief needs in the wake of severe natural disasters and war (von Glahn, 1986 and Wang, 1960, cited in *ibid.*). In particular, “a tradition of famine relief, celebrated in literature, in popular lore, and in local shrines, had been powerful enough to move local elites facing crises to assume responsibility for the starving”; for example, Lin Tsai (1165-1238), a noted philanthropist in the Southern Song Dynasty, established a kitchen that regularly fed some 15,000 people daily – combining government and Buddhist temple resources – “generosity [that] set an impressive example for later generations” (Smith, 1987, pp. 309-310; Lin, 2006).

Under the administration of Fan Zhongyan (989-1052 A.D.), prime minister of the Southern Song Dynasty, charitable estates – farmlands called *yi tian* – were purchased and given to some 300 poor families; Zhongyan also “donated land to build schools for those who could not afford education” (Lin, 2006, p. 17). Such practices continued during the Ming and early Ch’ing dynasties (1580-1750), which saw the rise of various benevolent societies that “aided impoverished widows, buried the unclaimed dead, set up soup kitchens, and provided capital to merchants and doctors” and of foundling homes, which, by 1740, numbered over 40 in the Kiangnan area alone (Smith, 1987, p. 309). Complementing the societies were state-sponsored

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poorhouses and medical bureaus to serve the “poor, sick, disabled, and lonely” (ibid., p. 310).

The ethical principles of Confucius – who “emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity” – similarly has influenced a sense of social responsibility in China. Adopted as the official ideology of the realm in 140 B.C. during the reign of Emperor Wu, Confucianism moved officials and judges alike to emphasize “magnanimity... avoidance of the death penalty... limitation of land ownership in order to curb the oppression of the poor by the rich and powerful” in a holistic effort to establish the Confucian ideal of a perfect social order (Smith and Weng, 1979, p. 80). While philanthropic giving – donating money for the construction of buildings, roads and bridges, for example – “was seen as a way for the wealthy to gain social approval” (Lin, 2006, p. 10), the benevolent societies “expressed widespread public beliefs that wealth could serve noble causes and a spirit of civic pride” (Smith, 1987, p. 331), which speaks to the heart of Confucian philosophy.

Today, both Buddhism and Confucianism have “the most influence on motivations that drive companies to devote resources to philanthropy and CSR”, in particular “disaster relief, poverty alleviation, education and assisting the elderly”, social works that Chinese business focuses on the most; the Confucian business model, *Ru Shang*, moreover, stresses traditional moral values in financial transactions, a “business philosophy [that] echoes the idea of corporate social responsibility” (Lin, 2006, pp. 11-13). A review of the Web sites of “Forbes’ Top 100 Corporate Philanthropists”, an annual list compiled by *Forbes* magazine, the Corporate Citizenship Committee of China Social Work Association and *Gong Yi* newspaper based on actual cash donations, confirms a “significant number of companies implementing CSR in their business operations” with 71.5 % specifically mentioning CSR activities in their company profiles or having had their CSR initiatives reported by the media (Lin, 2006). The study also reports a “growing number of CSR think tanks and non-governmental organizations that specialize in CSR” (ibid., p. 41).

### **Toward the common good**

As public relations practitioners and those whom they counsel – not to mention educators who have responsibility for future generations – discover or re-discover corporate social responsibility, they would best serve their bosses, clients and students

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by examining the long, deep and broad history that CSR has and what ancient civilizations and traditions can teach us about the common good and its centrality to institutional behavior in general and to public relations practice in particular.

If anything, history suggests that to be authentic and long-lasting, CSR must be an integral part of an institution's policies, procedures, and operations and not an "add-on" that changes with administrations, public opinion polls or the latest economic tsunami (Tilson, 2009). As the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative observes, CSR "should be seen as an investment, not as a cost"; otherwise, institutions "will keep viewing it as something 'added' rather than as the mainstream activity that it should be" (European Foundation for Management Development, 2005, p. 13). Integrity has always been considered a virtue, whether in Confucian, Buddhist, Muslim or Christian thought, and is as necessary to institutional behavior today as it was during the Mauryan age or the Tang Dynasty in China.

Such a view of CSR also requires managers in institutions – and their public relations advisors – "commit to real engagement and take ownership of the consequence of their behavior, not only economically, but socially and environmentally as well ... which requires a deep ethical commitment and a set of principles to guide leadership" (ibid., p. 5). Indeed, an "ethical, values-based leadership ... based on a fundamental understanding of the interconnectedness of the world" is guided by universally-recognized principles of "fairness; freedom; honesty; humanity; tolerance; transparency; responsibility and solidarity; and sustainability" (ibid., p. 2) whether enshrined in UN declarations, professional codes of ethics, institutional credos or the edicts of Asoka. Such an ethic that values essential principles – most important, that all human beings have dignity and worth – is reflected in the span of social responsibility that speaks across the ages to the twenty-first century. Such history is worth remembering, re-telling and re-enacting.

Finally, it should not go unnoticed that socially-responsible behavior as examined across cultures and millennia has often had a foundation of faith upon which to stand. Such a commonality of the intersection of faith and institutional practice should be further explored even as new chapters are written to include still other ancient antecedents, in particular those in African and Latin American civilizations. A deeper review of history may reveal that the world's faith traditions

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have more in common than is popularly believed and that faith has cultural value even in largely secular societies.

