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# **Public Relations (PR) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Malaysia: A Critical Reflection**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the 1980s, several key policies were introduced to transform Malaysia from an agricultural based economy to an industrial nation e.g., the ‘Malaysian Incorporated’, ‘Industrialization’ and ‘Privatization’ policies. This study chronicles the early development of public relations (PR) in Malaysia and how government’s key policies have lifted PR to a new height. Drawing from Malaysian experience, it is apparent that PR’s role has gradually changed and expanded to suit a particular context and need, mainly to the advantage of the elites or powerful actors in society. Similarly, the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Malaysia is largely motivated to pursue the interest of the government and business. In this case, PR role in promoting excellent practice in Malaysia and that includes its role in driving CSR would appear problematic.

This paper argues that the development of both PR and CSR is determined by the historical, social, economic and political framework of a country. Literatures affirmed that early CSR practice in Malaysia was part of PR activity undertaken by multinational firms to build relationships with the government by supporting various nation building activities (Arun 1993 in Leuven 1996). This study extends the literature by critically examining the actual role of PR in CSR through insights from real PR practitioners in the country.

The paper exposes the relationships between corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice and the scope of public relations (PR) in Malaysia. It embraced a critical approach which offers alternate readings of Malaysian PR literature which are dominantly quantitative in nature. The focus is on how historical, socio-political, economic, cultural and organizational contexts shape the practice of CSR and affect the scope and function of PR in pursuing the practice.

This study has employed semi-structured interviews among PR and CSR managers working in renowned CSR organizations in the country. In addition, the study analyses executives’ messages in CSR reports and later triangulated with interview findings that helped to achieve a rich description of the topic under study.

CSR practice is a recent phenomenon in Malaysia whereby the government has been a major driver in its development. Drawing from history, economic growth is fundamental to ensure a fair distribution of wealth among multi-races in Malaysia that perceived imperative to preserve national unity. In this respect, CSR initiatives have been largely undertaken to achieve the long term survival of businesses that consequently drive the nation's economy. This has been widely accepted among business firms in Malaysia thus become ideological. At the same time, PR role in promoting the practice of CSR was found central. More often than not, such role appears to be working to the advantage of the dominant groups i.e., business and government. Nevertheless, how PR promotes mutual interests of business and society through CSR remain obscure.

Among others, CSR initiative in Malaysia could be seen as a state project that promotes government's aspiration to develop the nation. The finding of this study was a clear example that CSR development is parallel to the history, socio-cultural and values hold by a specific nation thus the practice remains distinctive in its own way.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This article focuses on the connection and relationship between public relations (PR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Malaysia. In this paper the acronyms of PR and CSR will be used to represent public relations and corporate social responsibility throughout the discussion. Despite many claims that PR manages CSR practice, the empirical evidence on PR roles in the pursuit of CSR initiatives remains scarce. This article critically examines the role of PR in CSR practice in Malaysia. It gives great emphasis on how history, socio-political, economic, cultural and organizational contexts shape the practice of CSR and affect the scope and function of PR in pursuing the practice.

Public relations (PR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are evolving concepts, neither of which has a single definition. Dr. Rex Harlow (1977) collated and analyzed 472 definitions of PR written between 1900 and 1976 (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, p. 4). Likewise, CSR related literature comes from a wide range of academic disciplines such as: management; marketing; accountancy; public relations; and law; to name a few. Moreover, both PR and CSR vary in concept, and are also manifested in numerous forms and degrees, from one corporation to another.

Clark (2000) asserted that 'the rise of CSR, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coincided with the increased concern for a corporation's image' (p.364). Likewise, Malaysian government had introduced 'privatization' and 'industrialization' policies in the 1980s that

created a competitive environment for businesses. This has compelled corporations to give greater attention to corporate image, which often managed by PR. At the same time, Malaysian businesses feel the urge to embrace socially responsible practices to meet the requirements of international trade as well as enhancing business's reputation (see Lu & Castka, 2009). In this context, CSR is seen as an essential tool for PR to optimize a company's image and reputation (L'Etang, 1994), in order to improve economic growth. On the other hand, the critical perspective asserted that PR could neither instigate CSR initiatives that would yield mutual return to both business and stakeholders, nor promote ethical CSR (L'Etang 1994, 1996, 2006). Critical scholars argued that PR works in the interest of those who pay it service, and has been instrumental in the support of capitalism (see Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Sklair & Miller, 2010; Edwards, 2011; Bardhan & Weaver, 2011). This research has adopted a critical bearing in examining the role of PR in the pursuit of CSR practices. This paper first presents background information of Malaysia, prior to explaining the early development of PR in the country. Next, the discussion underscores key events and policies that shaped the practice of PR and CSR in Malaysia.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *2.1 Malaysia: history, politics and socio-economic at a glimpse*

Malaysia or previously known as Malaya has a long history of colonization. The country had been colonized for more than 400 years before achieving its independence in 1957 (Amran & Susela, 2008). The Portuguese was the first colonial power to settle in Malaya in the sixteenth century (1511) (Ibrahim & Joned, 1987; Idid, 2004), followed by the Dutch (1642) (Ibrahim & Joned, 1987; Idid, 2004), and the British (1786) (Hussin, 1998). Japan had ruled Malaya for a brief period when World War II struck in 1941 (Ibrahim & Joned, 1987; Idid, 1994). Malaya was once again governed under the British administration after the Japanese downfall in 1946 and achieved its independence in 1957 (Idid, 2004). The British influence dominated Malaysian education, language, religion, law and administration (Ibrahim & Joned, 1987; Abdullah & Pedersen, 2003).

At present the country has a population of approximately 28.31 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010) in an area covering 330,252 square kilometers (Economic Planning Unit, 2009). Malaysia consists of thirteen states and three federal territories. The states are Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Sabah and Sarawak whereas; the federal territories are Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan. Drawing from history, a massive immigration of Chinese and

Indian workers into Malaya during the British era has contributed to the country's multi-racial landscape (Abdullah & Pedersen, 2003, p. 22). The country consists of three main ethnic groups; *Malay* is the indigenous group which represents 54.7% of the total population (Department of Statistics, 2009, p. 4). The *Malay* is considered as the oldest indigenous people, enjoying the status of *Bumiputra*; the 'sons' and 'daughter' of the soil (Abdullah & Pedersen, 2003). At present, the Chinese make up 24.5% of the overall population, and a further 7.5% are Indian (Department of Statistics, 2009, p.4). *Bahasa Malaysia* is the official language of the country while English is regarded as the second language and is widely used in the work place and in some educational institutions.

In the Article 160 (Interpretation) of the Federal Constitution, the term *Malay* refers to a person who professes the religion of *Islam*, habitually speaks the *Malay* language, and conforms to the *Malay* customs (Federal Constitution, 2005, p. 198). The Constitution also affirmed *Islam* as the official religion of the Federation (Federal Constitution, 2005, p. 20) and this is largely practised by the *Malays*. Nevertheless, freedom to practice other religions also applies.

Since its independence, Malaysia practices a system of parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The federal parliament is bicameral with the Upper house (*Dewan Negara*) the Lower house (*Dewan Rakyat*) (Economic Planning Unit, 2009). A general election is generally held every five years to elect the members of the lower house and state legislatures (Economic Planning Unit, 2009). The diverse cultural values and religious beliefs practised by the multi ethnic groups endow Malaysia with a relatively unique cultural landscape. Living in a pluralistic society requires Malaysians to be highly tolerant, respectful, and to adopt a mutual understanding if harmony is to be maintained in the long term.

## 2.2 *PR: Different phases of development*

Scholars were not of a similar opinion when PR started in Malaysia (see Idid, 1994, 2004; Adnan, 2008). However, this study concurs with Idid (2004) that the modern practice of PR took place when the Public Information Department was formed by the British during its occupation in Malaya before World War II. The literature affirmed that PR was used as an instrument of propaganda to rally support for the British from all its colonies (Leuven & Pratt, 1996). At this juncture, the Public Information Department was formed to counter the Japanese propaganda in Malaya. The Japanese had used persuasive slogans to win the hearts and minds of the people as part of their propaganda efforts: for example, 'Asia for Asian People', 'Liberating Asian from Western Domination' etc (Adnan, 2008, p. 154). These

slogans served to spark hatred among the local population towards the British and subsequently engendered support to the Japanese.

The intense pressure from the Japanese had forced the British to form the Department of Information and Publicity in 1940 (Idid, 1994). The new department subsumed some of the functions of the former department and to expand general war publicity, the release of official information, disseminate news through government departments, and co-operate with the Ministry of Information in London and Singapore (Idid, 2004, p. 212). The establishment of these departments provided a significant role for PR in order to keep the colonial power informed about the war situation, and to maintain support from the local population when power was threatened by the Japanese. However, the two departments ceased to function when the Japanese invaded Malaya.

The British returned to Malaya in 1946 when the Japanese surrendered their power completely (Idid, 2004). Soon after regaining control, the British introduced a PR Department in all states in Malaya to re-build Malaysians' confidence towards the British in view of them having previously lost to the Japanese, and to restore law and order in the country (Idid, 2004).

The British once again used a psychological warfare to galvanize support from the people during the Communists' insurgency that put Malaya in a state of emergency from 1948 to 1960 (Idid, 2004, p. 213, see also Adnan, 2008). Idid (2004) chronicled that the Department of Information Services, was formed in 1952 to combat the communists' influence through various social welfare programmes. The British High Commissioner in Malaya, Sir Gerald Templer, had reiterated the importance of this psychological warfare strategy when he stated that:

‘The answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle but rests in the hearts and minds of the Malayan people.’ (C.N. Parkinson, 1954, p.23 in Adnan, 2008, p. 229)

This psychological warfare strategy suggested that PR in its early years acknowledged that power rests with the people. Thus, to maintain power and influence means to earn trust and confidence from the public. In brief, PR during the colonial period has been primarily used to pursue the British colonial agenda, and ultimately maintain power. This is consistent with Adnan (2004) as he affirmed that colonial PR was purely propaganda to fight ‘for the cause of the imperial master’ (p.126).

Furthermore, the aspiration of being an independent nation has brought people of different ethnic groups together. Under the reign of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj,



Malaysia had achieved independence without any bloodshed in 1957 (Putra, 1986). PR was again used to prepare the population for information about their rights and responsibilities as an independent nation. Prior to organizing the first general election in 1959, the Department of Information Services held a series of campaigns that mainly aimed to persuade people to exercise their rights while educating them on the process of voting (Idid, 2004).

PR continued to perform a significant function after independence. Malaysia's proposal to form a Malaysian Federation, composed of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore, received strong opposition from the Indonesian leader; President Soekarno. According to Tunku Abdul Rahman (1986) in his book '*Political Awakening*', Soekarno himself wanted Malaya to expand his empire. The 'Confrontation' had implications for Malaysia's international affairs. The pressure imposed by Soekarno moved Malaysia to lobby support from its international counterparts and subsequently changed Malaysian foreign policy to be more outward looking (Idid, 2004, p. 214; see also Adnan, 2008).

### 2.3 *Ethnic relations and national policies*

Preserving national unity in a pluralistic society such as Malaysia is indeed an uphill battle that requires concerted effort particularly from the ruling government. Malaysia learned a hard lesson from the dark incident of racial clash in 1969. Mahathir, in his book '*the way Forward*' (1998), affirmed that the racial riot of 1969 was partly attributed to economic imbalances between races which were rooted in the 'divide and rule policy' introduced during the British colonial period. The policy had kept the three ethnic groups apart geographically to pursue a specific economic function. Mahathir (1998) affirmed that the separation of the economy based on race has created huge economic gaps between the ethnic groups and has resulted in discontent. Alternatively, Idid (2004) asserted that poor communication with regards to government policies served as another reason that contributed to the riot. Subsequent to the racial clash, the government had assigned public relations officers at various ministries to keep local people informed of national policies (Ibrahim 1987 in Idid, 2004, p.215). Part of PR's role was also to ensure sensitive issues were handled with extra caution to prevent racial conflict. At the same time, the national charter or also known as the national ideology (*Rukunegara*) was laid down as a foundation for national unity. The principles of *Rukunegara* encompasses of five principles; belief in God, loyalty to the King and the country, upholding the constitution, rule of law, and good behavior and morality. At this point, PR was mainly used to educate the people in relation to government initiatives; to

make them understand the philosophy behind every policy introduced by the government and to prevent discontentment and conflict among races.

Furthermore, the government also introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP), a twenty year economic plan (1971-1990) that gave attention to the equitable distribution of wealth among races (Ching, 2004). NEP created an opportunity for *Bumiputra* to participate in the mainstream economy in order to acquire at least 30% of the nation's economic wealth by the year 1990 (Jomo, 2004). The NEP's two-prong objectives were to eradicate poverty irrespective of race and to eliminate the identification of race with economic function (Mahathir, 1998, p. 9). Several key policies were later introduced by the government in the 1980s to support NEP's target: for example, the 'Privatization' policy and 'Industrialization' policy.

The 'Privatization' policy among others served to reduce the government's financial burden and increase its revenue from tax paid by profitable companies. The policy also functions to increase *Bumiputera* share of corporate ownership (Yong, 1998; Mahathir, 1998) and consequently resulted several state-owned entities being privatized thus helped *Bumiputra* to move into big business. Later on more government departments and projects have been transformed into *Malay* dominated giant private companies or known as government-linked companies (GLCs) (see Amran & Susela, 2008). GLC is defined as companies that have a primary commercial objective and in which the 'Malaysian government has a direct controlling stake to appoint board members, senior management, and/or make major decisions' (Ab Razak, Ahmad & Aliahmed, 2008, p. 2). Privatization has changed the focus of these newly formed corporations from merely providing services to the public into profit driven entities. Such demanding roles require business to pay greater attention to relationships with various publics while promoting a positive image of the companies. During this period most companies had formed their own in-house PR (commonly known as a Communication Unit) and hired external consultants particularly to manage their communication strategies (Idid, 2004), and to create a favourable image to lure customers and investors to their services and products.

Furthermore, the 'Industrial' policy was introduced to expedite the growth of the Malaysian economy from reliance on agriculture to an industrial based has positively affected the growth of PR in the country. The Government's pro-business policy and Malaysia's rapid growth in the early 1990s has advanced the development of PR in the private sector, mainly among multinational organizations. At this juncture, the role of PR was not only confined to helping government in pursuing the national agenda, but also to be more market driven to

pursue an organizations' commercial goals. In this respect, building a good relationship between the local population and government was viewed as vital to secure a license to operate for multinational companies.

The aspiration towards achieving national unity continues to be a significant agenda under the leadership of the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Tun Abdul Razak. The concept of *One Malaysia* has been introduced mainly to promote unity among Malaysians, as the country attempts to become a developed nation by 2020 (Abdul Razak, 2009). Under the slogan 'people first, performance now' the importance of engaging with the grassroots population via two-way communication between leaders and the people is accentuated. It has been observed that there are more channels of communication available for the public to reach political leaders. On the other hand, 1Malaysia concept is also viewed as a PR strategy adopted by the ruling government to win the hearts and minds of the people. More PR activities have been organized to strengthen relationships amongst multi-ethnic groups in Malaysia. For example, an '*open house*' event has been consistently held to enable all Malaysians regardless of their race and creed to get together and celebrate the main festivals of every multiethnic groups in Malaysia i.e. Hari Raya Aidilfitri (mainly celebrated by the Malay-Muslim), Chinese New Year (Chinese community), Deepavali (Indian community), Christmas and others. Such activities not only offer people from different ethnic groups the opportunity to learn and appreciate other cultures but also provide an opportunity for political leaders to be close to the *rakyat* or citizen. In this respect, PR activities are used by the government to engage with the population and to enhance national integration.

#### 2.4 CSR in Malaysia

Early CSR practice in Malaysia was part of PR activity in the late 1960s. This was undertaken by multinational firms as an attempt to build relationships with the government by supporting various nation building activities (see Leuvan, 1996). This is consistent with Taylor & Kent (1999) when they affirmed that government appeared to be a significant public particularly for corporations that want to 'participate in and benefit from economic opportunities in Malaysia' (p. 141). Therefore, corporations' engagement in CSR may be interpreted as self-serving that largely aimed to uphold business' interests as well as a manifestation of compliance with the ruling elites to maintain their legitimacy to operate. CSR awareness among Malaysian firms continues to grow as companies strived to become good corporate citizens in recent years (Rashid & Ibrahim, 2002; Ahmad & Rahim, 2003 in Lu & Castka, 2009, p. 147; Frynas, 2006).

Furthermore, doing good to society is well embedded in the country policy. Vision 2020 that was formulated during the tenure of the fourth Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad, among others aimed to form a united nation that is infused with strong moral and ethical values, democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous (Abdul Razak, 2004). In this context, the government strongly encouraged business to model best practices, including making social investments to develop the nation.

In the interim, the government has continued to support socially responsible business practices through various ways, including providing tax exemption benefits for any investment or contribution made towards charitable institutions or upgrading public facilities. In addition, there has been a growing recognition given to companies that adopted exemplary CSR initiatives, i.e. 'ACCA-MESRA reporting award', the 'Prime Minister CSR award', 'Star-Biz ICRM Corporate Responsibility' award, to name a few. CSR in Malaysia has gradually transformed from doing good to look good to strategic CSR; doing good to do well (ICR Malaysia, 2008). This positive change has encouraged businesses to realize the value of being a socially responsible entity in order to be more market driven and profitable.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### *3.1 The research questions*

The overarching focus of enquiry and driving questions of this research are: how is CSR practiced in Malaysia and why? And what is the role of PR in that practice? This exploratory research question was purposely developed to stimulate a rich description of CSR practice in Malaysia and to critically explore the function of PR among socially responsible organizations.

#### *3.2 Sample*

Data was primarily generated through semi-structured interviews, and executive messages drawn from CSR reports. The study was conducted among organizations with long CSR traditions, and those which had been recognized as outstanding performers in CSR. These organizations were selected from the award winners' list of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants' (ACCA) Malaysian Sustainability Reporting Awards 2006 and 2007 (known as MESRA). MESRA award was initiated by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) to encourage the uptake of sustainability or CSR reporting among companies in Malaysia. The award was first introduced in Malaysia in year 2002 (see

ACCA, n.d.). Companies were also selected from the Prime Minister's CSR Award 2007 that was initiated by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (see PM's CSR Award 2007) and Star-Biz CSR Award 2008 that was initiated by the Star business section newspaper and the Institute of Corporate Responsibility Malaysia (ICRM) (Chan, April 14 2008). These companies included private, multinational and government linked organizations (GLC). On the whole, purposive sampling technique was used in view of the voluntary status of CSR practice in Malaysia. In this case, samples were selected on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2004, p.334). This is imperative to ensure all potential respondents, PR managers and CSR managers are familiar with the concept and practice of CSR and have been somewhat involved in managing the practice.

### *3.3 Methods*

This research has secured fifteen responses inclusive of fourteen face to face interviews and one presentation by the Stakeholder Management Department (from the Group of Corporate Affairs) of a multinational company. Interviews involved twelve respondents leading the Corporate Communication portfolio and Corporate Affairs while three other informants championing the CSR portfolio.

At the same time, executive messages drawn from CSR reports were also used to address the same research issue that helped to achieve the completeness that is integral for qualitative inquiry. Executive messages include forewords from the Chairman, Managing Directors and the Presidents of the companies that normally appear prior to the introductory page. This study acknowledged that the key persons; Chairman, Managing Director or the President of the companies may not personally write the messages but these messages to some extent symbolized the view of the top management. This argument is consistent with Weber (2009) when he recognized that executive messages in the report represented the value of the top managements' inspiration by virtue of the messages being given an explicit endorsement. This endorsement often consists of the placing of management's photographs and signatures adjacent to the messages.

Nevertheless, despite their distinctive feature of providing rich accounts of responsible practices, CSR reports are to be used with caution in view of their underlying bias and the fact they are often used 'as instruments of self-promotion and as expression of corporate vision' (Surma, 2006, p.53). Therefore, the research takes into account how the text is being created, produced, interpreted and consumed.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND A CRITICAL REFLECTION**

CSR in Malaysia has its own unique features intertwined with the history, social, economic and political landscape of the country. At the outset, the government has strongly encouraged business to emulate international practices to endure the challenges of globalization. The key policies introduced in the 1980s such as the 'Privatisation policy' and the 'Industrialization policy' served as a turning point for business organizations to transform their traditional outlook and practices in order to match their international counterparts and that include CSR practices and reporting. At this juncture, local businesses were expected to adhere to international business standard in order to make a breakthrough into the international market particularly in the developed countries. Moreover, a strong and sustainable business financial performance would enable business to make a significant contribution to the nation's economy. This is in keeping with Nelson (2003) findings when he argued that CSR in developing nation tends to stress the importance of 'economic multipliers' including the spread of international business standard that draw international investments to the country (in Visser, 2008, p. 490). In addition, socially responsible practices appear as integral component in the Vision 2020. The Vision among others explicitly includes high ethical standard and a sense of caring for others as part and parcel of becoming a developed Malaysian by the year 2020.

CSR in Malaysia continues to be a significant agenda of the government in building the nation. The Malaysia government has offered incentives and that include tax exemptions to encourage other companies to make substantial investment in CSR thus keeping up the momentum among business firms to do good to society. This study has found that business which has a strong government influence i.e. GLCs, typically constructed nation building as the main motive to do CSR rather than to meet the bottom line pressure. In this context, GLCs' role in supporting the aspiration of the government through CSR has been substantial. This is in view of GLCs' nature of establishment and their unique relationships with the government. In recent years, GLCs have executed mega CSR projects to develop human capital, education and alleviation of poverty that are essential for national development. In essence, CSR is largely a state project that aims to address national issues such as economy, education, infrastructure and the like. This appears to be an absolute contrast to CSR efforts in the developed countries that concentrates on fair trade, socially responsible investment, consumer protection and green marketing (Visser, 2008, p. 482). However, assuming that GLCs' CSR initiatives are benefitting the intended audience entirely is indeed an

oversimplification. Therefore, this study suggests for a systematic evaluation on these CSR initiatives to ensure the intended recipients' expectations and needs are properly met. At the same time, this study strongly concurs to the recommendation made by the critical views to include the potential recipients in the decision making process; as one way to ensure they obtain the benefits they deserve (L'Etang, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2006; Kuhn & Deetz, 2008). On the same note, the study also suggests for PR to include recipients' voice in CSR reporting to generate a more balanced assessment.

The aspiration to achieve economic growth through CSR also affects the motivation of pursuing CSR at the organizational level. Business case emerged as the most dominant motive of pursuing CSR practices among organizations in Malaysia. In most instances, CSR values is mainly prioritized to the advantage of financial stakeholders i.e. shareholders, and customers, and to enhance business efficiency. In this context, I strongly argue that the positive impact of CSR is mainly constructed as business' rhetoric in CSR report to entice financial stakeholders in which PR function found to be dominant. This is consistent with Du, Bhattacharya & Sen (2010) when they affirmed that 'companies should explicitly discuss the business impact of their CR activities, and how their social initiatives are linked to key business metrics when communicating with mainstreams investors' (p. 16). However, the tendency to provide information that a business find important and assuming it is what stakeholders want to hear may not meet the actual need of the stakeholders (see Morgan, 1999, Christen & Cheney, 2000 in Morsing & Schultz, 2006, p.333). The finding illustrates that a significant component of engaging with stakeholders through CSR has been absent from practitioners' discourse thus has implication for meeting the actual needs of stakeholders. Scholars affirmed that stakeholders' engagement is fundamental to incorporate insight on actual issues and needs of stakeholders thus produce a better CSR (see Freeman, 1984; Waddock & Smith, 2000).

One major area of concern is that the motivation to maximize wealth and economic growth compelled PR to marginalize the need of non-financial stakeholders of the firm, i.e. the local community, the underprivileged and society at large. In this respect, PR would primarily work to serve the interests of business, and its 'elite' stakeholders that matter most to business. This finding reveals that CSR practice was largely driven by a pre-determined business objective of the business's elites. Critical perspectives emphasize on PR practitioners' ethical conduct in view of their major function to advocate organizational interest (e.g. L'Etang, 1996, 2006) because of the increasing tendency among practitioners to prioritise the need of business rather than the interests of the less dominant groups in society.

In this case, PR role in promoting excellent practice in Malaysia and that includes its role in driving CSR would appear problematic.

In addition, studies also showed that Malaysian firms engaged in social reporting initiative merely to improve corporate image (see Ahmad, Sulaiman & Siswantoro, 2003; Zain, Mohammad & Alwi, 2006). In this regards, the advantage of CSR to business tend to outweigh its advantage to other stakeholders. This has also influenced practitioners' evaluation of CSR that skewed towards business perspective rather than social impact as manifested in CSR report and PR practitioners' discourse.

In brief, CSR driven by a business case motive serves as the key stumbling block for PR in creating sustainable impact and value to other than its client organization or paymaster. This study argues that it is time for PR to reflect on this common practice and its ethical implication to both client organization and PR profession as a whole.



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**‘The Prince and the Courtier’  
Lessons in Public Relations from the Italian Renaissance**

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**Abstract**

Machiavelli’s *The Prince* was published in 1513, so 2013 marks its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Few books have been so controversial and few authors so notorious, yet few texts have been so influential – and so misunderstood.

Machiavelli’s theme was power and the book was written at a time of instability in the region. His references to what we now call public relations are oblique, yet the lessons about power and politics remain current in political discourse.

When Jonathan Powell, a chief of staff to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, published his memoirs in 2010 he called his book *‘The New Machiavelli: How to Wield Power in the Modern World’*. Powell reflected on Blair’s time in government through the lens of Machiavelli’s writings.

This paper reviews the life and writings of Niccolò Machiavelli and considers the critical response to his work over five centuries. Was this thinker, writer, adviser and ambassador a prototype for today’s public relations practitioner, or a historical figure from whom the profession should seek to distance itself?

It is easy to view Machiavelli as an isolated and exceptional individual, yet the same intellectual currents and political circumstances produced another thinker relevant to contemporary public relations practice.

Baldesar Castiglione was a courtier and diplomat. In *The Book of the Courtier* (mostly written 1516-18 about events in 1507, though not published until 1528) the author updated the medieval notion of chivalry to make it applicable to the more peaceful pursuits of a Renaissance courtier.

Machiavelli's reflections on power feel more contemporary than Castiglione's focus on courtly (or gentlemanly) behaviour.

Yet both authors were influenced by classical texts and by humanist thought; both books were placed on the Index of banned books by the Church; both remain in print and continue to be discussed.

This paper explores *The Prince* and *The Book of the Courtier* for their potential as examples of proto-PR. If Machiavelli's truth-telling still feels too abrasive, then Castiglione's gentler depiction of courtly virtues may provide another prototype of the professional PR adviser. How applicable are the roles of *consigliere* or *cortegiano* to contemporary public relations?

The paper reviews the literature surrounding these works and their authors. Where it may have some claim to originality is in doing so from the perspective of public relations scholarship in an attempt to extend our understanding of PR-like activities from before the PR industry was established in the industrial age.

As well as re-reading the sources (in translation) and reading critical commentaries on these texts and their authors, the researcher has travelled to Urbino and to Florence in the footsteps of Castiglione and Machiavelli.

## **A study in proto-PR**

Though it is not original to connect Machiavelli to public relations, it is irresistible to review *The Prince* in its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and reflect on the book's lessons for contemporary public relations practice and professionalism.

Simon Moore presented a paper on Niccolò Machiavelli and Sir Thomas More at this conference (Moore 2011) and the anniversary of *The Prince* has been noted with readings and broadcasts this year on the BBC. Google Scholar (the Library of Alexandria of our day) cites over 4,000 mentions of Machiavelli in the context of 'public relations' and over 8,000 connecting him to 'public affairs.'

The adjective 'machievellian' is often used dismissively of figures in public life and public relations, though the negative associations with his name are not new. 'The murderous Machiavel' is mentioned in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI Part Three* – a curious claim since immorality and atheism seem more legitimate causes for criticism. But the association of Machiavelli's name with the ruthless pursuit of power – putting pragmatism above principle – remains the subject of debate.

This paper reviews *The Prince* alongside another contemporary text, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. Though this text is less notorious, both books were placed on the Index of banned books by the Catholic Church; both remain in print and both have gained admirers (as well as detractors) over time and in different cultures.

Neither author would recognise the term 'public relations'. Both lived centuries before the emergence of a public relations industry during industrialisation and the rise of representative democracy. Yet as advisers to princes and as diplomats representing their rulers they were exemplars of early (or proto-) PR.

In contrast to Machiavelli, the main citation for Castiglione and 'public relations' is this paper's abstract published on the International History of Public Relations Conference microsite.

## **The context: humanism, classical sources and modernity**

The term 'medieval' is unhistorical. It is merely a useful shorthand for the long period between the end of classical civilisation and before the arrival of the 'modern' world. Both Machiavelli and Castiglione belong to an intellectual trend known as humanism (the study of the humanities, in particular drawing on classical scholarship). Humanism does not imply a rejection of the teachings of the church, though it provided an intellectual context in which some individuals chose to argue against the authority of the church – and a few rejected religious belief altogether. Machiavelli, who had experienced the theocratic rule of the Dominican friar Savonarola, had no affinity with orthodox religious beliefs and was known to hold the clergy in low regard (White 2005, p. 2).

In a historiographical reflection, Castiglione opens the second book of *The Courtier* by asking why people tend to praise the past and blame the present. He points to the flawed thinking in this approach: 'If the world were always growing worse and if fathers were generally better than their sons, we would long since have become so rotten that no further deterioration would be possible.' (p107)

The moment at which thinkers stopped looking back to a golden age and started to envisage a brighter future marks the true passage between the ancient and modern worlds. It is ironic that an important step on this journey was the rediscovery of classical scholarship during the 'Renaissance'.

Historically, public relations belongs to the modern era. It fits with a mindset that believes in progress. Yet Machiavelli's pragmatic response to a challenging world in which Italy was a weak and divided peninsula reminds us that public relations also thrives in times of uncertainty, and that public relations advice is needed in a world in which tomorrow may prove to be worse than today.

## **The context: princes and principalities**

Machiavelli served the Florentine republic as an official for a decade. With the return of the Medici rulers, he was imprisoned, tortured, and sent into exile (and thus given the time and opportunity to write).



Yet his best-known work was *On Principalities*, now known as *The Prince*. (In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli focuses on republics.) His interest in princes and principalities was a pragmatic response to the circumstances of the time. Italian city states were weak in the face of powerful princes: the kings of Spain and France, the emperor and the Pope (himself a powerful Italian prince).

With Francis I on the French throne, Henry VIII on the English throne and Charles V both king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, the rise of princes seemed complete.

This also provides the context for Castiglione's work. While medieval kings surrounded themselves with knights and nobles, Renaissance princes surrounded themselves with courtiers and artists. *The Book of the Courtier* can be read as an updated version of medieval texts extolling the virtues of chivalry, with the emphasis on faith and fighting replaced by an emphasis on culture and conversation.

### **Machiavelli: public relations and power**

Despite the 'dark arts' connotations with public relations, Machiavelli was not writing about public relations in *The Prince*. Indeed, there is only one oblique and tantalising allusion to public relations practice:

‘A prince can gain their [the common people's] favour in various ways, but because these vary according to the situation, no fixed rules can be given for them, and therefore I shall not discuss them. I shall conclude by saying only that the prince must have the friendship of the common people. Otherwise, he will have no support in times of adversity.’ (p36)

Machiavelli implies that there's another book to be written describing how princes can gain the favour of the people (a PR textbook for princes). But even the master pragmatist can see no pattern – no fixed rules – so resists the temptation to develop this theme.

For the historian of political thought, however, this sentence is highly significant. Given the ruthless pursuit of power with which Machiavelli is associated, given the absolute power implied in the role of the Renaissance prince, why should he be concerned with public favour? Machiavelli has already noted that princes gained their authority either by inheritance

or conquest. They do not hold power through some form of democratic mandate, so why do they need to consider ‘the favour of the people’?

The conclusion is a challenging one for those who associate public relations practice with democracies in the developed world: all rulers govern by consent (and must therefore be concerned with their popularity).

This conclusion is supported by the events known as the Arab Spring, when a number of longstanding north African and middle eastern rulers were toppled by a wave of popular protests that began in Tunisia in winter 2010-11. This is apparently contradicted by the survival of the totalitarian regime in North Korea – though the sabre-rattling displays and the warlike rhetoric (along with the apparatus of terror) can be seen as ways to retain the support of the people by talking up the threat from external enemies.

If all rulers have governed by the consent of the people, then all rulers have had to concern themselves with what we call public relations, at least since the ‘bread and circuses’ days of Roman rulers.

### **Castiglione: the rules and giving advice**

Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* is an unlikely bestseller. It has been read as a handbook and a contemporary publisher would surely have repackaged it as ‘The Seven Rules of Highly Effective Courtiers’ or similar. Yet it is written as a series of imagined conversations giving the author an opportunity to explore ideas without ever laying down his rules.

So the courtier should serve the prince: ‘I want the courtier... to devote all his thought and strength to loving and almost adoring the prince he serves above all else, devoting all his ambitions, actions and behaviour to pleasing him.’ (p125)

This leads to the question: is the courtier just a first class flatterer?

‘Our courtier will avoid foolish arrogance; he will not be the bearer of bad news; he will not be careless in sometimes saying things that may give offence, instead of striving to please; he will not be obstinate and contentious, as are some who seem to enjoy nothing more than being irritating and obnoxious like flies and make a habit of contradicting everyone spitefully without any misgivings; he will not be an idle or lying babbler, nor a stupid

flatterer or boaster, but he will be modest and reserved, observing always, and especially in public, the reverence and respect which should mark the attitude of a servant towards his master.’ (p126)

Machiavelli also recognises that courts are full of flatterers (p80) and his advice to the prince is clear: ‘there is no other way to guard yourself against flattery than by making men understand that by telling the truth they will not injure you. But when anyone can tell you the truth, you lose respect. Therefore, a prudent prince should follow a third course, electing wise men for his state and giving only them permission to speak truthfully to him, and only on such matters as he asks them about and not on other subjects. (p81)

If rulers (‘princes’) have always had to concern themselves with public opinion, then advisers to princes have to master the skill of speaking the truth without causing offence. This clearly also applies to public relations practitioners who advise bosses and clients.

Castiglione recognises that this balancing act takes great skill – and much practice.

‘If at all possible, he should always be well briefed and prepared for everything he has to do or say, though giving the impression that it is off the cuff. As regards matters in which he is unsure of himself, he should treat them merely in passing, without going too deeply into them, but in such a way as to make people credit him with far more knowledge than he displays, as sometimes happens with poets who sometimes hint at subtle matters of philosophy or other branches of knowledge, and doubtless understand very little about them.’ (p148)

Everyone who has been a senior public relations adviser – or has seen one in action – will recognise this need to appear wise and knowledgeable on all matters.

Commentators have identified the trait Castiglione describes here as ‘off the cuff’ as one of the few original concepts in his book. The speaker claims a new word in Italian, ‘sprezzatura’, to describe this quality. Translators have struggled to turn this into English, though a word borrowed from French describes it best: nonchalance. The opposite of sprezzatura/nonchalance is affectation (p67): the courtier must not be seen to be striving too hard. The advice must appear effortlessly ‘off the cuff’.

[The courtier should] ‘practise in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless.’ (p67)

Peter Burke explains that sprezzatura was not a new word, but a new sense given to an old word whose basic meaning was ‘setting no price on’ (Burke 1995, p31).

## **On truth and deceit**

This quality of sprezzatura/nonchalance should help imbue the courtier's advice with credibility. But how can the courtier convey unwelcome news? Castiglione's speaker makes it clear that the courtier must always serve the best interests of the prince:

'The end of the perfect courtier is ... so to win for himself the mind and favour of the prince he serves that he can and always will tell the truth about all he needs to know, without fear or risk of displeasing him. And, if he knows that his prince is of a mind to do something unworthy, he should be in a position to dare to oppose him, and make courteous use of the favour his good qualities have won to remove every evil intention and to persuade him to return to the path of virtue. Thus if the courtier is endowed with the goodness these gentlemen have attributed to him, as well as being quick-witted and charming, prudent and scholarly and so forth, he will always have the skill to make his prince realize that honour and advantages that accrue to him and his family from justice, liberality, magnanimity, gentleness and all the other virtues befitting a ruler, and on the other hand, the infamy and loss that result from practising the vices opposed to these virtues. ... Its real fruit is to encourage and help his prince to be virtuous and to deter him from evil. (p284-5)

## **The reaction**

The role that print played in the Protestant reformation meant that books came under much closer scrutiny in the middle of the sixteenth century. Thus it was that *The Prince* and *The Book of the Courtier* were both placed on the Index of banned books.

There were three reasons for banning books: this could be because they were deemed heretical, immoral, or because they dealt with magic.

In both cases, the objection appears to have been to the concept of *fortune*, and *The Book of the Courtier* was subsequently published in an expurgated edition.

There was criticism from the protestant side too to Castiglione's apparent support for appearance over sincerity (through the concept of 'sprezzatura').

Machiavelli has been interpreted, up to our day, as everything from the devil incarnate ('old Nick') to a champion of liberty.

## **The New Machiavelli**

In a recent example of revisionism, the political memoir of Jonathan Powell, former chief of staff (courtier) to Tony Blair, was called *The New Machiavelli*. Powell writes:

‘I studied Machiavelli’s *The Prince* as a student, and in Number 10 I often felt the need of a modern handbook to power and how to wield it’ (Powell 2011 p 3).

In a striking chapter, Powell discusses how strained the relationship became between the prime minister Tony Blair and his chancellor Gordon Brown – ‘the key relationship at the centre of the British government... One controls the appointments and the other controls the money.’ (Powell 2011, p105)

The relationship between the one-time friends and allies became difficult once Tony Blair had outflanked Gordon Brown to gain the leadership of the opposition Labour Party following the unexpected early death of John Smith.

Powell describes the increasingly strained relationship between the two men. ‘This ... was Tony’s problem. His way of managing Gordon was to string him along indefinitely without ever addressing frontally the difficult issue of who was in charge.’ (Powell 2011, p108)

What would Machiavelli have advised? ‘In retrospect Tony should have sacked Gordon early on. Machiavelli’s advice was ‘that to a person to whom offence has been given, no administrative post of importance should subsequently be assigned’. (Powell 2011, p127)

‘To avoid becoming the victims of blackmail, leaders should make sure they have a choice of more than one possible successor and cultivate competition between the candidates... As Machiavelli says, you have to deal with threats like this early or it is ‘too late to resort to severity; while any leniency you may use will be thrown away, for it will be seen to be compulsory and gain you no thanks.’ (Powell 2011, p132)

### **Concluding remarks**

Neither author was describing public relations; neither would even have recognised the term. Yet Machiavelli’s advice to Renaissance princes and Castiglione’s description of the Renaissance courtier contain advice that is relevant to contemporary public relations practitioners.

The tensions inherent in an advisory role (to what extent should you flatter the boss or client, and to what extent should you withhold the truth) are questions that Machiavelli and Castiglione considered.

Five hundred years is a short span of time so we should not expect large changes in human behaviour despite the many changes in politics, society, technology and the economy since the Renaissance. *The Prince* in particular remains in print and is widely read and discussed. This is a tribute to the immortality of the author's words.

Castiglione was also concerned with his legacy. In the dedicatory letter that introduces his work he wrote: 'if the book meets with general approval, I shall take it that it is good and believe that it will survive; and if, on the other hand, it fails to please, I shall take it that it is bad and shall at once accept that it must sink into obscurity.' (p36)

Both authors were concerned about their reputations and their legacy. We can see that they were exploring public relations concepts long before there was a public relations industry.

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## **Exploring British Litigation PR: a short history**

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**Acknowledgment:** This paper is a small proportion of an extended empirical research and a recent project on the evolution of litigation communication in England.

### **Abstract**

Historians are interested in the analysis of historical events (Hanagan, 1990, p. 124). This kind of analysis is “rooted in and emerges from the logic of events of a given place and period [...]” (Smelser, 1968, p. 35). This historical paper intends to be one of the few if any account addresses the evolution of Litigation PR in England, a remarkably knowledge-bounded PR branch within the occupation. The main aim of the author has been developing genuine information on the historical evolution of this new PR branch. The original research has fallen within the qualitative historical scholarship therefore it has been limited by this paradigm (McDowell, 2002).

The paper argues that Litigation PR in England has an independent history and follows a distinct path. Accordingly, the paper intends to reconstruct and present this path, the origin and historical development of Litigation PR in England, by exploring a series of external forces and the main internal drivers, various social, political and economic events as pressures placed on the appropriate legal and PR institutions and practitioners.

### **1. Introduction**

This paper addresses the short history of a new PR branch. History has not been a popular research paradigm in PR, especially in Litigation PR, for decades. However, “Historical study adds a robust quality to a discipline. It enables scholars within a discipline, [...] to gain an understanding of its origins and its patterns of change” (Savitt, 1980, p. 52). Accordingly, this historical paper intends to be one of the few if any account addresses the evolution of Litigation PR in England. Taken as a whole, the paper intends to accomplish two things. First, it wants to clarify past events in British legal communications history in light of what is known today. Second, it intends to be a well crafted historical account and tell a good story



on Litigation PR (Barzun & Graff, 1992).

### *1.1 Defining Litigation public relations*

The paper argues that Litigation PR in England has an independent history than that of the evolution in the US, where the new PR branch first time occurred. The evolution in England started later and became more dependent on the local legal, cultural and historical traditions. The unique legal setting, the high proportion of juryless trials, the strict procedural rules, the distinctive roles of solicitors and barristers as well as the growth and complexity of lawsuits and the litigious cultural and media environment in England opened up the potential for this new PR branch later and in a different pace than in the United States.

As a distinct type of legal communications, Litigation PR in the US is about “managing the communications process during the course of any legal dispute or adjudicatory proceedings so as to affect the outcome or its impact on the client’s overall reputation” (Haggerty, 2003, p. 2). It is about fighting a case and influence the result of the trial in court as well as ‘in the court of public opinion’. Whilst in England, “Litigation PR is a specialized PR knowledge for solving legal dispute with enforcing settlement when avoiding trial procedure or defending client’s reputation before, during and after the trial” (Beke, 2012, p. 14). The new PR practice has been formed through the merging of two distinct fields. Accordingly, the paper provides us with broader narratives within the particular institutional frames of law and communications in England. As a result, this paper is an attempt to extract original ideas and meaning from these institutional contexts.

### *1.2 Exploring Litigation PR in England*

Based on the descriptive historical narrative of data<sup>1</sup> this paper explores the evolution in England. The flow of the storytelling is determined by various thoughts emerged from the interpretation of primary data and some additional data sources on legal and PR histories, such as company documents and chronologically selected legal cases. It presents significant details, legal cases, proceedings and the main turning points, historical events around PR and legal undertakings. The paper follows the periodization by turning points technique (Hollander, Rassuli, Jones, & Dix, 2005; Rowlinson, 2004; 2005, p. 296; Stowe, n.d.). As

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on the extended empirical research on this topic please refer to Beke, T. (2012). *The Evolution of Litigation Public Relations in England, 1992-2010*. (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Stirling, Stirling, UK.

Hollander et al. claim, “this is the most logical and acceptable method of periodization” (Hollander et al., 2005, p. 37). As such, it is arranged around two distinct periods in the evolution:

- Events, reforms and the evolution of legal case promotion in the decades before 1992
- The first formal use and the expansion of Litigation PR in London after 1992

## **2. Litigation PR in England: a short history**

### *2. 1 Events, reforms and the evolution of legal case promotion in the decades before 1992*

In England, case promotion with media coverage in legal and pre-trial proceedings as a form of early litigation communication had a long history. This first period introduces the traces of the evolution from the early ages; however, in fact, the application of this particular communication technique in the legal process had been identified in England only from the 1970s. Before and sometimes after this decade, Media Relations techniques in order to provide coverage of legal cases were initially used by lawyers, journalists and press agents. In those days, mainly legal representatives (such as Carter-Ruck<sup>2</sup>) offered legal and communication support, a sort of extrajudicial advocacy in the ‘court of public opinion’, respectively. Litigation PR in this period was not a distinct concept in England.

In the 1970s, business promotion practitioners dominated the legal communications market. However, an early form of litigation communication practice also occurred in London and was represented mostly by investigative journalists, such as Harold Evans of *The Sunday Times* in a very famous affair. Attempts of the Thalidomide families to win compensation started very early on in the 1960s. Later in the 1970s a pressure group was formed by the parents of the victims against Distillers in obtaining adequate compensation. In September 1972, the low compensation offered to the victims by the drug company, caused a national outcry after it was made public by *The Sunday Times* campaign.<sup>3</sup> The Thalidomide scandal led to the rise of an important legal institution: the strict and unique *Contempt of Court Act 1981*. The Act fundamentally affected the evolution of communication during pending litigations in England.

From the mid-1980s there has been a growing group of lawyers in both legal professions, who understood that their role was to protect and promote their clients’ cases.

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<sup>2</sup> Legal firm in the UK famous for its high-profile clients involved in libel cases.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Evans and the newspaper described the dispute in great detail in a series of articles and called Distillers to reconsider its previous offer for the victims.

Mostly solicitors intended to offer various services in both courts, in the ‘court of law’ and the ‘court of public opinion’.

From the mid-1980s a remarkable course of economic and financial reforms and business proceedings started in England. Also, after the Thatcherite deregulative economic policy, concentration of the legal market increased intensively. Particularly because of the Big Bang in the financial markets in England the mid-1980s was a boom-time in PR. The consequence of the favourable business climate affected various PR offers (e.g. Financial PR and Investor Relations) as well as legal communications services. Accordingly, the second half of the 1980s in England was the introduction of the age of distinctions in legal communications. This started immediately after the beginning of the increased need for diverse legal promotion and specialized communications knowledge. From 1987 business conflicts and financial disputes resulted in law cases where parties sued each other. That time PR practitioners involved in financial and legal issues could be relatively easily identified in England. Most of the representatives of certain legal communications fields were spokespersons and media consultants of lawyers and legal professional associations, such as The Law Society.

The end of the decade also presented a new role model for legal communications. Mostly freelance journalists made efforts to introduce American style litigation journalism in London. Practice of the new branch of PR confronted them with the accusation of the media for “blackmail by journalism” and the high expectations of the strict law of contempt.

From the end of the 1980s media coverage of personal injury cases<sup>4</sup> dominated the legal market concerning the evolution of Litigation PR. Accordingly, by the end of the decade the demand for more effective litigation communications increased a lot. The PR of this period was mainly about legal case promotion with media coverage as a simple form of litigation communications. In *The King’s Cross Fire case* complex personal injury claims were first time promoted in the press by British media specialists.

As new role models to the prospective litigation communication market of the early 1990s, some experts had to deal with financially and legally driven conflicts in the bank sector. From November 1991 they represented IMRO (Investment Management Regulatory Organisation) and SFO (Serious Fraud Office) in investigating the finances of the Mirror Group’s pension fund scandal. With a kind of pre-trial communication they were trying to focus the attention of the media where it really should be focused.

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<sup>4</sup> In these cases the clients were mostly represented by Thompsons Solicitors, one of the biggest Trade Union law firms in England.

## 2. 2 *The first formal use and the expansion of Litigation PR after 1992*

Litigation PR in the second period became a new and distinct concept, an offer evolving dramatically in the market under the direction of sophisticated PR practitioners. The signature case at the start of the period, the first formal use of Litigation PR in England, was *The Blue Arrow fraud case*. In the long lasting case, the charges of conspiracy to defraud in the trial arose out of the takeover of the US employment agency Manpower by Blue Arrow, and the allegations of rigging the price of Blue Arrow shares with the help of County NatWest. Due to the extensive media coverage of the case 1992 was a main turning point in legal case promotion: the first formal use of Litigation PR in England. Therefore, the case is considered as the first in the English common law jurisdiction where PR advisers were formally employed. In this period of the evolution, a business-like, professional Litigation PR practice allied with a new generation of Litigation PR experts in London. Accordingly, the heavy expansion of the new branch started after 1992. Litigation PR in this second period became a new and distinct concept, an offer evolving dramatically in the legal communications market under the direction of sophisticated PR practitioners.

The post-1992 years have been divided into two main historical sub-periods: publicity, and litigation communication between 1993-1997, and the expansion of professional Litigation PR in London after 1998. In addition, the post-Lehman times of recession (2008-2010) presents a new concept of litigation communication. In these years the scandalous events and trends of the financial world, the collapse of large financial institutions, bankruptcies and bailout of banks by national governments also signalled further changes for Litigation PR practice.<sup>5</sup> The period has been illustrated by very complex legal cases and Litigation PR expanded to other legal fields not just civil cases.

## **Conclusion**

As seen in this paper, the historical evolution of litigation communication tightly followed the evolution of various rules as well as the main trends of the legal market affected the development in England. Nowadays, lawyers disseminate information not only about the service of their practice or fees (in the form of legal PR) but about the legal procedure, cases and clients. They do this with the help of communications experts. Designed to serve the needs of lawyers journalists provide volumes of legal coverage every day, including more

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<sup>5</sup> The accurate academic exploration of 'the post-Lehman effect' in Litigation PR is a brand new story therefore this paper has not addressed it yet.

access to specialized information than ever before. Newspapers and the broadcasting media in England provide extended court coverage, exposing corruption trials, high-profile legal disputes. By now, as the mutual interest of lawyers, journalists and PR practitioners, this new legal communications service, a distinct branch of PR has evolved to provide specialized communication support for lawyers in the litigation process.

Since the close of the gathering of research data in 2010 social media has become a serious problem in the English jurisdiction. The emergence of new technologies and forms of public broadcasting like Twitter and Facebook are challenging the strict rules of the English common law legal system. These new technologies have had major impacts on the evolution of the new branch due to the strict rules on contempt and the need for real time response in the 'court of public opinion', at the same time. I argue that the development of law and technology have changed the relationships between regulators, politicians, broadcasters, news organisations and the practice of PR, and their main sources of information. This has already been seen in a document called *Interim Practice Guidance: The use of live text-based forms of communication (including Twitter) from court for the purposes of fair and accurate reporting* (Lord Judge, 20 December 2010), issued by the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. Accordingly, nowadays, twitting from court would be allowed if the use of mobile, social media and internet-enabled laptops did not interfere with the administration of justice.

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**“And so there developed a special profession”: The effect of early journalism codes and press criticism on the professionalization of public relations**

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At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, journalism was under fire. The era of “Yellow Journalism” had passed, but sensationalism was still bread and butter to much of the press, which was busily seeking a larger and larger readership. It was, according to press critic and journalist Will Irwin, “a time of transition for the century and for journalism” (Weigle & Clark, 1969, p. 25).

World War I had posed a particular challenge for American journalists. The massive propaganda campaign mounted as the United States entered the war in 1917 became an impregnable barrier to truthful reporting and a harbinger of the power of this emerging form of persuasion. By the war’s end, the public was beginning to view any information, including news, as potentially propaganda, aided in no small part by the overt rise of public relations as a champion of business and industry. Insiders such as Walter Lippmann and Irwin decried the lack of training of reporters, their laxity in gathering and reporting facts, and the recurring tendency toward sensationalism in even the most respected newspapers.

All of this, however, started to change in the 1920s. As a direct response to years of criticism, journalism began to style itself as a “profession.” As journalist Ernest Gruening noted in 1924, “The attempt to professionalize journalism follows, perhaps naturally, the professionalizing of law, medicine, architecture, engineering. [T]he idea of a profession... is predicated on a certain spiritual desire for self-expression, for service, for personal independence” (Gruening, 1924b, p. 692). Gruening further suggested that “[T]here is still another aspect of the question whether journalism can be a profession. This relates to the difficulty, if not the impossibility, under present conditions of maintaining any consistent standard of ethics” (p. 693).

In response to this not uncommon criticism during this period, more than a dozen ethics codes were developed and officially approved by journalism organizations and individual newspapers. According to Cronin and McPherson (1995),

The public's backlash against the press resulted from a combination of the effects of World War I propaganda, the rise of press agents, the resurgence of sensationalism and the fruition of the press as big business. Ethics codes provided the best opportunity for the press to regain credibility since codes publicly displayed journalism's values (p. 349).

Stung by the criticism for their reliance on press agents, state press association members used codes as a means of publicly stating their opposition to the growth of public relations" (p. 895).

For example, during the debate over the American Association of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) code, one editor stated, "I think this Committee is unanimously of opinion that there is no greater menace to American journalism than the publicity agent" (ASNE, 1923, p. 40). He called for the organization to make a "forthright declaration" stating its opposition to press agents (p. 43). This reaction was based in large part not only on the activities of press agents but also the tendency of many news rooms to accept at face value "news" produced by outside sources.

Members of the press had come under particularly vigorous criticism for allowing too many press releases clearly aimed at promoting business interests to pass as legitimate news stories. Clever public relations practitioners, recognizing that a sense of laziness was often pervasive in newsrooms, managed to get many of their press releases reproduced, word for word, as news stories. Editors often only later realized the press releases' business twists (Cronin & McPherson, 1992, p. 366).

It's not surprising, then, that journalists began to use codes to set their field apart from any type of communication not directly related to the roles of watchdog and protector of the public interest. As Cronin and McPherson (1995) also note "A parallel dialogue on journalists' dislike and distrust of press agents also took place in the pages of the trade press" (p. 895). Penning (2008), moreover, suggests that U.S. media portrayals of public relations in the 1920s helped lay the groundwork for modern characterizations of the practice.

The question this paper asks is, might this marginalization of the nascent practice of public relations have acted as an impetus in the parallel attempt at professionalization in that occupation? Specifically, it examines what influence journalists' efforts to professionalize their field might have had on public relations. To answer this question, early journalism codes are examined in light of the historical context of professionalization, as well as press criticism and contemporary writings about both fields. This paper attempts to discover in what ways public relations' early pursuit of professional status might have been, in some part, a reflexive response to the criticism embedded in early journalism codes and an effort to legitimize its practice for many of the same reasons as journalism during this period.



Although there has been research dealing with early press coverage that included attempts to understand and define public relations, (Penning, 2008) and explorations of early journalism codes (Cronin and McPherson, 1992, 1995), there hasn't been a significant study of the potential effect of journalistic criticism, including that embedded within its early codes, on the formulation of public relations itself as a profession. This paper will help to clarify this possible relationship.

## **World War I and Following**

Following World War I, the public's opinion of journalism began to shift for the worse. Sensationalism was still rampant in the tabloids. The age of muckraking had ended, along with the fame and respectability that it had brought to journalism in general (Cronin & McPherson, 1992, p. 351). The effectiveness of the government propaganda machine during the war, exposed frequently by those most closely associated with it, led to a general distrust of all information, even that emanating from the press. After all, the head of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), George Creel, had himself been a journalist. Following the war, his book, *How We Advertised America*, carefully detailed how his committee had rather easily manipulated public opinion (Creel, 1920). Meanwhile, another journalist, Walter Lippmann—also a former member of the CPI—was leading his fellow practitioners to question the very nature of fact and subjectivity. And, he was alerting them to the realization of a new, rapidly growing occupation for which “facts” were *always* subjective. “[I]t is natural,” said Lippmann, “that everyone should wish to make his or her own choice of facts for the newspapers to print. The publicity man does that” (Lippman, 1922, p. 345). And, as if to affirm Lippmann's observation, early public relations practitioner Ivy Lee noted in 1925 that, “We are very prone to look at everything through glasses colored by our own interests and prejudices” (Lee, p. 38). This was especially true of his chosen occupation.

As DeLorme and Fedler (2003) suggest, “World War I contributed to the public's skepticism, if not hostility, toward propagandists, yet simultaneously contributed to the growth of the public relations industry” (p. 104). During the pre- and post-war periods, from 1914 into the early 1920s, the terms publicity and propaganda were frequently used interchangeably, which exacerbated the problem of the movement to call the new practice “public relations.” This helps explain why public relations practitioners such as Edward Bernays were frequently confused with press agents and propagandists. “During the war period, there was no difference between public relations and propaganda; the public relations theory, techniques and tools were used as a weapon (for the propaganda purposes) during the

war” (Podnar & Golob, 2009, 70-71). The 1920s, especially, were a formative period for both journalism and the nascent profession of public relations. Penning observes,

It was into this era of increasing consumerism, concern for public opinion, and journalistic introspection that ‘public relations’ emerged as a concept and formal occupation. It would be met with the same skeptical eye viewing journalism and the state of democracy itself at the time (p. 349).

The effort to distinguish among terms such as “press agent,” “propagandist,” and “publicist” became increasingly important to a group of practitioners who were, themselves, attempting to differentiate among the clutter of nomenclature common at the time. Although credited with using the term “public relations” as a general description of his work as early as 1916, one of the leading practitioners at the time, Ivy Lee, still professed problems with defining exactly what he did for a living. Although he believed in “Telling your story to the public,” and had developed a declaration of principles for doing so, his response when asked during a hearing of the United Transit Commission in 1927, “What is the difference between the vocation you follow and that of the publicity agent?” was telling. “I don’t know, sir. I have never been able to find a satisfactory phrase to describe what I try to do” (Goldman, p.10).

Others, however, had no such problem. Edward Bernays—who, along with Lippmann and Lee, had also worked for the CPI during the Great War—was attempting something that hadn’t been conceived of prior to the realization of the ability to move the masses via propaganda. He wanted, simultaneously, to revive the image of propaganda as a positive influence in democratic life while introducing an entirely new concept of how and by whom it would be most effectively accomplished. “The World War left business astounded at what the technique of propaganda had accomplished in the conflict,” wrote Bernays in 1928. “[T]his ‘new propaganda,’ this new technique that had made men willing to give up their lives and their money— this was something big business might find very useful!” (p.198). However, he was not happy with the common term “press agent.” Originally, he referred to what he did as “publicity direction” (Cutlip, 1994, p. 181). In fact, the editor of *Harper’s Bazaar* had recommended Bernays to the CPI during World War I by saying, “I consider E. L. Bernays one of the shrewdest and most effective publicity men in this country” (Goldman, p. 8). However, for Bernays, times had indeed changed, and the name he eventually decided upon and the category in which he placed his occupation were more than self aggrandizement, they were no less than a crusade to insert a new profession into a world in which its place was at once misunderstood and unwelcomed.

## **Criticism of press agents and publicists in general**

### ***Press Criticism***

Criticism of the new practice of public relations was already widespread by the early 1920s when it was still conflated with press agency. Schudson (1988) says that “As early as 1919 journalists complained that they were suddenly outnumbered by publicity agents” (p. 150).

The job of the press seemed to be changing from reporting the news to reprinting interested parties’ definitions of the news (p. 151).

DeLorme and Fedler (2003) show that the books and articles from this period “support the belief that journalists treated public relations and its practitioners with contempt” (p. 112). The publicity mongers, who had proliferated in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had grown in numbers and in tenacity following World War I. Their stories had become a staple of many newspapers, which some saw as nothing short of an attempt to gain free advertising for their clients under the guise of publicity. According to Lucarelli (1993), much of this tension was a result of the economic pressures news organizations faced due in part to costs associated with increased prices for newsprint. Gruening (1924b) noted that “Mechanical costs, especially the cost of news-print paper, have so greatly increased that frequently each copy of a large edition of a daily newspaper is sold below the net cost of the raw materials it contains (p. 688). Every inch of a newspaper was extremely valuable real estate. “Spacegrabbers must go,” shouted an article in *Editor & Publisher* (1920). “[The demand for free space] is sucking lifeblood from journalism; healthy blood of reader trust and confidence; financial reward in advertising space bought and paid for” (p. 36).

While trying to sort out the exact nature of the threat posed by free publicity, the newspaper industry reacted by restricting access to its columns by reconsidering again what it deemed news and what it deemed advertising (Lucarelli, p. 883).

However, the general criticism of press agency went beyond the newsprint shortage. Even the most recognized critic of journalism itself, Walter Lippmann (1922), spared no vitriol in describing the effect of “publicity agents” on the news industry. He cited Frank Cobb, editor of the *New York World*, as saying,

[M]any of the direct channels to news have been closed and the information for the public is first filtered through publicity agents. The great corporations have them, the

banks have them, the railroads have them, all the organizations of business and of social and political activity have them, and they are the media through which news comes. Even statesmen have them (p. 344).

In his own voice, Lippmann described the publicity man as a “censor and propagandist, responsible only to his employers, and to the whole truth responsible only as it accords with the employers’ conception of his own interests” (p. 345). Stoker and Rawlins (2005) note that during the period of the 1920s, “the term ‘publicity’ became solely associated with the work of press agents and publicists,” and that the term itself became synonymous with “propaganda,” a word that had come to signify a method of coercing the American public (p.185). Exposed by such trusted notables as Harold Lasswell (1928) had laid out in detail the machinations of the CPI during World War I, and had decried the latest incarnation of propaganda as an agent of what Bernays later innocently called, “the manufacturing of consent.” Lasswell, however, noted that the new breed of propagandists, fearful of the connotation of that word among the public, had given themselves new names—“public relations counsel,” “specialist in public education,” and “public relations advisor.” (p. 267)

And, this type of criticism was not restricted to editorial comment from working journalists. Eric Allen, dean of the new School of Journalism at the University of Oregon noted in 1922 that,

The despised ‘press agent’ of an earlier day has developed first into the ‘publicity man’ and then into the ‘promotion’ expert. Now he often bears a still more dignified title... He is a real problem; scolding will not eliminate him. He is respectable. After a course in sophistry, necessitated by his self-esteem, he comes to regard himself as ethical, and his own careful statement of his functions exhibits him as a useful member of society. He worked for the government and helped win the War. Newspapers reject the great bulk of his copy, but apparently they accept enough of it to justify his existence economically (p. 175).

He also presciently warned that among his new titles, the press agent might even become a “*professor of journalism*, with duties to practice the lower functions of the profession rather than to teach the higher” (p.175). Allen and his colleague Collin Dymont produced one of the earliest, state-sponsored, journalism codes. Not surprisingly, it and many other codes developed in the 1920s had very little use for publicity in its myriad forms.

### ***Criticism within Journalism Codes***

Short of licensing, the adoption of an ethics code is often considered to be a final step toward a practice becoming a profession. Although ethics codes, or at least early sets of

guidelines, had been around since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dicken-Garcia, 1989; Banning, 1999), It wasn't until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they began to take full form.

The adoption of ethics codes, a key factor in professionalism, was much slower in coming than were the other elements. Not until four decades after the professionalism movement began did newspapers and press associations begin adopting ethics codes. The codes primarily were a response to rampant public mistrust of journalists, a trust that was all the more crucial to maintain in the face of the coming of a new medium-radio (Cronin & McPherson, 1992, p. 351).

In 1910, the Kansas Editorial Association formally approved what is considered the earliest code of ethics adopted by an association of journalists (Crawford, 1924). Within the next 20 years, a number of ethics codes were developed and officially approved by journalism organizations and individual newspapers, awakening a new interest in the behavior of journalists and heightened expectations among their constituents.

Following the Kansas adoption, a spate of ethics codes began to appear: Missouri and Texas in 1921, South Dakota and Oregon in 1922, Massachusetts and Washington in 1923, and Iowa and New Jersey in 1924 (Cronin & McPherson, 1992). By the end of the 1920s, thirteen state ethics codes had been adopted. Notably, in 1923, the first national code of ethics was adopted by the newly formed American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE). And, by 1926, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), which had been formed in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi (SDX), had officially adopted the ASNE code, which remained intact until it was rewritten specifically for SPJ in 1973. These early codes were typically reflective of a traditional libertarian press theory, stressing truth telling and public service as their primary focus. Most dealt with advertising, especially as it related to masquerading as news, and excessive editorializing within a potential conflict of interest (Keeler, Brown & Tarpley, p. 49).

As noted earlier, as part of the attempt to professionalize journalism and separate it from everything that it was not, codes began to be developed that, in no small part, stated emphatically "their opposition to the growth of press agents" (Cronan & McPherson, 1992, p. 366).

Press codes developed at a time when the industry most needed a credibility boost. The combined effects of propaganda, press agents, the resurgence of sensationalism and the fruition of the press as big business culminated in a noticeable decline of the public's trust in the press (pp. 371-372).

Because the development of most of these codes followed closely on the heels of World War I, they also tended to deal with the subject of propaganda and the burgeoning influence of the new and growing occupation of public relations (p. 358). For example, the

Massachusetts Press Association built its entire code around the topic of press agency (Cronin & MacPherson, 1995). Their code stated emphatically, “The scope and uses of newspaper publicity have been misunderstood and abused to the extent that there has been a wide public misconception of the limits to which a newspaper is justified in extending free use of ” (p. 367).

Other codes developed and published during this time also reflected the general concern over the potential effects of the “press agent,” who was, often as not, still conflated with anyone seeking free space in a newspaper for an individual cause or point of view—including advertising that editors considered a source of lost income when masquerading as publicity. For example, the Massachusetts Press Association urged its members not to publish advertising unless paid for. This included government campaigns that had continued following the war, such as that for Liberty Loans (Lucarelli, p. 885) as well as those for charities, businesses, or political causes (Cronin & McPherson, 1995, p. 896). This type of information, whatever name it took, was roundly rejected in these early codes.

- So-called news communications from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claims to value as news, both in form and substance. (ASNE Canons of Journalism, 1923, Article 3)
- We will not permit, unless in exceptional cases, the publishing of news and editorial matter not prepared by ourselves or our staffs, believing that original matter is the best answer to the peril of propaganda. (Oregon Code of Ethics for Journalism, 1922, Article 5)
  - There is no place in journalism for the dissembler; the distorter; the prevaricator; the suppressor; or the dishonest thinker (Article 1).
- In accuracy partisanship or the taint of propaganda has no part and cannot be present in fair journalism (South Dakota Code of Ethics, 1922).
- Control of news or comment for business considerations is not worthy of a newspaper.
  - *Press Agents and Unpaid Advertising.*—The specific trade name of an article of commerce, or the name of a merchant, manufacturer, or professional man *with reference* to his wares, products, or labors should not be mentioned in a pure story (Missouri Declaration of Principles and Code of Practice, 1921).

- We condemn [as] against truth: The issuance of fake news, dispatches, whether the same have for their purpose the influencing of stock quotations, elections, or the sale of securities or merchandise. Some of the greatest advertising in the world has been stolen through news columns in the form of dispatches from unscrupulous press agents (Kansas Code of Ethics, 1910).
- Beware of the seekers after free publicity. Remember that space in *The Eagle* is worth twenty-five cents a line. What you give away *The Eagle* cannot sell. Don' help press agents cheat the advertising department (*The Brooklyn Eagle Policy*).

The confusion over terms and the blatant antagonism toward propaganda and publicity contributed to an environment in which any new attempt to redefine these practices was bound to meet with resistance. DeLorme and Fedler point out that by 1923 publicists were as ubiquitous as their titles—titles which, in many cases, were simply attempts to provide their bearers with a sense of importance, if not professionalism.

'director of publicity' 'publicity engineer' 'public relations counselor' 'good- will ambassador' 'vice president' or 'assistant to the president' Whatever they called themselves, all PR practitioners sought approximately the same thing—free and profitable advertising for their employers and the goodwill of the public (p. 104).

It was within this environment of confusion and antagonism that Edward Bernays began his crusade to professionalize public relations.

### **Bernays' attempts to redefine the publicity agent and lay a professional groundwork**

During this same period, Edward Bernays set up his new agency in New York, styling himself as a "public relations counsel." He was acutely aware of journalistic efforts not only to belittle the practice of press agency, but also its efforts to eradicate the influence of these "space-grabbers" from the pages of their newspapers. Bernays, in fact, claimed that the newspaper industry had mounted a concerted campaign against publicity agents (Bernays, 1965, p. 288). Much of that campaign was, in reality, coordinated (Lucarelli, p. 883), but much of it was an attempt to set the "profession" of journalism apart from the pretenders of press agency and its newest incarnation, which Bernays was calling "public relations."

He began his crusade in full force in 1923 with the publication of *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, in which he laid out the parameters of a new profession. Goldman (1948) summarized the main principles of the book by saying, "Bernays declared the primary function of the public relations thought in the United States. . . . The public was to be understood as an intricate system of group relationships and by an expert with the technical

equipment, the ethics, and the social view associated with the lawyer, doctor, or teacher” (p. 19). Increasingly, throughout the decade of the 1920s, Bernays sought to reinforce the idea of public relations as a profession naturally aligned with other, traditional and already socially acceptable practices such as law and medicine. Goldman writes that,

The Bernays team, seizing upon the analogy between law and public relations, developed their thinking around the conception of public relations as a profession.... (p. 19)

[They] had cast about for a phrasing that would describe, with dignity and full connotations, the public relations activity as they conceived it. The natural analogy was the legal profession.... Out of that analogy, the term ‘counsellor [sic] in... public relations’ was appearing and the activity was being called a profession. (p. 18)

In his second book, *Propaganda* (1928), Bernays continued to develop his notion of professionalism. “If we accept public relations as a profession, we must also expect it to have both ideals and ethics” (p. 69). He went on to flesh out some of his earlier thoughts on his own code for this new profession.

The profession of public relations counsel is developing for itself an ethical code which compares favorably with that governing the legal and medical professions. In part, this code is forced upon the public relations counsel by the very conditions of his work. While recognizing, just as the lawyer does, that every one has the right to present his case in its best light, he nevertheless refuses a client whom he believes to be dishonest, a product which he believes to be fraudulent, or a cause which he believes to be antisocial. One reason for this is that, even though a special pleader, he is not dissociated from the client in the public’s mind. Another reason is that while he is pleading before the court—the court of public opinion—he is at the same time trying to affect that court’s judgments and actions. In law, the judge and jury hold the deciding balance of power. In public opinion, the public relations counsel is judge and jury, because through his pleading of a case the public may accede to his opinion and judgment (p. 69).

Bernays continued his multi-pronged approach to professionalization. He again reinforced the name of his new profession by noting that “New activities call for new nomenclature” (p. 63).

The propagandist who specializes in interpreting enterprises and ideas to the public, and in interpreting the public to promulgators of new enterprises and ideas, has come to be known by the name of ‘public relations counsel.’

At the same time, he reiterated his belief that the public relations counsel functions “primarily as an adviser to his client, very much as a lawyer does. A lawyer concentrates on the legal aspects of his client’s business. A counsel on public relations concentrates on the public contacts of his client’s business” (p. 64).



The linking of a nascent profession with an existing profession was not a new concept. Ironically, some journalism codes from this period also referenced such an association. Colorado's code literally stated that newspaper editors were on a par with doctors. "The cure of social ills is the editor's responsibility more than any other man's" (Cronin and McPherson, 1995, p. 892).

This was not the only commonality between the efforts of journalism and public relations to professionalize. Bernays' plan for professionalization was multi-faceted. He was also urging training in communication through universities and schools of journalism. He proposed that "Every man or woman who holds a position conveying symbols to the public should be prepared to meet that responsibility by having a thorough grounding in economics, human relations, and the social sciences, as well as a knowledge of the techniques of communication" (Bernays, 1948, p. 415). In fact, Goldman (1948) recalled that "Bernays pushed toward the professionalization of public relations by arranging with New York University to offer the first course in the subject ever to appear in the curriculum of an American university" (p. 16).

Likewise, supporters of professionalism within journalism were pushing for better educated reporters and editors (Cronin and McPherson, 1995, 892). As early as 1912, discussions of professionalism in journalism included a strong educational component.

No one is allowed to practice medicine unless he possesses a diploma certifying that he has completed the course of study proscribed by a reputable medical college; no one can practice law unless he has been admitted to the bar after a searching examination; but anybody can engage in the practice of journalism without preparation and therefore without experience of any kind. (*Editor & Publisher*, 1912, p. 8)

And, Crawford (1924) firmly stated that,

Journalism is a profession and... the school of journalism is a professional school... [T]he school must give technical training... but maintains that this... could be obtained in a very brief course and that the primary function of the school is rather to give the student such an intellectual and ethical training and background as will best enable him to serve the public through the press (p. 170)

Not surprisingly, then, many of the early journalism codes also recognized the need for well-educated workers, without whom the public could not possibly be well informed (Cronin & McPherson, 1995, p. 893). The Oregon code, written by two academics with years of newspaper experience, cited educational proficiency as a necessary component of high standards.

Inaccuracy in journalism commonly due more to lack of mental equipment than to willfulness of attitude. The ill-equipped man cannot be more competent as a journalist than he can as a doctor or engineer.... We regard journalism as a precise and a learned profession (Article II).

Firmly establishing professions within a learned framework is completely in line with the trajectory of professionalism in the United States since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Parsons (1968) points out, the early pattern of establishing law schools and medical schools within universities placed these professions on “a new level of intellectual sophistication.”

This pattern has now extended so far that a major credential of a new applied profession is the acceptance of its training program within the university framework (p. 6).

In fact, Parsons notes that, “Law and medicine... have constituted the frame within which a more elaborate system of applied professions has begun to proliferate” (p. 8). In other words, the common comparators for emergent professions (especially those in applied areas) traditionally have been law and medicine; and, they were used this way by both journalism and public relations in the 1920s.

### **The press (and others) react**

Bernays' attempts to redefine the press agent/publicist as a new profession didn't escape the notice of critics who, in large part, didn't quite see the distinction. Goldman notes that critics of *Crystallizing Public Opinion* “rubbed their eyes at this resplendent descendant of the press-agent” (p. 19). Among the most notable critics, sociologist Harold Lasswell (1928) questioned both Bernays' legal analogy and his attempt to redefine through a change of nomenclature.

The propagandist operates upon the public; the lawyer is more commonly restricted to the judge and jury.... He is bound by no special traditions of presenting his material (such as the rules of evidence), and he is subject to no umpire who exercises a continuous censorship over the formal validity of his contentions (p. 261).

Lasswell also questioned the renaming of propaganda as public relations. He noted that since propaganda had become “an epithet of contempt and hate” following the Great War, “propagandists have sought protective coloration in such names as ‘public relations council,’ ‘specialist in public education,’ public relations adviser” (p. 267).

*The New York Times* stood its traditional ground in a number of articles. A review by newspaper critic Herman Mankiewicz (1924) of Bernays' book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* revealed that “the public relations counsel, of course, is merely our old friend the press

agent.” Mankiewicz suggested that there was certainly a fine line between good and bad public relations. Nonetheless, he still saw the new profession, whatever its name, as “a dangerous occupation— that of public relations counsel or press agent or publicity representative—to leave unnoticed” (p. 3). He also hoped that something as simple as a name change would result in “a change in the ethics and manners of the press agent,” noting that, if that were the case, “people will be delighted to call him a public relations counsel or sweet little buttercup or anything he wishes.”

Meanwhile, journalist Ernest Gruening (1924a), long a critic of press agency and propaganda in general, suggested in a review of Bernays’ book (in an article for *The Nation* titled “The Higher Hokum”) that the new public relations counsel was, in fact, the “publicity man of yesterday, the shabby, underpaid fellow who sought to worm a little free space out of the newspapers by devious ways, raised to the nth power.” He wondered whether assigning a new expertise to an old practice would actually change the practice.

The public relations counsel’s function will be to create illusions, of which far too many have already been foisted on society without expert aid.... It is a extension of this very idea to professionalize and exalt what is already not an unknown though largely untitled vocation in our midst (p. 450).

*Time* magazine was especially vitriolic, continuing to harp at Bernays and his new practice throughout the decade of the 1920s. Reacting to a paid editorial placed in *Editor & Publisher* by Bernays in an attempt to define public relations, the editors of *Time* countered by calling “public relations counsel” simply the latest evolution of the “press agent” and “publicity agent.” “They do so in the harshest of tones,” says Penning (2008), “indicating an early animosity between journalists and public relations” (p. 353)

As the mongoose loathes the cobra, as the herring fears the shark, as the flapper dodges ‘lectures,’ so do editors shun the machinations of a species whose villainy is (to editors) as plain as the nose on your face and as hard to clap your eyes on. This species was for a long time called ‘press agent’...

Lately, Public Relations Counsellor [sic] Edward L. Bernays of Manhattan made a definition... Mr. Bernays declared: ‘The public relations counsel carries forward to a logical development, along broader and more constructive lines, the work of the ‘publicity man’ (*Time*, 1926).

*Time* specifically noticed the early attempts at offering public relations courses at universities. In 1929, *Time* reported, based on an article in *Editor & Publisher*, that Columbia University attempted to “conceal a course on press agency.” The publication had,

viewed with alarm the growing profession of 'public relations counsel.' It warned, editorially: 'This is the business that Ivy L. Lee, Edward L. Bernays. William B. Shearer . . . are in.'

'Propaganda,' said the editorial, 'can only represent a self-serving and partisan view. Therefore it corrupts the stream of public information. What the world needs is truth, all sides of every story, written by disinterested hands, with sources carefully identified.'

Sentimental editors wrote retorts in which they pretended that reporting is such a fine art they would just as soon have pursued it all their lives. They derided the fact that of Columbia's 26 graduate journalists last year, six at once became press agents (p. 60).

Probably, one of Bernays most tenacious critics was Stanley Walker, Editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*. In his 1934 book, *City Editor*, Walker devoted an entire chapter to the rise of the public relations counsel during the 1920s. He seemed to be one of the few willing to admit that not all publicists were cut from the same cloth.

Members of this strange profession range from the frightened, somewhat ratty Broadway hanger-on, who hopes to pick up a few dollars for whistling up any fly-by-night enterprise which comes along, to such elegant and philosophical practitioners as Ivy Lee and Edward L. Bernays, who represent large interests and movements directed at what is known as the Mass Mind, and who have brains....

It has been the custom to hold up Ivy Lee as the greatest example of what a newspaper man may do when he enters upon publicity work... but it is probable that Bernays is the more important as an American phenomenon. He is more of a psychologist, or psychoanalyst, than Lee.... Bernays has taken the sideshow barker and given him a philosophy and a new and awesome language: 'conditioned reflexes,' 'the creation of events and circumstances,' 'dramatic high-spotting,' and 'continuous interpretation.' He is no primitive drum-beater. He has written books and lectured at New York University on the methods and underlying psychological principles of his high art. He is devoid of swank and does not visit newspaper offices; and yet, the more thoughtful newspaper editors, who have their own moments of worry about the mass mind and commercialism, regard Bernays as a possible menace, and warn their colleagues of his machinations (Walker, p. 133).

Finally, although Walker might have discerned the difference between what Bernays was calling himself and the old-fashioned shills that had come before him, he wasn't altogether buying it. "No matter how effective he may be, or how much money he makes, it is still difficult to accord the press agent a professional status" (p. 144).

### **A perfect storm: The irony of simultaneous professional development**

A confluence of variables that were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century collided in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: The fading of the Barnum-like huckster and the emergence of the "press agent," the growing fields of psychology and sociology, the rise of the "new" propaganda and its nearly immediate fall from grace, the realization of mass communication on a global level, and the

drive to differentiate among the various forms of modern communication vying for the attention of a truly mass public. Add to this mix the influence of rising intellectuals whose primary field of inquiry *was* mass communication (Lippmann, Lasswell, Bernays, and others), and competition, discrimination, and spontaneous juggling for position in the new order was not only predictable, it was a foregone conclusion.

In a sense, Edward Bernays was trying to do the same thing that journalism was attempting, at exactly the same point in time. Both were trying to differentiate between what they did and what propagandists and press agents did. The press in numerous articles and within their newly minted codes fumbled with understanding the transformation of propaganda and publicity into what Bernays was calling “public relations.” At the same time, Bernays frequently injured his own cause by his constant attempts at reconstructing propaganda, especially with the publication of his second book of that title in 1928, which historian Scott Cutlip has called, “an inept public relations decision—to put it mildly” (Cutlip, p.182).

What Bernays did accomplish, however, was not only the introduction of a new term into the mass media lexicon, but also a new way of thinking about and actualizing publicity, whatever it was construed to be. As William H. Baldwin, of Baldwin and Mermey public relations, later wrote, “Bernays had more to do with developing acceptance for PR and public relations counsel than any half dozen other persons” (Walker, p. 21). And prolific business author Milton Wright (1935) noted that,

The closest approach to a professional status is that reached by those publicity men who, individually or in partnership, maintain organizations where they serve numbers of clients in much the same way as a lawyer serves his clientele on the basis of an annual retaining fee. It is through this method that some of the outstanding figures in publicity men like Ivy Lee, Edward L. Bernays and John Price Jones have accomplished their results (pp. 210-211).

The seed had been planted for a new profession, and it was constantly being tended by Bernays. As St. John (2010) notes, “By 1926, Edward Bernays had already begun to articulate that the new field of public relations was about more than space-grabbing; it was a profession that advocated new ideas against the ‘tremendous force’ of the mass mind” (p.75). Bernays himself continued to insist that,

A sense of public relations is not an instinct. It is not a taste nor an intuitive understanding. A sense of public relations is the product of strenuous and thorough going training in theory and practice. It is based on the same technical and professional work as most other fields of professional knowledge (*Today*, 1936, p. 10).

In 1927, Bernays even joined in short-lived attempt to establish a professional organization, serving as chairman of a group of like-minded practitioners meeting at the Advertising Club in New York. As the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) reported in its official *Bulletin*, “notable publicists, including Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee, had gathered together in New York to develop a code of ethics and attempt to ‘elevate the press agent’s occupation to a higher plane’” (St. John, p. 61). Ever the publicist, Bernays himself released the story to *Editor & Publisher* who, ever the editors, retitled it, “Planning to ‘Professionalize’ Press Agency” (Cutlip, p. 215).

Despite Bernays’ best efforts, the press continued to distance itself from publicity under any guise, especially its latest incarnation. According to St. John, “The rise of PR aggravated the press’ insecurities concerning its financial viability and its authorial autonomy” (p. 56). And, there is no doubt that, during this time, Bernays was chafing under constant belittling from the press, which had referred to him as “the young Machiavelli of our times” (Pew, 1928, p.32), and to his occupation as “publicity agents for special and selfish causes inimical to the general interest...” (Irwin, 1936, p.120) “[T]he profession of counsel on public relations lacked the respect that I felt it deserved,” Bernays later, plaintively, wrote.

St. John proposes that, “PR stimulated journalism’s professionalization movement, as evidenced in the rise of a postwar ‘anti-publicity’ movement in newsrooms across the country” (p. 56). However, it seems clear that journalism and public relations were *both* attempting to separate the wheat from the chaff during this pivotal time in American history. The era of the propagandist and the press agent was slowly fading. “The decade when ‘public relations’ was emerging as a common term was also an era when media responsibility and public opinion were hot topics” (Penning, p. 355). Journalism, under the instruction of Walter Lippmann, began a new era of truth seeking by donning the cloak of professionalism and setting itself apart from the other voices in “the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world” (Lippmann, p. 81). Although the new objectivity championed by Lippmann soon became the driving force behind journalistic professionalism and its laying sole claim to scientific facts and the ultimate “truth,” the parallel birth of public relations not only challenged that claim, it redefined it. Like Lippmann, Bernays “adopted the concept of the disinterested, morally mature, and intellectually developed expert who shaped meaning for the public” (Stoker, p. 6). However, unlike Lippmann, Bernays *believed* in the “court of public opinion.” In order to argue in that court, one had to have an advocate, and Bernays felt he was that person—that *counselor*.

In 1928, in an editorial written for the Boston *Independent*, he reiterated his call for professional recognition, and again likened public relations to other professions. He suggested that public relations, as a profession like medicine and law, was, also like them, honorable and vital to the public welfare. “And so,” he wrote, “there developed a special profession—I have called it public relations counsel” (p. 198).

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**Spinning the Spinners:**  
**Representations of Political Public Relations in *The Hollowmen* and *The Thick of It***

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**ABSTRACT**

The phenomenon of political PR has been captured and reflected in popular culture by various texts, particularly in the form of political satire. This study used critical textual analysis to examine representations of political PR in two popular television series, *The Hollowmen* and *The Thick Of It*, which satirise the inner workings of modern government in Australia and the United Kingdom (respectively). Results suggest representations in the texts are generally negative and reflect public concern about the nature of ‘spin’ and its apparent domination of both politics and the media in contemporary democracies. The role these representations may play in shaping public understanding of political PR, and the implications of this, are discussed.