Whether as captains, co-pilots or merely back-seat drivers, public relations practitioners and educators alike can best navigate their way – and direct others who accompany them on the journey – by taking an occasional long, deep look through the rearview mirror of history. In so doing, they may come to appreciate not only the road left behind but how they've reached their present moment. Most important, by such instruction, they may learn to take the better path that lies ahead – the one that leads to the common good – which ultimately will best serve all of the passengers by keeping them from heading into the ditch.

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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

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### **Introduction and Overview**

More than 30 years ago, during a meeting of the Public Relations Division of what was then the Association for Education in Journalism, Cutlip and Bateman (1973), criticized “the unsatisfactory and disparate state of public relations education in United States colleges and universities” (p.1). These co-authors, arguably the leading American public relations historian of all time and clearly one of the most recognizable practitioners of that era in the United States, wrote the following paragraphs.

The need for qualified, competent, professional assistance in this field was never greater than it is today. Yet the heavy hand of the past – its publicity genesis – still dominates public relations practice today when our divided society cries out for communication, conciliation and community. Call it “public relations,” “public affairs,” “corporate communications,” or whatever you will, the need for trained persons in this area is likely to increase in coming decades, as our society becomes even more complex.

Yet, we have already witnessed and are witnessing today a dearth of professional public relations practitioners capable of operating at the higher executive levels in all institutions – public and private – where their counsel is needed. The number of qualified people in public relations is incapable of meeting the demand for competent practitioners. Generally speaking, most of those in public relations work today were not specifically educated for this type of career. They are “retreads” from other fields of communication.

In the last quarter-century, more and more institutions of higher learning have turned their attention to public relations as a field of study. To a very considerable extent, courses in public relations are offered on an elective basis at the undergraduate level. Many of the courses, however, are taught by instructors who themselves are not fully qualified in the theory and practice of public relations (Cutlip & Bateman, 1973, pp. 1-2).

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Ironically, nearly four decades later, much remains unchanged in public relations education the United States. Even though the need for qualified public relations practitioners is greater than ever and counsel of qualified public relations experts remains essential at the executive level in the most successful organizations there continue to be problems. These include, but are not limited to the fact that much of public relations education and practice continues to focus more on outputs than outcomes; our field continues to be called by a variety of different names – rarely public relations; most who work in public relations were not specifically educated in the field; more and more colleges and universities are teaching public relations; and, not all who do this teaching are fully qualified.

For several centuries, scholars have said that a major characteristic distinguishing a profession from an occupation is the intellectual base of the former. For nearly half a century, global evidence has existed suggesting that effective public relations practice requires knowledge, skill and intellect (Sriramesh, 2002; Taylor, 2001). Public relations education is based on a solid body knowledge that continues to develop and expand (Kruckeberg, 1988; VanSlyke Turk, 1989; Wakefield & Cottone, 1986; Wright, 1982).

Wright & VanSlyke Turk (2003) claim in spite of the growth in formal education in public relations in the United States -- growth both in terms of numbers of programs and numbers of students -- there is still a lack of consensus about how, or even whether, public relations should be taught at US universities. They also point out some of the greatest discrepancies facing public relations education continue to be lack of support, encouragement and understanding from those who practice the profession. Stacks, Botan and Van Slyke Turk (1999) agree.

### **Development of Professional Education in the Two Countries**

This paper explores the history and development of public relations education in Canada and the United States of America. Although the growth and development of university-based education within the traditional professions of medicine, law and the clergy is extremely similar between Canada and the United States such is not the case with education for public relations.

For example, university-based medical education in both countries has progressed in close concert with each other for the past century. Universities in the United States and Canada interested in establishing schools or colleges of medicine

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benefitted greatly from the noted Flexner Report on “Medical Education in the United States and Canada,” that was commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation (Flexner, 1910). This report criticized the then state of medical education in both countries concluding that it was substandard, of questionable quality and that too many universities were teaching medicine. Many corrections were made to university-based medical education in both countries as the result of this report. When the report was first published in 1910 there were 155 medical schools in the United States and Canada. However, that number decreased to 89 by 2035. Medical scholars based in the United States regularly interact with their Canadian colleagues at conferences and workshops. It is not uncommon for Canadian medical scholars to publish in US-based academic journals and the reverse also is commonplace.

Somewhat similar stories can be told about the development of university-based education in law and theology during this same time period although differences in Canadian and American law and in several aspects of regulation between the two countries somewhat inhibit the robust scholarly exchange of ideas found in medicine (Sheppard, 1998). Additionally, there are many more similarities between the study and practice of medicine than law in the two countries given the reality constitutional differences between the two legal systems. Legal education in the United States began in 1977 with the endowment of three professorships at Yale University and with the establishment soon thereafter of the School of Law at Harvard University (Stein, 1981). The first law school at a Canadian University was established in 1848 at McGill University (2010).

The growth and development of theological education in Canada and the United States understandably is more aligned with religious denominations than national origins (McCloy, 1962 & Fraser, 1994). For example, there are strong similarities between the establishment, growth and development of Roman Catholic seminaries in the two countries. The same can be said for other Christian denominations particularly the Anglican Church in Canada and the Episcopal Church in the United States, both decedents of the Church of England.

The early establishment of university-based education in medicine, law and theology in Canada and the United States, coupled with the development of these academic programs over the centuries, has resulted in not only the creation of, but also the growth and development of highly respected professional schools and

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colleges at many of the most prestigious universities in the two countries. Having these professional schools based at top-tier universities that value research also has led to the development of significant bodies of research knowledge in the fields of medicine, law and theology at universities throughout Canada and the United States.