**KEY WORDS**

Democracy, Political Communication, Politics, Public Relations, Representation,  
Satire, Spin, Television, Textual Analysis

## 1. Introduction and literature review

Political public relations (PR) is an integral but often derided part of western society and the modern media landscape. Politicians and journalists maintain a symbiotic relationship with ‘spin’ that is an important element in contemporary liberal democracies and the political arena. This relationship has been captured and reflected in popular culture by various texts over time, particularly in the form of satire. This study explored representations of political public relations in two popular television series *The Hollowmen* (2008) and *The Thick of It* (2005, 2007, 2009, 2012). This paper concludes that representations in these texts may play an important role in shaping public understanding of political PR.

### 1.1. *The rise of the ‘spin doctor’*

The demand for skilled PR practitioners has been on the rise since the influential work of Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays (and *Propaganda* 1928; see their seminal studies, respectively, *Public Opinion* 1922). However, over the last 30 years, the public relations industry has expanded exponentially across the world’s advanced capitalist societies, thriving on the professionalization of communication in our mediatised culture (Davis, 2002, pp. 19-22; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; McNair, 2004; 2006, pp. 47, 64; Miller & Dinan, 2000, pp. 7-8). McNair (2000, p. 126) suggests that a “combination of mass democracy and mass media made it both possible and necessary” for the phenomenon of public relations to develop. Davis (2002) argues that, for better or for worse, we have moved towards a “public relations democracy” where PR is an engrained function in political, economic, and cultural processes.

Enter the ‘spin doctor’. These PR experts have thrived in the political sphere and are responsible for spinning the meta-narrative of politicians and their parties, which is in turn the life-blood of a sustained and effective permanent campaign” aimed at attracting and maintaining public support (see also Mann & Ornstein, 2000; Stockwell, 2007, pp. 130-132). With increasing emphasis placed on the importance of political brand building and the value of collaborative communication, both sides of the political spectrum employ PR practitioners to help them cultivate their images and maximise the impact of their messages (Davis, 2002, pp. 3, 171). Politicians increasingly rely on PR to sculpt their public identities, manage their reputations, and develop communication strategies that target their constituents with engaging and persuasive dialogue (Hobsbawm, 2010, pp. 2-4; Negrine &

Papathanassopoulos, 2011, pp. 48-50). Indeed there are now not only more PR practitioners than journalists in most Western democracies (Jackson, 2012; McNair, 2010, p. 184), but civil (public) servants are being sidelined or replaced as main ministerial advisors by political aides (staffers) who predominantly perform PR functions in their capacity as special advisors (Benoit, 2006; Tiernan, 2007; Whelan, 2011).

The emphasis placed on universal suffrage in democratic states has resulted in a growing sensitivity of those in power to the importance of public opinion (McNair, 2000, p. 124; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008, pp. 152-153). McNair (2006) suggests that this sensitivity is also a result of the proliferation of mass media in the twentieth century and societies' increased access to a range of information sources. He argues "political actors henceforth have an incentive to ensure that they are presented favourably in the media, and that any negative coverage is minimised" (McNair, 2006, p. 61). For political PR to effectively achieve this goal, Castells (2009) asserts it must perform two roles in the process of communication: the active dissemination of information and the art of persuasion and propaganda. The former role can be evaluated as inherently "good" for liberal democracies, while the latter role can be evaluated as "bad" depending on whose interests are served by the content and nature of the persuasion (Jackson, 2010).

Despite its burgeoning state since the early 1900s, PR has remained a largely unseen profession, operating as a hidden intermediary between various stakeholders and publics (see also Cutlip, 1994; Wright & VanSlyke Turk, 2007, p. 574). This is even more so in the case of political PR. As Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2011a) suggest, political PR has remained concealed because it has been able to quietly slide into the gap between corporate public relations and traditional political communication. Yet Morris and Goldsworthy (2008, p. 186) suggest that "without PR, politicians would be ignorant of the needs and desires of their citizens, and people would be unaware of much of what government can do for them." As stressed by Cutlip et al. (2009) the need is for *mutually beneficial* relationships, connoting that, ideally, public relations embraces reciprocity. The democratic notion of government *of* the people and *for* the people raised in the Gettysburg Address is implicit in this idealised definition of political PR and applicable across cultures. However, Strömbäck and Kiouisis (2011a) capture a key dilemma when they point out, 'what public relations *is* and what it *should be* are two separate matters.'

## *1.2. Criticisms of 'spin'*

Despite the expansion and increased professionalization of the industry and its practices, PR “does not seem to have outgrown [its] pervasive identity crisis” (de Bussy & Wolf, 2009, p. 376; see also Henderson, 1998; White & Park, 2010). In particular, the emergence of PR in politics has attracted considerable scrutiny and cynicism. Most critiques accuse political PR of being inherently anti-democratic and focus on examining the adversarial yet symbiotic relationship between PR, the media, and power (see Burton, 2007; Dinan & Miller, 2007b; Hobsbawm, 2010; Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). Public relations is seen to be disrupting political agency and degrading public discourse (Tanner, 2011) as so called spin doctors push their organisation’s vested interests and corporate agendas at the public’s expense (Burton, 2007; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). The public sphere is perceived to be saturated to a point where any indication of conflict is stonewalled, and anything of importance is buried and lost under a mountain of superfluous rhetoric that does little to inform the public (Davies, 2008; Dinan & Miller, 2007b; Louw, 2010; Stockwell, 2007). Morris and Goldsworthy (2008, p. 186) also suggest that “although most PR people get on cheerfully with their work, the industry can seem defensive and unable to tell the world more about itself.” As such, McNair (2006, p. 64) considers the perpetual “demonology of spin”, and the spinners who spin it, is hardly surprising, when even the industry finds it difficult to articulate its identity.

Conflict between the ideological and perverse intentions of PR is captured by Turnbull (2007, p. 120) who emphasises that PR tends to blur the line between information and propaganda. Ward (2007) asserts that this is symptomatic of our progression towards a pervasive PR state, and a reflection of life in an era of the 24-hour news cycle where governments and private enterprises battle for public opinion *through* the media (see also MacDermott, 2008; Mann & Ornstein, 2000; Turnbull, 2007). McNair (2007, p. 97) argues that this lack of separation between public and private interests has resulted in the perception that political communication “violate[s] the normative ideal, and corrupt[s] the public sphere.” Indeed, much of the scholarly condemnation of public relations is framed by Jurgen Habermas’s (1989) argument about the decline of the bourgeois public sphere and the “refeudalisation” of contemporary democracy. Louw (2010) however, states that the rational-critical public sphere no longer fits with the post-modern world of mass media, mass information, and mass democracy. Johnston and Stockwell (2005, p. 21) propose our world is now one where anyone can become “citizen-hackers who co-opt PR techniques and the

strategies of the media campaign with an awareness of the ethical responsibilities inherent in the production of broad-ranging democratic exchanges.”

Thus on the flip side is a more positive view, commonly advocated by PR professional and industry associations, that sees political PR as a practice that serves the public interest by facilitating communication and contributing to informed debates on issues in society (Cutlip et al., 2009; Toth, Grunig & Grunig, 2007). Coombs and Holladay (2007, p. 2) are also sympathetic to this cause, arguing “public relations offers a mechanism for people to be involved in the marketplace of ideas.” Indeed, it is often through public relations activities that citizens have the opportunity to engage directly with their political representatives. Furthermore, voters are, to varying degrees, highly discerning media savvy individuals, who are often sceptical of political communication, and not easily indoctrinated by repeated political mantras (Young, 2011, pp. 29-30). No longer perceived as a mindless mob passively accepting as fact whatever they are dished out, the public is instead perceived as capable of making informed decisions, and motivated to do so provided they have access to information and the freedom to openly deliberate (Gastil, 2008). While political PR is undoubtedly oftentimes an attempt to influence public opinion and behaviour, critiques like Dinan and Miller’s (2007a) implication that it suspends critical faculties and suppresses the free expression of will assumes PR has a near-godly power of persuasion. It also fails to recognise the role of other gatekeepers circulating in the media landscape, such as journalists, who still exercise their capacity as the fourth estate to varying degrees (see McNair, 2000, 2004). What is apparent however is a lack of holistic understanding of what public relations is and what PR practitioners do, given the industry has found it difficult to remove the “smoke and mirrors” from around the “smoke and mirrors” (Bowen, 2009, p. 403; Cutlip, 1994; Wright & VanSlyke Turk, 2007, pp. 573-574).

### *1.3. Understanding spin through representation*

While the machinations of public relations have been reflected in popular culture since as early as the 1930s (see Saltzman, 2012; Watson, 2012), there has been minimal scholarly research on how public relations is represented in these media texts, and even less specifically on political PR. Existing research on representations of PR varies from listing texts with short summaries (see Ames, 2010; Lee, 2001, 2009; Tavcar, 1993, 1994) to thematic analysis of representations and subsequent exploratory discussion (see Johnston, 2010a, 2010b; Miller, 1999; Saltzman, 2012). Lee (2001, 2009) notably presents a summary

of 27 films, across two studies, featuring PR professionals in government administration, though his purpose is of identification rather than analysis. Other approaches have also examined how PR has been represented in the media (see for example Jo, 2003; Keenan, 1996; Spicer, 1993).

Saltzman's (2012) recent study identified 327 films and television programs featuring representations of public relations from 1901-2011. While it is the most extensive study to date, the breadth of Saltzman's (2012) research precluded depth of analysis. Tavcar's (1993) short article "Public relations on the screen" is the earliest study to focus specifically on popular depictions of PR, proposing that while cultural representations of PR are not as prevalent as that of other professions, they are still worthy of note for building understanding about what Lambert (2011, p. 205) calls "preconceived ideas about the field." However, Tavcar's (1993) research, like other later studies (see Ames, 2010; Lee, 2001, 2009), was primarily descriptive and provided minimal analysis of the films listed, or depth of discussion about the significance of these texts. Miller's (1999, p. 3) article "PR in film and fiction" was the first to draw on wider debates, with focused analysis on the "misconceptions about and stereotypes of PR that are relayed to the public through [popular culture]" from an industry perspective. Miller (1999) and Ames (2010) criticise the stereotypes used in the texts, arguing that they are a poor reflection of the reality of public relations practitioners and their work. While each study clearly describes how PR is portrayed in the texts, attempting to measure representations against reality restricts the capacity to fully engage with what these texts tell us about how public relations is *understood* in and by society.

Johnston's (2010b) study "A history of public relations on screen" is an exception to this. She expands on Miller's (1999) original work and investigated representations of PR more broadly from a historical perspective emphasising that "looking at, talking about and analysing [texts] can feed into [societies'] collective understanding of the [PR] profession" (2010b, p. 190). Johnston (2010b) draws parallels between cultural representations and developments in public relations throughout history as a way of helping to "inform a profession about how it was seen to have developed over 80 plus years" – in this instance through the lens of film and television. This is similar to Ewen's (1996) approach in *PR! A Social History of Spin* where he traced the evolution of PR through its social and political backdrop by drawing on anecdotal evidence from books, news media, and professionals openly speaking about PR. Appropriately, Johnston's (2010a, 2010b) discussion and

outcomes are centred around the PR industry. However, given the close intersection between public relations and other communication and cultural disciplines, it would seem fitting to adopt a broader theoretical paradigm in order to further explore this line of enquiry. It is here that McNair's book *Journalists in Film* (2010) becomes an exemplar, where he treats textual representations as a reflection of the agenda of public debate, and as worthy of analysis in their own right. While McNair's (2010) focus is on journalism, he notes that as PR has become an increasingly central component in liberal democracies, and as representations of PR in popular culture become more common, research in this area is both important and timely.

## **2. Method**

This study explores representations of political public relations in *The Hollowmen* (THM) and *The Thick of It* (TTOI) two popular television series, which satirise the inner workings of modern governments in Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). Using a primary research method of critical textual analysis, this study sought to analyse the *likely* interpretation of representations of political PR in texts, with the aim to explore, reason, and debate perceptions of PR in society more broadly. It examined key themes of how these programs present fictionalised representations of political PR and the mediatised political communication processes operating in contemporary liberal democracies.

### *2.1. PR in popular culture?*

Cultural texts, including film, television, books, blogs, and radio, draw on social concerns and inform (and are informed by) public discourse. Critical analysis of representations within these texts, of specific people, places, pursuits, and importantly, professions, can be an effective method for helping to better understand society (McNair, 2010). Hight (2010, p. 291) recognises that texts, especially those on television, have “the capacity of performing acts of critical literacy in relation to broader cultural and political life,” because they act as a readily available “cultural touchstone[s]” for audiences (see also 2003; McKee, 2001; Wagner, Kronberger & Seifert, 2002). Johnston (2010a, p. 1) is mindful that while “we cannot generalise too liberally about how audiences might view the industry of public relations through these [texts]” much of the literature on representation suggests depictions in popular culture are “a primary source of how the citizenry learns about a profession” and its (perceived) place in society. This approach offers a perspective that is



centred on an interrogation of the public perception of this industry (and those that work within it) as it reflected through the contemporary cultural forms of television. Ultimately, representations of PR in media texts are collective critical explorations of what PR stands for in society. This study aims to critically analyse these narratives in *THM* and *TTOI*, in order to explicate how they are linked to broader debates about the nature of spin and the role of PR practitioners in contemporary politics.

## 2.2. Sample texts

Many of the contemporary textual representations of PR are found in political satire, of which *THM* and *TTOI* are exemplars. *THM* is an Australian television series that was originally screened in 2008. It was a satirical exploration of the way Australia's political system operates and the policy decisions made in light of politicians' preoccupation with getting re-elected. *TTOI* is a British television series that was first broadcast in 2005. It satirises British politics and politicians' dependence on spin doctoring. These programs were chosen for critical interrogation for two reasons. First, both series' explicitly portray political PR as their primary theme, thus offering extensive representations for analysis. Second, both programs were critically well received and (relatively) popular with audiences, attracting an average of one million regular viewers during their original runs.

In total, the first nine episodes (292 minutes of footage) of *TTOI* and all 12 episodes (322 minutes of footage) of *THM* were viewed and analysed. The third and fourth series of *TTOI* were not analysed in order to contain the scope of the research. In order to provide structure to the textual analysis, a thematic network analysis was applied which involved an inductive approach to analysis, similar to that used by Spicer (1993) and Miller (1999). The verbal, visual, technical and contextual content from the texts was organised according to coherent and salient themes as they emerged, rather than attempting to fit data into predetermined categories. Related data was collapsed into themes at three levels: global, organising, and basic themes. This thematic network was used to structure the results and discussion sections of the paper.

## 2.3. *The Thick of It*

In 2004, comedian Armando Iannucci was commissioned by BBC4 to develop a low-budget political satire after he publicly championed the need for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of *Yes Minister* / *Yes, Prime Minister* (1980-1988) in a national BBC poll for "Britain's Best

Sitcom” (Armstrong, 2006). *TTOI* was soon born, with Iannucci (2007) describing the show as a satirical sitcom where *Yes Minister* meets *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-1998). It has also been likened to popular mockumentary *The Office* (2001) given its cinéma vérité style and fly-on-the-wall filming, and American sitcom *Spin City* (1996-2002) for its focus on the role of political staffers in government.

The screening of the first season coincided with the UK’s General Election held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2005. Similarly, the “specials” were broadcast during the change of New Labour leadership from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown in 2006/2007. The political contextualisation and parallels drawn in *TTOI* to the activities of New Labour’s approach to government are widely considered to have contributed to the show’s popularity. *TTOI* was critically acclaimed in the UK, and won multiple awards. It consistently attracted an average audience of over one million; however it maintained a low profile until after Iannucci’s feature length spin-off film, *In The Loop* (2009), was released. This brought *TTOI* into the limelight and further broadened the show’s audience base.

The first and second series and the specials are set in the impoverished backrooms of the British government. The episodes revolve around the daily activities of the (fictional) Department of Social Affairs and Citizenship (DoSAC) as its Minister, Hugh Abbott, and his swamp of advisors. The team at DoSAC are regularly interrupted by the Government’s abusive Director of Communications Malcolm Tucker, who is doing everything he can to ensure the Ministry toe the party line and make the Government look good in the media. *TTOI* is filmed in chronological sequence and relies on the cast to improvise much of the script in order to enhance the “realism” of the show and ensure it has a lingering “whiff of authenticity about it” (Iannucci, 2007, p. xi).

#### 2.4. *The Hollowmen*

*THM* was a television comedy series, locally popular in Australia, and first broadcast in July 2008. The show was produced by Working Dog Productions, a successful Melbourne-based production company, whose team were also the creative genius behind other popular Australian television comedy programs *Frontline* (1994-1997), *The Panel* (1998-2004), and *Thank God You’re Here* (2006-2009). *THM* was well received by audiences and critics in Australia, attracting an average weekly audience of one million and winning a number of awards. In a vote of confidence, the ABC announced it had commissioned a second series on

the eve of the first episode's premiere. The second series screened immediately after the first, at the new timeslot of 9.00pm. Both series consisted of six half hour episodes and were repeated on ABC2 and made available for viewing on ABC iView, the ABC's free Internet TV service.

Described as a satirical comedy-drama and shot in mockumentary style with hand-held cameras, *THM* was based around the inner workings of the Australian Federal Government's "Central Policy Unit" (CPU), a fictitious strategic team of political advisors established to manage the media and develop policies based on popular public opinion. The central characters, or "hollow-men", are essentially political staffers – the anonymous "power behind the power" who "wield enormous [unseen] influence" in government, and are "unafraid" and "uncompromising" because they are "unelected" and thus unaccountable to the public (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2008). It was widely regarded by fans and critics as a timely political commentary that highlighted politicians' preoccupation with rhetoric and getting re-elected rather than getting the job done.

According to the producers, *THM* exposed the emptiness of contemporary politics, and gave political spin doctors the same treatment *Frontline* gave to commercial current affairs (see Blundell, 2008; Ellis, 2008; Idato, 2008; McManus, 2008). The genesis for the show came after Working Dog's Santo Cilauro produced a documentary, *The Campaign*, which followed then Prime Minister Paul Keating and his media team in the lead up to the 1996 Australian Federal election. This fascination with the inner workings of politics and the news media stuck, though Working Dog chose to bide their time. Director Rob Sitch (who also co-wrote, co-produced, and starred in the show) said *THM* evolved from over a decade of observation and research around the idea that while democracies publicly elect Members of Parliament (MPs), the power brokers and political machinery behind these representatives remain largely invisible:

[What] we kept pointing out as we plotted the idea was how removed from power someone like that [Ministers] had become. ... The points we were wanting to make kept gravitating towards the prime minister's office [the political staffers] and, in a way, away from elected officials. ... Politics has become so efficient and professional in so many ways ... it's [sic] run more like a corporation – a CEO, a board, and lots of [stakeholder] feedback. (Sitch quoted in Idato, 2008, p. 4).

The professionalization of democratic politics, politicians, and indeed political communication, has been a concern in academic circles for some time (Louw, 2010), so it is unsurprising that the issue was picked up by Working Dog, who are well known for ‘high modern’ media criticism through satirical television.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The results of critical textual analysis of *THM* and *TTOI* were structured using an inductive thematic network. Organising (primary) themes including identity, gender, power, and information control are discussed. Relevant social, political, and cultural elements in the texts external environments, as well as broader theoretical considerations are drawn on where appropriate, given generated interpretation and meaning are often contextually specific.

#### *3.1. Political PR, but by any other name*

Overall *TTOI* and *THM* provide a deeply cynical perspective on the contemporary political processes and communication strategies used in liberal democracies. Both shows share a number of similarities in genre (televised political satire), style (fly-on-the-wall mockumentary), programming (public service broadcast), and content, however the real common ground is captured by *TTOI* creator Iannucci, who describes his concern that:

Today, a minister surrounds him- or herself not with administrators but advisors – close political allies or specialists brought in above the departmental staff, who guide the minister through every waking moment, advising on how well a policy might play with a particular electoral group or selection of the media. The advisors are there not just to help formulate policy, but to make sure policy is subtly tweaked or drastically changed if it’s in any danger of getting a bad press. ... Media coverage has such a dominant hold over political life that appearance can often take greater precedence over substance. (Iannucci, 2007, p. ix).

This captures the context behind the creation of both *TTOI* and *THM*, and identifies issues around changing political power relations and the purpose(s) of political communication. Here senior political staffers, in addition to those political personnel engaged in what is commonly referred to as ‘public affairs’, have increasingly taken on political public relations functions as part of their job, yet they rarely identify it directly as such (Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2011b, pp. 10-12). That political PR professionals are filling key political advisory roles is a true realisation of Grunig’s (2006) definition that PR belongs at the *strategic management* level of an organisation, as public relations in the political sphere

has become a priority enforced from the top down and enacted by lower-level technicians. In the texts we see these unseen strategic political operatives perform public relations on every level, from policy development and poll analysis to relationship management and campaign communication. Thus the typical spin doctors in *THM* and *TTOI* are not confined to those filling traditional media relations or communications director roles, for the aides and advisors are seen to have become professional spinners too (Kerr, 2008; Price, 2011).

### *3.2. Character identities and their world of work*

Three archetypal characters emerged from analysis of the texts: enforcers, crawlers, and subservients. These archetypes capture how practitioners are being represented as people with common personalities, attitudes, and behaviours. In *THM* and *TTOI* enforcers typically occupy the more senior positions in government communications and are consistently insensitive, controlling, aggressive, and manipulative. They are the godfathers of the political mafia. These characters are much more prevalent in *TTOI*, like Malcolm Tucker (played by Peter Capaldi), the villain protagonist, whose tyrannical reign over Number 10 is peppered by his cantankerous foul mouthed tirades, openly hostile threats, and total lack of sensitivity. Capaldi's character reflects the new wave of unelected political authorities that spread with New Labour's rise to popularity and power in the 1990's in the UK. While the character of Malcolm is commonly thought to be based on Tony Blair's infamous spin doctor Alastair Campbell, Capaldi has repeatedly insisted that his embodiment of the Government's Communication Director was actually modelled on infamous Hollywood film producer and studio boss Harvey Weinstein. Regardless, Malcolm Tucker "is the evil personification of spin as it has been practised throughout the advanced capitalist world in recent times" (McNair, 2007, p. 94). He epitomises a new breed political 'enforcers', responsible for ruthlessly ensuring all government departments stick to the party's line and reflect positively on the Prime Minister (PM). Crawlers tend to be depicted as mid-level special political advisors who are ambitious, self-interested, obsequious, and opportunistic, such as Ollie Reeder (Chris Addison) in *TTOI* and Nick (Merrick Watts) in *THM*. They become the bullyboys in the political backrooms – bullied by the enforcers, but also called on to bully others on the enforcers' behalf. Subservients, like Terri Coverly (Joanna Scanlan) in *TTOI* and Holly (Nicola Parry) in *THM*, fulfil more traditional technical PR roles such as media advisers, and begrudgingly do as they are told. They are priggish, piqued, and principled in

accordance with their own personal set of values, and they tend to whinge, whine and complain.

While on occasion the character types blur and overlap, the distinction between the three reflects traditional political power hierarchies that are enacted in the real world, with the additional assertion in *THM* and *TTOI* that politicians and civil servants have been forced to take a back seat as the spinners drive the Government's activities. This is a shift away from representations of governmental structures in earlier texts such as *Yes Minister / Yes Prime Minister* (1980-1988) where power is portrayed as engrained in bureaucratic structures to which public servants such as Permanent Secretary Humphrey Appleby (Nigel Hawthorne) hold the keys, while politicians like the Rt Hon Jim Hacker MP (Paul Eddington) battle uphill with their aides against this in an effort to formulate and enact legislation for the good of the people. Through characters in *THM* and *TTOI* we see political PR practitioners subject to a clear chain of authoritative command where they are compelled to do the enforcer's bidding, regardless of any ethical objections. Failing to do so signals the end of their career prospects. In the worlds of *THM* and *TTOI*, relationships are played out with an overriding tone of dispassion, and there is no time for petty personal problems or life (that is, non-work) dramas, as they must keep the Government looking good above all else. The workplace that results is a dog-eat-dog world that is not for the feint-hearted. Politics is represented as a game where political PR practitioners hold most of the cards and change the rules as it suits them.

Based on the representations in *THM* and *TTOI*, political PR is far from the glamorous, highflying lifestyle one might expect to come from a role that largely rides on the coat tails of our political leaders. Although practitioners operate in the same fast-paced and dynamic environment of politics, they are plagued by a culture of bullying, arse kissing, insensitivity, and very long hours. That practitioners willingly throw themselves into the voracious chaos of the political arena contradicts the common perception of (non-political) public relations as an "easy" or "soft" industry (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008, p. 18). Political PR practitioners, as they are represented in the texts, are not the traditional "smiling professionals" that has come to be associated with public relations and other communication professions (Hartley, 1992, p. 135). Instead they are "po-faced" and see their role as fundamental to the Government's success (Morris & Goldsworthy, 2008, pp. 185-186). They are shown in the texts to operate in what McNair (2004) describes as the small space between

the fluctuating political environment and the responsive and volatile 24-hour news cycle. Expected to predict and pre-empt where possible, and react instantly and effectively where not, it is little wonder characters in *TTOI* and *THM* are portrayed as working relentlessly long hours and under impossibly tight deadlines. Both texts even display the day and time during certain episodes to visibly highlight the non-stop pace and quick turnaround time practitioners are subject to. Politics, it would seem, stops for no one, and those involved are expected to keep up. *THM* and *TTOI* represent political PR as an all consuming profession that is simply do-or-die – and given the instinctual animal response of human beings is to go for the “do” option, political PR becomes depicted as an all consuming profession that demands the same level of ruthlessness and resilience as the animal kingdom.

### 3.3. Gender relations

There is little demographic diversity in the representations of political PR practitioners in *TTOI* and *THM*. The majority of the central characters are suit and tie wearing white Caucasian males, aged between mid twenties to early fifties, who occupy the most senior strategic positions. A smaller proportion is thirty-something business skirt wearing female characters that occupy lower level support roles. This distinction is important as the texts portray political PR as a male dominated gendered profession. It is also consistent with conclusions drawn from other studies about representations of (non-political) PR that identify many more depictions of male characters than female (Johnston, 2010a; Lambert & White, 2011; Lee, 2001; Miller, 1999), and aligns with the masculine hegemonic discourse commonly associated with the political environment (Van Zoonen, 2003). Though as Johnston (2010a) notes, women are traditionally underrepresented as onscreen protagonists and often depicted as subordinate – thus such gendered representation is not unique to PR or politics.

Although the PR industry as a whole has a high proportion of women – estimated at approximately 70 to 80 per cent – the strategic leadership and management level roles are still dominated by men (Grunig, Toth & Hon, 2000; Johnston & Zawawi, 2009; Toth & Aldoory, 2001). This reality is reflected in *THM* and *TTOI*, while female characters are left to fill conventionally technical roles such as media advisor or press secretary. Despite holding formal titles like “director” or “senior”, the female characters in both texts spend the majority of their time performing technical tasks such as sorting through media clippings, writing press releases, or responding to requests for information from journalists with strict

instructions to use whatever line they have been given by their male superiors. Sexist and chauvinistic remarks directed towards female characters are rife, and reinforced by the “publicly glorified male bonding” that is typically encouraged between politicians (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000, p. 63), though is also evident among political staff according to depictions in *TTOI* and *THM*.

To be a successful political PR practitioner is of course not solely dependent on having a Y chromosome, however, *THM* and *TTOI* certainly suggest it helps. The aggressive language, hardline attitudes, and blatant sexism portrayed in the texts are the sort of overtly masculine territories that are not culturally associated with women. As such, this testosterone charged environment implies that politics, and political PR, are overwhelmingly a man’s world. Women are positioned in the texts as more suited to performing emotional labour that involves dealing with people and capitalising on feelings to influence responses to situations and issues. Female characters are represented in frontline communication roles, which Yeomans (2007) suggests is a typical form of emotional labour. In both *TTOI* and *THM* women are portrayed as *not* being able to swap roles with men, though in contrast men are seen as able to aptly perform the roles of women when required. The female characters in both *TTOI* and *THM* are consistently treated as doing jobs that anyone could do, and, more often than not, it is alluded that those (males) above them could do it better themselves if only they had the time. This representation reinforces the impression that there is a “glass ceiling” for women in political PR, and indeed the PR industry in general (Lee, 2001, p. 309).

### *3.4. Power and information control*

The final two central themes – power and information control – are interrelated and are portrayed in the texts as primary objectives and a motivating obsession of political PR practitioners. The texts represent power flexed by political PR in legitimate efforts to control the media, the “loop”, and the message. Information control is portrayed as the favoured way for PR practitioners to manage the political circus and secure the Government’s chances of re-election. However, in pursuit of this power and control, practitioners have earned a reputation for manipulation and deceit, with the concern that the aim of government communications is more about setting a particular agenda than providing information to citizens.



What is consistent across *TTOI* and *THM* is that political PR is represented as the real brains behind political operations, and as such they are portrayed as the central source of information, guidance, and power in politics. They operate in an ideologically-neutral world, and dictate politicians' days from what to wear, to what to say, and take care of general media management and crisis control for the Government, as well as performing the behind the scenes strategic decision making from policy development to smoothing party divisions. The idea that it is the unelected officials that control the appointments of our elected politicians seems to cause the most social concern in that there is a presumed lack of transparency, and therefore a lack of trust, in government. This is a result of the inherent deep-seated unease that anything that goes on behind closed doors is unlikely to be in the public's interest, and must instead serve a darker ulterior motive. Given some of the high profile cases where PR has been used to mask abuses of power, cover up corruption, or hide safety issues in the commercial sector, the paranoia that PR plays a similar role in politics is understandable. Indeed, the tag line for *THM* captures this secrecy and unseen coercion:

Unafraid, uncompromising, unelected. We don't vote for them, we don't even know their names and we're not quite sure what they do. But they wield enormous influence. They are the power behind the power. They are *The Hollowmen*. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2008).

This is exacerbated by the reality that those who do not have direct experience with PR, often have a limited understanding about what PR is – that is, its purpose and function – and what practitioners do. Good PR after all is often intentionally subtle and deliberately unobtrusive, though practitioners attempt to remain behind the curtain and out of the spotlight can be confused with the assumption that they have something to hide

In both *THM* and *TTOI*, it is political PR practitioners who are calling the shots. However, it is important to note that political PR practitioners are *not* represented in either text as peddling any personal or ideological agenda. Rather than imposing a particular political dogma or alternative agenda on the public, their actions and motivations are focused entirely on ensuring the PM's appearance and approval stay positive in the public eye, because by consequence this secures their own positions of authority and future careers. As represented in the texts, political PR practitioners simply, albeit vainly, desire power for the sake of power. In order to achieve this though they have to be acutely aware of voter sensitivities, and their ends justifies the means approach is in part based on fulfilling the fickle wants of the public – since giving people what they want usually produces pleasure,

satisfaction, and a favourable attitude. In the advanced capitalists systems of Australia and the UK, attempts to go beyond this and actually put forward policy that might meet the *needs* of the public are often slandered for enforcing “nanny-state” politics and taking away the democratic rights of citizens to make their own decisions (see for example Merritt, 2011). Thus the power of political PR practitioners is constrained, even if its practitioners are the real political decision makers as *THM* and *TTOI* suggest, because it is limited to courses of action that will be popular with voters. While this ties in with debates around the pros and cons of populism, it challenges the idea that political PR is inherently sinister.

In order to exercise power at all, political public relations practitioners must be ring masters of the political circus, where remaining in control over information flows and content is paramount to pulling off a successful show. Being in ‘the loop’ and managing ‘the message’ are represented in *TTOI* and *THM* as the core obsessions of political PR practitioners. It is suggested that this is in part a response to the acceleration of the media environment, where political PR must run on the same 24 hours news cycle as journalists. This implies that political PR practitioners must be wired in and in the know about what is happening on all fronts in order to stay one step ahead of the game. While most individuals start out as having intermittent access to ‘the loop’, power is gained through greater access and control of the loop’s infrastructure. Malcolm Tucker, at the pinnacle of political PR positions, is, as he suggests, not only part of the matrix but *the* matrix, capturing the fact that he presides over the system and supervises its operations. In order to maintain the system however and retain control of the loop, practitioners must employ certain tactics to ensure operations are contained.

Journalists are often depicted in *TTOI* as the victims – bullied into servitude by the powerful and at the mercy of their capitalist media industry, driving them to continually produce content that reflects the interests of those in control of the system. From this perspective, public relations is the face of the bully and the gatekeeper to information sources that provide the lifeblood of the journalistic profession. In this position political PR practitioners are seen to have a significant advantage over journalists, and are largely able to dictate what gets published when. As governments and their respective departments are key sources of information, journalists rely on them to provide them with content – this is of course considerably easier and cheaper for the journalists too. Knowing this, PR practitioners are able to selectively choose what content to provide, and beyond this, who to provide it too.

Political PR as we are shown in *TTOI* takes full advantage of this situation. Indeed, this representation clearly implies that political PR practitioners are no longer journalists' dogsbodies (McNair, 2000, p. 138), but have asserted themselves and declared themselves as master. While the power to influence journalists and control information outputs from the outset may be a good thing for the profession internally, it is a shift that journalists, scholars, and others are strongly opposed to.

In *TTOI*, Malcolm makes it abundantly clear who is in charge of the situation – and by consequence who is in charge of the media – as well as detailing the repercussions involved as a counsel against anyone double crossing him. This aggressive style can be seen as a reflection of the Blair Government's heavy handed approach to communication and a reaction to (and attempt to overcome), what McNair (2009, p. 81) calls a tradition of "hyperadversarial" journalism. On this it is difficult to determine if the professionalisation of political communication (and increase in presence of political PR) is a response to an increasingly aggressive media, or whether political journalism has become increasingly hostile in order to counter the increase in political PR and their apparent attempts to spin stories and manage the media. Political PR and journalism are represented in *TTOI* as arch nemeses, fighting for authority, authenticity, and influence with their audience, where, for the most part, political PR is seen in *TTOI* to be winning this war, and doing so largely behind the scenes and out the public eye.

However, the dynamic portrayed in *TTOI* can be distinctly contrasted with *THM*. While political PR is still portrayed as being a key information source for journalists in this text as well, the extent of their control over information is considerably diminished compared to *TTOI*. In *THM* the relationship between political PR and the media is represented as mutual but independent, with journalists able to air and publish content free of retribution from the Government. While preference is still given to select journalistic sources who the CPU hopes will communicate supplied information in the Government's favour, the journalists still hold the power as to what they do with provided information. For example, the Australian parliamentary press gallery is described across a number of episodes in *THM* as "a gang", "a clique", "a frenzy of sharks", and "vultures, picking on the bones of a carcass." Tony (Rob Sitch), the Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary and *THM*'s chief enforcer, describes journalists as conducting "asymmetrical warfare," where political PR is

the Government's only defence against relentless negative news coverage. This portrayal is the reverse of the war in *TTOI*, where political PR practitioners call the shots.

The embittered resentment held by characters in *THM* indicates that political PR is the begrudging victim here, and suggests a clear *lack* of (total) effective control by government communications over journalism. Instead, the CPU opts for the *appearance* of control – hoping this will contain, or at least divert, any unwanted media attention. Political PR in *THM* takes a more reactionary approach to the media, where they wait with baited breath for the next day's news headlines and do their best to weather the storm when it hits, and minimise damage where they can. A 'do whatever it takes' attitude follows (rather than precedes) this in order to get the media and the public back on side and focused on the *good* things about the Government. This positive, roll-with-the-punches approach reflects both the Howard and Rudd Government's style of media relations in Australia, where agendas are set based on polling, and fallout is dealt with after the fact. While it is clear from *THM* that political PR has the power in terms of resources to achieve this, whether it is to launch a new policy initiative or open another public building, they do not have the coercive power needed to influence the news. Political PR is represented in *THM* as being subject to the fancies of the press, with practitioners charged with tracking and reacting to the media's movements but rarely able to set the ball rolling down a particular path. In *THM* journalists are law unto themselves, with political PR employed by the Government to minimise the havoc they cause, pick up any pieces, and move on as quickly as possible.

Political PR strives for consistency and coordination in the delivery of government messages. In this way, practitioners can more easily regulate the communications activities of their politicians. Consistency of message is also depicted as a paramount objective to ensure an impression of party uniformity is presented, as this in turn is seen to create an air of reliability and trust with the public. Regular message reinforcement achieves this while also strengthening the impact of the message on its audiences through repetition. In the texts individual MPs are reprimanded for differing from the set party line, reinforcing the idea that it is not the politicians that are in control of the Government. Rather, it is political PR practitioners that have the power to determine the party's position and the responsibility for enforcing this. Individually expressed statements, regardless of whether they are personal opinion or an interpretation of the party line, are represented as dangerous, downright taboo, and always thoroughly discouraged. Any deviation from the PR-crafted script risks the media

citing such statements as evidence of dissent or instability within the Government. Political PR practitioners are observed in *THM* and *TTOI* as using a range of approaches to manage communication with the media and the public, in their sustained effort to control situations to the best of their abilities. This is in order to avoid anything catching anyone off guard – be it PR practitioner or politician. However, the problem with such exploits is that practitioners cannot control the capriciousness of the *people* partaking in the game of politics. This is a humanising element of the texts. As dirty and manipulative and vacuous as these characters may be, they are not robots. They are prone to making mistakes as well as intentionally pursuing their own path, often with the best intentions. Though this inevitably causes problems for whoever seeks to be in control of the loop, because no matter how much you threaten, bully, or cajole, total control is impossible.

#### **4. Significance and Recommendations**

The predominantly abhorrent archetype characters, the aggressive and chauvinistic working environment, and emphasis on power and control as key objectives, paints an overwhelmingly negative picture of political public relations. The texts portray political public relations as a strategic management function employed in the game of politics to produce, maintain, and control, information and power relations between political actors, the media, and the voting public. Representations in the texts reflect ongoing debates about the state of political communication, and the role of political PR in liberal democracies. In particular, representations in the texts reflect heavily on public concern about the presence of spin doctors as hidden intermediaries between politicians and the media. Democracy is seen to function through a political public relations filter as practitioners mediate the political, cultural, and public spheres of society. As such *THM* and *TTOI* are about more than just the political process – they echo the perceived power shift away from the traditional institutions of public administration, politics and journalism, and towards the unelected and unseen intercessor of political PR.

Fictionalised representations serve as important social and cultural reference points for audiences in negotiating, and reflecting on, their own lived experiences of the ‘real’ world. McNair (2010, p. 19) emphasises that cultural forms – such as film and television – are significant in “facilitating public debate ... by inserting into the public sphere another kind of knowledge, comprising fact, interpretation, and comment.” Hight (2010, p. 293) argues that texts generate “layered forms of engagement for audiences, providing narratives which

can be enjoyed for their own sake (through the identification of characters and their storylines) and degrees of intertextual commentary on the fact-fiction forms which they appropriate.” Similarly, Gray (2006) asserts that representations in texts invite viewers to reflect on elements of society as they have observed it – both as audiences of the texts and citizens in the public sphere. Representations of political PR serve to deconstruct and debunk the role of public relations in the media, politics, and society, and as such, call on audiences to “rethink” popular debates (McKee, 2001, p. 297) about the nature of professional communication in the twenty first century. Analysis of these texts is important because it highlights the ways in which we, in the absence of opportunities for direct experience of the phenomenon of public relations, may come to understand or “know” public relations *through* these texts.

Macmillan (2005, p. 5) asserts, somewhat ironically, the importance of understanding how PR operates is “due to the work of the public relations industry and the media” where “there are many ways in which information can be filtered and massaged [and] it is knowledge of these processes that puts the public in the best position to see reality.” In this sense textual representations crack open the facade of the “smiling professionals” (Hartley, 1992, p. 121) to expose the inner mechanisms of the PR machine as it functions in contemporary politics – potentially encouraging us, as audiences, to critically evaluate the role of political PR in the real world beyond the texts. Harrington (2010, p. 122) emphasises the importance of Gray’s (2006) concept of critical intertextuality is that texts can “help to build, or perhaps re-build, a kind of public sphere” where citizens are, as Dahlgren (1995, p. 53) puts it, better able to “make sense of their world” and the forces at work within it.

*The Hollowmen* and *The Thick of It* call on audiences to rethink popular debates about the relationship between PR, politics, and journalism. Further, fictionalised representations may play a very real role in heightening critical understanding amongst audiences about the function of political PR beyond the stereotypes associated with spin. However, the assumption representations of political PR in media texts provide an important site for the public’s understanding of PR, and its relationship to politics and the media requires additional consideration. Further research with *audiences* is recommended to fully explore this, in order to expand discussions on this topic that go beyond assuming the likely interpretation of these texts.

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## **“Corporate Affairs”**

### **Public relations and asbestos production: a social history**

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#### **Abstract:**

Despite recent critical inquiry in studies of public relations, there is limited research into communicative activities conducted during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s supporting high risk producing industries. About this time, concerns were emerging within different jurisdictions and in international contexts about the impacts of industries, such as tobacco, toxic waste/incineration and asbestos. This response was due to better informed “publics”, higher levels of publicity and broadcasting of news, and the wide-spread mobilisation of activist groups. In response, industry mounted expensive and carefully crafted large-scale ‘PR’ campaigns. The purpose of these campaigns was to expunge dissenting voices, “reassure” the anxious public, and neutralize the opposition to enable continuing high economic returns and reputation management. This paper argues that these campaigns had social consequences that, amongst other things, muted rational voices advocating more enlightened economic and political agendas. It also argues that the extent to which public relations was used to resist these social currents is not fully appreciated and that more needs to be done in understanding its impacts because, as a corollary, these PR campaigns influenced the normalisation of socially dangerous practices in public relations that have ongoing ramifications.

In exploring this line of inquiry, the paper focuses on an internationally networked public relations campaign by Australian asbestos manufacturer James Hardie & Coy Pty Ltd. In particular, it explores a range of socio, economic and cultural factors that enabled a long-term public relations campaign to sanitise the serious health issues associated with asbestos over the late twentieth century. Some of the findings to emerge so far in this study are: an overriding belief at this time that the instrument of public relations could be used with impunity to stifle dissent by activists; a general expectation a passive, obedient and malleable

“publics”; and a level of international networking between parent and subsidiary public relations companies.

A review of literature relating to the social history of asbestos production provides the overall historical, social and political context of the primary research (Hills, 1989; Peacock, 2009). Using original documents and secondary sources, the study draws on a discourse framework to analyse the ways public relations responded to suppress the emergence of other coherences (Fairclough, 1999; Foucault 1972).

The paper also analyses how Hardies’ public relations campaign worked to exercise considerable social control so that it could tell its own version of history and have ongoing credibility as a great “Aussie” company, in turn softening the public attitude towards the company and its future corporate expansion. More broadly, this study explores the circumstances that promote ethical and unethical practices and as such contributes to an understanding of the social history of public relations and its relationship to public interest. The findings will also be of interest to public health researchers who seek to analyse how businesses behave when met by public resistance to their activities. The implications will have interdisciplinary appeal for health groups, governments, advocacy groups and social researchers.

**Keywords:** Public relations, grey wash, asbestos, James Hardie Ltd, Australia

## **Introduction:**

This paper examines how public relations was used by risk producing industries in the twentieth century in the management of activism. It approaches this analysis with a particular focus on critical and interpretative public relations.

A critical public relations approach seeks to investigate the power relations within and through public relations “in stimulating emancipation and social change” (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 5). In particular, this interpretative approach seeks to understand “how meaning is constructed and re-constructed through communication relationships which they study in the ‘natural’ or ‘local’ setting” (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p.5). Therefore it acknowledges that paradigmatically there are certain things that have been included and excluded from the history books and focuses, for example, on racial or ethnic minorities,

women and other marginalized groups, as well as the daily lives of ordinary people. One example of what has been included within the discourse of public relations is a strong focus on big business in the United States of America. Indeed, Verčič and Grunig (2000, p. 12) argue that the development of public relations in the US has created prejudicial ethnocentricity within the field. The term “ethnocentricity” can be defined as an outlook which has an unquestioning ethnic bias together with an underlying supposition of superiority (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1994, p. 151). This focus on the US and big business has meant other perspectives, such as activist groups and from different geographic locations such as Asia or even Australia have been largely excluded from much of the literature. A critical public relations approach is not just useful for pointing out the weakness in the field but also about re-forming and building credibility. As L’Etang (2008) suggests, a critical approach requires reflexivity – meaning that there should be constant evaluation and introspection to ask probing questions. Therefore central, is that there is not one single way to think about public relations practice – rather we should acknowledge that there are multiple ways in which we can do this.

This paper argues that in 1970s, 80s and 90s public relations worked in lesser-known but powerful communicative ways that reflected uneven social relations within the broader cultural and social landscape. Moreover, it argues that public relations was deeply hostile and adversarial in its relations to activism and at this time abused its power in unprecedented ways. This stifled important social change that was responding to significant environmental and social risks brought about through industrialisation. Examples of controversial industries whose expansionist or protectionist activities which were strongly associated with “PR” are the tobacco, toxic waste disposal, chemical (pesticides), petro-chemical and nuclear energy production, amongst others (Stauber and Rampton 1995). “PR”, instrumental in much of the communication between the industry, political realm and the public, as a corollary, was characterised as immensely powerful, unaccountable and driven by a profit and ideological agenda that was self-serving and arrogant. The lack of transparency and highly effective ways in which public relations was able to influence “truth” and decision making to position their clients’ interests favourably, both in the political realm and within the media, led to a backlash calling for democracy and media to be scrutinised over the 1980s and 1990s (Nelson, 1989; Stauber and Rampton, 1995; Ewen, 1996; Beder, 1997; Hager and Burton, 1999).

Stauber and Rampton describe the role of public relations in assisting the tobacco industry to maintain its profit margins in light of the growing body of scientific research linking tobacco to cancer.

For help, the tobacco industry turned to John Hill, the founder of the PR megafirm, Hill & Knowlton. Hill designed a brilliant and expensive campaign that the tobacco industry is still using today in its fight to save itself from public rejection and government action. (1995, p. 27)

In particular they detail how the Tobacco Institute Research Committee (TIRC) was created as a front to provide counter science.

Around this time there was small but significant and emerging critiques of public relations within business itself. In his book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* R. Edward Freeman (1984, p. 219) discussed interviews conducted public relations and public affairs executives “in a number of organizations, and several who were active in the various PR/PA professional associations.” Some of the views from inside public relations industry included that:

- Our publics don’t listen to us. They want to speak to someone who can make decisions.
- Investigative reporting has gotten out of hand. When the media call I am not sure if I should even talk to them. The press is impossible.
- What we have been doing for the past 20 years, and doing well, just isn’t enough these days.

Freeman (1984, p. 220) also argued that “More fundamentally, these comments illustrate an increasing feeling that while PR is more important than ever, in the current business environment the concepts and tools that have evolved for PR managers to use are increasingly ineffective.” Freeman’s research also suggests that standard public relations practices were largely ineffective and resulted in the practitioner being pilloried:

Armed with the traditional weapons of the vitriolic press release, the annual report, a slick videotape, corporate philanthropy etc. today’s PR manager is a sacrificial lamb on the altar of multiple stakeholder dissatisfaction with corporate performance (1984, p. 221)

Therefore a salient question for this study is how did public relations practitioners respond to these conditions in which industry was being challenged, empowered publics and activism was on the rise, but where its trade practices were increasingly ineffective?

Freeman's empirical research published in the early to mid 1980s is valuable for revealing a crisis of faith within public relations around this time. It suggests that PR practitioners were using ineffective tools with publics, not being taken seriously by the press and regarded by their own as ineffective. Indeed Freeman's analysis of the "boundary spanner" role, discussed by Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 9) as one functioning "at the edge of the organization and serving as liaison between the organization and the external groups and individuals" is an inversion. He argues that instead of providing various perspectives important to decision making in the organisation; it results in no one taking PR seriously. Neither in the organisation nor outside the organisation, Freeman's argument positions public relations on the boundary, with all the shortcomings that this brings. PR's professional aspirations are therefore unrealistic because it operates without the high ethical standards or social value required to be considered a legitimate professional domain (Volti 2008, pp. 98-99).

### **James Hardie: 'A very good business'**

The James Hardie company was formed in 1892 and is the principal Australian manufacturer of asbestos products, now known to have toxic and carcinogenic properties. According to McCulloch (1986, p. 13) James Hardie were one of the first to see the potential of asbestos as a building material and by 1903 "had begun to import French asbestos cement products". Hardies established itself as a successful and prosperous company and its activities were characterised by an outward looking global outlook. According to McCulloch, in the 1960s the company was:

in contact with Turner & Newall and Johns-Manville, the British and American conglomerates, with whom it exchanged technical information. Presumably, given the firm's concern with worker health and safety, that information included material on the vital subject of occupational health" (1986, pp. 20-21).

In the domestic Australian market Hardies was equally aggressive and in 1977 took over its major competitor Wunderlich; "this merger gave Hardie an effective monopoly in all states with the exception of Tasmania" (McCulloch 1986, p. 18). Over the years the extensive advertising and promotion of their products meant that James Hardie became a household name. In 1978 chairman John (Jock) Reid is reported to have said: "Every time you walk into an office building, a home, a factory: every time you put your foot on the brake, ride in a train, see a bulldozer at work . . . Every time you see or do any of these things, the chances are that a product from the James Hardie Group of Companies has a part in it" (McCulloch 1986, p. 19).



Between 1969 and 1975 media interest in exposing the risks of asbestos became increasingly evident. Independent and public broadcasters such as Britain's BBC, ITV and Australia's ABC televised documentaries about the ubiquitous health risks associated with asbestos. Regardless of this complicating factor, profits for asbestos producers continued to rise. During this time, Haigh writes that the industry created a public relations group, the Asbestos International Association, and maintained that: "despite all the negative articles on asbestos-health that have appeared in the press over the past half-dozen years, very few people have been paying attention" (2006, pp. 110–112). Tweedale and McCulloch argue that the reason for this buoyancy was that:

The asbestos multinationals – Johns-Manville, Turner & Newall, Cape Asbestos, Eternit, and James Hardie – were powerful enough to influence the media and scientific debate. Most leading asbestos scientists had links to the industry. The asbestos industry's critics were dismissed as subversives or accused of having links with trade unions and personal-injury lawyers (2011, p. 1).

Victim support group Australian Asbestos Network writes:

The boom years of the 1960s-1970s were overtaken by intimations of doom as the company found it harder and harder to ignore the warnings about the danger of asbestos to human health. As the miner who dug the mineral out of the ground began succumbing to asbestos-related diseases years after exposure it became evident that those handling the manufactured products could be equally at risk . . . it was only in the 1970s that the official death toll began to rise and the public started to ask questions about how much the company knew, and when it knew about the legacy of asbestos (2013).

Indeed Australians were most keen to embrace asbestos products made from the 'magic' mineral. Unfortunately the popularity of versatile asbestos products and its presence in homes, cars and workplaces means exposure rates are particularly high. According to the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, "Australia and the UK have the highest rates of asbestos-related death in the world. This is understood to be because of the amount of asbestos used in these countries, and the relatively high proportion used of the most dangerous types, blue and brown".

Mounting evidence that serious health risks were associated with asbestos production dated back to the nineteenth century when "people began to notice the ill effects on millworkers from asbestos factories in Manchester and Birmingham" (Demetrious 2013, p. 58). Hills argues that in 1906 it was "public outcry" that "forced" the British Government to

establish a Parliamentary Commission to investigate, and the full horror of conditions in the industry began to be exposed” (1989, p. 13). He says “By 1927 it had a name: asbestosis (Hills 1989, p. 13). McCulloch states that in 1930 the first major British study of the effects of asbestos on occupational health was commissioned by the Home Office. He said that Merewether and Price study stated a clear warning that “The asbestos manufacturers are clearly confronted with the necessity of attaining conditions in their industry which will ensure much less dust in the atmosphere than can be safely tolerated in many comparable trades not using asbestos” (McCulloch, 1986, p. 40). This evidence was given further weight when: “Within eighteen months of the release of the Merewether and Price study, the British Home office released a memorandum to all manufacturers on the subject of silicosis and asbestosis” (McCulloch, 1986, p. 40). He said that this memorandum “was widely circulated” and that it also identified that “the suppression of dust as the best means for the prevention of the disease” (McCulloch, 1986, p. 41). Demetrious says “that further epidemiologic studies of asbestos in Europe and the USA took place in the 1940s and 1950s but the alarming social effects were also prominently canvassed in 1964 in a conference hosted by the New York Academy of Sciences” through the efforts of Dr Irving Selikoff (Demetrious 2013, p. 58). According to Haigh (2006, p. 90), “The audience was the elite of the occupational health and safety; ranging from the foremost respiratory clinicians to representatives of Turner & Newall and Cape Asbestos”. He said Selikoff’s action was significant for working with the trade union in surveying the health of asbestos insulation workers:

The results were literally breathtaking. Among insulators with twenty years’ experience, the rate of asbestosis was 87 percent; insulators in general faced 92 times the risk of contracting lung cancer than non-smokers. Selikoff would become the asbestos industry’s public enemy number one (Haigh, 2006, p. 90).

Demetrious said that “Monitoring this activity was the American Textiles Institute. The committee was concerned about the growing publicity and discussion in its minutes reflected the level of concern amongst its members:

. . . the picture has changed somewhat [since their June meeting] as recent publications again point out the intention of this conference headed by Dr. Selikoff. Since they are linking asbestos with cancer, the committee feels this conference will have an effect on the entire industry and are concerned as how best the results of the conference can be investigated and rebutted. After considerable discussion it was agreed a public relations man with our help would be quickest way to get accurate publicity to the public. (Minutes of the June 6, 1963 American Textiles Institute Meeting, quoted in Greenberg, 2003, p. 547; in Demetrious, 2013, p. 59)

The role and relationship of public relations to asbestos production is significant in understanding this social contradiction. “Rochdale Online” is a community website, based in Greater Manchester area which was the site of a former Turner & Newall asbestos factory. The website contains a series of articles about asbestos manufacturing and the power relations at play between the industry and the community supported by a range of original documents, such as board minutes, letters, pamphlets and reports. According to the Ed Howker from the *New Statesman* (28 August 2008) the archive of “nearly one million” original T & N documents sit:

in the office of the Manchester Metropolitan University Business School academic Geoffrey Tweedale. They expose a scandal that ranks among the biggest and costliest of our age: how the Lancashire manufacturing giant Turner & Newall (T&N), once the world’s largest asbestos conglomerate, exposed millions to a lethal carcinogen in full knowledge of its dangers, using PR firms and politicians to hide a truth that it had secretly admitted to in 1961, namely that “the only really safe number of asbestos fibres in the works environment is nil”.

Under the heading “Publicity in the UK”, the community website reports that the T&N Board meeting minutes of 25 May 1967:

. . . suggest that much of what was being said about asbestos was “alarmist” and “ludicrous”. That the industry’s products are being “smeared” by “alarmist headlines” particularly in local papers and Trade Union journals. (Rochdale, 2008)

In the Rochdale article, in the T&N Board minutes, the BBC was also criticised for putting out a “very irresponsible programme” that February.” They report the minutes as saying:

Under “Action” the formation of an “Asbestos Information Committee” was minuted, with the appointment of the London Branch of the American public relations firm Hill & Knowlton International. Hill & Knowlton’s roll [*sic*] was clear: “Their job will be to combat and, if possible, to forestall adverse publicity in all quarters.” The concluding sentence in the minutes set the scene for an aggressive public relations campaign: “ . . . until it can be proved that no risks arise from using the Group’s [asbestos] products the tendency of customers to play for safety by looking for alternative materials can be combated only by very active selling of the superior attractions of asbestos.” (Rochdale, 2008).

Rochdale claim that in 25 January 1968 Board Minutes, Turner & Newall give an “update on international PR consultants Hill & Knowlton’s activity for the asbestos industry” and that as well as a national advertising campaign this included “letters to editors challenging articles

about asbestos in medical, technical and local journals”. Also circulated to T & N staff by Hill and Knowlton was a confidential five-point plan entitled “Putting the Case for Asbestos”. The five headings were:

- “Make clear our concern.
- Emphasize . . . rarity
- Stress that control is effective.
- Be positive
- Mention indispensability” (Rochdale, 11 September 2008, layout as in original).

According to the Ed Howker *New Statesman* article (28 August, 2008):

When government departments did raise questions about the safety of asbestos, the Board of Trade intervened, arguing that any suggestion that asbestos presented a danger would damage British jobs. So, the sale of asbestos products continued to grow in the UK throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

In Australia, the use of public relations to mask the dangers of asbestos production to the public mirrored the British situation. An equivalent PR pamphlet to calm the mounting public anxiety was produced for James Hardie in 1979. It stated that:

There is considerable confusion about asbestos as used in James Hardie products, and respirable asbestos dust. It is only airborne asbestos dust that is the potential health hazard. Because the small amount of asbestos fibre in our products is locked in by cement, it cannot escape into the atmosphere as dust, and therefore poses NO RISK TO HEALTH (James Hardie Ltd, 1979).

James Hardie was acutely aware of the growing public backlash and undertook surveillance of the dissenters. Demetrious (2013, p. 60) says that:

Australian public broadcaster and investigative journalist Matt Peacock . . . said that in 1977 Neilson, McCarthy & Partners were employed by Hardie to monitor media about the organisation. In fact their query relating to the granting of permission to reproduce part of the program for “internal and external community relations” triggered his interest in the asbestos issue. He surmised that the part of the program that they were interested in was the simple declaration that: “The asbestos industry in Australia is no longer a problem,” uttered by Gersh Major, a physicist in Sydney University’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The School was articulated to the federal Department of Health which was “specialising in occupational health,” and which according to Peacock had also been “receiving a research grant from James Hardie Asbestos.” (Peacock quoted in Demetrious, 2013, p. 60).

Around this time action groups and trade unions mobilised to warn the public and lobby for policy change and compensation. In Australia the media savvy Asbestos Diseases Society of Western Australia formed in 1979 (Hills, 1989, 52). “The new organisation drew the bulk of its members from those who had worked and lived at Wittenoom and was supported by the Ex-Wittenoom residents Association” (Australian Asbestos Network 8 September 2012). Key publications included Nancy Tait’s *Asbestos Kills* in 1976 and Alan Dalton’s *Asbestos Killer Dust* in 1979. Tweedale and McCulloch (2011, p. 3) said that “Inevitably, these campaigns groups were attacked. The asbestos industry published a critical *Commentary on Asbestos Kills* that took Tait to task for her ‘extreme view’”. Perhaps as a counter measure James Hardie published its own history in a volume entitled: “*A Very Good Business*”: *One Hundred Years of James Hardie Industries Limited 1888-1988* by Brian Carroll. Demetrious argues that “Other methods were also deployed to ensure Hardie was perceived as respectable. One included a barrage of statements invoking legal discourse to maintain a form of third party endorsement through the support of science” (Demetrious, 2013, p. 61). These baseline practices helped to buttress the institutional authority of Hardie as a source of credible information.

James Hardie’s public relations around this time was bolstered by an international approach. Eric White Associates (EWA), which provided public relations services and advice to Hardies, was taken over by US public relations firm Hill and Knowlton in 1974. Hill and Knowlton had links to US-based Johns-Manville Corporation: “which became the biggest asbestos miner and manufacturer in the world” (Hills, 1989, 10). Hill and Knowlton also had links to UK based asbestos producers Turner & Newall, Cape Asbestos.

According to Zawawi “By the late 1950s Eric White & Associates had set up six offices in Asia and one in London, becoming Australia’s first international public relations consultancy” (2009, p. 33). Moreover, EWA had strong and influential local political links which would have been provided important leverage to increase its reach and influence. Mark Sheehan (2009, p. 8) writes:

White was fortunate in forming relationship built on trust and mutual respect with an Australian Prime Minister who remained in power for 16 years. This relationship coincided with the growth and establishment of EWA and would have to a certain extent guaranteed his ability to achieve objectives for his clients. In White’s obituary (*Sydney Morning Herald*) he is introduced as the “man who helped shape the public image of former Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies”.

It is reasonable to speculate that Hill and Knowlton strategically coached their subsidiary companies in other countries such as Australia.

## **Discussion**

The continued use of asbestos products constitutes a significant social contradiction that needs further exploration. The study suggests the normalising of unethical conduct in public relations was bolstered by a transnational approach. In particular, it points to the fact that James Hardie was not operating alone – the company was networking with other multinational asbestos companies that all had their own public relations arms that were sharing information and methodologies and how to conduct effective campaign that were implemented specifically to “grey wash” – that is deflect the public gaze from the social and health risks of the product and focus it instead on the ‘virtues’ of economic growth and stability. The concerns about asbestos were emerging within different jurisdictions and international communities, particularly in the UK and US. Therefore, this paper argues that the overall legacy of these campaigns to deflect attention and ameliorate the social contradiction of asbestos production contributed to tragedy and its ongoing social effects.

The fact that publics were changing around the 1970s is also significant in understanding this behaviour. According to Freeman (1984, p. 46) “Groups which 20 years ago had no effect on the actions of a firm can affect it today, largely because of the actions of the firm which ignored the effects on these groups”. Although written several decades ago, Freeman’s work had remarkable foresight and argued among other things that “the concern with environmental quality: clean air, water and land, as well as conservation of natural resources” was part of the catalyst for change towards a more outward and less defensive relationship (1984, p. 20). He also identified “single issue politics” or social activists as being significant, especially since the development of more powerful communications technology and media scrutiny (1984, pp. 21-22). According to Demetrious industry countered such activity by attacking activists with “fiercely aggressive tactics” (2013, p. 73). This re-positioning of social activists and citizens as effective: challenging, confronting and resisting the contested activities of government and industry is very different from the one understood by Edward Bernays who in his 1928 book *Propaganda* described the public as passive “herds” (2005, pp. 73–74). In these “utopian’ conditions, Demetrious writes:

“Democratic process, regarded as ‘unworkable’ by Bernays, was but a slight consideration for big PR” (2013, p. 71).

Indeed a focus public relations and its relationship to asbestos production provides a prism to understand why an entire genre of anti “PR” literature emerged after the 1970s (Nelson, 1989; Stauber and Rampton, 1995; Ewen, 1996; Beder, 1997; Hager and Burton, 1999). It also argues that three conditions that enabled these long-term public relations campaign to sanitise the serious health issues were: socio, economic and cultural.

## **Socio**

Within the public relations industry in the 1970s there was general expectation a passive, obedient and malleable “publics”. This is reflected in a monthly report issued by the Environmental Health Unit of Eric White and Associates. The report was intended to provide political, economic and social advice to industry regarding the “stream of activity” from activists and the press.

In the past months “pollution villains” have been accused, among them industrial firms, users of agricultural chemicals and Government bodies responsible for sewerage disposal; seldom-used words such as “ecology” and “environment” have gained new vogue and extended meaning; experts, both domestic and imported, have appeared bearing claims and counterclaims; governments and men in politics have been moved to words and actions. At the same time, Press reports on these events have multiplied beyond the capacity of most people to benefit from them. ENVIRONMENT & INDUSTRY now leaps into this stream of activity, not to control, filter or enlarge it, but to sample its current composition and to distil into useful form information that will ultimately affect every Australian. (EWA, May 1970)

This heightened social monitoring activity, guarded and defensive response to more active and politicised publics, was also occurring within a context that PR was failing in the 1970. Freeman’s (1984, p. 219) research reported on the views of senior practitioners who made known a number of deficiencies and limitations of the field, including that “our publics don’t listen to us”; “the press is impossible” and that “What we have been doing for the past 20 years, and doing well, just isn’t enough these days. These limitations could explain the more extreme ethically grey measures that were invoked by public relations firms who were floundering and had professional relevancy at stake.

## **Economic**

A globalised level of international networking between parent and subsidiary public relations companies existed that facilitated the aggressive public relations campaigns which were designed to avoid confronting the health implications of asbestos. Complex webs of cross ownership extended the reach of public relations companies working in localised settings like Australia. In relation to James Hardie, Eric White and Associates (EWA) is significant as a public relations consultancy with singular global ambitions and whose “reach led to the company becoming an affiliate of the giant US RP company, Hill & Knowlton,” (Burton 2007, p. 191). As discussed, the US public relations firm Hill and Knowlton had links to US-based Johns-Manville Corporation: “which became the biggest asbestos miner and manufacturer in the world” (Hills, 1989, 10). Hills & Knowlton also worked for Turner & Newall and Cape Asbestos setting up the Asbestos Information Committee (AIC) “to handle publicity and lobbying” (McCulloch & Tweedale 2008, p. 98). In 1978 EWA wrote to the Managing Director of Hardie:

Hill & Knowlton, our parent company, has been very much involved in this whole matter. In the U.K., our office was instrumental in the establishment of the Asbestos Information Committee in 1969 and worked for that Committee for some four or five years. In the U.S. Hill & Knowlton began work for Johns Manville in 1967 and in 1971, at the instigation of that client, began work for the Asbestos Information Association. Work on that assignment lasted for about five years. (Anderson 1978)

Like the Tobacco Institute Research Committee, Hill and Knowlton worked with a separate institution entity with claims to authority. McCulloch writes that the Asbestos Information Association “is a non-profit publicity and promotions body which represents more than fifty American and Canadian firms” (1986, p. 32). Their activity included suppressing adverse publicity about the industry and deflecting attention from the health issues. Despite the moral and ethical implications for society, public relations was able to achieve their goals and objectives. According to Haigh in 1973, the spokesperson for the Asbestos Information Association “Matthew Swetonic insisted “The good news is, despite all the negative articles on asbestos-health that have appeared in the press over the past half-dozen years, very few people have been paying attention”” (2006, pp. 110-111). It is easy to speculate that public relations firms such as EWA delved far deeper into unethical territory because of such associations.

## **Cultural**



Embedded in public relations practice at this time was an overarching belief that as an instrument of powerful and useful businesses, it could be used with impunity to stifle dissent by activists. This corporate culture was buttressed by cosy relations to politicians and government. Toohey and Pinwell (1989, p. 163) discuss an example of this in the early 1970s when “the use of a public relations company raises equally serious questions of public policy. In the early 1970s ASIS (Australian Secret Intelligence Service) posted one of its recent recruits overseas under the guise of working for an Australian public relations consulting firm. The recruit was a young social sciences graduate who had been ‘talent spotted’ by an academic while at university”. Sheehan posits that (2009, p. 10) “Toohey and Pinwill do not identify the public relations consultancy that was a cover ASIS agents. On release of the book however journalists at the *Sydney Morning Herald* identified EWA as the company and pointed at its South-east Asia network as providing the cover. White, then in his retirement, and dying, refused to confirm or deny the claims.” Sheehan said that this fact was verified when White’s son “Dr Hugh White, in correspondence with the author, wrote that he remembered in 1961 his father telling him that “he did “secret” work for the government to protect Australia” and swore him to secrecy. In Dr White’s estimation he states that he had “no doubt that employees of EWA in Jakarta, Singapore, KL, Bangkok, HK and Tokyo had dual roles” and that Eric was very well connected with prominent politicians in Malaysia” (Sheehan, 2009, p. 11). These political links to the public relations company may have been established when Eric White, in 1947, “had worked for three years as Public Relations Director for the Liberal Party of Australia” (Burton 2007, p. 189). This example of ambiguous loyalties raises a number of complex issues for the public relations industry:

The fact that a public relations has a secret relationship with the Australian government also raises serious question of conflict of interest – questions which must cause concern to other PR companies and their clients. One objective of PR firm and lobbyists is to win favour for their customers with government ministers and bureaucrats. An aspect of this role was explicitly described in a book published for the American market by the world’s biggest PR company Hill and Knowlton: “Public relations in Australia . . . has been used to break down government or public resistance. There are examples of campaigns being conducted to achieve relations of government regulation that inhibit the sale of a product. (Toohey and Pinwell 1989, p. 164).

That a public relations consultancy, off shore, assisted the Australian government to spy highlights the blurred boundaries within which the consultancy was operating. This activity was well outside its professional remit. Toohey and Pinwell write: “By providing cover for

ASIS spies – who routinely engage in deception misrepresentation, bribery and law-breaking – the Australian PR firm breached at least seven of the seventeen articles of this (Public Relations Institute of Australia) code of ethics” (1989, p. 164). In relation to asbestos, EWAs involvement with suppressing the known risks that were emerging at this time had terrible and serious ongoing social and health consequences. With a privileged corporate culture of impunity and unaccountability, public relations sought to represent some of the twentieth century’s most successful risk producing industries, which in turn had close proximity to centres of political power. This enabling factor not only led to the suppression of the known facts about asbestos but gave rise to a climate of complacency that allowed continuing exposure to the deadly mineral.

## **Conclusion**

The asbestos tragedy now straddles over three centuries. Social action responding to the problems in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s introduced new perspectives and ideas that, if adopted, might well have had different consequences for people and society. However, public relations was used to choke the social movement of these perspectives and ideas within the public sphere. This is a study of the social history of public relations. The implications are interdisciplinary and have ramifications for health groups and governments and advocacy groups and social researchers who seek to deal with similar avoidable crises, or indeed the ongoing asbestos tragedy. In particular, the study raises questions about the extent to which public relations strategies disempower stakeholders as citizens. It reveals, not just calculated and manipulative repertoires of communicative practice in relation to the issues at hand, but broad patterns in unethical public relations practices, suggesting a systematic approach that was not accidental or unplanned. It also shows that activism is significant as a critical social site for interpreting the cultural complexity and power relations of public relations. Today “PR” is one of the most powerful communicative forces shaping public opinion and stifling debate about issues such as climate change and its effects, and as such it is central to risk production. Activism (often thwarted by PR) is the visible face of social change that is attempting to move this debate along. This study exposes the conceptual weaknesses in public relations that present almost unresolvable issues for practitioners that seek ethical communication. Yet despite this complexity, the problems posed need to be addressed. The case of asbestos production is therefore vitally important to understand the present and future

role and relationship of public relations to society, and how it may be understood, reshaped and changed.

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# **Professionalisation and public relations education: Investigating the national industry accreditation of university courses in Australia**

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## **Introduction**

This paper offers a historical perspective of public relations education, focusing on its role as a professionalisation strategy for a professional association. I consider the ways in which the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) attempted to regulate public relations education through the introduction of a national accreditation program for university courses in 1991. I argue the development of Australian public relations education needs to be considered in the context of the industry's professionalisation drive.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how the professional association's attempts to regulate education contributed to an Australian public relations body of knowledge. This paper is structured in four sections. In the first, I review the PRIA's introduction of greater regulatory structures in 1985 and introduce the National Education Committee (NEC)'s accreditation guidelines for university courses. Second, I outline the design of the research reported in this paper. I then discuss the findings in relation to four themes that emerged from my analysis of industry archives: public relations knowledge; industry expectations; the public relations curriculum; and the disciplinary status of public relations. In the final section, I consider the significance of these findings for public relations education.

## **Background**

### *Professionalisation and education*

In introducing national accreditation in 1991, the PRIA aimed to standardise industry accreditation of university courses as part of a broader professionalisation drive. I draw on Larson's definition of professionalisation as 'the process by which producers of special services sought to constitute *and control* a market for their expertise' (1977, p. xvi [italics in original]). Education plays a significant role 'by contributing to the legitimizing process of

social acceptance and by helping to define public relations expertise and the scope of its operation' (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006, p. 276). A PRIA-commissioned report concluded in 1985 that the Australian industry was 'at a crossroads in terms of its industry base, service delivery, people distribution and image', noting the industry's rapid growth, increase in tertiary qualifications, and low salary levels in comparison with other business functions ('PR industry at the crossroads', 1985). In response, the PRIA introduced a number of strategies to establish the professional standing of the public relations industry; the regulation of education and training, along with more rigorous membership requirements, which mandated tertiary qualifications for professional-grade membership, were designed to address concerns about the field's poor reputation.

Until 1991, the PRIA did not adopt a systematic approach to the regulation of public relations education. PRIA state councils had considerable control over the endorsement or 'accreditation' of university courses, but the criteria varied between states. One state council announced a course, developed in conjunction with PRIA state council members, was (not surprisingly) approved by the PRIA state council and subsequently received national council endorsement ('W.A.I.T. course ready to run from 1985', 1984; 'W.A.I.T. degree a step closer', 1985). Another state council 'signed a legal agreement with [university] providing them with exclusive endorsement [to offer short courses] for two years'.<sup>1</sup> In response, David Russell, the inaugural NEC chair, wrote to the state council president highlighting the need for 'uniform national standards' in public relations education and in 'virtually every field of PRIA activity'.<sup>2</sup>

The NEC was created by the PRIA national council in 1990 to establish PRIA's jurisdiction over public relations education, training and professional development activities in Australia.<sup>3</sup> The NEC tasks were: developing university accreditation guidelines; updating reading lists for practitioner examinations; establishing guidelines for both student internships and continuing professional education requirements; and determining criteria for educator qualifications.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of the first national accreditation round in July 1991, the NEC consisted of two practitioners (Marjorie Anderson, a consultant with Sydney-

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<sup>1</sup> State president. (1991, March 21). [Facsimile to Russell, inaugural NEC chair, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>2</sup> Russell, D. (1991, April 11). 'Short courses' [Memorandum to state council president]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>3</sup> There is a reference to Potts' membership of an earlier PRIA national education committee (1985–91) (see PRIA, 2012) but the evidence in the Anderson archives confirms the NEC was a newly formed committee in 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Russell, D. (1990, November 30). 'Meeting' [Memorandum to NEC]. Anderson archives (File 1).

based Anderson Knight, PRIA [NSW] state president, and NEC chair; and David Potts, an experienced public relations educator who in 1990 was working as a consultant in Sydney) and three educators (Jan Quarles at RMIT, Melbourne; and Lyn Maciver and Gael Walker, both at University of Technology, Sydney). Another consultant, Sheila O'Sullivan, who worked at Turnbull Fox Phillips in Melbourne, was invited to join the committee on 6 September 1991, making the members evenly split between practitioners and educators. It is perhaps surprising that all members of a national committee lived and worked in only two cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Adelaide-based practitioner, Jennifer Richardson, joined the committee the following year and participated in the assessment of some late accreditation applications.<sup>5</sup>

### *PRIA accreditation*

The NEC introduced standardised criteria, 'Guidelines for the accreditation of courses in public relations at Australian tertiary institutions' (PRIA, 1991), based on recommendations in a PRIA-commissioned report into Australian public relations education (Quarles & Potts, 1990), which, in turn, were adapted from the Public Relations Society of America guidelines. These criteria acknowledged the previously inconsistent accreditation of public relations courses and were explicit about the role of education as 'the means to pass [the public relations body of knowledge] on to future generations of practitioners (Quarles & Potts, 1990, p. 46; PRIA, 1991, p. 2): 'Accreditation...is an important milestone in the development of a vocation into a profession', justifying the need for 'a properly constituted, controlled and industry-supported education system' (PRIA, 1991, p. 2). Anderson noted the PRIA must regulate public relations education and training 'because of the shysters that "float" through with their one day PR certificates!'<sup>6</sup> Accreditation was designed for courses that offered a major in either public relations or organisational communication.

The accreditation guidelines stated 'no more than 25 per cent of a total course at undergraduate level should be in professional communication/public relations subjects', with the remainder of the course made up of 'areas which support the professional core' (Quarles & Potts, 1990, p. 48; PRIA, 1991, p. 4). These supporting areas could include a range of established disciplines, in order to provide a broad education: 'aimed at developing the

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<sup>5</sup> Richardson, J. (1991, December 17). [Letter to Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1). A similar letter was received from Gae Synnott, an educator based in Western Australia, accepting an invitation to be the NEC state representative. However, Synnott does not appear to have participated in assessing applications in the first accreditation round.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, M. (1991, June 21). [Letter to T. Stevenson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).



intellectual and problem-solving capacities of students as well as giving a sound understanding of the theory and practice of communication and public relations' (PRIA, 1991, p. 3). The criteria acknowledged that 'arts and sciences remain a strong basis for helping practitioners to understand an increasingly complex world and their role as communicators, and for developing critical faculties' (Quarles & Potts, 1990, p. 48; PRIA, 1991, p. 3). However, the criteria also noted practitioner support for 'business subjects' and for 'English literature, including writing skills' (PRIA, 1991, pp. 3, 4).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Quarles and Potts recommended diverse support studies so that 'students have the freedom to choose that course which most matches their career goals' (1990, p. 47). In this first accreditation round, therefore, the guidelines appear to emphasise the value of a generalist university-level education in any discipline, alongside public relations units. The NEC assessed applications based primarily on the content in the 'professional core' of public relations units that made up only a quarter of the degree. In addition to a focus on communication theory, the professional units were expected to cover historical developments in public relations; public relations theory and its relationship to communication theories; theories of organisational communication (including management theory); functional elements (goal-setting, research, program planning, message preparation, budgeting, evaluation); and management activities (Quarles & Potts, 1990; PRIA, 1991).

As NEC chair, Anderson wrote to universities teaching public relations on 24 July 1991 inviting them to apply for accreditation by 15 September.<sup>8</sup> The NEC members met on 2 November 1991, the day after the PRIA Annual General Meeting, in Sydney to discuss the applications. The chair wrote to universities that submitted by the September deadline on 6 December 1991 to advise whether their application for PRIA accreditation had been successful; to request further information or clarification; or to reject their application. A second deadline of 16 December was offered to universities that could not meet the first, but universities could submit at any point and some submitted courses for accreditation as late as 1995.<sup>9</sup> However, regardless of the timing of the submission, all courses – if successful – were accredited until the end of December 1996. In January 1992, there were eight

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<sup>7</sup> I note a small difference in the Quarles and Potts report, which stated 'practitioners generally view English, including writing skills, to be central to support studies' (1990, p. 48) whereas the PRIA (1991) criteria referred specifically to English literature. However, the comments regarding practitioner support for business subjects as suitable support studies are identical.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, M. (1991, July 24). 'Accreditation of courses in public relations at Australian tertiary institutions' [Letter to universities]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, M. (1995, December 21). [Letter to university, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

accredited degrees at five institutions in four states.<sup>10</sup> These degrees included five undergraduate courses (mostly Bachelor of Arts with majors in public relations, communication or applied communication) and three postgraduate courses (two graduate diplomas in communication and communication management and a Master in Applied Science [Communication Management]). Five courses were rejected or the university was asked to provide additional information. In May 1992, the chair sought greater involvement of state-based representatives in public relations education, as the NEC shifted its focus to professional development.<sup>11</sup> The onus for ongoing industry liaison with universities offering accredited courses therefore became the remit of the local NEC representative along with the PRIA state council. By November 1992, 16 public relations courses were accredited.<sup>12</sup>

### **Investigating the Anderson archives**

The introduction of a national accreditation program by the industry body in 1991 was an attempt to standardise industry expectations across Australia of what a university public relations course should offer. Analysis of the Anderson archives therefore offers insights into how the PRIA constituted public relations knowledge and attempted to regulate the transmission of that knowledge. The Anderson archives contain evidence of the deliberations and concerns of various committees within the professional association, and between universities and the PRIA, in relation to the emergence and establishment of national standards for public relations education in Australia in the 1990s. The archives consist of two files labelled 2007–8, despite their contents dating from approximately 1990–6 (File 1) and 1997–2001 (File 2). These two files record – albeit with gaps – the first decade of the NEC; they are not a complete record of the NEC’s deliberations in the 1990s, but contain correspondence to and from the chair of that committee. I report in this paper my findings in relation to File 1, which contains letters, facsimiles, meeting minutes, file notes, memoranda, speech notes, draft media releases, promotional copy, and handwritten notes. The documents are unnumbered and not in date order, although some are filed in sections by university name. The narrative I construct incorporates secondary sources to validate findings that emerged from my analysis.

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<sup>10</sup> Anderson, M. (1992, January 26). ‘PRIA accreditation of public relations courses’ [Memorandum to NEC, national executive and state presidents]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, M. (1992, May 16). ‘Re: Continuing Professional Education’ [Memorandum to state and territory based education representatives, national executive, state presidents and NEC]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>12</sup> Synnott, G. (1992, November 5). [Letter and copy of application for National Teaching Development Grant to Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

### *Scope and limitations*

This paper does not offer an analysis of the Australian public relations curriculum; its focus is industry expectations of public relations education. The findings reported in this paper emerge from a larger research project investigating the development of Australian public relations education. I report on educator and practitioner perceptions of public relations education (1985–99) elsewhere (see Fitch, 2013). As a PRIA member, former member of a PRIA state council (2005–8), and the NEC (2008–11), I am familiar with contemporary accreditation processes from educator and professional association perspectives.

As my focus is PRIA processes and the interaction between the PRIA and universities, I chose not to identify individual academics or universities in my analysis; permission to use these archives was granted on this basis. I identify national presidents and NEC members as this information is readily available. However, one limitation is that I cannot compare the reactions of individual state councils and universities to the introduction of a national accreditation program.

## **Findings and discussion**

### *Public relations knowledge*

Analysis of the Anderson archives offers unique insights into the constitution of public relations knowledge. Scholars have noted divergent understandings of professionalism held by educators, scholars, practitioners and professional associations (van Ruler, 2005) and for practitioners, public relations ‘expertise is...constituted and transmitted in practice’ (Pieczka, 2002, p. 321). The shift in responsibility for the accreditation of university courses from PRIA state councils to a national committee inevitably led to tension, as state councils and the NEC had different expectations of the role of education.

Despite strong links with its state council and practitioner involvement in the course, one university’s business course was rejected on the grounds the course did not teach communication theory.<sup>13</sup> The university had existing state council accreditation and enlisted the council’s support to lobby the NEC. The state president wrote to the NEC chair ‘to voice our wholehearted support for the continued accreditation of the [university] undergraduate

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson, M. (1992, April 15). ‘Accreditation of courses in public relations at Australian tertiary institutions’ [Letter to university]. Anderson archives (File 1).

public relations course', particularly as '[t]he original course was written by Fellows and Members of the Institute.'<sup>14</sup> In subsequent correspondence, the state president wrote an informal but revealing note confirming some state council members perceived: 'the academics responsible for accreditation have pirated the issue and are setting it up based upon their own opinions and attitudes' and threatening the end of state council support for 'nationalisation.'<sup>15</sup> The state council perceived a clear distinction between practitioner-driven state councils and the 'academic' concerns of the NEC. The course was subsequently accredited, following a telephone discussion between Quarles, as an NEC representative, and the university course coordinator confirming 'the extent to which communication theory is taught', and that 'it is dispersed across subjects'.<sup>16</sup> The correspondence between the state council and the NEC reveals considerable tensions between their respective roles and their understandings of the public relations curriculum.

### *Industry expectations and experience*

The Anderson archives offer evidence of collaborative and strong partnerships between various universities and the NEC. Universities with accredited courses were expected to liaise regularly with their course advisory committees, which included senior PRIA members, and state councils. However, universities and industry representatives sometimes differed in their understanding of the role of education. The NEC chair requested further information about one university submission from a practitioner, who was a member of the course advisory committee and state council, which had accredited the course in 1989. The practitioner provided an account of their 'frustrating' interaction with the university, noting: 'a lack of liaison' with industry and course 'changes take place according to University/campus resources, rather than industry/profession needs.'<sup>17</sup> The NEC chair rejected the submission, stating the course 'needs to be strengthened' by the addition of further professional and public relations-specific units, and referred the university to the Quarles and Potts (1990) report.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> PRIA state president. (1992, August 17). '[University name] accreditation' [Letter with facsimile coversheet to Anderson]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>15</sup> PRIA state president. (1992, September 3). [Letter to Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>16</sup> Quarles, J. (1992, September 8). [Facsimile coversheet and letter to Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>17</sup> Practitioner. (1991, October, 31) [facsimile transmission date]. 'Tertiary education (courses and industry needs)' [Two-page note]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, M. (1992, September 2). [Letter to university, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

The NEC's education agenda did not have universal industry support. The general manager of Turnbull Fox Phillips wrote to Anderson in July 1991 following a presentation on the PRIA's plans for accrediting university courses to complain on behalf of several industry representatives:

We had all attended in the hope of offering our experience and time to prepare case studies, present lectures and discuss how work experience and intern programs might be successfully incorporated into learning programs.