### **History of Public Relations Education**

A variety of errors and mistakes in previous research have resulted in some confusion about when public relations education actually began in the United States. As Cutlip (1994, pp. 219-220) indicates, the first university-level public relations course in the United States was called “Publicity Techniques” and was taught at the University of Illinois in 1920. The instructor was Joseph P. Wright, the university’s publicity director who, according to Cutlip, was committed “to bring prestige to (public relations) and win its acceptance on a campus where faculty were highly suspicious of this new function” (p. 220). The first course at an American university that was actually called “Public Relations” was taught in both 1923 and 1924 by Edward L. Bernays within the Department of Journalism at New York University (Cutlip, 1994, p. 220).

Cutlip (1994 & 1995) and Tye (1998) have pointed out that Bernays was a phenomenal self-promoter and some of the confusion regarding who actually taught the first US course in public relations can be traced to Bernays’ unique ability to tout his own accomplishments and to promote his book, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. There also is the reality that until Bernays coined the term “public relations counsel” most practitioners of the field were known as publicists or press agents (Cutlip, 1994). Later in his career, Bernays also created the title of the “Father of Public Relations” for himself although some suggest this title should be shared by Bernays and Ivy Lee (Argenti, 2009).

Although Cutlip (1994) does take Bernays to task for claiming to have taught the first public relations course and for some of his other self-promotional antics, Cutlip does praise Bernays for his “pioneering effort to introduce the subject on the university level – where it is widely taught” (Cutlip, 1994, p. 220). Cutlip (1994) also asserts that “Bernays’ interest in seeking a strong professional education never flagged, even in his declining years” (p. 220).

Bernays strongly advocated that public relations education should be based in a separate school or department at a university and not be part of some other academic

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unit such as journalism, business or speech-communication. In 1944, *Advertising Age* wrote this about Bernays:

Bernays often called U.S. Publicist No. 1, had not only developed a far more profound concept of public relations, but has pioneered in establishing fellowships at American universities to carry forward the study of public relations . . . It is Mr. Bernays' hope that from the studies of men and women holding these fellowships will come a body of interpretive material which will help orient public relations thinking of the men in charge of our destinies in the postwar period. (February 21, p. 2)

The historical record is unclear regarding any development – including additional courses – of public relations education in the United States between the mid-1920s and the end of World War Two in 1945. At that time, thanks in great part to a number of soon-to-be public relations educators returning from military duty, a variety of public relations courses started to dot the American university landscape. One of the larger dots on this landscape marked the University of Wisconsin where a then young Scott M. Cutlip began teaching public relations in the School of Journalism. Cutlip would teach public relations at Wisconsin for nearly thirty years before moving to the Henry W. Grady School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia as a full professor and eventually as dean of the college. In addition to his efforts in teaching public relations and developing its curriculum, Cutlip would make huge contributions to public relations scholarship. These included his co-authorship with corporate practitioner Allen H. Center of the well-known textbook *Effective Public Relations*. In early editions of this highly successful textbook, Cutlip was identified as a Professor of Journalism at Wisconsin while Center was listed as Vice President for Public Relations at Motorola and as a Lecturer in Public Relations at Northwestern University. Originally published with a first edition in 1952, this book paved the way for the development of hundreds of courses about public relations at colleges and universities in the United States.

Cutlip's contributions to the public relations body of knowledge also included a large number of conference paper presentations, scholarly articles and books, particularly those about public relations history thus establishing an early standard about the importance of having public relations faculty members publish research and contribute to the public relations body of knowledge. Cutlip did have his contemporaries including pioneer public relations educators especially Walter Siefert

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of Ohio State University, H. Frazier Moore of the University of Georgia, Alan Scott of the University of Texas (at Austin), Otto Lerbinger of Boston University, William P. Ehling of Syracuse University, Raymond Simon of Ithaca College and Albert Walker of Northern Illinois University. Cutlip was the first recipient of the annual Outstanding Educator Award of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) that is sometimes considered the top prize for public relations educators in the United States and he also has been admirably referred to as the “Father of Public Relations Education” (Wright, 1991). With the exception of Boston University and its School of Public Relations, all of these pioneer public relations educators in the United States taught public relations courses in colleges, schools or departments of journalism (and/or journalism and mass communication) thus beginning a tradition that continues through today of having a majority of university-based public relations educational programs housed in and administered by journalism and mass communication academic units. Furthermore, all of these early public relations programs were based at some of the nation’s more elite and prestigious universities.

The first American university to actually offer a degree in public relations was Boston University with its Master of Science in Public Relations program that began in 1947. Although the BU degree continues through today and remains highly-respected in both education and practitioner communities, there have been many changes in how the program is administered. When established in 1947 the Boston University was in a School of Public Relations and all this academic unit taught was public relations. Faculty members came from a broad cross-section of the academy especially the humanities and social sciences. Early faculty members at BU included sociologists, political scientists and an economist, Otto Lerbinger, who would teach public relations at BU for 50 years before retiring in 2005. As BU’s School of Public Relations expanded to teach other subjects, including journalism and broadcasting, the name of the academic unit was changed to School of Public Relations and Communication, then to School of Public Communication and finally to its current title of College of Communication.

As Likely (2009), a highly respected Canadian practitioner, has pointed out, there are both similarities and differences between how public relations is practiced in Canada and the United States. Consequently, there are some similarities but even more differences in the approach to public relations education in the two countries.

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According to the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) (2010) the first university-based public relations course in Canada was taught by Leonard Knott at McGill University in Montreal in 1948. The next year, in 1949, the University of Toronto started teaching a public relations course with the assistance of the Public Relations Association of Ontario and the Advertising and Sales Club of Toronto.