We all felt though, that there was another agenda being driven by academic members of the group...we didn't raise our issues.<sup>19</sup>

The general manager offered assistance to develop public relations education. There is no record of Anderson's response, but O'Sullivan, a Turnbull Fox Phillips consultant, was appointed to the NEC two months later. However, the NEC's course accreditation continued to concern senior practitioners. For example, in 1994 the PRIA College of Fellows expressed concern at national board meetings about the 'quality and suitability for industry of graduates of accredited university courses', noting technical institute 'courses should be considered for accreditation as many graduates of those courses have proved themselves suitable for employment in the industry.'<sup>20</sup> It appears the Fellows preferred courses to have a stronger training or vocational focus.

### *Public relations curriculum*

Understandings of the content of a 'suitable' public relations course varied between the NEC, some PRIA state councils and universities. In the example discussed earlier, the PRIA state council and the university business school disputed the need for communication theory although it was prescribed in the criteria. The NEC rejected courses, or particular units within the professional core, if they perceived they were too focused on media, marketing, journalism or advertising rather than specifically public relations or organisational communication. In another example, the NEC rejected a university's course on the grounds it did 'not cover sufficient areas of public relations to warrant accreditation'.<sup>21</sup> In response, the course coordinator, a state council member requested the

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph. R. (1991, July 17). [Letter to Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives, (File 1).

<sup>20</sup> PRIA Board. (1994, November 16). Item 4 (vii). Education – College of Fellows. *Minutes of the meeting of the PRIA Board*, p. 2. PRIA (National) archives (Box 29, ML72/2144, Board 93, 94, 95, 97). Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, M. (1992, January 20). 'Accreditation of courses in public relations at Australian tertiary institutions' [Letter to university]. Anderson archives (File 1).

NEC 'provide a definitive ruling on what constitutes a public relations subject.'<sup>22</sup> The course coordinator added that until the PRIA broadened its conceptualisation of public relations knowledge to include 'communication policy, cross cultural communication and environmental communicative' subjects, 'practitioners will continue to be seen as skills based para-professionals and who will never achieve...professional status.' In 1993, the university submitted a revised course for accreditation, following extensive industry liaison and the formation of a new university faculty, the Department of Communication;<sup>23</sup> the new course was accredited as in the opinion of one NEC member, it offered a 'sufficiently well balanced program on both communications and public relations theory and practice as well as extending the students into a range of other academic studies.'<sup>24</sup>

### *Academic legitimacy*

A significant theme is the status of public relations within the academy. Other scholars have noted public relations struggled to be recognised as a discipline in the Australian academy, partly due to its strong industry links and vocational focus (Hatherell & Bartlett, 2006) or encroachment from other fields (McKie & Hunt, 1999). The Anderson archives contain some evidence of the NEC's attempts to promote public relations within the academy, lobbying for dedicated public relations sessions at Australian Communication Association (ACA) academic conferences; identifying the need for a scholarly journal; and re-establishing a network for public relations educators. The NEC sought funding to support more research into education and an academic journal, but was not successful. However, the PRIA national council funded the inaugural newsletter for the public relations educators (edited by Walker) and hosted an educators' breakfast forum at their annual conference in 1991. NEC members were prominent at the ACA conference in 1991; Anderson presented a session on the strategic direction for public relations education, the new accreditation program and the Quarles and Potts report recommendations.

The NEC expected the course coordinator to hold a senior position within the academic institution, although this requirement was not stated explicitly in the accreditation

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<sup>22</sup> University. (1992, January 31). 'Accreditation of communications programme [university]' [Letter to Anderson]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>23</sup> University. (1993, January 28). 'Accreditation: Bachelor of Arts (Communications)' [Letter to Anderson]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>24</sup> O'Sullivan, S. (1993, February 22). '[University] accreditation' [Memorandum to Anderson]. Anderson archives (File 1).

guidelines. One university submission was rejected pending a senior appointment.<sup>25</sup> A state council member sat on the selection panel and confirmed to the NEC chair the successful candidate had both ‘excellent academic qualifications’ and ‘practical experience in a range of public relations areas including community relations, media relations and government relations.’<sup>26</sup> The next day, the course was accredited.<sup>27</sup>

### **Implications for Australian public relations education**

Emerging from this analysis is an understanding of NEC expectations of the ideal public relations curriculum in the early 1990s. For the NEC, a suitable public relations course was underpinned by communication theory, offered breadth and an interdisciplinary approach to study, and a professional core of public relations units. The NEC accreditation processes in relation to the first accreditation round point to an understanding of public relations education as more than simply vocational training or the replication of existing industry practices. At the same time, the NEC’s demand for public relations-specific subjects in the professional core suggests a disciplinary struggle over what constitutes public relations knowledge. In rejecting courses they perceived as too marketing or media-focussed, the NEC sought to establish the disciplinary boundaries of public relations.

However, my analysis reveals considerable resistance to both the institutionalisation of public relations knowledge and the involvement of the PRIA’s national, rather than state-based, education committee in public relations education. For instance, the rejection by the NEC of an accreditation submission for a course developed and supported by senior practitioners astounded one state council, whose members subsequently accused the NEC of ‘pirating’ education. In contrast, from the perspective of another university, the NEC was failing to develop public relations into anything more than a technical field or para-profession due to their focus on functional aspects. The contest over education points to the difficulty in combining professional practice and academic legitimacy in a relatively new field of study. Expectations that public relations educators would have industry experience and universities would liaise closely with practitioners as a condition of accreditation suggest that, for the PRIA, practice significantly informed and underpinned public relations

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<sup>25</sup> University. (1992, February 10). [Letter to Marjorie Anderson, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

<sup>26</sup> State education chair. (1993, March 22). ‘[Name of university lecturer]’ [Facsimile to Anderson]. Anderson archives, (File 1).

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, M. (1993, March 23). [Letter to university, copied to state president and chair of state education committee, no subject]. Anderson archives (File 1).

knowledge. Industry experience and involvement was therefore perceived as integral to public relations education and the transmission of public relations knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

Through its establishment of the NEC and the introduction of a national accreditation program, the PRIA sought a significant role in the development and regulation of public relations education. Although university-level education was recognised as necessary for professional status, for some practitioners the institutionalisation of public relations knowledge in the academy was problematic. Tensions between universities, PRIA state councils, the PRIA's College of Fellows and the NEC emerged, along with contested understandings of the role of public relations education, as either suitable training to meet industry requirements or as an academic discipline offering a broad generalist education and the development of analytical skills.

This paper offers new insights into the development of Australian public relations education. The first insight relates to expectations regarding the role of public relations education in the early 1990s. The NEC perceived the value of university education in broader terms than simply the transmission of public relations knowledge, derived from and constituted in public relations practice. The second insight identifies resistance from some practitioners to the shift from non-standardised, state-based endorsement of university courses to a national accreditation program. The resistance can be understood as a contest over the constitution of public relations knowledge. The final insight concerns the disciplinary status of public relations. The analysis revealed emerging disciplinary boundaries as the NEC sought to determine suitable content for industry-accredited courses and to establish the legitimacy of public relations in the academy.

This paper has presented public relations education as a contested field for an industry seeking to regulate education to address concerns over its professional legitimacy. These findings offer important insights into the interaction between the public relations industry and higher education and the constitution of 'professional knowledge' in the early 1990s in a hitherto understudied but significant period in public relations education. Many of the themes identified in this study continue to inform contemporary public relations education discourse in Australia. More research in specific historical contexts is needed to understand how structural developments contributed to the growth of public relations education and the significance for the constitution of public relations knowledge.



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## **The Asian Century: but what do comparative histories tell us about practice?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Over the last twenty years, mainly Western scholars of public relations have put forward various principles or models which seek to identify and theorize on the regional or global practice of public relations. For example, van Ruler and Vercic (2002) and van Ruler et al. (2004) articulated a European Model of public relations and Vercic et al. (1996) and Grunig (2009) proposed a set of principles for a globally applicable approach based on the theory of generic principles and specific applications.

While there have been published studies which seek to apply the global principles to practice in individual Asian countries - for example to Korea (Rhee, 2002) - and a growing number of studies about practice in specific Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and China, there has been no attempt to undertake an analysis of these in aggregate to determine whether it is possible to theorise about more general principles which characterize an Asian model of practice.

In this paper the authors will do five things: first, summarize, analyse and identify the principles which underpin the two major Western models and principles of practice; second, undertake a meta-analysis of the histories of public relations in Asia-Pacific countries published in English to identify common themes, threads and theoretical insights. Third, propose an initial set of principles based on these insights. Fourth, compare and contrast these

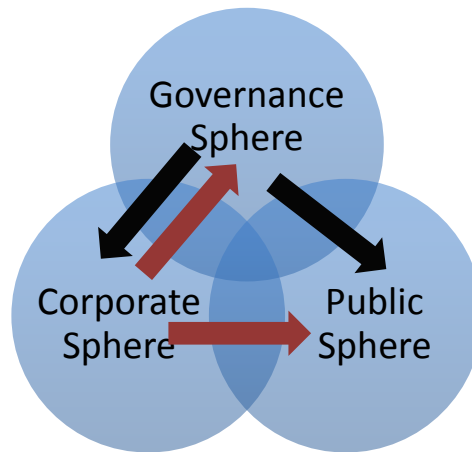
principles with Western models. Finally, draw conclusions about epistemological and practice differences between the Western and Asian-Pacific principles. This will be the first time this comparative historical analysis has been undertaken and the first time a regional Asian-Pacific set of principles will be identified.

The authors will theorise that a set of 3 spheres form the parameters of all extant models of public relations: the public sphere, the corporate sphere and the governance sphere. Public relations inhabits the place where these spheres interact, relate, collide or overlap and it is the nature of the shifting relationships between these spheres that determine the model of practice.

They will argue that in the West and over time the public and political spheres have been colonised by the corporate sphere as the values and language of the market with its attendant consequences of individualism and privatisation have gained ascendancy. Consequently, Western models of public relations can also be said to be predominantly corporatist.

The authors will go on to apply the spheres and their relationships as a framing mechanism for exposing regional differences. It is expected that the meta-analysis will show that in Asia-Pacific the above spheres are also present, but their form and relationships are different. It will be shown that the corporate and public spheres are differently constructed, continue to be held in check and are framed by the governance sphere and its structural insertion into most parts of corporate and public life in Asian-Pacific societies.

The diagram below shows how the dominant discourses have come to colonize neighbouring spheres over time: the red arrows showing movement in the West and black showing movement in the Asia-Pacific region.



From this analysis, the authors will comment on the epistemological basis of studying public relations in Asia-Pacific and propose key components of a future model of Asian-Pacific public relations which will be different from those which appear to have historical and current currency.

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## **PUBLIC RELATIONS ON TRIAL: THE U.S. COMMISSION ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS' INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLES OF JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. AND IVY LEE IN THE COLORADO COAL STRIKE, 1913-1915**

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International Public Relations History Conference | University of Bournemouth, UK | June 24, 2013

This study chronicles the hearings conducted by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations from May 1914 to May 1915 under the leadership of its ardent pro-labor chairman, former U.S. Congressman Frank P. Walsh. The chair used the hearings to viciously attack John D. Rockefeller, Jr., whose family held a 43% interest in the Colorado Fuel & Iron company, the largest of the coal operators, and public relations pioneer Ivy Lee, who was retained to tell the coal operators' side of the story.

### **The Hearings – A Classic Political Response after Tragedy**

- The hearings examined one of the bitterest conflicts in U.S. labor history – and were the most prominent of 40 investigations conducted about the origins of the strike and resulting civil unrest.
- The case is a classic example of how an issue can become crystallized as a result of a crisis – as lawmakers sought corrective action, the public sought to ascribe blame, and various parties – including the USCIR chairman – postured to advance their own political agendas.
- The hearings were historically significant because it was through USCIR that the work of Ivy Lee gained widespread visibility – and is largely known to historians today.
- Ironically, the mishandled proceedings actually had the opposite effect of their intent – by bolstering the public position of Rockefeller and the operators -- and by leading to the demise of the USCIR.

### **The Colorado Coal Strike – September 1913-December 1914**

- The deplorable working conditions in Colorado's mining camps exemplified the "company town" culture that dominated many American industries at the turn of the 20th century.
- Three large operators largely determined industry positions for 70 smaller operators.
- Colorado coal miners walked out after years of organizing by United Mine Workers of America.
- Colorado captured national headlines on April 20, 1914, when shooting broke out between the Colorado state militia and miners living in a make-shift tent colony near Ludlow. In all, 21 people were killed in the "Ludlow Massacre," including 13 women and children who actually *suffocated*.
- U.S. federal troops were sent in to restore order for seven months until the strike finally collapsed.

### **U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations (1912-1915)**

- The USCIR had a broad charge to investigate and recommend solutions to labor unrest.
- The nine members represented labor and management interests and the public-at-large.
- Chair Frank P. Walsh, 51, a former U.S. congressman from Kansas City, was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson. A Progressive reformer, Walsh had been especially successful in securing industrial pensions for widows and better working conditions for women.

### **First Hearings: May 1914 in New York**

- As early as May 4, 1914 – only two weeks after "Bloody Ludlow" -- Chairman Walsh instructed one of the commission's five investigators to look into the Colorado troubles. George P. West submitted his report May 14. Two commissioners also visited the state.
- A week later, Walsh and a third commissioner visited Rockefeller staffers Jerome Greene and Starr J. Murphy and pleaded for JDR Jr. to bring an end to the bloodshed. Walsh intimated that he would welcome the Rockefellers asking the commission to investigate and make recommendations.
- Walsh at first suggested the USCIR would not address Colorado for some time. But the following week, the USCIR hearings in New York were interrupted to hear impromptu testimony about the Colorado situation. One witness was Major Edward J. Boughton, an emissary of Governor Elias

Ammons. The USCIR also heard from a delegation dispatched to the East Coast by labor interests, including Judge Ben B. Lindsey and two miners' wives, Pearl Polly and Mary Hannah Thomas.

### **Second Hearing: December 1914 in Denver**

- After the hearings originally scheduled for October in Chicago were deferred, the USCIR convened in Denver in December. The first week was devoted to hearing government and union officials, militiamen, rank-and-file miners and railway workers, and coal operators.
- Rockefeller was never called to testify in Denver, but his central role was quickly revealed after union organizer John Lawson and other union leaders provided Walsh with an intercepted telegram sent on April 30 by JDR Jr. to CF&I President Jesse F. Welborn that suggested how to confute the strikers. Walsh demanded that Welborn verify the telegram's authenticity and supply the commission with copies of all other correspondence between New York and Denver.
- Walsh devoted an extraordinary amount of time to the subject the 19 bulletin circulated by the coal operators. Walsh's staff had learned that they were produced by Ivy Lee, who had been retained by JDR Jr. in June but whose work for the Rockefellers had not been publicly disclosed. Walsh baited Welborn to reveal the author – and enumerated discrepancies in more than half of the circulars.
- Lee's name was divulged only after a back-and-forth series of telegram exchanges between CF&I and the Rockefellers' headquarters. Lee was hesitant at first because he was still employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad; Welborn wanted to protect Rockefeller. But ultimately it was agreed to issue a full statement, which Welborn read into his testimony.
- Walsh exploited the publicity opportunity. He traveled south to Ludlow, and issued a nationwide public appeal to help southern Colorado's poor suffering children. He wrote a bylined article for the *Denver Express* and issued a toughly worded statement about his plans to investigate the Rockefellers' involvement, including their role in the distribution of misleading information.

### **Third Hearing: January 1915 in New York**

- In a cunning ploy, Walsh added to the agenda an inquiry into the use of the on tax-preferred status of the Rockefeller Foundation to hire consultant William Lyon Mackenzie King to conduct a general study of industrial relations (which might directly benefit the Foundation's benefactors).
- With the surprise announcement that JDR Jr. would be called on a Monday morning, Lee recommended (with King) that JDR Jr.'s testimony be distributed in advance for publication in the morning papers. Lee also issued a 14-page typeset news release. JDR Jr.'s arrival was carefully planned to reinforce the idea he had nothing to hide.
- JDR Jr.'s 15-minute opening statement covered key points about his involvement and updates on CF&I's efforts to improve labor relations during the six weeks since conclusion of the strike. The tone was largely conciliatory—a move that caught Walsh off guard.
- Walsh then quizzed Rockefeller over three days on a broad range of topics, including the boards on which he served and the family's investment in CF&I. Also JDR Jr.'s views about corporate directorships, labor unions, the 7-day work week, and conditions in mine camps and company towns.
- Rockefeller begged off giving many answers based on his lack of knowledge or inexperience. But at the end of the day, he shrewdly asked the commission for particulars and offered to investigate the litany of claims reviewed during the day.
- On the second day Walsh continued to press Rockefeller in rapid-fire fashion on a variety of topics, many of which had been covered the first day. Walsh admonished JDR Jr. that he should have been more familiar with the situation -- and ridiculed him with questions about how he spent his day in his New York office and about whether he read newspapers.
- Walsh interrupted Rockefeller with increased frequency, and changed the line of his questioning whenever Rockefeller made a strong point or introduced important evidence. He then zeroed in on the appropriateness of using Foundation funds to fund research that could benefit CF&I.

- JDR Jr.'s gracious demeanor stood in sharp contrast to the Walsh's pugnacious tact. He thanked the commission for their patience and repeated his invitation to receive suggestions. JDR Jr. then received a thunderous ovation – and was followed by a brusque call for order from Walsh.
- In calling Ivy Lee to the stand, Walsh clearly wanted to position Lee as the secret manipulator of Rockefeller's actions. The two debated their opposite views about publicity agents. "My job is simply that of adviser and I advise my clients to tell the truth," Lee testified.

#### **Escalation Between Hearings: January-May 1915**

- The USCIR hearings triggered considerable press attention as newspapers and magazines dissected the details of the hearings. Public opinion had begun to swing in the Rockefellers' favor.
- On February 15, USCIR Chairman Walsh, reeling from the drumming he received at the hearings, falsely told a newspaper reporter in Kansas City that JDR Jr. had testified that funds of the Rockefeller Foundation could be used to establish a strike-breaking agency. Then on April 22 and April 27, Walsh issued statements critical of Rockefeller, which were promptly refuted in a blistering response from Lee. The feud escalated as Walsh instructed staff to investigate CF&I's treatment of a camp minister and to seek ways to contradict JDR Jr.'s latest public statement. He also lashed out at JDR Jr. in a fiery nationwide radio speech before the People's Power League.

#### **Fourth Hearing: May 1915 in Washington, D.C.**

- As expected, the May hearing was highly contentious. Walsh was under pressure from union officials to turn up the heat on Rockefeller. These included John Lawson, who had just been convicted of murdering a mine guard. JDR Jr.'s staff was ready for battle – armed with printed testimony and appendices that addressed the various criticisms lodged by Walsh.
- Unlike other witnesses, Rockefeller received no advance outline of the questions. Walsh curtly launched in with questions, only to have JDR Jr. interrupt to ask to make a few introductory remarks.
- Walsh played interrogator as he asked about coal price-fixing and CF&I's involvement in the criminal trials of miners in Colorado. Walsh's sympathies for John Lawson were clear—his goal was to demonstrate the grounds for a new trial. In refuting Walsh's call for him to intercede, Rockefeller scored a major point by stating he had no right to interfere in the process of justice.
- Walsh focused throughout the next day and a half on Rockefeller's interactions with CF&I Chairman Lamont Bowers and President Welborn and various elements of CF&I's governance and operations. Rockefeller stood by his earlier statements that the Rockefeller's routinely delegated administration of their businesses to local managers. Walsh relished in reading excerpts of letters exchanged between JDR Jr. and Bowers. He repeated several excerpts three or four times and clung to the possible meaning of particular phrases.
- The former trial lawyer asked leading questions, posed hypothetical situations, and persisted for details on topics about which JDR Jr. had no knowledge. He was a master of innuendo, excerpts out of context, and inflammatory language. Walsh arbitrarily avoided accepting certain evidence, and insisted that Rockefeller first answer questions "yes" or "no" before providing any explanation. He cunningly used exhibits to goad Rockefeller -- including an ad for Standard Oil and a postcard of Frank Snyder, the young boy killed at Ludlow. "Do you care to look at it?" Walsh taunted.
- Ivy Lee's work for Rockefeller was raised no fewer than eight times during JDR Jr.'s testimony. Walsh asked JDR Jr. whether Lee had written his testimony, news interviews or statements about JDR Jr.'s attitude toward labor. JDR Jr. staunchly defended Lee, saying, "You are trying to make it appear that Mr. Lee had attempted to do something wrong and that I sanctioned it." JDR Jr. was drilled about origins of the publicity campaign, Lee's role in the effort, and whether JDR Jr. had intended it to be anti-union education campaign. Walsh also questioned Lee's distribution of an article from *Popular Science Monthly* on "Labor and Capital," (which JDR Jr. had recommended to Lee) and of a reprint of a favorable sermon about the Colorado situation (about which JDR Jr. knew nothing).

- Walsh's relentless cross-examination was a harrowing experience for Rockefeller. Even journalists who were JDR Jr.'s staunchest critics later expressed empathy. The proceedings continued for several more days as advisers filled in details.
- Ivy Lee's second turn on the stand was comparatively brief—there was hardly anything that Walsh had not already extracted from his client. Lee's terse answers shed few additional insights about the Boughton letter, the bulletins, or Lee's discussion with promoters seeking financing for *Nation's Business*. Many of the questions were reread from the January hearings and intended merely to discredit Lee. "As a matter of fact, now, Mr. Lee, didn't you simply go to work for Mr. Rockefeller to do anything he wanted you to do—that is, properly—in a publicity way?" Walsh asked.
- King was a perfect target for Walsh's vengeance. Following innocuous questions dealing with King's background and involvement in industrial problems in Canada, Walsh delved into the terms of King's contract as a consultant, and whether his work in Canada – as a foreigner -- had any relevance to American labor problems. Walsh cut King off in answering questions and badgered him to know the document he periodically referred to (King's August 6 recommendations letter to JDR Jr.).
- King made no bones about the fact he didn't like how Walsh conducted the hearing. King refused to disclose his compensation or to divulge the confidences of people he met in Colorado. When Walsh tried to curtail the loquacious Canadian's comments, King claimed unfairness. Walsh responded by bluntly informing King he was going to pursue the same course of questioning as he had employed with JDR Jr. Walsh would have cited King for contempt if he had such authority. Walsh also challenged outright King's claim that he was a friend of labor. Eventually tempers cooled. King opined that Rockefeller was influential had no power beyond his own company. King also said he thought an early meeting between coal operators and union representatives should have been granted. But, it was unlikely the Colorado conflict could have been avoided.

### Postlude

- The USCIR held only one additional day of hearings after it heard its last Colorado testimony. It never reconvened, except to issue a highly fractured report. Two commissioners challenged Walsh on his behavior, and the derision among commissioners was widely reported.
- Although Walsh continued to receive support from Midwest newspapers, radical newspapers and labor organizations, the commission quickly lost all credibility on the East Coast. Editorials expressed displeasure: Walsh had fed upon "rancor and hate" and had created a public scandal with his "howling farce." Many opinion leaders concluded that the Commission had been a mistake.
- Walsh defended the work of the commission and lashed out at the Rockefellers in a public statement on May 31 and a mass rally in Chicago on July 11. When the commission's authority finally lapsed later in 1915, Walsh continued his mission under the new mantra of a Committee on Industrial Relations funded by labor organizations and sympathizers. By June 1916, attorney Starr J. Murphy advised JDR Jr. to ignore any queries related to Walsh. He agreed with Lee that the better antidote was for Rockefeller and CF&I to inform the public about their activities.

### Implications for Public Relations History

- Although the issue of government publicity had been debated in Congress in 1913, the USCIR was the first major American public exposé of a publicity/public relations campaign.
- Ivy Lee's testimony has been reported previously, but the richer and more interesting insights can be found in the comments of his client, who had become the focus of the hearing. JDR Jr. ardently defended the work of both his advisers, Ivy Lee and William Mackenzie King.
- Although not detailed here, much of Rockefeller's success in the hearings can be attributed to the adroit counsel and involvement by both Lee and King.
- Frank Walsh did no favor for the state of Colorado because the protracted hearings only delayed the Rockefellers from addressing the labor problems at CF&I. However, the Rockefellers owe a debt of gratitude to Walsh for his pivotal role in crystallizing public opinion in their favor.



**‘As you are the Guardians of the Nation’s Peace be also the Guardians of her Honour.’**

## **Official propaganda and policing in the Irish Free State, 1922-37**

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### **Introduction**

In December, 1921 a treaty between Britain and Ireland brought to a close five years of intermittent warfare and established the Irish Free State. Though not the complete independence republicans sought – six Ulster counties remained within the United Kingdom – the remaining 26 counties were granted independence within the Commonwealth in December, 1922. Among the principal acts of the first governments, led by William T Cosgrave’s Cumann na nGaedheal (Irish Race) party was the creation of a national identity for the nascent state. The Gaelic revival of the previous three decades had seen an increase in interest in the Irish language, literature, culture and sport, and nationalists had adopted these as weapons in the campaign for independence. Skilful nationalist propaganda had created a nation that combined three essential ingredients to define Irishness: Catholicism instilled a moral code; Celticism emphasised sporting prowess and mythological heroes sacrificing their lives for a just cause; and Gaelicism embraced the Irish language as the pre-eminent cultural force in establishing Irish identity. Unsurprisingly, while politicians attempted to mould a state and nation along the same culturally distinct lines, they used instruments of the state to propagate this identity. This paper examines efforts by the state to use its newly instituted police force as a means not only of securing the state’s security in a period of tumult, but of promoting a vision of Irishness that was carefully constructed and heavily propagandised.

### **Policing in Ireland before 1922**

The Peace Preservation Act of 1814, synonymous with Sir Robert Peel, established the first formal policing of Ireland. By the 1820s, the four provinces into which the country was divided each had their own regional police force, forming an Irish Constabulary under the direct control of Dublin castle, the seat of British rule in Ireland. An armed paramilitary force, in its early decades the Irish Constabulary was engaged in vigorously quelling various strands of civil unrest: agrarian criminality linked to peasant detestation of the mainly British

or Anglo-Irish landlord class; a six-year long tithe war in the 1830s during which Catholic farmers were obliged to pay a tithe towards the Protestant church; the campaign to revoke the 1801 Act of Union between Britain and Ireland, led by Daniel O'Connell, whose highly effective use of mass rallies demands deeper investigation from an historical public relations perspective; and the highly ineffective 1848 Young Ireland rebellion that, nonetheless, fused separatism with militarism. It was, however, the Constabulary's achievement in defeating the Fenian Rising of 1867 that earned from Queen Victoria the prefix 'Royal' and the right to incorporate the motif of the Most Illustrious Order of St Patrick into its own insignia (Tobias, 1972).

The success of the RIC and its sister metropolitan police forces, principally the Dublin Metropolitan Police, lay in its pervasive presence with, by 1900, 10,660 policemen serving in approximately 1,600 barracks dotted around the country (Griffin, 1999 and Brewer, 1990). These outposts were charged with routine policing duties, and acting as intelligence gatherers for Dublin Castle. It was also a force that reflected with some accuracy the religious divide in Ireland, with about three-quarters of its members Catholic and the remainder Protestant. However, as separatist sentiment began to grow, particularly from the Land War of the 1870s and 1880s to the early 1910s, the force was increasingly viewed by nationalists as a symbol of British oppression in Ireland. At Easter 1916, a small group of around 1,200 insurrectionists styling themselves the Irish Republican Army, and led by the poet and schoolteacher Patrick Pearse, declared an Irish Republic, occupied several buildings in Dublin city centre, and engaged in a six-day fight with around 16,000 British troops and 1,000 RIC members. That rebellion, though conspicuously unsuccessful, nevertheless became the inspiration for further insurrection: after a prolonged period of low-key challenges to police authority - some, like flying Irish tricolours in public, designed to waste police time and hold the force up to ridicule (Morris, 2005) - sporadic violence against the RIC increased, and a war of independence broke out in January, 1919 when two officers were killed in an IRA raid on a gelignite convoy.

It was this conflict that would lead to the eventual disbanding of the RIC. The IRA, having initially began a campaign of assassination of policemen (Lee, 1989) organised itself in well-armed guerrilla units called flying columns and began a campaign of attacking small, rural RIC outposts. As the RIC lost control of the countryside and retreated towards larger towns with bigger garrisons, the IRA supplanted the police and judicial presence with its own Irish Republican Police and Dáil Courts, named after the republican parliament. Reluctant to commit troops to engage with the IRA lest it might legitimise the republican campaign,

Britain instead recruited a new police force of 7,000 demobilised soldiers. Called the Black and Tans after their uniform of black police tunics and khaki army trousers, the force quickly gained a reputation for violence that republican propagandists quickly seized on.

Embarrassed by their conduct, Britain recruited former army officers to form the Auxiliary Division to the RIC. Hopes that its 1,400 members' officer training would lead to better behaviour in the field were dashed as it, too, engaged in reprehensible actions, culminating in the burning of Cork city in December 1920 as a reprisal for a grenade attack on an Auxiliary patrol. Although the regular RIC played little part in such actions, it bore the brunt of republican assaults: almost twice as many police officers than British troops were killed during the conflict. Apart from military actions, the force was also subject to a period of terror, intimidations and boycotts, often from within the communities they policed (Hughes, 2012). Moreover, while its members frequently deplored the brutality of the two forces, by the time the War of Independence ended in a truce, the damage to the RIC's reputation caused by both the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, and assiduous republican propaganda, was such that the force had little credibility or popular support.

### **Policing in the Irish Free State**

Policing was in a curious position when the Free State was founded. The RIC was quickly disbanded, but the state had no alternative to it. With 800 former members opting to join the newly formed Royal Ulster Constabulary, the state lost experienced, dedicated policemen (Herlihy, 1997). The Irish Republican Police was a poor substitute. It was badly trained and equipped. Crucially, it lacked the glamour of an IRA active service unit and did not always attract the most efficient, or courageous, IRA-men. Policing was split between two traditions – one, efficient but unsustainable; the other, inefficient, but republican. A new, professional force was needed, and, even as the new state slid inexorably towards civil war between those who accepted the new state and die-hard republicans, titles such as The People's Guard and Civic Guard were bandied about. A parliamentary motion that the force be named An Garda Síochána (Guardians of the Peace) crystallised the force's function as an arm of the state at the service of the people (Dáil Éireann, vol.4, col. 1709). A year later, in an act to replace the temporary 1923 act, the Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, stated his vision of the relationship between force and state: 'this... is a National Police Force, and... it should not exist outside the authority of the Executive Council, in which is vested all the delegated power and authority of the people.' (Dáil Éireann, vol. 7, col. 379) Months later, he stated on the Dáil record:

People are coming to realise that those men are the servants of the State, are out... in the interests of the people who are not criminal... for their protection and the protection of their property and the vindication of their rights. I would like to see... the realisation that these men are their officials and their servants, out simply to uphold the laws... made here by the people's representatives. (Dáil Éireann, vol. 8, cols 381-2)

It was intended that the force be separated from politics. Membership of political organisations was prohibited, O'Higgins declared, because:

they have to serve... with the same discipline and... efficiency, succeeding Governments and... they have the duty... of seeing that the law is obeyed. Whether... they think that a particular law ought to be repealed or not, that happens to be their duty... and I do not think the undesirability of members... participating in political activity needs to be stressed. (Dáil Éireann, vol. 4, cols 1706-7)

Whether such activity included the Gaelic League (an Irish language revival society) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (which promoted native sports) exercised deputies.

O'Higgins clarified that if a Guard had concerns:

about joining the Gaelic League, he will... ask whether the declaration he has made excludes him, and similarly with the Gaelic Athletic Association. It is impossible to say... what is a political society. Political societies... come and go... the object... is to exclude members of the police force from joining political organisations or secret societies. (Dáil Éireann, vol. 4, col. 1707)

Eoin O'Duffy, the force's first Commissioner, took impartiality as a prerequisite. Addressing Gardaí before despatching them to serve in polling stations during the 1923 general election, he advised: 'political opinions held by the various parties with whom you come in contact are not your concern. Your duty is clearly defined. Be, in the truest sense, servants of the people.' (*Irish Independent*, 25/8/1923). O'Higgins was similarly outspoken on impartiality, reminding the Dáil that Gardaí pledged 'service and obedience to Saorstát Éireann and its Constitution and Government' and that they did not belong to political or secret societies because propriety would not permit Gardaí 'to become associated... with partisan politics' or 'join an organisation the commitments of which are not publicly known.' (Dáil Éireann, vol. 7, cols 379-80)

Such reinforcement of the force's neutrality was important as political opponents of the regime, principally the Fianna Fáil (Soldiers of Destiny) party led by the only commandant of the Easter Rising not to be executed, American-born Eamon de Valera, frequently launched verbal attacks under parliamentary privilege. O'Higgins' party colleague, James Fitzgerald-Kenny chastised Fianna Fáil deputies for remarks which were

another attack in the vituperative campaign which they are steadily and consistently carrying on... against this fine, well-ordered, well-disciplined, thoroughly efficient force. It may be that they think by repeated attacks they will be able to shake the morale and undermine the discipline of that force.... I know that force and... they will not succeed. (*Ibid.*, vol. 22, col. 1523)

When Deputy Richard Anthony rose to pay tribute to Gardaí who had ‘justified themselves before the public’ (*Ibid.*, vol. 26, col. 1356) Fianna Fáil’s PJ Ruttledge, a future Minister for Justice, churlishly declined to follow suit (*Ibid.*, col. 1358). In government, Fianna Fáil continued to view the Garda mistrustfully and unfairly as Cumann na nGaedheal collaborators: the party did little to help the force in the 1930s in a show of tacit approval for the IRA (McGarry, 2005). In a calculated snub to local Gardaí, de Valera preferred to receive a guard of honour in Skibbereen from the local IRA unit (Brady, 1974; McGarry, 2005). In February, 1933, de Valera launched an offensive against the force with the unceremonious replacement of O’Duffy with Ned Broy. Under Broy, the force began a recruitment drive, hiring 79 new Special Branch Gardaí. These were mainly Fianna Fáil supporters employed as a counterweight to O’Duffy’s new Fascist organisation, the Army Comrades Association. Their zealous proclivity to protect Fianna Fáil and disrupt political opponents earned the new recruits the dubious epithet ‘the Broy Harriers’, a pun on their Commissioner and the Bray Harriers athletics club. From 1933-5, 570 recruits, overwhelmingly Fianna Fáil supporters, joined the Garda (McNiffe, 1997). For Fianna Fáil, having a loyal coterie of supporters in positions of influence, prepared to put the party before the state was essential to its party propaganda. However, despite intense provocation, the Garda remained loyal to the state, and stood firm against O’Duffy’s fascism and an IRA emboldened by the Fianna Fáil government.

### **Propaganda and policing: commemorating death and valour**

The Garda journal, *The Garda Review*, edited by the former RIC journal editor, William Harding (*Ibid.*, 157) replaced the short-lived *Iris an Ghárda* (1922-4) and even shorter-lived *Guth an Gharda* (1924). Not on sale to the public, they were an internal propaganda vehicle; McNiffe observes that by 1929, *The Garda Review* had about 6,000 subscribers, the force’s approximate strength (*Ibid.*, 152). Under O’Duffy, the journals conveyed his idealised vision of the force as courageous, Christian, sporting and teetotal. Indeed, they were a propaganda vehicle for the flamboyant, publicity-seeking Commissioner himself. Many issues contained photographs of O’Duffy, who felt it necessary to arrange publication of letters complimentary of the force addressed to him, and, superfluous except

for self-promotion, his replies: Governor-General T. M. Healy's praise, 'Serenity, blended with decision, marks an efficient police' (*Iris an Ghárda*, vol. i, no. 10) and the Protestant Dean of Lismore's compliments to Gardaí for their sense of duty scarcely warranted public responses (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 42). Frequent articles praising O'Duffy conveyed an impression that the journal existed more for his aggrandisement than the force's. That would be a pity, as the propaganda value of its articles, including tales of courageous performance of duty, a crusade against illicit stills, sporting achievements and religious and cultural achievements, was incalculable.

Early articles in *Iris an Ghárda* sought to ground the force in communities, as a benign force for good. A reprint of an O'Higgins press interview in which he commended citizens' acceptance of the force exemplifies this: 'The Civic Guard have driven roots in the country, and people are cooperating with them.' (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 10) Articles by Gardaí were hyperbolic, even sentimental. A letter to the journal from Garda E.C. Millard was redrafted as an article that exhorted every Guard to realise that 'he is part of a Force which has it in its power to put that happy smile back upon the faces of the people, by restoring order, making for the security of life and property, and... helping to restore confidence and hope in all the land.' (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 11) An article about Sean, an Everyman in the Garda, read:

Fellow Guards, Sean lives among you. His past may have been your own. As you are the Guardians of the Nation's Peace be also the Guardians of her Honour. You've routed England's soldiers; rout also her civilisation and her language. You have taught the generations to come how to die for Ireland; teach them now how to [sic] live for Ireland. (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 19)

Harding brought new standards of professionalism to *The Garda Review*. The *Irish Times* welcomed the first issue as a 'journal both interesting and useful to the Garda.'

(28/11/1925) All three Garda journals sought to propagandise internally, to convince the members of the force of their value to the state, and to impress upon them how readily the nation had accepted them.

More calculating was propaganda surrounding murdered Gardaí who, being unarmed, were vulnerable to assault and assassination. However, this distinguished the force from the RIC, and was as much propaganda as policing policy, enabling Gardaí to assume moral authority as defenders of the state, though recalcitrant republicans, opposed to the Free State, quickly seized on Garda defencelessness. McNiffe notes attacks on 60 barracks and 19 patrols between November 1922 and March 1923. Although these usually resulted only in temporary imprisonment of Gardaí, Harry Phelan was the first Garda to be assassinated

during the Civil War in November, 1922 (McNiffe, 1997). McGarry (2005) observes that O'Duffy used funerals to rouse public support for fallen martyrs, and stiffen the resolve of the force. Before 1931, ten such martyrs provided opportunities for propaganda. *Iris an Ghárda* editorialised on the 1923 death of Sergeant Seamus Woods in Scartaglin:

are not the Garda Siothchana [*sic*] drawn from the foremost ranks of those sons of Ireland who risked their lives to free the land of their birth? Are the Gardai [*sic*] not drawn from the people... and, as a contemporary writes, 'to molest them even in the smallest way is to commit an act against the civic spirit which it should be the pride of every Irishman to uphold.' (vol. i, no. 43)

The journal editorialised the death of Garda Patrick Halloran, shot by bank robbers in January, 1924. (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 50) A week later it reported on the funeral at which O'Duffy, delivering the oration and playing to the public gallery, stated that Gardaí would be armed for a short period, if that was the will of the people. (*Ibid.*, vol. i, no. 51) *The Garda Review* editorialised on the death of Superintendent Sean Curtin, a youthful 29: 'the tenth time the hand of the cowardly assassin has fallen heavily upon the Garda'. It also reported on his funeral and propagandised the evil of those who murdered unarmed Gardaí, paraphrasing the officiating priest who sermonised: 'obedience and respect was due to the duly constituted civil power. God had invested the civil authority with power... and those who were guilty of disobedience to the lawfully constituted civil authority incurred upon their souls the stain of mortal sin.' (vol. 6, no. 5)

Acts of heroism alleviated the gloom of posthumous commemoration, and the Scott medal was instituted as an award for bravery. O'Duffy met Colonel Walter Scott at the 1923 international police conference in New York, and Scott donated \$1,000 to establish a fund for medals. Scott travelled to Ireland to present the first medal to Garda James Mulroy in 1924, at a ceremony attended by 4,000 guests. To maximise publicity, awards were made at the Commissioner's Garden Party at Garda headquarters during the *Aonach an Ghárda* festival, until Eamon de Valera, an austere head of government, discontinued the party; presentations were subsequently made publicly at headquarters (McNiffe, 1997). In 1930 Fitzgerald-Kenney presented nine silver and bronze medals to Gardaí. His address lionised the Garda:

whenever danger threatened... there had always been forthcoming from the Garda Siochana men willing to take risk, face all danger, and... imperil themselves in the cause of duty and humanity. In... the discharge of their work... they were... vigilant, skilful and attentive... animated always by the highest sense of duty. It was pleasant... to note how individuals, when called upon by some sudden and dangerous emergency to exercise all their powers, physical and moral, to utilise all the resources which nature had given them, and habit and training improved, showed themselves possessed of minds fertile in expedients, prompt in decision, and quick and fearless in

action.... They were always ready to perform the highest act of Christian charity, and, if needs be, lay down their lives for their fellowmen. (*Irish Times* 25/6/1930)

In 1933, a less effusive Rutledge, then Minister for Justice, was reported as saying that 'he felt they would not have enough medals to present to the Guards if they all got the opportunity of showing their bravery.' The presentations were overshadowed by questions of Garda loyalty to the government. Rutledge alluded to the uneasy détente between the Garda and the government: 'Governments might come and Governments might go, but the Civic Guards would always remain loyal servants of the people and the Government asked nothing more of them.' (*Ibid.*, 21/8/1933) As the decade progressed and Garda loyalty to the state was assured, the ceremonies reverted to a celebration of courage. British Pathé provided a laudatory voiceover for one ceremony:

we have come to accept acts of bravery as part of their normal routine, so often and so inconspicuously are they performed, and this must make it terribly difficult to decide what are the outstanding deeds of courage, and to whom shall these honours fall. To those whose acts have not been acknowledged here, let us pay tribute, for their deeds have not passed unnoticed. (Film 1913.08)

### **Propaganda and policing: cast in the state's image**

With the majority of the state's citizens Catholic, it was apparent that the new force would likewise be of the same faith. Some 98.5% of the force during the first decade was Catholic, despite the fact that Protestants made up 7.5% of the population (McNiffe, 1997). The force represented a particular view of the state, and it was warmly welcomed by local priests in towns and villages around the country (*Ibid.*). That welcome could hardly have provided better propaganda for the force as it attempted to gain legitimacy from a populace that was, in republican areas, hostile. Attempts to establish the force as a Catholic one began soon after the force's establishment. In 1923, the Chaplain to the force, Reverend Patrick McAuliffe, consecrated the Sacred Heart in a ceremony in the Depot, with O'Duffy assisting in the ceremony. Barracks around the country replicated the ceremony (McGarry, 2005). *Iris an Ghárda* celebrated Garda-Church relations: 'It will invest the Civic Guard with a new character in the eyes of the people of Ireland... will inspire in the minds of the people an increased confidence in their own police force, and will give satisfaction and hope for Ireland's future to Catholics throughout the world.' (vol. i, no. 6)

The force's Catholic credentials were further underscored with the establishment of a Jesuit-led Pioneer Total Abstinence Association branch in 1922. Pioneers wore a Sacred Heart pin, pledged to abstain from alcohol and recited a daily prayer. The pin was, with the



Fáinne (ring; denoting the wearer's fluency in Irish), the only non-regulation badge Gardaí were permitted to wear on their uniform. By 1924, 1,000 Gardaí were pioneers, and more had taken a temporary pledge of abstinence. Meanwhile, Garda action against illicit stills did much to popularise the force (McGarry, 2005). This elevated Garda policy to a moral crusade, informed by Catholic beliefs. A cartoon in *Iris an Ghárda* depicted a Guard arresting a poitín-maker in the act of distilling. 'A Study in "Still" Life' suggests that constant reminders, even informally, made the Garda's moral obligation second nature. (vol. 1, no. 48) The same issue reported on Cosgrave's first visit to the Depot: 'Garda Stations are the outposts of the Government. The Government is judged by our conduct and discipline. Ours is a sacred trust.' (*Ibid.*) With belief in its own religious identity, the force rigorously committed itself to supporting a Catholic state. Within its own ranks, the re-organisation of the St Joseph's Young Priests Society (founded in 1895 by the RIC, and disbanded along with it) provided funds to facilitate the seminary studies of sons of Gardaí (McNiffe, 1997).