Canada's bi-lingual nature understandably led to the development of public relations education not only at English-speaking colleges and universities but also at French-speaking institutions. The first English-speaking Canadian university to offer a degree program in public relations was Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax in 1977. CPRS was extensively involved in the development of this university degree program. Two years later, in 1979, CPRS established the Communications and Public Relations Foundation that has made significant accomplishments in terms of "increasing the knowledge and awareness of the role of public relations and communications by providing support to educational initiatives" (CPRS, 1010, p. 5).

The first public relations degree programs at French-speaking universities were established at Université Laval in Quebec City and at the Université de Québec à Montréal (Hirst, 2010).

According to Barbara Sheffield (2010), the current chair of the CPRS Communications and Public Relations Foundation, the following 19 Canadian universities currently offer some form of degree, diploma or certificate programs in public relations: Athabasca University, Concordia University, McGill University, McMaster University, Mount Royal University, Royal Roads University, Ryerson University, University of Calgary, Université Laval, Université de Montréal, Université de Québec à Montréal, University of New Brunswick, Université de Québec en Outaouais, Université de Québec à Trois-Rivières, University of Regina, Université de Sherbrooke, University of Victoria, University of Western Ontario and University of Winnipeg. Non-credit courses are offered at Memorial University in Newfoundland. These 20 university-based programs providing study in public relations in Canada are based in a variety of schools, colleges, divisions or centres. Eight are part of continuing education units and six are in communication departments. Three of the remaining programs are in business schools; two are in faculties of arts. Only one – the program at Mount Saint Vincent University – is in its

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own stand-alone academic unit. Apparently, no university-based journalism school in Canada offers courses in public relations.

In addition to the growth and development of public relations education at universities in Canada, with the exception of the province of Quebec, the country also has experienced a strong interest in the development of public relations education at a number of colleges. CPRS records indicate that public relations diplomas or certificates currently are offered by about 25 Canadian colleges, some of which are in the process of becoming universities. Although the terms “university” and “college” mean relatively the same thing in the United States, the two terms are distinctly different in Canada. While some American colleges – such as Dartmouth College, part of the famous Ivy League – are ranked as some of the most prestigious academic institutions in the US, colleges in Canada are clearly a rung below universities. Colleges in Canada tend to concentrate more on teaching with minimal emphasis on research. Consequently, the relegation of a large number of Canada’s public relations education programs to the college level in provinces other than Quebec is inconsistent with what takes place in terms of professional education for other professional schools such as medicine, law, theology, engineering and, even, journalism.

### **Development of Public Relations Education**

Nobody really knows how many public relations people there are in Canada, the United States or in the world. Although van der Meiden (1992) placed the global number of practitioners at 1.5 million nearly two decades ago, about that same time Reed (1990) pointed out that only about 150,000 members belonged to the world’s 215 public relations professional societies, associations, clubs and other groups. This idea that about ten percent of the world’s public relations practitioners belong to professional societies is consistent with what others have reported (Likely, 2009). Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) said there were about 150,000 public relations practitioners in the US four years ago and US Department of Labor (2007) figures from 2007 place this total at 191,430. Likely (2009) reported that there were 36,800 public relations and communication practitioners in Canada in 2004. He also explains that generally only about ten percent of those who practice public relations belong to professional associations such as CPRS and PRSA. If these figures and projections are correct one could estimate that there are about 220,000 Americans and nearly

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40,000 Canadians currently employed in public relations and communication positions.

Although there are very precise figures regarding the number of public relations programs at Canadian colleges and universities, there are huge discrepancies in the literature about the number of universities teaching public relations in the United States. Johnson and Ross (2000) say 145 US universities offered public relations degree programs in 1999. However, Stacks (2007) claims that research conducted by Stacks, Botan and Van Slyke Turk (1999) suggests this number is closer to 700. The 2006 Commission on Public Relations Education report claims there are 270 Public Relations Student Society of America chapters in the United States. A prerequisite for establishing a PRSSA chapter is that the college or university offers at least five courses in public relations.

Becker (2006), who conducts annual studies on the size of journalism and mass communication enrollments in the United States, claimed that there were 25,517 public relations majors at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels at US universities in 2005, or 12.2 percent of the 209,159 students majoring in some aspect of journalism and mass communication. For three reasons, the actual number of students currently majoring in public relations in the US probably is closer to 35,000. Becker's breakdown of majors includes more than 28,000 students whose majors are classified as "undecided," and at least ten percent of these students probably will major in public relations. Becker's research was restricted to academic units in journalism and mass communication and does not include thousands of students studying public relations at many American (speech) communication programs or business schools.

If we accept the assumption about their being 35,000 students currently majoring in public relations at universities, and divide this number of majors by four, it would mean roughly 8,750 public relations graduates enter the workforce each year in the United States – a number far greater than the number of available jobs.

In spite of these large numbers, neither a course in public relations nor a public relations degree is a prerequisite for employment in public relations in either Canada or the United States. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) report that approximately 40 percent of those now working in public relations majored in journalism, and they claim news-editorial university graduates outnumber public

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relations graduates two to one. David Ferguson (1987), the former chief public relations officer for United States Steel and a huge supporter of public relations education, once said, "Public relations will never reach the status of a profession as long as people can get into the field and prosper without having completed a fairly rigorous course of study in the field" (p.3).

There are many questions facing public relations education in Canada and the United States today. A review of the American literature from two or three decades ago provides ample evidence that many of the problems faced then continue to plague public relations education today (Bernays, 1978; Chase, 1961; Mader, 1958 & 1969; Mortimer, 1963; Walker, 1982; and, Westland, 1974). As Doug Newsom (1984), a leading public relations educator and past president of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), has pointed out, "It is not surprising that a discipline that cannot even agree on its definition is confused about career preparation" (p. 7).

Newsom, whose full name is Douglas Ann Newsom, was the first woman in the United States to become a nationally-recognized public relations scholar. Her accomplishments include being one of the few public relations educators ever to have been elected president of the overly journalism dominated AEJMC and was the first woman to win many of the national awards for excellence in public relations teaching and research. Gender equity remains one of the few areas of diversity where public relations education has made significant progress in the United States which is an important reality given that 70 to 80 percent of the students presently studying public relations in the US are female (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). Not only do women now comprise a high percentage of the full-time faculty positions in American public relations education, they have been recognized for their accomplishments on a much greater scale than have women in other areas of US public relations. For example, while eight of the past 18 recipients of the PRSA Outstanding Educator Award have been women, during that same time period there have been only two female winners of PRSA's highest award, the Gold Anvil. Additionally, there have been only two women who have won the Hall of Fame Award, the top award given by the Arthur W. Page Society, during that same 18 year period.

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Kalupa (2007) suggests the standard model for public relations education in the United States is seriously flawed and doesn't work anymore. Although praising pioneers of public relations education such as Scott Cutlip, Alan Scott, Frasier Moore, Walt Seifert and others, Kalupa says the model they constructed that saw US public relations education housed in journalism schools is now more than 60 years old and is focused too much on an association with news media education which, unfortunately, continues to treat public relations as a one-way communication function centered around publicity and media relations.

While the model of having most university-based public relations education in the US housed in journalism colleges or schools, other organizational options have presented themselves during the past three decades. Although none of these options include stand-alone academic units for public relations they do include many situations where public relations is taught as part of speech-communication departments, often in colleges of arts and sciences. A good percentage of these speech-communication programs have dropped "speech" from their titles during the past 25 years which causes considerable confusion with "journalism and communication" units that have dropped the word "journalism." As noted earlier, a good number of the Canadian university-based public relations education programs are housed in schools or colleges of continuing education. Within the past five years in the United States several universities have created similar programs under the administration of their continuing education units. These include the programs at New York University and George Washington University (in Washington, DC). Ironically NYU promotes its continuing education degree program by pointing out that NYU taught the first university course in public relations in 1923 (which really is not true) and this message is communicated in such a way that people could think that NYU has been teaching public relations continuously since then.

With the early establishment of most US-based public relations education in journalism academic units it seemed natural that the early development of public relations research and scholarship in the United States would be presented, discussed and published at conferences and in scholarly journals of the journalism discipline, most specifically the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ) which became the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) thirty years ago.

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Throughout the 1970s when public relations education was first presenting itself on the scene in Canada there was considerable development and expansion of programs in the United States. Although most of the early university-based public relations education programs in the United States were based at major, research-oriented universities much of this 1970s expansion took place within smaller, regional and mid-major institutions. And although most of the original public relations degree programs in the United States were based in journalism colleges, schools or departments, a good number of these new programs were located in speech-communication departments, many of which would later drop “speech” from their titles and become known as communication departments.

While the addition of public relations programs into the speech-communication area offered some advantages, it also created some confusion. When most of the US-based public relations education programs were housed in journalism units it was natural for public relations faculty members to attend and present research papers at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism (which became the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in 1983). AEJ created a Public Relations Division in the late 1960s and to this day it remains one of the association’s largest and most productive. However, American speech-communication educators did not attend AEJMC meetings favoring instead the Speech Communication Association (SCA). This led to the creation of a public relations unit within SCA which also became large and productive and remains active today. SCA changed its name to the National Communication Association in 1997.

The division of US-based public relations education programs into those housed in “journalism” areas and those located in “speech” departments has inhibited opportunities for American public relations scholars to meet and interact with each other. Granted some with stronger allegiances to AEJMC do periodically attend NCA conferences while some NCA loyalists sometimes show-up at AEJMC meetings. However, for reasons such as limited travel budgets such networking and information exchange does not take place as frequently as some might like it to do so.

Unfortunately, opportunities for public relations educators in both Canada and the United States to interact and network with practitioners are rare. Most of the large academic conferences – especially AEJMC, NCA and ICA – treat public relations as a small division or section in spite of the reality membership in these public relations

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units is huge compared to other interest groups. Since larger divisions don't receive additional convention program slots this leads to restrictions and other problems in terms of scheduling an adequate number of public relations sessions at these meetings. It also forces the public relations divisions and sections to partner with other interest groups on some program ideas. This leads to programming that combines the interests of others at the expense of facilitating meaningful dialogue focused specifically on public relations. Although several large professional societies – PRSA, CPRS IABC and IPRA – offer programs for educators at their annual conferences, rarely, if ever, does this include significant opportunities for dialogue between those who teach and those who practice.

Fortunately, some progress is being made in this regard. Now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, the annual International Public Relations Research Conference (IPRRC), sponsored by the Institute for Public Relations and held each March at the University of Miami, has clearly established itself as “the” annual event where serious networking opportunities are available for educators and practitioners. IPR and the Arthur W. Page Society also partner each year and cosponsor a meeting of senior-level corporate and agency practitioners plus those who teach public relations in leading communication or journalism schools and corporate communications professors from well know business schools. This gathering takes place at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth.