Under O'Duffy overseas pilgrimages were regular features. Hundreds of Gardaí used their annual leave for religious travel, for which they received no financial support. In 1928, O'Duffy led a pilgrimage of 250 Gardaí to Rome, and, in full dress uniform, a papal audience. In 1930, a pilgrimage to Lourdes, though not conducted in full dress uniform, evinced praise from the *Irish Independent* for its 'scenes of great rejoicing and devotion'. The newspaper lauded O'Duffy for arranging pilgrimages since 1928, and remarked that he had 'caused 350 Gardaí to save and arrange their annual holidays' for the pilgrimage. (10/10/1930) Arriving at their destination after midnight, the party was met by the bishop of Lourdes. Then:

After a few hours rest the pilgrims attended first mass at the Grotto, where they deposited the petitions of their friends at home and lighted candles at the memorable Shrine.

... Dutch, German, and Italian pilgrims stood in amazement as they looked on the Gardaí... and the hearts of our pilgrims were equally stirred by the courtesy and attention bestowed on them by all nationalities... (*Ibid.*)

Celebrations for the centenary celebration of Catholic Emancipation (1929) and the hosting of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress in Dublin saw the force demonstrating its piety through participation and crowd control. O'Duffy revelled in his role as Chief Marshall on both occasions and, after the Congress, addressed Gardaí at headquarters, linking their conduct to the exhibition of faith they had policed:

I congratulate you most heartily.... it would not be possible for any police force to control a million people... were it not for the ardent devotion of the people of their faith and their desire to co-operate with those responsible for maintaining order. ....You exerted yourselves to the special satisfaction of the Archbishop of Dublin and the Congress Committee, and to me, as Chief Marshal. My own responsibility was a big one, and I would not have dreamed of acting in such a capacity were I not alive to the fact that I would have Gardaí behind me.

He concluded by informing them they had won the admiration of visiting prelates.

(*Irish Times*, 28/6/1932)

A pretence was maintained that the Garda was an Irish-speaking force. Time, merely, was required to achieve bilingualism. *Iris an Ghárda* claimed in 1923 that the 'Fainne, alongside the Total Abstinence badge, is as familiar as the three stripes on a sergeant's tunic.' (vol. i, no. 33) O'Duffy, self-confessedly no native speaker, sought to publicise Garda contribution to the language. He wrote to the *Irish Independent* in 1924 outlining the force's march towards bilingualism:

A census was taken... in relation to Irish in the Garda. There were then 23 officers, 64 sergeants, and 154 Gardaí in possession of the Fáinne, or native speakers; and 99 officers, 679 sergeants, and 1,844 Gardaí with a fair knowledge.... Since then 45 native speakers have been admitted. In addition, 25 Gardaí from the Depot... secured the Fáinne, and about 500 others... classified 'fair knowledge'. A further 29 are now ready for examination for the Fáinne.... (*Irish Independent*, 12/12/1924)

Recruits were instructed daily for two to three hours by five native speakers.

Elsewhere, the *Coisti Ceanntar* (district committees) provided native speakers as instructors in almost all divisions. But O'Duffy's claims to linguistic progress were rebutted by critics:

I do not doubt the Commissioner's bona fides, for he has been a sincere Irish-Irelander for many years; but... many of his Irish-speaking Gardaí have been very successful in concealing their knowledge of Irish from the inhabitants of the districts in which they are stationed.... Gardaí wearing the Fainne ... stationed in a certain Irish-speaking district speak English habitually to all who understand even a little of it. (*Ibid.*, 19/12/1924)

Such observations did not deter O'Duffy who believed, however misguidedly, that the state would be Irish-speaking within a decade, and he intended that Gardaí would be to the fore of the revival. He ordered the purchase of a two-year Irish course on gramophone records, with textbooks, using state funds and contributions from Gardaí (Allen, 1999). Although learning Irish was ostensibly a voluntary endeavour, compulsion was unavoidable, as Irish was included in training. There were many difficulties in establishing an Irish-speaking force: many native-speaking recruits were unable to read or write the spoken tongue, and, while Irish was widely spoken socially among Gardaí, at official level English

was preferred. Moreover, once rank and file learned that bilingual proficiency guaranteed a transfer to a remote Gaeltacht district along the impoverished western seaboard, proficiency rates declined through disinterest, or concealment (McNiffe, 1997). The Commission on the Gaeltacht recommended replacing English-speaking Gardaí in Gaeltachtaí with Irish speakers, but many bilingual Gardaí were among the most able in the force and transfers to stations where promotional prospects were few were undesirable (Allen, 1999).

By 1928, cracks were visible in O'Duffy's policy, and Fitzgerald-Kenney was forced to defend Garda commitment to the language: 'Everything is done to encourage Irish amongst the Guards. Where possible, Irish speakers are sent to Irish-speaking districts, and Guards who know a smattering of Irish are sent to these districts also, so that... they may... build up a sound knowledge of the language.' (Dáil Éireann, vol.26, col. 1589) O'Duffy responded gradually as his dream of bilingualism petered out, dropping paternalistic exhortations and calls on national pride for imprecations that any Garda not bilingual by 1938 faced dismissal (McNiffe, 1997). Yet it seemed that the measured approach might be best. *The Garda Review*, praising the Linguaphone scheme, indicated that it would commence a new feature, a glossary of terms in English and Irish of use to Gardaí in the course of their duty (vol. vi, no. 3). Broy took a more pragmatic approach. Presenting Scott medals in 1933, he hoped that 'every member of the Garda Síochána should be able to... use the national language in the performance of his duties... to convert every Garda station... into a miniature Gaeltacht. They were converting their dépôt, which was once a stronghold of Anglicisation into a bulwark of Gaelicisation.' (*Irish Times*, 26/8/1933). Galway West division became an all-Irish division. By 1935 there were three all-Irish districts in the Donegal division and two in Kerry (McNiffe, 1997). In 1934, he ordered a pay increase of 7.5pc for Gaeltacht service. The Government Information Bureau announced that it would be paid to Gardaí in or transferred to the division 'as a recognition of the special service... not only in using nothing but Irish in their intercourse with the Irish-speaking public, but in mastering the technical difficulties of making Irish the official language of the force in the area.' (*Irish Times*, 14/7/1934)

How successful this policy was is moot, although McNiffe (1997) records that Gardaí speaking Irish in court occasionally delayed the implementation of justice as judges did not understand them. A debate on the national radio station, 2RN, 'The Revival of Irish in the Garda Síochána,' between Ailfrid Ó'Liodain, secretary of the Garda branch of the Gaelic League, and Seán de Burca, an Irish-language teacher, touched on the matter. Ó'Liodain claimed that the legal profession in Gaeltachtaí had made efforts to learn Irish in order to

match the linguistic ability of Gardaí. Gardaí were, according to Ó'Liodain, 'making it clear to the people that they were serious about the language and that it really was a living speech.' (*Irish Independent*, 7/8/1936). It was, however, increasingly clear that official propaganda regarding the Irish-language ability of the rank and file was beginning to show signs of untruth and distortion.

Sport required little such distortion. As with any body of young men, sporting endeavour was expected of Gardaí, and many members excelled nationally and internationally. Gardaí were regular contestants in the Tailteann Games (a quadrennial celebration of Celtic heritage in sport and culture) and in club and county championships in Gaelic games. This participation promoted a sporting elite, and made it accessible to the citizen as spectator, or fellow contestant. Of course, it cannot be discounted that sporting prowess helped O'Duffy bask in the reflected glory of Garda athletes. Both McGarry (2005) and Allen (1999) draw attention to his desire for publicity from displays of sporting prowess. While he initiated the first annual Garda sports championship in Kildare in 1922, it was the 1926 foundation of *Coiste Siamsa*, the Garda entertainment committee, that formally organised sports. That summer the first *Aonach an Gharda* was held at Landsdowne Road rugby stadium, attended by a sizeable crowd of spectators and filmed by Pathé (Film 540.11). The company frequently filmed Garda sports, generally Gaelic games and track and field, with prominence given to sports requiring physical strength such as the discus, tug-of-war and 35-pound over-bar throw.

Garda boxers were treated especially well. A former British army boxer, Tommy Maloney, whose salary was paid by the Garda sports fund, coached Garda teams. Garda boxers at headquarters were practically semi-professional, with less onerous duties than their peers (McNiffe, 1997). Film footage of Garda boxers training and sparring suggests a high level of fitness and technique. (Pathé, Film 682.11) The competitive record of the force bears witness to this, with 13 international team contests, two European police titles, 15 national competitions and two Amateur Boxing Association championships won in the force's first decade (McNiffe, 1997). Other sports also had their luminaries. Garda Paddy Perry, for instance, won a record eight all-Ireland senior softball singles in handball from 1930-7. During that period, he also won three all-Ireland softball doubles, and the 1932 Tailteann Games singles and doubles events.

While great sporting feats were not expected of all Gardaí they were expected to participate in sport for its own value, and the benefits it bestowed on their policing duties: 'The man who plays is bound to be a healthy and vigorous Guard, fit for duty in sunshine or

in storm; he will participate in that indescribable pleasure... reserved for men who take part in the games of the Gael.' (*Iris an Gharda*, vol. i, no. 6). An admonitory codicil to an *Irish Times* report on Garda sports could only have been inspired by a propaganda-conscious contact within the force, as it reminded Gardaí that the 'advent of summer-time leaves more time for training' and suggested all Gardaí take advantage of the lengthy evenings (16/4/1927). The heyday for Garda sports, however, passed with the Free State. An ageing force, whose members had new, familial responsibilities, was unable to maintain the successes that had done so much to promote it and win acceptance from the citizenry.

## **Conclusion**

That An Garda Síochána was speedily and virtually universally adopted as the national police force by the state's citizens, even amidst the conflagration of civil war and the simmering enmities it created, was a remarkable achievement. That it was achieved as a force armed with little other than a truncheon and a moral mandate was more remarkable still. Cumann na nGaedheal successfully created an image of the Free State with which its citizens could identify, and institutions like the Garda were to the fore in this melange of propaganda and state-building. In the Garda, the state had an institution that regarded itself as the defender of the state against lawlessness and, perhaps, even godlessness. It demonstrated its absolute loyalty to the state, irrespective of the party of government, perhaps because it was modelled on the composition and aspirations of the nation. Propagandising the Garda propagandised the state, and both were presented to the nation as exemplars to be admired and obeyed. Key attributes were selected in this regard: civic-mindedness combined with a sense of duty and loyalty towards the state that civilians were encouraged to mimic; a sporting, healthy way of living; and the espousal of a Catholic, Celtic and Gaelic, identity, however artificial that identity proved to be. Seven years of insurrection and civil war, with a death toll estimated between 4,500 and 7,500, gave the state bloody origins; An Garda Síochána, heavily propagandised to win popular support, helped bring stability to the new state, proving itself effective at guarding the nation's peace, and her honour.

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## **Public Relations for the Next Generation: An Historical Perspective on Activism on Behalf of Children's Broadcasting Initiatives**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Public relations campaigns on behalf of special interest groups are no novelty. They have existed throughout the history of the profession. Yet campaigns on behalf of minors, and their best interests regarding broadcasting and electronic media, as perceived by parents, professionals, and educators, are highly significant and fairly recent. They represent advocacy on behalf of a very vulnerable segment of the population, one that is a prized target market.

As early as the advent of television, pressure groups on both sides of the Atlantic lobbied broadcasters, government, and regulators as regards programming and policy matters. East of "The Pond," in the U.K., a public service mandate was in place even before television emerged. The U.K. imperative to educate, a foundation stone of broadcasting, was in stark contrast to events west of "The Pond," where U.S. channels were prodigiously gathering data to deliver audiences to advertisers.

To contextualize this in terms of children's television, several years ago Britain's commercial television channel (ITV) stopped producing and broadcasting children's TV shows to preempt them in favor of more commercially viable adult shows—a move some interpreted as linked to a new restrictions against advertising junk/snack foods during designated kids' programming. Activist groups, including Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV-see below) and the European Alliance of Viewer and Listener organizations (EURALVA), in the U.K. and Brussels, lobbied to bring about these changes. The competition among commercial broadcasters for a shrinking advertising pool exacerbated an already difficult situation. Perhaps ITV's motivation was solely economically driven; regardless, it was a noteworthy change to the children's media environment.

Beyond the question of revenues and programs, these cutbacks have had the potential to undercut broadcasting's role in serving the public interest by meeting the informational, educational, and entertainment needs of children, keeping them civically engaged, facilitating

social cohesion, and sustaining democracy. Almost concurrently, a widely acclaimed book (Palmer, 2006) underscored the effects of today's culture and new technologies on children and their learning.

The financial means to provide the above for children has been pulled out from under the broadcasters. Even the BBC, the most prolific producer of children's television, cut 5% of its children's programming budget for six years. This potential for negative impact makes these NGOs' case for purposeful, quality, indigenous programming all the more compelling.

This paper will primarily explore the history of U.K. campaigns focusing on children's programming content (e.g., concerns with obscenity or inappropriate material, indigenous-authored scripts representative of British life), including recent, emergent issues (e.g. junk food advertising). It will briefly discuss where British activism concerning children's media diverges from its American counterpart. It will also study the activities of nearly-defunct U.K. groups that campaigned on behalf of children's TV (e.g., Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association [NVALA]), and ongoing children's TV campaigns organized by all-issue groups (e.g., Voice of the Listener and Viewer and Listener [VLV]), and the Children's Media Trust, Save Kids' TV, and other current coalitions.

The paper will go beyond the "story line" and will be grounded in both the established body of public relations literature about activism, related literatures from other disciplines on this topic (e.g., sociology and political science) and more recent literature regarding children's broadcasting and its impact on children and young teens. There is a growing body of scholarly works (e.g., Messenger-Davies, 2010; Livingstone, 2008; Whitaker, 2009) that deal with the socio-cultural impact of children's programming. There are also voluminous U.K. government documents and government inquiries and evidentiary hearings at which expert witnesses have debated how changes in media output and outlets for children do or do not have a lasting impact on them socially, educationally, and morally. The activist groups mentioned above are among those that have presented and continue to present evidence and lobby Parliament for more changes.

Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, this paper will document how specific public relations strategies used for pro-social purposes, in this case, undertaken by a handful of individuals, various industry groups, grassroots activists, and broadcasting-centered groups, may elicit important policy changes and economic subsidies, from broadcasters and government, for ongoing, indigenous children's television production. It will identify the history of the main policy issues around which activists have generated discourse and debate, and the impact they have had on those empowered to make change. It will explore how



historically, activists have used public relations to build relationships around shared goals of quality, indigenous British children's programming, including the alliances and tactics stakeholders use to achieve goals. The implications are that public relations strategies, over time, can make substantial inroads into bringing policy issues with social impact "to the table" and can strengthen the lines of communication among corporate, public sector, and grassroots stakeholders. In this way, their individual/cumulative needs (in this case, quality, indigenous children's programs) and long-term interests may be addressed and children's best interests may be served.

The methods used in this study will be in-depth interviews, analysis of primary data, such as testimony in Parliamentary committees and other evidence, review of various literatures (see above), unobtrusive methods (such as reviewing library logs of documents borrowed by activists or other interested parties), analysis of government, organizational, and activist Web sites, and other promotional organizational literature, and visits to media outlets and other libraries here and in the U.K. (e.g., British Film Institute and/or university libraries). Additional methods may be used at the author's discretion. The limitations, other than time available to collect, review, and integrate the data, are yet to be determined.

## **The Evolution of Tokyo's PR: Case Study of a Local Government**

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### **Introduction**

This goal of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of how government public relations develop through the case of Tokyo. Not only have the history of government PR not been discussed adequately, many discussions about PR history often do not differentiate between the private and public sector. Also, while various examples of PR practice by the government around the world have been pointed out, they have rarely been discussed in relation to the “modern PR,” which is said to have emerged in the U.S. around late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By looking at the history of Tokyo's PR-related activities and department organization prior to the emergence of a PR department in Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 1949, this paper reveals how early PR practices gradually led to a birth of a department. Specifically, it looks at the three major stages of PR development between 1868 and 1945. Beginning with the most fundamental task of a government of notifying the public about the law, Tokyo faced series of communication challenges by developing communication systems, public journals, hosting events and sometimes listening to the public opinion, which compose different aspects of PR. Tokyo's records of organizational structure also provide insights to how communication practices gained importance and grew over time.

The case of Tokyo government may seem rather unusual given the large population and economic scale the city has in addition to the fact that PR in Japan is sometimes said to be relatively under-developed or practiced rather differently than in the U.S. or Europe (Cooper-Chen & Tanaka, 2008; Kelly, Masumoto & Gibson, 2002). Nevertheless, Tokyo's history not only points at some of the basic aspects of government PR but also connects the “dots,” or what seem to be ancient cases of PR and “modern” PR, which could also be seen in other public or private organizations with long history.

## Literature Review

Discussions about public relations have often played down the difference that exists between the public and private sectors (Liu & Horsley, 2007). Models and theories developed from the histories and practices of private organizations have been applied to public organizations without careful examination. In fact, in *Managing Public Relations*, Grunig and Hunt (1984) categorized government PR under the public information model, the model that focuses on one-way dissemination of true information, rather than the two-way symmetrical model that focuses on dialogue and communication between the organization and the public. Considering how many national or local governments provide public service by taking public voice into consideration, two-way symmetrical model can also be readily applied to governments. L'Etang (2008) even noted that, "the history of government PR is sometimes sidelined as propaganda." However, referring to the case of British PR history, she also points out that PR models can be derived from history of local governments too.

Even in Japan, the government PR has not been a major field of study, much less its history. The birth of Japanese PR is often attributed to the years of occupation by the Allied Powers led by the U.S. (1945-1952). PR history in Japanese literature often begins with the U.S. history starting in the 1800s as it is considered to have formed the basis of PR theory and practice that was introduced to Japan through the Allied occupation (Ide, 1967). The fact the Allied occupation introduced PR as a part of democratization most likely have limited the discussion about PR to focus on the postwar period, denying the link between wartime propaganda efforts and postwar PR. In fact, the "suggestion" that Allied occupation issued to the local governments in Japan stated that the PR office must provide accurate information about policies to the local residents, allowing the residents to make decisions based on the information and freely express their opinions (Hinoue, 1963). The idea was to inform and respect the will of the people instead of government forcing their decisions to the people. There were actually cases of two-way communication programs that began during the occupation years (Ide, 1967). As Olasky (1984) pointed out, narratives and scope of PR history depends on how one defines PR. In Japan's case, the democratic and normative definition that involves honest two-way communication have been favored to the extent Japan's PR history narrative is frequently coupled with the American version.

Although the normative definition and the concept of PR was introduced and spread during the late 1940s and 50s, the practice of two-way communication is said to have spread only gradually through the 60s and 70s as a part of marketing and crisis management in response to various criticisms from the society (Yamamura et al., 2013). One-way communication and media relations remained the dominant practice in Japan for some time,

although in terms of two-way symmetrical model of practice, Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted that it spread in the 60s and only about 15% practiced it in the U.S. In terms of history of ideas, PR in Japan may be said to have began as a result of the U.S. influence but in terms of actual practice, it is possible to assume that postwar PR practice involved the one-way dissemination of information similar to the ones practiced during and prior to the war, whether it be in the form of propaganda or not.

Examples of PR efforts during and prior to the WWII in Japan are often mentioned as either cases of propaganda or nonsystematic PR-like efforts (Inoue, 2003). Cases such as the use of centuries-old notice boards called *kosatsu*, publication of the first in-house magazine by Kanebou (1903) and establishment of the first PR department by the South Manchurian Railroad Company (1923) have been mentioned in several literatures but Ikari et al. (2011) and Yamamura et al. (2013) are two of the very few efforts to contextualize such examples into long-term PR development.

### **A Study of Local Government's PR History**

Given that most PR theories and histories do not distinguish public and private sector and that Japanese PR history studies have mainly focused on the postwar period, this paper looks at the long-term formation of a government PR department in the government of Tokyo since its establishment in 1868.

A study of the formation of government PR department reveals how certain PR functions came to be regarded as valuable enough to be institutionalized, to have a department of its own. It is a functionalist approach in that such departments were established to solve a set of social problems (Vos, 2011). Committee on Public Information (1917-1919) is one of the earliest and well-known cases of a PR institution despite its short existence. L'Etang (2004) documented cases of British local government communication efforts in the 1920s and 30s. CPI had the clear intention of influencing public opinion towards joining the World War I and British local governments had the need for communication in the rapidly democratizing society. At the same time, it is an institutional approach.

“Presented with the same institutional obstacle course, rational people will navigate the course in essentially the same way or via the same path. The path, once constructed, will represent a predictable road of travel; but the path, once altered via new institutional obstacles or rules, will also present a predictable path of travel.” (Vos, 2011, p. 328)

Vos mentioned the quote in the context of showing how PR pioneers such as Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays were able to develop PR business in part because of their experienced in the CPI, that after the World War I they faced PR challenges by following the paths developed during the CPI years. In the case of government departments, once a department is established, it will develop routines and patterns to face PR challenges. A historical study of government PR department is thus an attempt to discover how a specific government organization decided to invest substantial amount of tax money to establish a department in face of certain PR challenges.

Unlike private businesses that developed in the recent history, governments have existed, in one way or another, since thousands of years ago. Communication with the governed is inevitable for most of government agencies but the government department that focuses on PR only emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The World War I is often said to have raised awareness of propaganda and PR among the countries. However, that may be a logical explanation for a wartime PR efforts such as the CPI but does not necessarily explain PR efforts during peacetime. Early development of PR profession has been discussed as a response to muckrakers and mistrust of businesses but records of governments facing such public resentments also dates back centuries, although the existence of newspapers is a rather recent condition.

Why, then, did PR department only emerge recently? How were PR-related functions executed prior to the establishment? This paper attempts to answer such questions through the case study of Tokyo. Tokyo, as a local government, may not be a typical case in Japan or elsewhere but its history dates back to 1868, when the feudal Tokugawa government (1603-1868) ended and the new Meiji government was established. Despite several major structural reforms, the government has maintained a certain level of continuity for over one and a half century. Such lengthy continuity enables us to look into which department was responsible for PR-related functions and how it eventually developed into a “PR” department. Further case studies of other local governments are certainly necessary to provide a general answer to the questions but this research attempts to also propose a method of analysis that may be applied to other cases too.

## **Method**

One of the difficulties researching the background of a PR department is specifying documents that relate to PR activities. As L’Etang noted, “organizations often do not retain archives that would be useful to PR historians” (2008, p.325). Archives of PR activities or minutes for PR decisions are not always available but such archives preceding the

establishment of a PR department is even less accessible.

For example, historical researches on Japanese prewar government agencies or Tokyo's governance rarely touch upon the methods or issues of information dissemination or communication with the public except in general terms. Despite the fact that persuading or mobilizing the public has often been a major task for leaders or agencies, historical research in both PR and government studies seems to have focused more on the background or effects of important decisions and movements rather than focusing on how such decisions were shared and spread among the stakeholders.

In order to look into the age when PR department did not exist, in Tokyo's case prior to 1949, this study looks at the annual records of departmental organization. Fortunately, Tokyo has kept records of its organizational structure since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Although it is not always clear as to what each departments or sections were responsible for, it is possible to track when departments were created or dissolved. Together with records of PR activities by the government and various historical studies about Tokyo, it is possible to study how PR functions were initially positioned, how they were expanded or developed over time.

Inevitably, this research is required to consider one-way communication and propaganda attempts in a non-democratic society where the press enjoyed very little freedom. As a broad definition is necessary for this research, this paper defines PR as "management of communication between an organization and its publics," specifically that between the local government of Tokyo and its local citizens. This paper does not look at the "origin of PR" *per se* but rather the background of the origin of a PR department. To be precise, of a department-level section with the name of PR, translated as *kouhou* in Japan, which was established in 1949.

Some define PR as a practice that can only exist in a democratic society with free press. However, the democratic nature of a society and freedom of press is relative and defining the practice in broader terms enables its history to go back millennia. By studying the transition of organizational structure that lead to the birth of a PR department during a time-period that includes a dynamic shift from non-democratic to a democratic society, this research implies the possible relationship between PR in a non-democratic setting and that in a democratic setting.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) indicated similar shift among private PR practitioners in terms of press-agentry model to public information model that occurred between late 1800s and early 1900s. Their historical analysis looked at prominent PR practitioners to indicate the shift in practice. Instead, this study takes Liu and Horsley (2007)'s claim that private and

public sectors are different, as they are placed under different conditions, into historical perspective to clarify exactly how PR developed under certain conditions during a time that would otherwise be classified under the age of press-agentry model.

This paper will first look at some of the government PR activities that are known to have existed even prior to the emergence of Tokyo government in order to provide general understanding of how local and central government disseminated information in Japan prior to the mid-1800s. Tokyo's PR from 1868 and 1945 will be described in three different sections, each referring to a period with fairly distinctive PR practice and goals. Also, while Tokyo began as a prefectural government in 1868 and became a metropolitan government in 1943 due to a major revision of government structure, the City of Tokyo that existed between 1898 and 1943 was the most active in terms of PR activities. Thus, although this paper will look at prefectural or metropolitan level of governance, it will also focus on the City, which covered the most populated and developed areas of central Tokyo.

### **PR-related Activities Before and Around the Meiji Restoration**

A Japanese government PR practitioner Hinoue (1951) and a sociologist Koyama (1954) mentioned in their books that were published soon after PR was introduced to Japan by the U.S.-led Allied Occupation that dissemination of legal information is the most fundamental form of government PR. In a government, the most basic relationship is that between the ruler and the ruled, between the government and the governed. In order to establish such a relationship, laws and regulations are the most fundamental information that must be understood and shared among the members.

One of the ancient examples of government PR in Japan's recorded history is the promotion of the Codes of Taika in 701 AD (Hinoue, 1963). The Codes of Taika was a set of administrative and criminal codes based on Chinese legal system and Confucianism issued in order to create a centralized government headed by the emperor. As the promulgation of the Codes affected not only local governments but also the people in terms of taxation, lifestyle and criminal law, public officers were sent around Japan to let the Codes be known to the people.

One of the oldest and long-lasting cases of media use was the wooden notice board called *kosatsu*, or *takafuda*. *Kosatsu* has a characteristic, wedge-shaped top that is known to have existed more than a thousand years, gradually becoming a popular and systematic method of disseminating information to the public. Local governments often had a fixed spot to post the notifications. Similar system exists even today with notice boards set up in every municipality, where printed notifications from the local public agencies are posted. However,

the *kosatsu* was special in a sense that even if people could not read or understand it, it was to be respected as sacred (Okada, 1993). The people were often only notified about what actions will be punished without the explanation as to why. The use of *kosatsu* as an official method of disseminating legal information continued until the introduction of new public announcement rule in 1874 in an attempt to deny the sanctity of rules set by the previous government and to modernize the system.

Clerical staffs called *yuhitsu* have long been responsible for drafting documents, for transcribing announcements, records and laws accurately according to set of rules. The position gradually gained importance as the governing system became complex and sophisticated. During the Edo period (1603-1868), the position of *yuhitsu* was built into the government organization. The department was responsible for functions held today by legislative bureau and correspondence and archives division. They not only drafted and checked the accuracy of documents that were sent out but also received documents coming from around the country. As drafting legal documents was one of their important functions, elite officials of the department have come to be involved in the actual policy formation process.

Notifications for public officials or agencies and those for the general publics were drafted separately, where the latter was made public through the use of aforementioned *kosatsu* and personal networks. Documents were copied manually and eventually delivered to local leaders in the towns and villages, who were responsible for notifying the local inhabitants (Okada, 2002).

As legal notifications had to be delivered to wide range of areas and be understood accurately by local leaders with limited educational background, the language used in the notifications were simplified. Such attempt to simplify the wordings to make legal documents comprehensible to the mass is quite common even today. Koyama even pointed out that when most of the population was illiterate, knowledge about the law was familiarized through maxims and proverbs (1954).

An important part of information dissemination was the *gonin gumi* (five-man team), a system of mutual surveillance and collective responsibility for crimes and tax payment. It was primarily used as a personal network to control the population but it also functioned as a method to deliver and share notifications. Although the *gonin gumi* was established in the Edo period and disappeared with the modernization of local government, similar system of *tonari gumi* (neighborhood association) was organized during World War II for effective mobilization, mutual surveillance and allocation of rationed food, not to mention its importance in the effective top-down flow of propaganda. Today, a system of voluntary



neighborhood associations exist around the country and many of them are responsible for sharing local information and delivering newsletters issued by the city and prefecture that they belong to.

In 1868, when the Tokugawa shogunate ended and the new Meiji government was established, the Imperial Oath of Five Articles was released on March 14th. As it stated the basic principles of the new government, the Oath was shown to territorial lords and printed in the public journal, *Dajokan Nippo*, published by the Meiji government, or the new, central government for sale. The public journal, first published on February 1868, was meant to counteract the increasing number of publications and rumors that were unfavorable to the government. Originally it included information about the legislation, personnel affairs and current events with newspaper-like contents. It was renamed in 1883 as *Kanpou* and has been published under the same title since.

While the territorial lords were informed about the principles of new government, the general public was informed about the new set of rules they must abide by, which was identical to those in the previous government, through the *kosatsu*, which was about to be abolished as an official notification system.

The notice board system of *kosatsu* was officially abolished in 1973 as a part of modernizing the governing system. From the next year, process of making legislation public has been clarified. Although the process involved similar features such as positing notification on designated locations, the traditional *kosatsu* were removed nevertheless and new printing technology and delivery systems were utilized so as to improve efficiency and accuracy (Okada, 1993).

These are some of the methods used by the local and central government before or soon after the establishment of the Meiji government. It is a history of dictatorial or feudal control through one-way communication. Meiji government's attempt to establish new forms of governance and to maintain it afterwards inevitably required extensive communication. What accelerated the change were the rapid modernization and the rise of newspapers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Period of Rapid Modernization (1868 to 1900s)**

One of the major challenges for any newly established government that went through or goes through drastic structural change due to civil war or rapid modernization seems to be informing and educating the public about the new government system. The Tokyo government faced the challenge through trials and errors during the latter half of 19th century.

On September 1868, the new prefectural government of Tokyo was established with correspondence section under the department of general affairs. In 1887 when the correspondence section rose to the position of a department, its subsections included the following: rules and regulations, secretary, archives, statistics and document reception.

Although the details of these subsections require historical research as to what their functions were, they were apparently responsible for not only drafting, archiving and distributing legislations and notifications like the *yuhitsu* in the previous government but also gathering statistical data. Many of their functions have been practiced in the past in one way or another but the difference was that now these functions had to become official and systematic. One such example is the increasing amount of documents involved in realizing the modern governance, policy formation and implementation requiring advanced information management system within the organization.

In terms of communication, initially Tokyo continued the use of *kosatsu* and personal networks in order to deliver legislative information and other notifications as they had done under the previous government. However, as the country promoted modernization of political, economic and social systems, there were increasing number of rules and regulations that had to be drafted and publicized, which could not be handled by the previous methods of notifications.

In 1872, Tokyo began utilizing printing press and circulated printed materials so as to avoid misunderstandings caused by hand-copied materials such as the notice boards and by verbal communication. By 1876, Tokyo introduced a public notification system where it segmented its land into small segments, each with a group of influential figures who are responsible for introducing and explaining legislation to 50 households. Also, it posted notifications in the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, the first daily newspaper published in Tokyo since 1872.

In 1880, as newspapers increased their circulation, Tokyo began to publish public journal entries periodically in both *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimubn* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, two of the major newspapers at the time. As many newspaper companies emerged in the 1880s and 90s, Tokyo posted their notifications in different newspapers.

In 1889, Tokyo organized 15 of its major wards into a city managed by the mayor of Tokyo Prefecture. Two years later, the Prefecture began providing its legislative notifications as a supplement to the public journal *Kanpou* issued by the central government. In 1897, the City of Tokyo began issuing public journal as supplements to the newspapers *Mainichi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Miyako Shimubun*. The City's journal included not only legislative information but also reports and advertisements, occasionally changing the

newspaper it was included in. Until 1916, the City continued to issue its public journal as a supplement to newspapers.

During the late 1800s, both the Prefecture and the City attempted to continue improving the way they deliver legislative news and other information to the public in order to introduce a new system of governance and maintain public order. Tokyo modernized its communication methods by upgrading the traditional, ambiguous notification system into a concrete and official one, publishing public journals using simpler language for accurate and better understanding. Also, unlike today, when governments can publish their own journals either in print or online and deliver it directly to almost every households, in the late 1800s Tokyo had to rely on newspapers in order to both publish and distribute public journals either in the form of a newspaper entry or a supplement.

While gradual development of information distribution methods promoted modernization, it was clearly a gradual expansion and strengthening of one-way communication that saw little importance in receiving feedbacks from the public.

### **Period of Persuasion and Enlightenment (1900s to 1920s)**

Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, rapidly increasing population and urbanization became a major issue for Tokyo. Administrative workload increased and became complicated. Urban development was necessary for maintaining public health and expanding business. While major change for both infrastructures and governance was discussed within the government, the strong legislative body (composed of influential members of society), the Council of Tokyo City, along with many other political and social factors prevented major initiatives from taking effect. However, major riots caused by rising rice price (1918) and the Great Kanto Earthquake were some of the severe events that forced the government to move forward. Mayors such as Yoshio Sakatani (1863-1941) and Shinpei Goto (1857-1929) were known for their efforts to gain public support for government projects by promoting disclosure. Although there are limited records of noteworthy organizational change concerning departments related to communication during this period, many attempts were made with the initiative of mayors.

A scholar of public administration, Yoshinori Ide (1967) mentioned that there are several factors that affect the development of government PR, namely the expansion of city area, increased complexity and information. Although Ide was discussing the postwar government PR, these factors were clearly evident in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the City of Tokyo was established in 1889 and was restructured ten years later precisely because it was unable to handle the expanding administrative functions of an enormous city

at that stage, especially since the First Sino-Japan War (1894-1895). Specifically, the outdated transportation system, water and sewage systems, slow constructions of roads and ports have been pointed out as serious issues at the time (Tokyo, 2000). In fact, the number of city officials more than tripled between 1900 and 1912, from 600 to 2,000. The number continued to rise and by 1924 it was again tripled to 7,000, eventually reaching 15,000 by 1942 (Tokyo Metropolitan Archives, 2008).

Yoshiro Sakatani, the fourth mayor of the City (1912-1915) is known for his attempt to gain public support for the urban development project. In 1914, the Tokyo Taisho Exposition was held from March to July. Mayor Sakatani gave orders to build the Tokyo pavilion to present the City's programs and future projects in front of the public. The goal was to gain public understanding and cooperation toward city's activities through eye-catching presentations (Tokyo, 2004). According to Tokyo, more than 2.5 million visitors came to the pavilion during the five-month long event. It was quite rare for a local government to participate in such event.

In addition to the Tokyo pavilion, Sakatani had published a booklet that contained the overview of the City's projects with extensive use of visual aid such as photos, tables and graphs. Such a publication was quite rare at the time and it was only published. However, in 1922 another mayor of the City, Shinpei Goto, began publishing it on yearly basis to promote disclosure and public discussion. With minor changes to the title and content, it has been published since with the exception of the years between 1942 and 1946.

In 1918, the Rice Riot, or an uprising by the people against rising rice price occurred around the country. The price of rice went up as the central government sent troops to Siberia. The government responded to the riots by force and gag law that led to a major public resentment and eventually the dismissal of the cabinet. The following cabinet actively introduced social policies and urban development projects in order to realize stable urban governance.

Although urban development projects often faced strong objections from the local residents, the City Planning Act was finally passed in 1919. The Act limited the rights of local residents in order to implement development projects. One of the ways government officials dealt with the resenting public is to organize a research group composed of influential members that worked on awareness campaigns where they claimed individual rights must be sacrificed for the greater good.

One of the research group members, Shinpei Goto, a former cabinet minister who also used to serve as the head of South Manchuria Railway, became the mayor of the City between 1920 and 1923. As a former member of the group he continued to raise awareness

about the need for urban development. At one point he invited more than 100 intellectuals to hear and draft a pamphlet containing public dissatisfaction towards city promotion projects in 1920. The pamphlet contained a survey of questionnaire sent to 65,000 citizens with voting rights that received 6,111 responses. It contained a wide range of public demand that included information and communication matters such as the disclosure of council minutes, greater coverage of City's activities by the newspapers and more reflection of public demand by the city councils or officials. Although it was the collective voice of elite population with means, it was one of the early cases where a head of a local government used the voice of the public in order to improve and realize public policy that often faced resentment.

The Great Kanto Earthquake of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923 prompted the City to issue several publications to share information with the local residents. The effect of M7.9 earthquake that killed around 140,000 people was so severe many of the city functions were directed towards reconstruction, where sharing information through regular publications has become an important part. Although Goto had left the mayor's office on April that year, he became the Minister of Home Affairs the day after the earthquake, eventually drafting the "800 million yen reconstruction plan" which he not only discussed within the government but also with the general public through the newspapers.

In terms of government organization, other than Mayor Goto's decision to raise the correspondence section to a department in 1920, no significant change can be observed either in the City or the Prefecture. Other than the booklet on the overview of the city, the above examples remained as initiatives of mayors that were not institutionalized.

Changes began to occur in the 1930s, starting with the establishment of a official announcement sector, or a small PR sector that focused on one-way communication called *Kouhou kakari*, and a city information sector under the correspondence department in 1934. The two sectors were established soon after the expansion of the City in 1932 to include 20 more wards, 35 in total. This was the first time that a single sector was devoted to the function of delivering information in Tokyo.

### **Period of Militarization and Efficiency (1930s to 1945)**

After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan's militarization became evident, leading to the Second Sino-Japan war (1937 to 1945) and the Pacific War (1941 to 1945). Propaganda attempts by the government and the military has been well documented about these years but their influence on the local government's PR system has not been discussed extensively. As the central government attempted to mobilize the entire nation through various propaganda attempts, communication systems in the local level have been reformed

for greater efficiency, giving rise to a departmental structure and institutionalized PR that resemble that of postwar Japan.

In this paper, we will look at three main factors: the development of public journals similar to that of the post-war era, the emergence of the information department and the rise of neighborhood association.

### *Development of Public Journals*

When the Tokyo City first published its independent public journal in 1916, it included official announcements, legislative announcements and various reports, published and sold twice a week. As public journals are today, it was not necessarily meant for the general public to read. However, in 1928, in order to raise awareness of the City's events and projects, the journal was redesigned. Specifically, it now had a photograph on the cover page along with academic reports, official announcements, personnel affairs, city project overviews, current events, local news, statistics, comments from the citizens and advertisement.

In the months following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japan War in July 1937, the City enlarged the cover-page photo and placed news concerning the city in front of legislative announcement, making the journal more interesting to the public. According to the guideline for the public journal issued in the same year, its purpose was to facilitate cooperation between the City and the citizens, to educate the citizens and to serve as the public agency shared by the citizens. It was meant to be easy to read, cover every matter that citizen must know, be accurate and avoid speculation, include interesting news and opinions, to welcome article contribution from the citizen and to provide useful materials in the form of graphs and tables or booklets (Tokyo, 1995).

The fact that it accepted article contribution from the citizen makes it quite unusual for a public journal at the time. The City apparently began accepting requests or complaints from the citizens for the purpose of improving bureaucratic efficiency. On July 1937, the first edition of the monthly report on office function improvement was issued. It was distributed to each department within the City government that included list of issues that must be improved along with citizen's voice that were published on newspapers. In a sense, the revised public journal and the monthly report served as a point of two-way communication. These movements were some of the results of the cabinet decision to improve administrative affairs not only by the efforts of individual agencies alone but with the cooperation of the citizens, which required greater understanding of administrative work.

Internal communication was also improved with information officers appointed to

each department. From September 1937, daily activities of the City was recorded and published twice a day, in the morning and afternoon for better coordination within the agency.

In 1938, the National General Mobilization Act was passed. Various aspects of the society was now mobilized for wartime needs. Local governments had to reduce expenditures and improve efficiency even further. The City's various publications were consolidated in to a single, comprehensive weekly journal called the *Shisei Shuho*. Several thousands to 15,000 copies were published on Saturdays. It also included a citizen column, where contributions from citizens were posted. The column disappeared in August 1940 but during the year and four months of publication, it posted articles requesting the improvement of various facilities, compartmentalized administration, etc.