The subject of faculty credentials should be addressed in a paper of this nature. In the United States, *The Professional Bond Report* (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006) strongly encouraged universities to hire only faculty with doctoral degrees and “a broad knowledge of communication sciences, behavioral sciences and business, as well as considerable cultural and historical knowledge” (p. 71). This report also said:

Qualifications for teaching public relations at a college or university generally include a Ph.D. degree. Those holding Ph.D. degrees who also have had substantial and significant practitioner experience are highly preferred. The Commission encourages those faculty who have Ph.D.s, but who have limited or no practitioner experience, and those without this terminal degree who are former practitioners, to pursue a range of academic and professional experiences that will familiarize them with both the knowledge and the skills needed in the current practice of public relations. (p. 71)

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This viewpoint clearly dominates the thinking within many of the academic units that teach public relations in the United States today. In spite of this recommendation the reality is that CEOs of major US-based agencies and their human resources officers continuously indicate that some of the best future practitioners are graduates of university-based public relations degree programs that have faculty with a combination of academic and professional credentials.

The insistence by many American universities that all of their public relations faculty members have doctoral degrees coupled with the huge growth and development of public relations education within smaller and less-elite academic institutions has created a shortage of excellence in public relations teaching and research. Granted this is a highly sensitive topic, but the reality is that too many universities in the United States are teaching public relations without adequate facilities and faculty. Since public relations is an extremely attractive and revenue-generating academic major some of these universities seem to be more concerned about making financial profits by teaching public relations than they do about adhering to excellence in public relations teaching and research. These problems becomes enhanced over time as less than qualified faculty begin hiring other faculty and as some get elected to office in professional societies, serve on editorial review boards for academic journals and so forth.

Distance learning and online educational programs in public relations have been increasing in number and popularity in both Canada and the United States in recent years.

### **Practitioner Views About Curriculum**

Writing about public relations education in the United States, Wright and VanSlyke Turk (2007) point out, “Although formal, university-based public relations education has evolved for more than half a century, there appears to be a huge disconnect between what universities are providing and what those who practice public relations want” (p. 586). They continue:

When people want to become physicians they go to medical schools; when they want to become attorneys they go to law school. This is also the case in engineering, nursing, accounting and many other occupational groups. In public relations, however, having a university degree in the field is too often the exception and not the rule. (p. 586)

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There are at least three reasons behind this disconnect between practitioners and educators. First, most academic public relations programs are sub-sets of larger academic disciplines such as journalism, mass communication, communication, speech-communication or business. Second, meaningful dialogue between educators and practitioners on curriculum matters is rare. And, third, if and when educators and practitioners discuss curriculum matters it usually involves a very small number of practitioners – frequently the same people time and time again – who differ from most of their peers in that they are truly supportive of public relations education.

One of the most outspoken critics of public relations education in the United States is Rob Flaherty, a Senior Partner and President of Ketchum, one of the world's largest and most successful public relations firms. Although he holds a bachelor's degree with a public relations major from a large university, he has concerns that the current public relations curriculum in the United States – both at the undergraduate and graduate levels – has not kept pace with recent changes and needs of the public relations industry. He has shared this thinking with, and received support for it from Patrick Ford, CEO for North America of Burson-Marsteller, another major public relations agency. They believe that the changes and concerns that should be driving the public relations curriculum in the United States more than they are include the reality that:

- Public relations practitioners have far less control today than they used to have over perceptions and far less ability to segment audiences.
- This lack of control is compounded by the reality today's public relations people are working in a multi-audience view, using relationship-based approaches and working via channels we don't control.
- Public relations is in the midst of a revolution that involves new audiences, new channels, new kinds of content and new measurements.
- In order to seize these opportunities, public relations people must adopt different kinds of activities and develop new skill sets including new aspects to traditional skills and new combinations of traditional skills.

They also say the need for future public relations practitioners to acquire new skill sets leads this paper to recommend those who study public relations at the university level should receive instruction in the following areas:

- Business relationships including consumers, employees, investors, communities, governments, business-to-business, supply chain and NGOs.
- Building strong relationships with an emphasis on trust, satisfaction, loyalty and mutuality.

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- Creating magnet content (content that attracts viewers and readers; text, video, audio, interactive, paid vs. organic, authenticity, creative risk taking).
  - Context and channels (mainstream mass media, online media blogs, video, sharing, social networking sites, word-of-mouth, in-person events).
  - Writing (news and brand/corporate advocacy communications for convergent media – the melding together of different media incorporating new personalized services).
  - Planning (program planning, event planning; work streams, multi-disciplinary).
  - Insight (understanding motivations, interests, demographics, psychographics and media choices of target audiences, research techniques to develop insights).
  - Metrics (techniques for measurement – media coverage, attitude & awareness, behavior, but also from CRM, interactive, direct response).
  - Business imperatives (financial performance and marketing, plus triple bottom line: employees and community in addition to financial priorities).
  - Responsibility (brand and corporate, actions, transparency, sustainability, ethics, governance).
  - Influence, persuasion and mutuality (strategies to influence and persuade – balance with mutual gain).
  - Networks (social networks, internal and external business networks, network theory and practical application).
  - Public relations leadership (vision, charisma, compassion and the ability to manage projects and people).

### **Various Commissions on Public Relations Education**

Dialogue and discussion about public relations education has taken place over the years in both Canada and the United States through a number of “commissions” sponsored and cosponsored by professional associations such as the Institute for Public Relations, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Arthur W. Page Society and the National Communication Association (NCA).

Since public relations education began much earlier in the United States than Canada there has been more action on this front in the US. In fact, the first major examination of public relations education in Canada currently is taking place through the National Council on Public Relations Education which is part of the CPRS. Members of this committee are practitioners Colleen Killingsworth of CK Communications and Jean Valin of Transport Canada and educators Terry Flynn of

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McMaster University, Fran Gregory of Conestoga College, Elizabeth Hirst of McGill University and Joan Yates of Camosun College. This committee currently is working to finalize a report that uses an integrated program planning model that could serve as a “yardstick” for academic institutions to assess their public relations programs and to provide a sense of context for ongoing and future curriculum development. A detailed report from this task force is anticipated before the end of 2010.

The US-based commissions that have examined public relations education have all been co-chaired by an educator and a practitioner and all included educators and practitioners in their membership. The first of these, a Commission on Public Relations Education, was formed in 1973 by the Association for Education in Journalism (now known as AEJMC), co-chaired by Scott M. Cutlip of the University of Wisconsin and noted practitioner J. Carroll Bateman, and issued a report in 1975, *A Design for Public Relations Education* (Commission on Public Relations Education, 1975). Among other recommendations, this report suggested curricula for undergraduate and graduate study in public relations. Most of these recommendations are now required for “accreditation” by the Accrediting Council on Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) as well as for “certification” by PRSA.

As public relations education rapidly grew and expanded in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, two other educational commissions were created to update and review changes in public relations education and its curriculum. These included the Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations, established by the Public Relations Division of AEJMC in 1982, and the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations, cosponsored by the Public Relations Division of AEJMC and the Educators Section of PRSA in 1983. Both of these groups issued lengthy reports. The graduate commission was co-chaired by Michael B. Hesse of the University of Alabama and Paul Alvarez, the CEO of Ketchum. Its report provided detailed suggestions for graduate study in public relations (Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations, 1985), and the undergraduate commission’s report recommended updating the 1975 curriculum suggestions (Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education, 1987). The undergraduate commission was co-chaired by noted practitioner Betsy Plank.

Ehling (1992) thoroughly reviewed the work of all of the American commissions. He pointed out the 1973-75 group was responsible for strengthening

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and standardizing undergraduate and graduate education in public relations and made good strides in developing a dialogue between educators and practitioners. This early commission recommended a curriculum consisting of course work in three main areas – liberal arts, communication studies and public relations studies. When the graduate studies commission was convened, Ehling (1992) says more than 50 US universities were offering graduate degree programs in public relations. He summarizes the major goals of this graduate commission as being designing a model graduate-level curriculum and making sure this curriculum met the needs of the public relations practice. The graduate commission's report was somewhat parallel with that of the earlier commission except that it focused upon graduate study. As this report discussed what it called, "the drive toward professionalism through new emphasis on graduate study in public relations," it said, "practitioners and educators must act in concert to guide public relations in the direction of professionalism. Without this necessary partnership, the practice of public relations will never attain the professional status it needs and deserves to perform the communication and management tasks it has been assigned in the United States." (Commission on Graduate Study in Public Relations, 1985. p. 5).

The Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education was formed in 1987 by the Public Relations Division of AEJMC in co-sponsorship with 24 other organizations including the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Institute for Public Relations (IPR), the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), the National Communication Association (NCA) and the International Communication Association (ICA). This group's report, (Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education, 1987), continued to echo the need for an undergraduate degree consisting of at least half of liberal arts courses with about one-quarter of the degree in professional courses. This included the so-called "five-course requirement" of identifiable public relations courses including public relations principles and theory, communication principles as applicable to public relations activity, strategic planning and evaluative research, management principles involving goal setting and program implementation, and a supervised internship program.

As these last two commissions were wrapping up their activities, several other groups surfaced that would impact the future of public relations education and

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scholarship in the United States. These included the Task Force on Demonstrating Professionalism and the Body of Knowledge Task Force, both created by PRSA in 1986 (Ehling, 1992), and an Assessment Task Team that resulted in several recommendations and reports by the National Communication Association in 1998 (Coombs & Rybacki, 1999). NCA also held a Summer Conference on Public Relations Education in 1998 that brought together interested professors and practitioners.

Another major public relations education commission, the Commission on Public Relations Education, was created in the United States in 1999, co-chaired by Dean Kruckeberg, then of Northern Illinois University and John Paluszek, Senior Vice President at Ketchum, with membership comprising of 47 educators and practitioners. It remains active today with a membership of 36 and has been effectively managed by PRSA in close co-sponsorship, over the years, with AEJMC, NCA, IABC, IPRA, the Institute for Public Relations, ICA, the Black Public Relations Society, the Canadian Public Relations Society, the Council of Public Relations Firms, the International Communication Association, the Arthur W. Page Society and the Association for Women in Communication.

This commission's initial report, by far the most thorough of the previous US commission reports, elaborated thoroughly on components for baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degree programs in public relations and also made recommendations about teaching methods and faculty qualifications (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2001). Unlike earlier American commission reports, this one also made recommendations regarding continuing education for practitioners and workloads for public relations faculty at colleges and universities. It also raised appropriate questions about accreditation and certification programs offered for public relations education by ACEJMC and PRSA, and briefly touched upon resources universities needed to provide for public relations degree programs.

Recommendations of this 2001 report, popularly known as the *Port of Entry* report, included encouraging the following:

- Having public relations practitioners “take a new look at the ‘products’ of today’s public relations education” (p. 35).
- Getting more practitioners to become involved in accreditation and certification programs of public relations education.