### *Emergence of the Information Department*

The *Shisei Shuhou* was modeled after the *Shuho*, a weekly journal issued by the central government. By the 1930s, information strategy has become a major issue in the national level and *Shuho* was issued in October 1936 by the Cabinet Intelligence Committee. The Committee was established to coordinate information policies among different departments and perform propaganda. The *Shuho* and several other journals were used as a form of internal propaganda too, published in order to not only inform people but also to relieve people from wartime difficulties and to motivate the home front. In the beginning, the *Shuhou* contained professional discussions about legislations and current events. However, as the war expanded, the journal gradually shifted toward posting articles that relate to everyday lives.

In 1939, the information department was established under the City's general affairs bureau. Some of the major function of this department included gathering, organizing, coordinating and presenting information related to the City and drafting and distributing materials or hosting events that will promote citizen understanding towards the City. The department was able to gather internal information efficiently from the information officers in each department. It was also responsible for managing newspaper and radio reports. City's news was broadcasted on radio almost everyday in a program that started from 17:30.

The emergence of information department seems to be the height of organizational development until the emergence of the PR department after the war. Although there are issues of translation from Japanese to English, what could be translated as the wartime "information" or "intelligence" department both involved certain degree of one-way dissemination of information and two-way communication to gather information and manage

the population in whatever way the government saw necessary at the time. As the Allied Powers introduced the concept and practice of “public relations” and “suggested” or effectively ordered the establishment of PR office in local governments, it is no surprise that a “PR” department emerged during the years of occupation (Yamamura et al., 2013). However, the PR practice taught by the Allied Powers focused on one-way communication with less emphasis on the two-way communication or dialogue with the people (Hinoue, 1963). Thus, it may be natural to assume that the “PR” department that emerged after the war only incorporated the democratic nuances and some aspects of two-way communication to the body of knowledge and practice that was built over the years before the postwar American influence.

However, only two years later, in 1941 its budget was cut significantly, decreasing the number and volume of publications. Also, in the *Shisei Shuho* published on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1942, the editor’s note said that the journal has changed from being a method of promoting understanding toward the City to a printed bullet, a marching horn and an army at the front line of national propaganda (Tokyo, 1995). Although the character of the information department gradually became strongly embedded in the wartime efforts, the fact that it also pursued effective management of information as a part of improving administrative functions indicates that it was most likely a part of the long-term development or evolution of government structure in Tokyo.

### *Reconstruction of Neighbor Associations as a Path of Information*

While public journals and information departments developed during this period as a rather modern form of government PR, a rather traditional, personal network-based flow of information was institutionalized too. As it has been discussed above, neighborhood association has existed for centuries, such as the *gonin gumi* system during the *Tokugawa Shogunate*. Such system regained government’s interest as an efficient method of public control as the war expanded. Although the wartime neighborhood association was dissolved after the war, many were reunited to provide mutual support and to share information. In terms of PR, the association was a very efficient method of transmitting information to local households despite its traditional and pre-modern characteristics.

While traditional neighborhood associations in local communities in countryside remained strong, many people gathered and settled in Tokyo away from their hometown since late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tokyo’s neighborhood associations were based in cities and they grew gradually through pro Originally it was issued to promote activities within the associations and raise public awareness about City-related matters but it gradually shifted toward issues



that are closer to daily lives, such as food ration, fire and disaster prevention and support for those who lost their relatives in war.viding mutual support during times of war or natural disasters. Originally these associations were formed naturally and voluntarily but since 1939, the associations were embedded into government structure and it became mandatory to join one. When the Tokyo's population was six million, government-led neighborhood association numbered 100,000.

A notice issued by the City was circulated within the association since August 1939. Originally it was issued to promote activities within the associations and raise public awareness about City-related matters but it gradually shifted toward issues that are closer to daily lives, such as food ration, fire and disaster prevention and support for those who lost their relatives in war. Along with publications such as the *Shisei Shuhou*, it provided valuable information and propaganda message from the government.

Development of public journal, emergence of the information department and the reconstruction of neighborhood associations are some of the significant aspects of information and communication management during the 1930s and 40s. Despite the fact that they surfaced as a part of wartime efforts, the institutionalized PR system show similar characteristics that can be seen in postwar government PR departments. Public journals were abandoned toward the end of war due to lack of resources and neighborhood associations were dissolved by the Allied Occupation. The information department itself was dissolved when Tokyo went through a major organizational restructuring in 1943, when the city system was abandoned giving rise to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. In the new government, media report section or news section existed under the correspondence department without a department-level position. It is not clear yet as to why the information department was demoted but the similar sections appeared and disappeared until 1949, when the PR department was finally established.

## **Conclusion**

This paper looked at the pre-history of the PR department in Tokyo by organizing the history in three major periods with special focus on different communication activities and organizational structure. In the case of Tokyo, initial forms of PR can be traced to dissemination of legal information, in other words the attempt of government to create a relationship of control with the governed through laws and regulations. Challenges caused by growing population and urbanization in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led to series of attempts to win public understanding. Wartime efforts gave rise to an information management system that resembled that of postwar government. In terms of government organization, the

correspondence department remained the dominant position responsible for PR related activities, which saw gradual emergence of subsections devoted to communication functions since the 1930s.

As this research looked at almost 80 years of Tokyo's history, there are many limitations. In considering government PR, it is necessary to position the sample agency within the government structure within the country, as its PR activities will definitely be affected by the sharing of responsibilities in terms of areas, subjects, etc. As describing governmental structure of Japan will be a complicated task, this paper focused on the superficial aspects of PR related activities. Also, historical research into the government minutes is necessary in order to clarify the discussions and decisions behind the decisions to create or dissolve certain departments or sections. This paper only looks at when certain departments were created or dissolved and what they did or was happening in terms of PR related activities.

Despite such limitations, this research shows how a PR department developed gradually, how series of PR related functions gained importance within the organization. PR department seem to manifest itself when a set of PR functions become important enough for an organization to be institutionalized with significant amount of resource devoted to it. In Tokyo's case, while the basic PR functions of disseminating legislation news or gaining support for urban development did not give rise to a department or a section, increasing need for publications and eventually the urgent need for wartime information coordination did. External factors such as the growth of mass media industry and changes in the political or social climate does seem to have effects on the formation of PR departments but the organizational history and context is also necessary to understand exactly why and how a PR department emerged.

In terms of Grunig and Hunt's four models of PR (1984), this research looked at the age of press-agentry model, when one-way propaganda and publicity was supposedly the major form of PR. Although propaganda was an important part of Tokyo's PR functions, countless efforts to deliver accurate information and understanding shows signs of public information model and occasional attempts to listen to the public for improvements may very well fall under the two-way asymmetrical model. In general, in the longer run, government PR in Japan seems to have followed the similar path of models indicated by Grunig and Hunt over the past 150 years or so (Kunieda, 2009). However, the case of Tokyo indicates that comparative studies of government agencies are necessary to generalize or devise appropriate models for the historical development of government PR.

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# **Planting messages: A narrative paradigm analysis of the World War II Victory Garden campaign**

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## **Abstract**

Although the Victory Garden program is typically presented as a successful propaganda campaign, the authors assert that narrative probability and fidelity actually drove success of the program as evidenced by language that reconstructed the meaning of military service, images that reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination that fostered community during a time of discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden campaign through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus advancing a narrative rather than rational-word paradigmatic structure.

*Keywords: Narrative paradigm, World War II, Victory Garden, Office of War Information*

## **Planting messages: A narrative paradigm analysis of the World War II Victory Garden campaign**

When United States (US) First Lady Michelle Obama planted a vegetable garden on the White House lawn in 2009, it was the first time food had been planted there since then-First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt tended a *Victory Garden* in support of Americans fighting World War II (Burros, 2009). Roosevelt's garden was initially viewed as symbolic gesture (Obama, 2012). The popularity of Victory Gardens suggested a more than symbolic meaning. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates place Victory Gardens at 15 million in 1942 and 20 million in 1943 (United States Department of Agriculture, 2011).

Although the Victory Garden program is primarily presented as a successful propaganda campaign, the authors assert that narrative probability and narrative fidelity actually drove success of the program. Probability and fidelity were evident in campaign language that reconstructed the meaning of military service, visuals that reinforced familial connections and message dissemination that fostered community during a time of national discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden program through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus questioning the rational-world paradigm often ascribed to the Victory Garden program.

### **Victory Gardens**

More than 25 percent of America's food production was needed to feed troops, allies, and civilians during World War II, including 50 percent of canned and dried fruits, placing a huge strain on the American food supply (OWI, 1943; Obama, 2012). The US government Office of War Information launched the Victory Garden program to offset food shortages among farmers and food processors (Miller, 2003). The ambitious campaign called for the development of backyard town and suburban gardens, public community gardens, school gardens, and farm gardens (Office of War Information, 1943d). It had the promotional efforts to ensure the call would be heeded.

Headed by William Bennett Lewis, the massive campaign included government-level, media, and community-based promotions. Government publications (Miller, 2003) and promotional videos (Prelinger Collection, 1944) distributed garden plans to aid the neophyte gardener. The media, newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and movie publicity were all utilized to drive interest. After studying the success of Canada's war poster efforts,

(Witkowski, 2003, Young & Rubicam, c 1943) Lewis hired hundreds of NYC-based artists to develop specially-designed posters to promote the Victory Gardens (Witkowski, 2003). Community volunteers promoted Victory Gardens. “The office of civilian defense...promoted a structure of authority for local defense councils to follow in the organization of the victory garden program” (Miller, 2003, p. 396). Citizens in libraries, schools, and volunteer groups helped distribute Victory Garden materials (Witkowski, 2003).

Although the Victory Garden program is widely understood as a successful propaganda campaign; nevertheless, narrative probability and fidelity actually drove success of the program because language redefined the meaning of serving in the military, images reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination fostered community during a time of discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden campaign through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors seek to extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus advancing a narrative rather than rational-world paradigm for persuasion.

### **Theoretical framework**

Harding (2012) defines narratives as “the stories we elaborate in order to make meaning of our lives and to both guide and justify our actions” (p. 287). In its original proposition by Fisher (1984), narrative paradigm holds that people are essentially storytellers who use informed, differential reasoning to communicate and make decisions. Decision-making is informed by history, biography, culture, and character, but reasoning is informed by people as “narrative beings”. Narrative beings demonstrate “their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (Fisher, 1984, p. 8). In the narrative paradigm framework, people choose among the many stories that constitute the world; these ongoing narrative choices enable people to reconstruct their realities.

During World War II, Americans with individualist worldviews were all facing the same anxiety wrought by military action. Their narratives were constructed and reconstructed through a narrow selection of print and broadcast channels that evoked a common narrative of the meaning of war. These stories facilitated the shared worldviews of a culture (Page & Duffy, 2009) that corresponds to narrative paradigm.

The narrative probability component of the narrative paradigm lends further support for employing this theoretical framework for the present study. Establishing common ground

with the receiver through coherent messages is a requirement for probability. “Whether convincing an audience that one’s interpretation of a specific subject is normative, or attempting to reform culture, the speaker must appeal to some ground where a meeting can take place (Redick & Underwood, 2007, p. 399). The scholars noted how successful planners use symbols to create common ground and extend narratives. Symbols were among the materials Fisher (1984) included in his description of the materials of the framework. He identified “signs of consubstantiation, and good reasons, the communicative expressions of social reality” (p. 8).

The AAUP bulletin issued the seminal propaganda techniques in a 1937 bulletin: name calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, and bandwagon. Describing propaganda as “an expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends”, the authors contend propaganda only works through evoking emotion. “Without the appeal to our emotion—to our fears and to our courage, to our selfishness and unselfishness, to our loves and to our hates—propagandists would influence few opinions and few actions” (American Association of University Professors, 1937, p. 55). Describing Victory Gardens as propaganda minimized the narrative probability and narrative fidelity that drove success of the Victory Garden program. Language redefined the meaning of military service, images reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination fostered community during a time of discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden campaign through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America.

## **Methodology**

The researchers employed a case study approach because the method enables investigation of a phenomenon in context (Yin, 2008). In this historical case study, the phenomenon was the Victory Garden campaign, and the historical context was the Second World War. As qualitative communication researchers, we sought selected our dataset based on their attribution to the Victory Garden program (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Yet the researchers faced the challenge common to all historians (e.g., Witkowski, 2003): working with incomplete or unsystematic materials. The researchers identified primary data sources for analysis and secondary data sources to situate their findings in the larger body of knowledge. Three of the following primary data sources have not been analyzed in previous



research. For the purposes of transparency (Witkowski & Jones, 2006), a detailed description of the primary data sources, secondary data sources, and analytical approach follow.

### **Primary data sources**

- Twelve posters from the Bureau of Industrial Conservation (1) Office of War Information (8) and U.S. Food Administration posters (3)
- Statement from the Bureau of Operations Office of Facts and Figures (c 1942)
- Progress report memorandum of the Bureau of Intelligence (1943)
- Victory Gardens promotional film (1944)
- Study of Canadian War Posters (c 1943)

### **Secondary data sources**

Historical studies relevant to the Victory Garden programs are categorized thematically in the following Literature Review.

### **Literature review**

The term Victory Garden originated with the conclusion of World War I. The government re-named what had been called “war gardens” to a name better suited to the message (Miller, 2003). The re-labeling of the Victory Garden foreshadows the multiple constructions that have emerged from scholarship about the programs. Much of the scholarship is 10 years old.

Several scholars (e.g., Miller, 2003; Witkowski, 2003; Yesil, 2003,) have noted the constructions of household chores as military service in Victory Garden campaigns. The approach gave Americans a sense of participation, according to Witkowski (2003). Scholarship indicates that advertisers promoted nutritious foods to “build courage” and others that suggested conserving materials “facilitated the war production” (Yesil, 2003, p. 110). Analysis of World War II posters reveals stark visual representations. Witskowski (2003) described a “stunning visual connection between the kitchen, represented by a well-manicured female hand pouring a stream of fat from a frying pan, and actual hostilities, epitomized by a veritable explosion of bullets, bombs, and shells” (p. 74). World War II campaigns included linguistic and visual messages, according to research studies. “Through reinforcing the significance of home-making duties, the propaganda and advertising rhetoric did not merely remind working women of their traditional place; more importantly it

implored non-working women to join the war effort—if not by donning an overall then by planting a victory garden” (Yesil, 2003, p. 110). The scholar’s study of gendered war promotions corresponded to research focused solely on Victory Gardens. The juxtaposition of domestic duties and military service ascribed a new meaning for traditionally women’s work. “Applying national goals of efficiency to the household increased the range of social space in which citizens were to find value and meaning by aligning their work to the needs of the nation” (Miller, 2003, p. 407). The paradox of serving the country through serving oneself was not lost on other scholarship about Victory Gardens, as identified in the next thematic category.

Several scholars have studied contradictory constructions in Victory Gardens and other World War II campaigns. World War II advertisements that featured working women idealized both women’s participation in the realm of employment and their traditional role of home-making, according to Yesil (2004). Three dominant themes emerged from her analysis of World War II advertisements that featured working women’s experiences: women’s role in the war effort was secondary to men, women’s motivation to work was a way to win approval of men, and women remained concerned with beauty and womanliness. The idealized beauty served a dual role in female recruiting posters: to assure family members and would-be recruits that rumors about the military fostering lesbianism were untrue (Ryan, 2009). “The posters worked simultaneously to empower and disempower the women. By framing the jobs as a patriotic duty...they were able to recruit a wide range of women while allowing for the fact that the women wouldn’t be able to hold the jobs once the war was over” (p. 20). The contradictions in World War II campaigns also extended to consumption messages. The overflowing vegetables in one poster overshadowed the intended message of frugality (Witkowski, 2003). Academic research about the frugality message in World War II promotions is explored in the next, and final, theme.

Frugal consumption was the focus of one notable study about World War II campaigns. Witkowski (2003) explored how the U.S. Government advanced the message of frugality during World War II by constructing frugality as a social norm. He analyzed campaign posters that fit the frugality message: those that promoted buying war bonds, conserving, rationing, and producing at home. The Victory Garden program was included in his analysis. Witkowski (2003) attributed the success of the Victory Garden program to several factors: “Poster campaigns worked creatively because they tapped into the tropes, images and sentiments of American popular culture to serve an important cause. They were

visually simple, yet immediate, and used recognizable characters from the past and present” (p. 80).

Although the Victory Garden program is widely understood as a successful propaganda campaign; nevertheless, narrative probability and fidelity actually drove success of the program because language redefined the meaning of serving in the military, images reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination fostered community during a time of discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden program through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors seek to extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus advancing a narrative rather than rational-word paradigm for persuasion.

### **Analytical approach**

The researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (McCracken, 1988), so both researchers analyzed the sources. Their analysis of primary data sources included grouping the data thematically and identifying some of the persuasive approaches (Riessman, 2005). The researchers reviewed each source initially for overall understanding. Then, they analyzed the sources, writing self-memos and about symbols and concepts. The researchers reviewed their memos and met to discuss and label linguistic and visual patterns. Working inductively, the researchers alternated between the sources and their understandings of them, enabling final themes to emerge prior to the last reading. Chronological arrangement is not necessary for historical case studies (Witkowski & Jones, 2006), so the following findings are categorized thematically. These findings are considered in the wider body of knowledge; i.e., the secondary data sources, later in the Discussion section.

### **Findings**

Victory Garden programs redefined the meaning of serving in the military, reinforced familial connections, and fostered community during a time of discontent. The following thematic categories emerged from the study: Appeals to emotion, calls to action, words of war, ambiguous message framing, and credibility of sources. These findings are described in detail next.

#### *Appeals to emotion*

Emotional appeals were a recurring concept in the Victory Garden campaign. A government-sanctioned study of Canadian War Posters revealed the success of the emotional

approach. “War posters that make a purely emotional appeal are by far the best...such war posters definitely attracted favorable impression among men and women alike” (Young & Rubicam, c1943). Study findings further revealed that humorous appeals did not garner attention and were disliked by focus group participants. Aesthetics of the “Cardinal Mercier” poster (United States Food Administration, c1943) evoked emotions among the viewer. The soft hues in the airbrushed image as well as the quote from Mercier infused this poster with the emotionality of war. His reference to “starving” people and the “war-stricken” communities may have been less effective from a different sender. Nostalgia was evoked in posters portraying images of mothers and daughters. Many American families were now led by females due to the number of men off to war.

### *Calls to action*

Several Victory Garden campaign materials fostered a sense of urgency in their calls to action. Action-oriented headlines such as “FOOD” (Office of War Information, 1943a) “SAVE” (United States Food Administration, 1943b) and “SAVE WASTE FATS” (Bureau of Industrial Conservation, 1943b) almost guaranteed that the message would be delivered. The location at the top of the posters captured attention and established importance. If the public did not heed the call, then Victory Garden campaign planners delivering the message likely would. The Canadian War Poster campaign directed readers “how to make posters that will help win the war” (Young & Rubicam, c1943). The call to action was especially evident at the conclusion of the Victory Garden promotional video (Prelinger Collection, 1944): “No work, no turnips. No work, no tank, no flying fortress, no victory. Bear that in mind all you victory gardeners and work for victory!” The call concluded with a waving American flag and soaring background music.

### *Words of war*

New meanings for war terminology helped construct the Victory Garden campaign narrative. The Victory Garden name reminded the public of the country’s foregone victory every time they planted food. Gardeners could even post a Victory Garden sign declaring their commitment to the cause, as did the Holder family in the Victory Garden promotional film: The sign read: “Food and freedom...our family will grow...a victory garden in 1942...realizing the importance of reserve food supplies, we will produce and conserve food for home use” (Prelinger Collection, 1944). Several campaign messages reconstructed appropriate food consumption and gardening as military service. In the “FOOD” poster

(Office of War Information, 1943a), viewers could simultaneously serve food and the cause of freedom. “Food is a weapon” reconstructed food as soldiers, depicting cartons of food parachuting into battle alongside soldiers (Office of War Information, 1943b). The “veritable army of suburban gardeners” (Office of War Information, 1943d) re-imagined Victory Garden planters as patriotic victors.

### *Ambiguous message framing*

Some messages in the Victory Garden campaign were ambiguous. The information bulletin statement that “Victory Gardens Work in our spare time” was likely meant to remind readers that their efforts extended beyond the soil (Office of War Information, 1943d). The message may have fallen flat since first reading suggests that gardening is a leisurely activity. Posters that counseled the public how to buy, cook, use, serve and dispose of food acted as an empowering and disempowering agent. Viewers were free to actively participate in the war effort, but the modes of participation were limited by their responsibility to the government needs. The unclear symbolism utilized in the opening quote of the Victory Garden promotional film (Prelinger Collection, 1944) may have been lost on viewers: “A victory garden is like a share in an airplane factory. It helps win the war and pay dividends”. Cash-strapped viewers may also have been confused a metaphor later in the film. According to the announcer, a Victory Garden a “health insurance policy, a dooryard savings bank, each a vitamin mine from which you can take stuff more precious than silver or gold” (Prelinger Collection, 1944). Ambiguity also emerged in imagery of the Victory Garden campaign. “Work on a farm this summer” touted conserving food, yet featured overflowing baskets of food. In “Food is a weapon”, an olive branch typically associated with peace served as a sharp contrast to the imagery of war (Office of War Information, 1943b).

### *Credibility of sources*

Influencers and experts were common components of the Victory Garden campaign (See Appendix for a selection of key campaign influencers). The Victory Garden promotional film opens with a quote from the US Secretary of Agriculture. Even local experts took precedence in the effort. The County Home Demonstration Agent was identified as an advisor whose documents were superior to grandpa and Dad who kept gardening plans “in their head” (Prelinger Collection, 1944). Poster producers, always credited, included the War Production Board Bureau of Industrial Conservation, the US Food Administration and the National Wartime Nutrition Program. Whether named (such as Cardinal Mercier, who was

featured in a 1943 poster) or unnamed (such as the artists hired to design posters) experts seemed to lend credibility to the Victory Garden campaign.

## **Discussion**

Utilizing the approach advanced by Fullerton (1998), the researchers evaluated the findings for messages as well as meanings in order to allow a coherent structure to emerge.

Appeals to emotion in the present study correspond to Witkowski's (2003) assertion that posters tapped into the American psyche. The Victory Garden posters evoked emotions visually, aesthetically, and linguistically. Despite a government-sanctioned study advocating the strength of emotional appeals, the researchers only found evidence of fear, pride, and patriotism in the present study.

The sense of participation Witkowski (2003) found was also evident in the calls to action in the present study. The headlines directing the public to immediate action supports Yesil (2003) and Miller (2003), who noted the constructions of household chores as military service. Although gender analysis was beyond the scope of the present study, the findings do support Yesil's (2003) assertion that Victory Gardens sought out women, in particular, to join the war effort.

As in previous studies (e.g. Witkowski, 2003, Yesil (2003), and Miller (2003), war terminology emerged as a critical component in the present study. What sets the present study apart is the sense of urgency displayed. The tone of urgency may have been underlying the reference Yesil (2003) made to civilian participation facilitating war production. Likewise, there is no question that Witkowski's analysis (2003) evokes immediate recognition of war hostilities. But the sense of urgency invoked in the Victory Garden film juxtaposing gardening with flying fortresses was not present readily apparent in previous research studies.

Soaring language and mixed metaphors led to some of the ambiguity in Victory Garden campaign messaging. Also evident were contradictory visual and linguistic messages. Previous campaign scholarship has extended ambiguity into the social sphere. Ryan (2009) and Yesil (2004) found troubling frames in idealized beauty in recruitment posters for women. Ryan (2009) noted the effort to assuage rumors about sexuality; Yesil (2004) decried the effort to promote new jobs for women that were no longer available once the war ended.

Although the credibility of sources does not appear to correspond to previous research about Victory Gardens, Witkowski (2003) explored a related concept. His exploration of how the U.S. Government advanced the message of frugality during World War II places tremendous accountability on the government. The inclusion of company or bureau names on

posters of the present study could indicate that the sources were more credible than the U.S. Government.

Source credibility as evidenced in the findings herein corresponds to the narrative paradigm. Fisher (1984) contends that every community in recorded history has key “story-makers/story-tellers, whether sanctioned by God, a ‘gift,’ heritage, power, intelligence, or election. It insists, however, that the ‘people’ do judge the stories that are told for and about them and what they have a rational capacity to make such judgments” (p. 9). People choose among the many stories that constitute the world, according to narrative paradigm framework, and these ongoing narrative choices enable people to reconstruct their realities. The re-labeling of the World War I War Garden to the Victory Garden of World War II (Miller, 2003) foreshadowed the multiple constructions of the programs. Narrative probability and fidelity drove success of the Victory Garden program because language redefined the meaning of serving in the military, images reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination fostered community during a time of discontent.

Narrative paradigm holds that people are essentially storytellers (Fisher, 1984). Victory Gardens told multiple stories: some focused on troops fighting; others focused on civilian service. The ambiguity in some stories suggests that viewers remained free to develop their own versions of the story. The theory also suggests that people use informed, differential reasoning to communicate and make decisions. It may have appeared easy to arouse emotions to facilitate behavior change, but people who attended to the Victory Garden campaign reason to decide to support the war effort—or not.

Fisher (1984) contends that decision-making is informed by history, biography, culture, and character, but reasoning is informed by people as “narrative beings”. Students who decided to grow school gardens were clearly informed by their teachers. Narrative beings demonstrate inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story. The Victory Garden campaign told the story of growing and gardening, but it was up to citizens to decide how coherent the story was.

Narrative beings demonstrate their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, which Fisher (1984) defines as whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. Fidelity emerged from the present study when campaign messages referenced the reality of food shortages that viewers were likely experiencing. Victory Garden posters depicting mothers and children also “rang true” to women whose husbands were called away to fight.

In analyzing the Victory Garden campaign through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors sought to extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus advancing a narrative rather than rational-word paradigm for persuasion.

## **Conclusion**

The Internet has proven both a blessing and a curse for historical study. Witkowski (2003) based his study of World War II posters largely on the online collection of the Northwestern University Library. These researches struggled with defining online sources as primary or secondary, and placing more (or less) value on sources they were able to physically inspect. Two factors set the current study apart from previous research about the Victory Garden campaign: access to archival material from the William Bennett Lewis collection and the narrative paradigmatic approach that has not been previously explored.

Although the Victory Garden program is widely considered a successful propaganda campaign; nevertheless, narrative coherence and fidelity actually drove success of the program because language redefined the meaning of serving in the military, images reinforced familial connections, and message dissemination fostered community during a time of discontent. In analyzing the Victory Garden campaign through the lens of narrative paradigm theory, the authors extend the current understanding of propaganda and the accompanying notion of the passive public so often associated with 1940s America, thus advancing a narrative rather than rational-word paradigm for persuasion.



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Appendix: A selection of key influencers in the Victory Garden campaign

Source	Message	Channel	Receiver
Government	Advertisement	Newspapers, magazines	Readers
	Broad information policy; conveying messages, appeals and ideas.	Posters	Public, soldiers, workers
	Presenting basic ideas;	Radio	Listening Audience
	Government war messages; Information policies	Motion pictures	Viewing public
Advertising Council	Advertisements	Magazines	Readers
	Government war messages	Radio	Listening audience
Office of Facts and Figures	Government policies	Radio	Networks, listening audience
Division of Motion Pictures	Raw materials	Motion pictures	Viewing public

## **Learning from the past to develop the future of the PR profession: Benchmarking PR's professional status in relation to established business professions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Building up a profession is a way of ensuring the legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, through an institutionalisation of the power that members of that profession exercise (Merkelson, 2010, p127).

Hanlon (2004), examines how professional services firms have managed to combine the use of bureaucratic and clan control to develop professions that are highly regarded and essential to the running of businesses, organisations and government. He explores how the professions of law and accountancy have developed in such a way that legislation and democratic governments cannot operate without their expertise.

The following paper explores the development of traditional professions and attempts to learn from them in order to identify routes to professionalisation for Public Relations (PR). It includes research among practitioners as well as an extensive literature review into the realms of legitimacy to operate, economics theories at play in the boardroom as well as social mobility, with some obvious archaic routes we may wish to avoid but some interesting developments that the PR profession, and its educational/training syllabus, may wish to embrace.

## **Learning from the past to develop the future of the PR profession: benchmarking PR's professional status in relation to established business professions**

### **Development of the professions**

Hanlon provides insight into the development of 'clans within the wider social structure, operating within the boundaries of democracy', using 'socially constructed characteristics of trust, homology and reputation' (Hanlon 2004, p188).

Hanlon focuses on the work of Ouchi (1980, p129-142), who identifies 'clans as working in opposition to both bureaucracies and markets, historically rewards were distributed within clans on a non-performance basis indicating a more socialised understanding of control'. Ouchi defines a clan as 'an organisational form that relies on the socialisation of staff to ensure that the organisation's goals and those of the individual are closely matched' (Hanlon 2004, p188).

The socialisation aspect of the clan form has been central to the survival of successful professional firms and to their ability partially to create and shape their market environment. Clan control was exerted through family and friendship ties and long periods of socialisation into the firm. Staff members deemed unsuitable for partnership were pressured out of the firm from an early stage (ibid).

### **Reputational and social capital of professional services.**

Reputational capital is at the centre of the relationship with clients, as 'trust is created through co-presence, familiarity, face to face contact and so on' (Giddens 1991 cited in Hanlon, 2004). 'These features mean markets are necessarily constructed around shared values, understanding and predictability. These relations are built on partner autonomy because this allows for tailoring of the service upon which trust is based' (Hanlon, 2004, p190).

These successful client relations are formed within the parameters of informal rules on how business should be conducted, 'without these informal rules unpredictability breeds and trust is eroded. Professional work is less about entrepreneurialism and more about protecting jurisdiction and specialist expertise' (ibid). These areas of expertise were established up to a century ago when accountants and lawyers claimed auditing and conveyancing as key specialisms.

These specialisms shaped the external environment and legislation to become essential components of business transactions and exchange. The social and reputational capital of the clans enabled these professions to enhance their role in society.

The extent to the success of these clans can be demonstrated by the income generation of key firms during denationalisation and privatisation. 'The sale of the UK electricity industry netted the professional services firms £191million in fees' (ibid). Those firms with the greater social and reputational capital won the lion's share of the business.

With a history of clan structures and high social capital the professional services are now operating with more fluidity for the high achievers, loyalty of clients to partners rather than firms and a greater requirement from clients for entrepreneurial thinking and practice by their professional advisers. These developments in more recent times have led to the professions' responding to clients' needs rather than the historical role of chief advisers.

These more recent developments in professional services practices are more in line with the practice of public relations in the western world where PR's main function is to respond to a brief or objectives set by client. However, as a profession PR has so far failed to establish itself as an essential tool for business, with no legislation in place to create a statutory demand for PR. This may be to do with the unclear boundaries within which PR is practiced, the lack of social and reputational capital, the relative age of the profession as well as the training, education and academic research underpinning the practice of public relations.

### **Social and reputational capital of the PR industry**

In the UK, professional status [of PR] was sought in an effort to establish social legitimacy, since tensions between journalists and PRs forced practitioners to try to justify themselves and establish clear identity. The expansion of PR required the occupation to negotiate social approval. Self-perceptions of practitioners can provide a link between legitimisation processes and attempts to establish professional power (Pieczke and L'Etang, 2006, p265-278).

Gaining a seat within the boardroom has become more common in the last two decades as practitioners have become recognised strategists as well as tactitioners. 'Chief executives see senior communications leaders as being more influential today than ever before. Although practice may vary when it comes to including senior communications executives in decision making, the trend is toward greater involvement from professional communicators into the development, as well as implementation,' (The Arthur Page Society, Authentic Enterprise White Paper, 2008).

‘When we have combined our traditional skills of creating messaging and communications programs with external and internal integration roles and business and industry expertise, public relations professionals have played a lead role with the C-suite in determining enterprise policies and actions’ (ibid). According to the White Paper 45.6 percent of senior communications leaders today report directly to the CEO, with the rest reporting to marketing, human resources, legal and other senior operating officers.

In 2009 the Swedish Public Relations Association reported that ‘the proportion of communication executives who are members of the senior management group increased from 40 percent in 1997 to close to 80 percent in 2009’ (Johansson et al., 2011, p143).

The variation in seniority and reporting lines of the senior PR practitioner varies from continent to continent and even country to country within those continents, however the research suggests an increase in status and seniority across the board in western cultures where business practices are scrutinised by shareholders and stakeholders alike. Cultural and societal norms within different countries are likely to also challenge the role of PR in organisations.

### **CEO approval as a route to PR legitimacy**

Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (1995, p574 cited in Merkelson 2011), as ‘generalised perception or assumptions that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions’.

Generally speaking it is frequently the organisation, its CEO and managing directors that decide whether and to which extent senior communicators should be involved in managerial decisions. ‘Often the degree of influence and power held by PR practitioners are leading factors in determining CEOs’ decisions of granting a role within the dominant coalition’ (Berger 2005, cited in Valentini, 2010, p158). It could therefore be argued that legitimacy of the PR industry has been granted by this influential group of publics as many now report to the CEO. However, as PR’s status in organisations increases it is less to do with legislation and established practice and more to do with the social capital of the individual practitioner.

Bourdieu describes ‘social capital’, as having two components; ‘the size of the network that a person possesses, as well as the volume of the capital that those in the network have. It also considers the person’s access to this capital’ (Valentini, 2010, p160). If this is the way to gain access to legitimacy from CEOs it does present huge barriers to entry for

many PR practitioners who may not conform to the social capital boundaries. It may also help to explain why predominantly white middle class males fulfil the roles of PR advisers to CEOs, who in turn tend to be white middle class males.

‘Having extended personalised networks of influence is an asset for a career conscious PR practitioner’ (ibid). This suggests that the clan structure which empowered the lawyers and accountants in the early stages of professionalisation is very much at play within the PR industry. Unlike the established professions that have developed from a clan structure to one driven by legislation and a prerequisite of rigorous professional training to be able to practice, PR still has a long way to go to ensure that its education and training alone will provide the golden ticket to success.

However, CEOs feel that communicating their company’s values has become more complex at the exact time that it has become absolutely essential according to the Arthur Page Society, The Authentic Enterprise White Paper, 2008 which highlights:

- CEOs see their top communications executives as more valuable than ever, and they see the importance of communications for their companies as highly likely to increase in the future.
- The skills and attributes that CEOs are looking for in their top communications executives have expanded. Experience in communications is taken for granted, and not considered enough anymore.
- CEOs want communications executives who are business savvy, with a deep understanding of their companies from top to bottom.
- Interactive communications represent the future of the profession.
- CEOs see their communications chief as a critical part of their team, and across the board. There are categories of decision making in which CEOs would consider it grossly negligent NOT to have that individual at the table.

This highlights the growth in position of power, influence, trust and reputation of PRs, as CEOs seek legitimacy to operate in a global environment where the boundaries between stakeholders have been blurred and the message is no longer controlled by the dominant coalition. Businesses now operate on a global platform even if its business operations and transactions operate at a local level.

The challenges and opportunities for corporations thrust into the global spotlight



are catalysts for public relations to rethink its role and purpose given the need for corporations to build strategic and sustainable relationships' (IPRA, 2008).

The collective perspective of some of the world's leading public relations practitioners is that globalisation and its urgent demand for transparency is forcing the need to clearly articulate the essence of the brand – its values, its ethics and its principles. Ensuring that communications is in tight alignment with business strategy to deliver against promises made is no longer a 'nice to have' but an essential ingredient in long-term survival' (ibid).

Grunig (1992) cited in Johansson (2011, p146) identifies that 'power comes to public relations practitioners from different sources' with the value that the dominant coalition places in PR as most pivotal to its position and role within an organisation. She proposes that 'the dominant coalition be educated to appreciate the potential of public relations' (ibid).

This education of the board is in contrast to the Arthur Page Society's CEO study findings which identify 'education of the wider business' as a key skill that PRs must bring to the table if they are to be a part of the dominant coalition. Education and training appears to have a strong bearing on the success of PR's ability to operate at the top levels. This is the case with other roles within the formal structure of an organisation's chief officer roles.

Where PRs fail to gain entry to the boardroom and professionalisation as a whole, could be a result of gaps in training and PR theory which fails to clearly understand what is actually happening in the boardroom, to include a lack of understanding of the substance of the boardroom discussion. However, the current economic downturn highlights shortcomings of economics practice and theory based on science which is prevalent in the boardroom, and the need to rebuild trust based on reputational management and social science.

However the shift in emphasis in the boardroom plays to PR's strengths. The next section will analyse economic theory that has dominated the post war boardroom and its relation to the development of PR in the boardroom.

### **PR theory and agency theory**

Developments towards sustainability by businesses are more in line with the role of PR practitioners who, whilst tactically continue to be focusing on 'doing PR', have strategically developed to focus on stakeholder relations.

'Long term investors are starting to push boards to actively address stakeholder interest' (The World Bank, Shareholder or Stakeholder, 2001). Still dominant, however, is the self-interest of the traditional shareholder who has little consideration for longevity and sustainability. PR theory and practice must recognise the power struggle between

shareholders and boards and the influence of stakeholders as well as the traditional and current influence of economics theory to appreciate the challenges of the boardroom.

According to Palenchar and Heath, 2007, (cited Public Relations Research, 21:2, 123) 'An organizational culture of transparency acknowledges and respects the information, communication and decision-making expectations and demands of all its stakeholders and stake seekers, and does not stage-manage them by limiting access or propagandizing information or manipulating decision-making'.

The regulation by industry watchdogs and organisations like LSE (London Stock Exchange) and AIM (Alternative Investment Market) have introduced more monitoring of good corporate citizenship as well as increasingly referring to sustainability as not just good practice but an expectation. This is helping to overcome the dominance of economics theories like Agency Theory in business, but this theory is so entrenched in business that it will take time to incorporate it into stakeholder relations rather than dominate it.

### **Challenges to agency theory**

Agency theory, through recent examples of corporate malfunctions, has been challenged as it is considered by many to breed greed and focus on the interests of shareholders over transparency and mutual stakeholder respect. Boardroom decisions have traditionally been able to manipulate decision making and limit access to transparency. However, increased public outrage, and use of the global internet to gather momentum, are leading to a decline in the agency theory model and more focus on corporate governance.

Public relations theory would do well to not just recognise this transformation but to appreciate and recognise the challenges that the boardroom has faced in recent decades to understand the conflicts of interest and how the profession can contribute to the evolving, boardroom discussions.

### **Sustainability: fad or fundamental?**

The new 'triple bottom line' based on three pillars of economic, social and environmental issues (Elkington, 1997) focuses on a new long-term model of economic growth. This calls into question the role of the board of directors and their duty to good corporate governance.

The agency theory is certainly the most well-known [boardroom approach] because it has supported numerous recommendations to do with the composition of boards, particularly

those related to the independence of directors and the boards operating procedures (Wolff, 2011, p246).

The role of stakeholders defined by Freeman (1984, p46) as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisations objectives' has generally been overlooked by boards of directors, as they've focused on the shareholder and wealth creation. Stakeholders, including the media, are still generally perceived to have no power to influence strategic directions of companies however they are growing in power, due in part to globalisation and the growth in social media, and are often highly critical.

'Corporate Governance effort and codes may have helped to bring unsophisticated companies or countries to the basic level of governance structure, it blinded us to the fact that complex companies were literally out of control. The call for legislative and regulatory action can no longer be pre-empted by promises of self-regulation' (Haspeslagh, 2010, p376).

### **The role of PR in challenging agency theory**

Where PRs have been able to influence senior management, or even become part of the dominant coalition they are respected due to their ability to 'interpret the environment [compared] to those who have to make decisions. Where those environments generate a variety of problems or uncertainties staff who are able to interpret and make sense of the surroundings will become influential in decision making' (White and Mazur, 1995, p 27).

Writing in the *Harvard Business Review* on the role of the PR director, Mason said, 'Their usefulness to the corporation hinges on their ability to maintain a degree of detachment from the motives that drive other members or management, the PR director must view corporate policies with a multiple vision to an extent that is never been done by any other staff officer, loyalty to the corporation is never an excuse for failure to observe it from every point of view, including the most hostile, actual and potential' (White and Mazure 1995, p28).

CEOs' requirements for PRs to be more business 'savvy' (Arthur Page Society, Authentic Enterprise White Paper, 2008) may be addressed by a gap in training and education. Indeed PR education is relatively new and not a pre-requisite to practice. Neither is PR offered as a module on MBA programmes; seen as a qualification that will enhance progression to a role in the boardroom.

## **The Future**

There is a clear opportunity, in the current economic climate, for businesses to create a better reputation that will enhance profitability based on longevity and sustainable governance. This rise in corporate governance and sustainability might therefore be the opportunity that PR has been seeking to embed itself in the boardroom based on its experience of stakeholder relations and two-way communication as well as its understanding of social media, global audiences and an increasingly strategic vision.

Developments in stakeholder relations and global technology have led to major developments in PR practice. The profession's fundamental aim to develop two way communication based on relationship building is increasingly required by businesses to help them manage their reputation. CEOs are recognising the need to be transparent and engaging in strategic planning for a long term future.

### *Business analysis*

Some businesses, like Marks & Spencer, recognise sustainability as more than addressing emissions, to include more subtle, often subjective engagement with stakeholders that leads to outcomes that directly influence strategic performance and direction. The challenge, and race, is surely to identify a profession that can harness this less obviously tangible approach to stakeholder engagement and align it with the tangible sustainable measurements and reporting, to influence strategic direction. Instinctively this practice is about two way communication and stakeholder engagement, which it could be argued may be more appropriate to be developed and delivered by communicators rather than accountants. The discipline that has two-way communication embedded in best practice is public relations, or corporate communications.

Further analysis will aim to identify public relations at the core of this development, with a view to identifying how PR can or should be influencing its role in the boardroom.

## **Current UK legislation.**

Company Law already legislates that business must include the following within its annual reporting which relates to reputation management of individual board members as well as that of the business. The section below highlights in bold the points most specifically pertaining to reputation, within the context of the remaining elements of sections 172 and 417 of Companies Act 2006.