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- The creation of “additional endowed chairs in public relations at academic institutions with outstanding public relations programs” (p. 35).
  - Having individual public relations professionals, “especially those who have benefited handsomely from public relations practice” (p. 35), to make significant financial contributions to public relations education.
  - Getting both practitioners and educators to develop and participate in “projects of topical and long-term social significance.”
  - The development of joint research projects, administered by educators and funded by the practice.
  - Creating ways to enhance the funding of and financial support for public relations education (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2001, pp. 35-36).

This commission’s most recent report, popularly known as *The Professional Bond*, was presented in 2006 and included recommendations for undergraduate and graduate education in public relations (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006). This report concluded “based on five ‘waves’ of research . . . that there is substantial agreement between educators and practitioners on what a public relations undergraduate student should learn, and therefore be able to perform at the practitioner entry level” (p. 5). Neither of the practitioner co-authors of this paper was aware of this commission nor of any of the aforementioned research.

This report identified the following courses it said would represent “an ‘ideal’ undergraduate major in public relations” (p. 7):

- Introduction to public relations (including theory, origin and principles).
- Case studies in public relations that review professional practice.
- Public relations research, measurement and evaluation.
- Public relations law and ethics.
- Public relations writing and production.
- Public relations planning and management.
- Public relations campaigns.
- Supervised experience in public relations (internship).

The report also said graduate students “should master the following content areas beyond undergraduate competencies” (p. 7): public relations theory and concepts, public relations law, public relations ethics, global public relations, public relations applications, public relations management, public relations research, public relations programming and production public relations publics, communication processes, management sciences, behavioral sciences, internship and practicum experience plus a thesis and capstone project and/or comprehensive exam.

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Research by Bruner and Fitch-Hauser (2006) indicates typical university-based public relations degree programs very much reflect Commission on Public Relations Education recommendations.

### **A Potpourri of Other Issues**

Something that sets public relations education in both Canada and the United States apart from education in professional schools in areas such as law, medicine and theology is the reality that virtually all of that education is at the graduate level. Students in those academic disciplines first receive academic degrees at the undergraduate (or baccalaureate) level and then attend graduate school where they study towards master's or doctor's degrees. However, while some graduate-level public relations education does exist, particularly at the master's degree level, the majority of the public relations education programs in both Canada and the United States are at the undergraduate level. Most of these undergraduate degree programs also yield significantly large profits for colleges and universities. Consequently, it is highly doubtful that institutions would be interested in moving public relations education to the graduate level because doing so could have a large and negative economic impact.

Support for public relations education in the United States today is woefully bad, at best. This includes the lack of appropriate budgets for public relations education and research at many universities that make huge financial profits teaching the subject, and a lack of financial and moral support from many who practice public relations. Although there are a few isolated exceptions where public relations education and research receive appropriate support at a small number of American universities, and there are several hundred practitioners and several associations and foundations who are great friends and supporters of public relations education and research, the reality is most universities don't support public relations education in a manner similar to other popular majors and most American public relations practitioners couldn't care less about public relations education and research. Support from the practice for public relations education appears to be stronger in Canada, especially in Quebec where having some form of academic credential in public relations is now required by many hiring organizations (Hirst, 2010).

In both Canada and the United States it is not at all uncommon to find graduates of liberal arts, business and other academic disciplines favored for entry-

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level public relations positions instead of graduates of public relations degree programs. This prompts the thought that if public relations education was excellent, if the faculty were highly qualified in both theory and practice and if the curriculum contained the kind of up-to-date, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art knowledge found in disciplines such as business, law, medicine, and so forth, employers with entry-level positions would fight over public relations graduates in a manner similar to what happens in other occupations. And, it would be the exception rather than the rule to have graduates from other academic disciplines hired for entry-level positions in public relations.

As explained in earlier research (Wright, et al, 2007a & 2007b), in the United States at least, there is a rather large disconnect between public relations educators and practitioners in terms of the value and importance of what is taught in university-based public relations degree programs and more needs to be done to facilitate future dialogue between educators and practitioners on the subject of curriculum development for university-based public relations degree programs.

The “Elephant in the Room” in terms of public relations education in both the United States and Canada is the reality that it is not uncommon to find graduates of liberal arts, business and other academic disciplines favored for entry-level public relations positions instead of graduates of public relations degree programs. If public relations education was excellent, if the faculty were highly qualified in both theory and practice and if the curriculum contained the kind of up-to-date, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art knowledge found in disciplines such as business, law, medicine, and so forth, employers with entry-level positions would fight over public relations graduates in a manner similar to what happens in other occupations. And, it would be the exception rather than the rule to have graduates from other academic disciplines hired for entry-level positions in public relations.

The concept of accreditation and certification of public relations degree and diploma programs in Canada and the United States is favored by some but criticized by others. CPRS has worked informally to assist with the development of high standards for public relations at Canadian universities and colleges. In the United States, PRSA has an optional and formal process whereby university-based public relations educational programs can seek what is known as PRSA Certification. The premiere accreditation program for public relations education in the US is the

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Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). Although the Commission on Public Relations Education (2006) has praised ACEJMC for the role it plays in accrediting public relations education in the United States, others criticize this process because it is dominated by journalism-based organizations and focuses upon accreditation of a university's entire journalism and mass communication unit. Critics point out that it is possible for a weak public relations sequence to be considered accredited by ACEJMC because it is based in a strong journalism school as well as for a strong public relations program not to be cited as accredited because it is located in a weak journalism program.

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