Companies Act 2006

Section 172 Duty to promote the success of the company

(1) A director of a company must act in the way he considers, in good faith, would be most likely to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole, and in doing so have regard (amongst other matters) to—

- (a) the likely consequences of any decision in the long term,
- (b) the interests of the company's employees,
- (c) the need to foster the company's business relationships with suppliers, customers and others,
- (d) the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment,
- (e) the desirability of the company maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct, and
- (f) the need to act fairly as between members of the company.

And this language can be found throughout the Act....

The legislation demonstrates that reputation and sustainability is very much on the agenda for UK businesses to report on. PR practitioners are often engaged in writing and producing annual reports, however strategic input and delivery of KPIs by PRs is not essential or obvious.

### **CIPR reputation and the board guidance**

The CIPR also offers sustainability guidance to its members via its 'Best Practice Guidelines for Environmental Sustainability Communications' report. This is aimed at practitioners and how they operate on a day to day level, and offers the following advice:

1. Ask what the purpose of the communication is? Is it just for PR sake?
  2. Be transparent. Keep the messaging simple and clear.
  3. Be honest and don't exaggerate. This will instil a level of trust with stakeholders.
  4. Back up all your claims with robust statistics.
  5. Actions, not words. Do not blur the difference between aspiration and action.
  6. Spokespeople. Some of the science is complex and any spokesperson needs to be suitably knowledgeable to communicate effectively and clearly the issues.
  7. Message delivery. Ensure during the tactical implementation of the campaign actions back up the message; a recycling campaign release sent hard copy on virgin paper.
  8. Check your facts. Once you have done this, double check them.
  9. Ensure strict governance is in place to communicate back to stakeholders on your story regularly.
  10. Think continuous sustained improvement – be a leader!
- (CIPR Guidelines for Environmental Sustainable Communications Report)

The content and language of this report is hardly empowering to a profession with aspirations to enter the boardroom. An aspiring practitioner would be best advised to study economics journal articles on sustainability as a way to build professional reputation rather than consult the professional bodies based on these two CIPR reports.

### **PR Global Alliance**

Daniel Tisch, PR Global Alliance Chair, wants to see a “maturing of CEOs’ literacy of communication, and future where they value it intuitively and ask questions on how to measure it. CEOs must develop a listening culture and PR must start to measure it more effectively to demonstrate effectiveness.”

Dan also advocates better training for PR professionals to ensure they are literate in public policy and industry more widely as well as how to read a balance sheet.

The Futures Company, which specialises in trends and future-facing research (part of WPP group), recently published results of a poll that looked at the characteristics essential to being a good leader. ‘Being a good communicator’ ranked equal first with ‘being willing to take responsibility for good and bad decision’. In third place was ‘identifying the most important actions needed by the business.’ Followers expect their leaders to be good communicators, and rate it a number-one skill of leadership.

Following a series of qualitative interviews with senior practitioners the researcher was able to analyse themes as well as individual responses regarding professionalization of the PR industry

### **Challenges to professional status**

All of the interviewees recognised that PR doesn’t speak the same language as the boardroom, one even referred to PR’s ‘flabby language’, another as PR perceived as ‘airy fairy’ by CEOs and a third referred to assumptions around risk that PR’s recognise but that senior management still lack an understanding of.

All agreed that PRs need to understand the business drivers, to talk business and to focus on results rather than reputation. And that demonstrating value via AVEs and other loose measurements is always going to be a challenge to being recognised in the boardroom.

### **Recommendations for future of the professional status**

All of the interviewees were very interested in the rise of the professions of accountancy and law and comparisons made with the PR, however they were all sceptical about PR looking for opportunities to develop legislation or claiming areas that may become legislation in the future, such as sustainability. Interestingly all of them saw this area of business as more relevant to subjective measurements like emissions and recycling.

All agreed that access to the boardroom would improve the professional status, but that the rhetoric that journalists use about PR was damaging to the professionalisation agenda.

Two of the interviewees discussed education as needing to be more business focused and strategic, not just seen in terms of creativity.

One interviewee saw PR as more craft based than strategic and professional, more apprenticeship based and talked about a large number of influential practitioners who don't take education seriously.

One was highly critical of the PR professional and trade bodies. Criticising them for not taking a strong line on measurement, how to lead and deliver business results as well as cultural issues and internationalisation of the industry.

The PRCA and CIPR claim to be committed to the professionalisation of the industry but neither has a policy in place to achieve this. The PRCA is proud of its links with the CBI and the CIPR with its links with the IOD.

All interviewees are concerned with the term PR, believing it is 'limiting', 'tarnished' and 'will disappear unless there is a concerted push to keep it'.

### **Learning from the past**

The researcher has analysed the history of professions like accountancy and law and identified challenges to their professionalisation that they overcame, notably around the development of their social and reputational capital and development of legislation to seal their professional status. This led to qualifications that are essential to practice and a career route that is defined at an early stage for practitioners. Law has developed as a profession but is not represented in the boardroom. Accountants are represented in the boardroom but their qualification status isn't essential access. However both are recognised as strong professions.

### **Rules of engagement**

The researcher has identified theory that challenges the traditional boardroom practice of profit for shareholders based on agency theory. Increasing focus on Elkington's Triple Bottom Line, which focuses on economic, social and environmental issues provides PR with an opportunity to work with business to develop rules of engagement, if not new legislation. Elkington's theory is in line with findings by F&C Stewardship May 2009 who reported that three quarters of Britons agree it is important for companies to take social, ethical and environmental issues seriously.

The UK Government acknowledges that many businesses would like a mandatory requirement on sustainability however it acknowledges challenges to this in its briefing report

on Sustainable Issues and Financial Reporting, 2009, in consultation with the Environment Agency and the Chartered Institute of Chartered Accountants.

The primary interviewees all agreed that sustainability was not an area for PR and should be left to the experts, like the Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency. Even areas identified in Company Law around consultation and engagement with stakeholders are not seen as a priority for PR when asked in the primary research interviews.

### **Route to professionalization**

For PR the route to professionalisation seems to be linked to boardroom acceptance, 'empowerment legitimacy is dependent on attitudes of senior executives' (Johansson and Ottestig, 2011, p164). This view appears to be embedded in PR theory: 'degrees of influence are also leading factors in CEO's decision to grant a role within dominant coalition' (Berger 2005 quoted in Valentini, 2010, p158).

Primary research supports the theory which identifies that practitioners see the relationship with CEOs as crucial to professionalisation. The PR professional and trade bodies are working with business professional and trade bodies to create greater links and lines of influence, and the interview with the practitioner identifies these routes as crucial. It would seem that PR's role is less to do with legislation and established practice and more to do with social capital of the individual. 'Having extended personalised networks of influence is an asset for a career conscious PR practitioner' (Valentini, 2010, p160). When asked about routes to the profession all of the interviewees identified the unclear boundaries within which PR is practiced and the routes to the profession. The lack of professional social and reputational capital, the relative age of the profession as well as the short history of training, education and academic research underpinning the practice of public relations are all seen as barriers to professionalisation.

There has been a growth in power, influence, trust and reputation of PR as evidenced in the Arthur Page Society's White Paper 'the Authentic Enterprise' 2008 (appendix 1), thanks in part to the technology revolution, new rules of engagement with stakeholders and the need to manage reputation. But PRs need wider business skills to bring to the table. This view is common within the primary research findings.

A future that sees boardrooms adopt complex theories from a range of disciplines rather than those based on economics will allow PR to play a strategic part in boardroom decision making. However PR education and theory needs to be more mindful of the



challenges that the boardroom faces and understand the theory behind the decisions that are made that hinder the role PR could play.

A more complex and adaptable approach by the boardroom that includes PR in all its manifestations and not simply calling in the PRs when a crisis happens will improve sustainability and the reputation of business as well as access to the boardroom by PR practitioners.

## **Recommendations**

From the research findings the researcher concludes that it is unlikely that PR will ever be a profession like law and accountancy, that professional training is unlikely to ever be a prerequisite to practice, indeed few practitioners and academics would appear to want a mandatory route into the profession.

Where PR can gain credibility as a profession is by gaining the respect of the CEO and increasing the percentage of practitioners who are represented in the boardroom. For this to become more wide spread there is a role for the CIPR and PRCA to build on their relations with the CBI and IOD to strive to get PR and corporate communications embedded into CEO and board training. This should include recognising the benefits of proactive stakeholder relations and engaging strategically with these groups and be able to demonstrate a direct benefit to profit making and business strategy.

The sustainability agenda is likely to increase as pressure from governments, pressure groups and other stakeholder groups becomes more entrenched in the global Zeitgeist, particularly in western society which is impacting on the pressure of developing nations to uphold standards. These global standards include a move away from shareholder and short term profit priorities towards building longevity and transparency into the strategic planning of businesses. All the evidence from the primary research suggests that this is not an area for PR to focus on however PR and economic academic journals suggest that a focus on sustainability will increasingly require stakeholder engagement that has good communication at the centre. UK Company Law already requires communication with stakeholders to be evidenced.

Global legislation on sustainability is unlikely to be developed however global sustainability barometers and benchmarks are adding pressure to CEOs and boards to win stakeholder respect through league tables. PR can contribute to this development on behalf of CEOs through good proactive stakeholder engagement.

So to conclude it would appear that the PRCA and CIPR should focus on PR's role in the boardroom, rather than strive for professional status, which most of the literature identifies as unobtainable and primary and secondary sources identify as futile. In return for a seat in the boardroom will come an increase in respect for the profession of PR. Acceptance and endorsement of PR at this level is crucial to its future success and reputation even if it never gains the professional status.

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## **Edward Bernays and Freudian group psychology**

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### **Bernays and the Freud connection**

This paper intends to explore the debt from Edward Bernays to the mass psychology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and especially to the formulations of Sigmund Freud in this regard.

Although not the founder of the public relations industry, Bernays is one of its foremost pioneers and, according to some, its true father. Widely recognized, he is the only PR practitioner among the one hundred most influential Americans of the last century, listed in 1990 by *Life* magazine. Part of this recognition comes as a result of his talent for unabashed self-promotion. A PR consultant quoted by Tye (2001, p. 237) summarizes this talent by saying: “My overall impression of Bernays is that he only had one client, and that was Edward L. Bernays.” And one fundamental element of the image Bernays projects of himself is his association with Freud.

For other names with outstanding contributions to the history of public relations, such as Ivy Lee and Walter Lippmann, Freud is undoubtedly an important reference too. In the case of Bernays, however, the connection goes deeper. Born in Vienna, in 1891, as a double nephew of Freud (his father, Ely, being a brother of Freud’s wife Martha, and his mother being Freud’s sister, Anna), when he is one year old his parents decide to settle in the United States, where he spends his life and builds his career. Throughout his life, though, Bernays keeps himself in touch with his illustrious uncle and is keen to boast that. Being known for dropping Freud’s name in every conversation, he is derided by playwright Henry Denker, in the April 19th, 1961 issue of *Variety* magazine, as a “professional nephew.” Arguably, they have a two-way relationship, seeing that Bernays takes care of the American edition of Freud’s works, which generates for the latter a money flux in a strong currency. In the case of Bernays, the question here is what he really derives from Freud, besides some prestige. But, before assessing this influence, it is necessary to consider the context of mass psychology more broadly.

## **From social theory to social control**

In the wake of the industrialization, the nineteenth century brings about an intensification of the urbanization process. The ensuing indeterminacy of social life is captured by modern sociology via, for example, Durkheim's concept of anomia. In the same vein, it becomes fashionable among pundits, in the end of the century, the analysis of the behavior of the crowds, which, concentrated in metropolises, had taken center stage, sometimes through revolutionary movements.

French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon leads the way. Published originally in 1895 and translated into English in the following year, his book *The crowd: a study of the popular mind* resonates with widespread anxieties, quickly attracting a readership well beyond the academic circles. "The destinies of nations are no longer prepared in the councils of princes, but in the soul of the masses," says Le Bon (2010, p. 2). The problem, from his point of view, is the irrational nature of the crowd, in which the unconscious predominates over the conscious mind, suggestion and contagion channel feelings and ideas in the same direction, and an urge is felt to put these feelings and ideas immediately into action. "By the mere fact that he forms part of a crowd, a man descends thus several rungs in the ladder of civilisation" (ibid., p. 14).

If, for Le Bon, "the age we are about to enter will in truth be the *era of crowds*" (ibid., p. 2), for his fellow countryman and friend, the sociologist Gabriel de Tarde (1910, p. 11), the crowd is in fact "the social group of the past," to which he opposes the public as "the social group of the future." What enables the rise of the public is the dissemination of the press; while the crowd involves physical proximity and is ephemeral, the public has a virtual and more stable character. To change the focus from the crowd to the public marks a crucial shift of perspective, since it becomes easier to tame the dangers of mass mind. And the agents of this process are people strategically placed, contradicting the idea that democracy would entail the demise of individuality: "The large conversions of masses are now operated by the journalists" (ibid., p. 28).

## **Freudian mass psychology**

In his *Group psychology and analysis of the ego* (*Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, 1921), Freud (1922) begins with observations made by Le Bon and articulates them with his own psychoanalytic insights. Although he agrees with Le Bon concerning the irrationality of the crowds, for him crowds are not irrational per se. Their behavior has to do with unconscious processes, the same processes which psychoanalysis detects in an

individual.

In the mass psychology prior to Freud, there is a mysterious force that bonds one individual to another within a group, which Le Bon calls contagion and Tarde calls imitation. According to Freud, this force is the same libido present in the ego and which can be invested in objects of love, with the difference that the libido which unite a group is diverted from sexual aims (the exact same thing occurs in hypnosis, which differs from a group because it involves only two people). But how libido comes to perform the role of a bond within the group? The answer lies in the mechanism of identification.

In the Freudian construction, horizontal identification among the members of a group takes place around a shared symptom: the vertical identification of each individual with the leader. “It is impossible to grasp the nature of a group if the leader is disregarded” (ibid., p. 85). As a target of identification, the leader represents an idealized version of the subject, replacing, for each follower, his own ego ideal. Thus, “a primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego” (ibid., p. 80).

Since the ego ideal (the heir of the relationship with the parents, which Freud will later call superego) is an instance of control, the fact of replacing them by an outer object has the effect of disabling self-control – or, more precisely, of outsourcing control. In the case of organized, “artificial” groups, like the army and the church, the group ego which replaces the ego ideal is relatively stable and rigid – but, even so, control applies there only in some areas. In other cases, like those of ephemeral crowds which gather in the street, with a very informal leadership, the group ego is looser. This explains why otherwise perfectly rational individuals may behave wildly when banded together in a crowd, where “the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instincts” (ibid, 9-10). They revert then to a state equivalent to that of so-called primitive people, children, and dreams.

The identification with the leader is partial, limited, based on a specific trait taken from him, the “*einzigster Zug*” (unary trait). Moreover, the leader may be a kind of sublimated, abstract one, insofar as a shared idea or wish substitutes for the leader. “This abstraction,” says Freud (ibid., p. 53), “might be more or less completely embodied in the figure of what we might call a secondary leader, and interesting varieties would arise from the relation between the idea and the leader.” We can say that one of these varieties would be the virtual leader, who exerts its leadership not being visible for the members of the group.

## **Bernays's artificial crowd**

Bernays stresses the fundamental importance of unconscious motivations in order to explain human behavior. This means that, for him, the most efficient way to reach people is to appeal to these motivations: "This general principle, that men are very largely actuated by motives which they conceal from themselves is as true of mass as of individual psychology. It is evident that the successful propagandist must understand the true motives and not be content to accept the reasons which men give for what they do" (Bernays, 1928, p. 52).

On the other hand, he recommends, as a way to control the masses, the recourse to leaders. "Clearly it is the intelligent minorities which need to make use of propaganda continuously and systematically. In the active proselytizing minorities in whom selfish interests and public interests coincide lie the progress and development of America. Only through the active energy of the intelligent few can the public at large become aware of and act upon new ideas" (*ibid.*, p. 31). The idea is to identify potential leaders and try to gain access to the population at large through them.

Both strategies are illustrated by one of Bernays's most remarkable feats as a consultant, a publicity stunt commissioned by the American Tobacco Company in order to stir up the habit of smoking among women. With the support of A. A. Brill, a pioneer of psychoanalysis in the United States, Bernays proposes to deal with the cigarette as a phallic symbol and bases his game plan on the assumption that cigarettes, until then consumed mostly by non-reputable women, should be associated with female emancipation – a way for a woman to bear a phallus of her own – and hence with the women's rights agenda. To do so, he arranges an event during the Easter Parade, in New York, in 1929, in which women elegantly dressed walk down Fifth Avenue puffing at Lucky Strike cigarettes, announced as "torches of freedom," an expression Brill had come up with. Everything is carefully staged in consonance with previous instructions: the participants are attractive but non-professional-model women, some of them are accompanied by men, they reach for their cigarettes in a seemingly spontaneous way, and a photographer stands nearby to register scenes which the press eventually misses. In the end, newspapers all over the country run the story, polemics ensue, and concrete results are achieved – shortly thereafter, for example, Broadway theaters begin to admit women to their smoking rooms. In this event, the phallic suggestion points out to the unconscious motivations, while the performance of the female models – and of Bernays himself, who remains in the sidelines – cast them as leaders.

In the wake of Freudian mass psychology, this episode shows how a provisional

group – not unlike Le Bon’s ephemeral crowd – is formed insofar as people are stimulated, at the same time, to follow a leadership and to obey its unconscious desires. As a matter of fact, the lesson may not have been extracted directly from Freud, since Bernays had developed both a good practical experience and a good theoretical background on mass psychology and techniques of persuasion, aside from the fact that psychoanalysis was well disseminated in the *Zeitgeist* (we know, for instance, that Walter Lippmann, a crucial influence on Bernays, draws on Freud as well). Anyway, the aim here is to show that Bernays’s *modus operandi* is utterly compatible with Freud’s reflections. Things take place as if, knowing that crowds behave the way they do because of the link to a leader and of an unconscious backdrop, Bernays decides to mimic this behavior. His artificial crowd, planned from the outside, as it was made in a laboratory, has almost all the features of a spontaneous crowd, whose workings denote emotional content, suggestion, contagion, disposition to immediate action – everything connected with the influence of a leader. Its peculiarity, owing to an artificial nature, is that its aim is channeled in order to support a cause, in this case to modify cultural assumptions and habits in order to promote the consumption of a specific product.

Concrete leaders, who are visible to the crowd and with whom the crowd may interact, are subject to a problematization, since tensions may intervene in this interaction. With virtual leaders, which remain behind the scenes or act through media, advancing leading ideas as their avatars, the manufactured crowd has no dialectical relationship. This favors the strengthening of the group ego, which is tantamount to a debilitation of the ego and to a strong external grip on the crowd. In a certain way, a direct connection is established between the virtual leaders and the unconscious of crowd members. The compensation earned by these people is a gratification of libidinal nature, bolstered by the straightforward exploration of unconscious motivations.

With his artificial crowd, which put Freud’s findings to work, Bernays connects in a way the irrationality of Le Bon’s crowd and the domesticability of Tarde’s public. Where would be located then the difference between the approaches of Freud and Bernays? We could say that, while the first wants to understand crowd behavior, the latter wants to appropriate such understanding in order to reproduce this behavior. On the one hand, one of the psychoanalytic basic tenets is to make patients more conscious of their unconscious – as Freud famously states, “*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*,” which may be translated into English as “Where id was, there shall ego be.” On the other hand, for the “counsel on public relations” or “practicing social scientist,” as Bernays liked to be called, what is unconscious should remain so, since it is instrumental exactly this way.



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## **Public relations and historical sociology: historiography as critique**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to draw out the critical potential of historical research for public relations histories, and for the public relations discipline more widely. The paper begins by distinguishing between the purposes and practices of historical sociology and sociological history and then proceeds to provide an overview of key themes in historical sociology highlighting aspects that are particularly relevant to public relations, its histories and methodological approaches, for example, nationalism, institutionalisation, and statalization.

The paper takes forward discussion of evolutionary, functionalist and typological approaches and debates the cultural logics of historical periodization and their implications for public relations scholarship. This discussion considers tensions between a focus on events and the *longue durée*, as well as issues regarding memory, representation and reinterpretation. The paper re-addresses questions regarding the scope of public relations histories through a consideration of social movements and activism.

Finally, the paper draws together the range of themes to develop a critical framework for thinking about public relations history that has wider implications for scholarship in the field and argues both that public relations historians should engage more deeply with historiographical problems as well as drawing on themes that emerge from historical sociology in particular.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Crisis Communication Research in Israel: Past, Present and Future**

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For over a decade humanity has been exposed to large-scale terrorism, as well as natural disasters that have caused incredible damage to countries in which they occurred. The global media and the increasing involvement of individuals in creating the news (also known as "citizen journalists,") easily expose information that may embarrass or complicate famous figures, organizations and even nations (Reich, 2008; Warrick, 2010). The combination of these ingredients arouses a growing interest among decision-makers and policymakers regarding the need to prepare for crises before they occur, and to grant them a proper communication response during and after the events.

Parallel to the various events taking place around the world, we are witness to a meaningful and palpable blossoming of studies that revolve around crisis communication research. The important recognition of the ability to prepare to a certain degree for a situation perceived as unpredictable or uncertain leads many researchers to seek a theoretical development that can reduce the dimensions of surprise in times of crises, as well as minimize harm done in its wake (Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Heath, 2004; Kauffman, 2008). This discipline, which has developed greatly within the field of public relations, is gradually becoming an independent and central field that interests many researchers. The development of the research in crisis communication by Western researchers is appropriate to the development of professional bodies in the practical world, which offer strategic services to entities caught within crisis situations.

In contrast to this, when we analyze the Israeli case, the grand void between the practical and research worlds becomes very clear. Israel's most progressive public relations organizations boast of their expertise in crisis communication. These consulting firms recognize the growing interest and the necessity to specialize in appropriate management of publicized crises. Nevertheless, when the congruence of the practical world is analyzed with Israeli studies

surrounding crises, the significant lack is revealed; the research dealing with crises from *within* the emerging discipline of crisis communication is incredibly meager. The contribution of the study is in the mapping of the research regarding crises in Israel. From within this mapping, it is possible to identify trends in the research, the half-full glass - and indeed also the half-empty one. This article is intended to grant public relations researchers both historical and updated perspectives on the status of crisis communication research in Israel, through references both of the past and present. Furthermore, the research stands upon patterns of change and an eye to the future. Despite the lack, in the past few years it has become possible to identify initial interface of Israeli researchers who administer the desired connection between the fields of communication research and crisis communication research (Avraham & Ketter, 2008; Reich & Korbas-Magal, 2010). An especially impressive project that was led by researcher Shlomo Shpiro revolves around country preparation for terrorist crisis situations. Following a long and comprehensive multi-national study, a practical guide was formulated, with coping advice for a terrorist attack (Shpiro, Fernández, Hargie, Madzharov, Möhrle & Nomikos, 2011). This guide has been incredibly useful to government officials in Bulgaria, in the recent terror attack in Burgas.

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## **Nineteenth Century American Seed and Nursery Catalogs Promoted the English Garden**

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This paper will examine the relationship between promotional language and culture. Promotional language here refers to the language used in public relations strategies. The objective of much public relations practice is often to inform the public about a product so that he/she will purchase it. The question of power refers to the influence that symbol-makers like public relations practitioners exert in the culture.

Here we will be looking critically at one industry's public relations use of language. The promotional language in the campaign here was to inform the public about seeds and plants in order to have people purchase them. The problem to be studied here is how in their catalogs the nineteenth century American garden industry defined the garden as English. Nineteenth century Americans fell in the love with the romantic English garden style, especially the lawn.

The purpose of the project is to understand public relations practice as a cultural phenomenon, which espouses particular values through the choice of text. The text here is the nineteenth century seed and nursery catalog, in which the company owner wrote about garden design style, along with selling seeds and plants. The catalog also included illustrations, earlier in the century black line drawings, and by the end of the century colored chromolithographs.

It is important to understand how any product assumes importance in a capitalist culture. Various actors in the process define the product and the consumer accepts that meaning frequently without questioning. The challenge for the public relations writer becomes how to connect a product or service with what is current and of interest to a potential consumer. In creating that text the writer also establishes a cultural meaning for the product.

There is now a long tradition of a critical approach in the study of public relations practice. Recently British scholar Lee Edwards (2012) wrote that public relations is

fundamentally embedded in the social and organizational cultures in which practitioners work. (p. 18)

Cultural studies assumes the critical approach while at the same time pointing out the inequalities in the social system where the capitalist voice often dictates values for the culture while intentionally ignoring any minority voice. This is especially evident in the media (Williams, 1974) and since product promotion relies heavily on the media, one can say it is also the case with public relations practice when the issue is product promotion.

The feasibility of this project owes much to the availability of primary sources, two significant collections of nineteenth century American seed and nursery catalogs. The catalogs used in this research came from both from the archives of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and the Library of the Department of Agriculture in Beltsville, Maryland.

## **Review of Literature**

Modern public relations in the United States began in the nineteenth century largely due to industrialization, which brought in first the penny press and later numerous newspapers around the country along with national consumer magazines. After 1850 gardening became important as Americans moved into suburbs where the attraction of a lawn became a primary selling point to potential homeowners.

Here the focus is on the array of promotional materials, especially the catalog, as the text. Wernick (1991) discussed promotional culture as a way to understand society. It is the language of product promotion that gives us an insight into the values and ideology of the culture. Williams (1993) says that it is impossible to look at modern product promotion without realizing that the material object being sold is never enough: this indeed is the crucial quality of its modern forms. (p.335) Thus we have a cultural system, in which the objects to be sold are not enough by themselves but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings. It is the meanings that the product has for the culture which is the issue in this project: meanings produced by the seed and plant industries, distributed by both, and consumed by middle class patrons who wanted their products because these new homeowners coveted a landscape in the English garden style.

The postmodernist thinker, Pierre Bourdieu, provides the theoretical framework for making sense of this history of public relations practice. Rather than simply reporting interesting historical facts, the objective is to use a theoretical school to help us understand the facts from a critical perspective. Postman (1994) said whatever events may be included

in the study of the past, the worse thing we can do is to present them devoid of the coherence that a theory or theories can provide - that is to say, as - meaningless. Bourdieu agrees when he says: Every theory, as the word itself suggests, is a program of perception, but that is all the more true of theories about the social world. (p. 128)

Bourdieu proposed to look at language as a way of establishing power and capital in a particular culture. The language is part of the habitus of a time and period. Though many others have had similar ideas, Bourdieu developed the concept that the language used in society reinforces the powerful. When a company calls a product a certain name, and that company has the money and the support of significant groups in the culture, the society accepts that name as reality. Therefore, when the nineteenth century green industry preferred the romantic English garden style everyone believed and accepted the reality of that because the seed and nursery industries were so powerful. For example, the John Childs Seed Company from New York sent out 750 catalogs in 1875, but by 1896, with the rise of product branding and national consumer magazines, the number had increased to 1, 115,000.

Bourdieu cautioned against looking at language or words in isolation or as he says ‘in structure’ without looking at the function they play in society. We need to move beyond semiotics and look at the social and historical framework in which the language takes shape. (Bourdieu, p. 139) What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. (Bourdieu, p. 170) Languages exist only in the practical state, i.e., in the form of so many linguistic habitus. (Bourdieu, p. 46)

Bourdieu’s focus on language implies here in this study the practice of symbol making in the culture, particularly the acts of corporate giants like, for example, the American garden industry in the nineteenth century. Agents possess power in proportion to their symbolic capital, i.e. in proportion to the recognition they receive from the larger group. (p. 106)

Mintz (1983) says that culture must be approached as a complex social and cultural phenomenon - as one which must be treated as a process involving the production, distribution, and use of a product which itself becomes the text or artifact. (p. 97)

Thompson (1991) in his introduction to Bourdieu’s book wrote: “It is clear that Bourdieu has outlined a distinctive approach to political phenomena, an approach which has definite methodological implications. One such implication is that it would be superficial (at best) to try to analyze political discourses or ideologies by focusing on the utterances as such, without reference to the constitution of the political field and the relation between this field

and the broader space of social positions and processes. This kind of ‘internal analysis’ is commonplace in the academic literature, as exemplified by the numerous and varied attempts to apply some form of semiotics or ‘discourse analysis’ to political speeches. The difficulty with all such attempts is similar to the difficulty that vitiates all ‘formalist’ approaches to language (or, indeed, all purely ‘literary’ approaches to literature): they take for granted but fail to take account of the social-historical conditions within which the object of analysis is produced, constructed, and received.” (p. 28-29)

Here we will look through the lens of cultural analysis at the text of the seed and nursery catalogs within the context of an emerging middle class in nineteenth century America. The focus thus becomes the production, distribution, and consumption of the promotional text in nineteenth century America.

The general approach here will be a critical, cultural studies examination of the garden industry’s catalogs in nineteenth century America. One cannot propose a cultural studies project without mentioning the importance of situating the text for the study. Min (1992) calls for a look at social critical theory to use when embarking on a cultural studies project. (p. 6)

The theory of Bourdieu, which supports a cultural studies approach, provides a framework to understand the locus of these catalogs. Kellner (1995) calls for the incorporation of new cultural theories as part of the tradition of the Frankfurt school and the Birmingham tradition of cultural studies. There is a need for critical social theory to interpret, contextualize, and provide grounds to critique the findings of empirical and historical research. Min (1992) recommends Bourdieu’s social theory, especially the analysis of the relations between economic capital and cultural capital, as one way of providing a political and economic aspect to cultural studies. (p. 10)

Much cultural studies research centers on the text, without reference to the social system of production or the audience use of the product. (Kellner, p. 172) Yet, the social, economic, and political critique needs to incorporate all three avenues: production, distribution, and use. Focusing on texts and audiences to the exclusion of analysis of the social relations and institutions in which texts are produced and consumed truncates cultural studies, as does analysis of reception that fails to indicate how audiences are produced through their social relations and how, to some extent, culture itself helps produce audiences and their reception of texts. (Kellner, p. 170)

## **Method**



The method that will be used here is textual analysis, an approach to cultural studies. Curtin (1995) discusses textual analysis as distinct from both content analysis and discourse analysis. Textual analysis means looking at the meaning of the media of communication including, in this case, catalogs, garden magazines, and garden books. Coffin (1994) shows the relationship between selling of sewing machines and the culture. Images of women and their habits of consumption form the textual analysis of her study of late nineteenth century French product promotion materials.

In a cultural analysis of Channel One, Apple (1992) showed the ideology and audiences produced by the programming, which built a coalition in favor of a business agenda in schools. He examined news programming as the text to point out the ideology and the audience produced by that text.

Miller (1991) took a cultural studies view of advertising for suburban women from 1910 to the Depression by pointing out the interplay between the ads, ideology, and the daily life of the consumer.

Tourism was a secular ritual in the work of Hummon (1988). He constructed a symbolic presentation of travel through a textual analysis of promotional brochures for tourist spots across the United States.

The purpose here is to understand the nineteenth century garden catalogs as historical material through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of communication and society. There will be two parts to the following section. First, the historical data from the seed and nursery catalogs, published from 1800 to 1900, will be discussed in three sections: how the text was produced, how it was distributed, and how it was consumed. Second, an interpretation of the historical material will follow with Bourdieu's approach to promotional language.

## **Discussion**

Cultural studies scholar Mikko Lehtonen (2000) suggests that to arrive at the meaning of a term, as we might here suggest with the term "garden," we begin with a text, in this case the nineteenth-century seed or nursery catalog. Then he writes we need to look at the context of the period, and finally at the readers of the text, in order to understand how discourse on a particular topic enables its cultural expression. (p. 3)

The text here includes primarily American seed and nursery catalogs, but also company magazines, independent horticultural journals, books written by garden industry leaders, and newspaper articles. In the catalog the company owner presented a narrative about how important the garden was, what plants should be included, and how the garden should

look. Lehtonen argues that such a narrative provides a persuasive voice. (Lehtonen, p. 80) The writers of the catalogs did not just sell seeds and plants. They told the story of how and why to design the right kind of garden. Seed and nursery catalogs across the country repeated the same story over and over again.

The catalogs, as product promotion for a national audience, became a way for the middle class to create a sense of identity. From the late nineteenth century the success of modern advertising, for example, became its ability to enable the consumer to identify with the product. The garden writer Silvius said in an article included in Philadelphia nurseryman Thomas Meehan's magazine *Gardener's Monthly* (1884), "Perhaps in no other country is the press so liberally patronized by seedsmen, florists, and nurserymen as in the United States. In their advertising seasons, which cover most of the months of the year, we can rarely pick up a periodical that does not contain some of their advertisements."

The English lawn mower, introduced in 1830 by Edwin Beard Budding and later sold in American seed and nursery catalogs, made it possible for the homeowner to showcase a well-trimmed lawn, essential for middle-class status. Thus, product promotion from the garden industry in the nineteenth century also became a tool for socialization. Selling the garden to a national audience resulted in the same suburban middle-class home landscape that appeared in cities, towns, suburbs, and villages throughout the United States. Its sameness illustrated the success of the seed and nursery industries' media-generated image of what a garden should look like.

Once the fact of product promotion through mass media appeared in late nineteenth century America, it became important to market a product in the simplest form so that the consumer would experience no problem indentifying it. Branding resulted from such marketing in which people recognized the image used to promote the product, as with the familiar face of Quaker Oats, first introduced in 1888. (Sivulka, 1998, p. 49)

In the case of the nineteenth century garden that meant selling a garden illustrated the same way whether in a black and white drawing or chromolithograph for an article in a seed catalog, a nursery catalog, or a garden magazine. The illustration of the garden along with articles on landscape gardening represented the look of an English garden. The elements important to that 'English garden' style included a lawn, a curved walk, carefully sited trees, flowering shrubs grouped in threes, and often carpet beds of annuals on the lawn. The kitchen garden would be behind the house with perhaps some fruit trees in the back.

By buying seeds and plants from the catalog, the homeowner could envision a beautiful lawn or bed of colorful flowers on the lawn. The same discussion about the garden

and landscape in every catalog meant the seed and plant companies were normalizing the cultural value of a certain form of garden for the middle class. They succeeded. Horticulturist and garden historian Denise Wiles Adams (2004), who has studied and catalogued the history of dozens of nineteenth-century plants in America, both native and exotic, says that landscaping and garden styles remained fairly consistent and homogenous across the continent in the nineteenth century. (p. 36) The only difference was the choice of ornamental plants for a particular region in the country.

By the 1890s, the result of the persuasive seed and nursery catalog was that, for the first time in history, what the mass media said inspired gardeners around the country. The catalogs came off the press in the hundreds of thousands. A national readership for the catalogs created a sameness in plant choices and gardening style that America had never seen previously. The gardener, most often a woman, coveted a particular seed or plant and could envision changes the garden would undergo—all made possible by the catalog. The catalog sold dreams and hopes, as does any product promotion to this day.

The seed and nursery catalog became a powerful form of modern public relations. The catalog was not simply a collection of seeds for sale, but a vehicle to motivate the middle-class reader to want a garden with a particular form of landscape. That landscape was English in style, based largely on the works of English garden writer John Claudius Loudon (1773-1843) and later New York nurseryman Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), who both wrote about a similar naturalistic, picturesque, or gardenesque view of nature as a model for the landscape. Loudon, the elder of the two, had long been a mentor to Downing. Eventually Downing became Loudon's voice in America, especially in his magazine *The Horticulturist* and his many books on landscape gardening.

At the start of the twentieth century the English gardener and landscape designer Gertrude Jekyll influenced the American suburban garden through her writing on such topics as perennial borders and the mass planting of flowers of a single color. Eventually garden writers would Americanize the books and articles by such English authors. (Seaton, p. 47) The model, however, continued to be the English garden.

Using Bourdieu's theory of language and society, we might sum up what we found in the following way.

The nineteenth century seed companies and nurseries enjoyed symbolic capital in the culture of the time. The capital was particularly linguistic, employing extensive promotional language to enable the product to be known and thus accepted.

Also, the green industry as an organization was part of the habitus of that culture. Everybody who had a home, particularly in the suburbs, was concerned about a lawn. The green industry knew that seeds and plants it recommended, sold as enabling the English garden design, would be accepted in the culture. The result was that the seed and nursery industries used their power to facilitate a kind of landscape design that appeared in nineteenth century America from Maine to California.

Finally, the ability of the green industry to turn a seed or plant into a means of achieving a certain garden design through language was a sign of the relationship between language and culture. Though there were many other garden designs like French, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish, the green industry chose to recommend a garden along the lines of a romantic English landscape garden.

What Bourdieu confronts us with is how promotional language of a particular time can exert its power in the culture. The seed companies and nurseries were in a position of power to promote a product in a way that their customers would accept. The public embraced the definition of that product from the organization and the English garden appeared across America in the nineteenth century.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to provide a critical view of public relations practice. This project continued the line of cultural studies research by applying its theory and method to a specific public relations case.

Cultural studies proposes to look at a text produced in a particular culture and the context in which it was both distributed and consumed. In that process one examines the ideology and power in the culture. Thus Bourdieu's social theory provided a cultural studies framework here for the historical data.

Public relations can be defined as planned communication to motivate publics to support an issue, a cause, a service, an organization, or a product. The media forms of communication can include advertising and any other promotional material.

Bourdieu said that power in a society belongs to the one who has symbolic capital, expressed through language. In this case a powerful nineteenth century American industry used its symbolic capital to sell a particular garden design through its public relations discourse.

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## **The 1982 collapse of Banco Ambrosiano: Critiquing professional memoirs towards a reliable history of PR**

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Mainstream public relations history is, in large part, about a history of prominent people based on oral memoirs and statements by the protagonists of narrated programs and actions, mostly public relations professionals. ‘Oral’ history and memoirs have become a significant source of many different variations of historical research: “A recorded oral history is more than just a quote on a page in a book. It is a meaningful story expressed by the person who owns that story” says Doug Boyd, director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries (Ashenfelder, 2013). The reinforcement of subjectivity and ambiguity as characteristics of ‘oral history’ is also underlined by Alessandro Portelli in his widely cited *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories* (Sunypress, 1991). Yes, says this paper’s author, knowing very well that ‘owning the story’ implies a fully subjective version of events.

This paper argues a caveat, specifically addressed to non-professional historians who, in recent years, have enriched the public relations professional body of knowledge with narrations of specific aspects or periods of the field’s history. The caveat deals with authors who do not dedicate sufficient effort and time to check the accuracy of the protagonists’ memoirs of events.

Eric Kandel, a leading Columbia University scholar, argues that a memory appears like a permanent, precious essence of the brain. But it is not. Instead, many scientists believe that a memory changes every time one thinks about a past event, somewhat in analogy with quantum theory. This implies that our memories are not abstract snapshots stored in a bulging file in our mind, but rather, they are a collection of brain cells — neurons that undergo chemical changes every time they are engaged. So, when we think about something from the past, the memory is called up like a computer file, reviewed and revised in subtle ways, and then sent back to the brain’s archives, now modified slightly, updated and changed.

I am not an historian, but a professional public relations practitioner. I intend to present some pages from my own (yet unpublished) memoirs to deconstruct the facts in order to explicate the risks of writing the history of events which may be based on often fallacious and sometimes biased memoirs. This self-analysis is, in a way, a tribute to navel-gazing, but also avoids likely controversies that might arise had I chosen any other page of most published histories of PR. Judging by the results of the fact-checking exercise discussed later in the paper, one would conclude that very little of what one remembers, even when in perfectly good faith, bears resemblance with the nitty gritty facts. In turn, this leads to a serious problem in the ongoing, laudable and precious effort by many non-professional historians, scholars or professional as they may be, in portraying a serious and reliable history of public relations.

The sample text in the paper relates to events in the early 1980s in which I directly participated as a protagonist and contributed, for good or bad, to significant discontinuity in the Italian and the Vatican financial systems.

### **Accurate oral history**

A few general arguments before going into the actual episode:

1) In researching and writing history it believe it important for the writer to warn potential readers if the focus of the narrative is the history of public relations as such, or if it is that of a historically relevant event viewed through the lens of the role played by public relations in that event. This is essential because most planned public relations efforts are adopted, by at least some of the protagonists of major historic events, precisely to modify the very course of those events. Therefore the researcher needs to identify actors, actions, arguments, tools and channels that, directly or indirectly, for whatever reasons and with whatever results, modified or, consciously or not, attempted to modify those very events.

2) A further implication is for the author to make an effort to imagine what that course of events might have been had public relations not been consciously employed. This refers to the growing and questionable practice of the 'history of ifs' (for example, see Roberts, 2010) that in recent years has become one of the tools adopted by professional historians to investigate and explain events. This exercise helps in focusing not only on the single event as

it came about, but also in indicating other likely courses had the protagonists decided to go without aware and programmed public relations activities.

3) The researcher, in my view, would also need to consider that, in normal circumstances, public relations activities are seldom transparent and detectable to the public. Lay people do not usually perceive the process, the motivations and the represented interests of a public relations program. This facet is also associated with the innate ‘ambiguity’ of public relations... in the sense that most, if not all, of the tools adopted escape the limelight. What is more, in many cases, despite strong wordings in a plurality of professional codes of ethics, even the direct interlocutor of the public relations professional (politician, journalist, opinion leader...) is left unaware of our true represented interest, modes of proceedings and ultimate motivations. Thus, the would-be-historian must investigate and fact-check well beyond the professional’s immediate recollection, statements and documents (the latter, in many cases scarcely available or traceable).

4) The researcher will also want to investigate even well beyond the, however important, recollection of events by the professional’s direct interlocutors (clients, politicians, journalists, opinion leaders, etc), because these might have an interest in undermining or overplaying the role of public relations. To evoke a simple analogy: the researcher’s perspective is closer to that of the investigative journalist than of the simple interviewer.

As André Aciman, author of the recently-published novel *Harvard Square*, wrote recently in the New York Times:

... if changing the layout of your problems doesn’t necessarily solve them, it does make living with them easier...memoirists, unable to erase the ugliest moments of their past or unwilling to make new ones up, can shift them around. They don’t distort the truth, they nudge it. Everyone has reasons for altering the past. We may want to embellish or gloss over the past, or we may want to repress it, or to shift it just enough so as to be able to live with it. Some, in an effort to give their lives a narrative, a shape, a logic, end up altering not the facts they’ve known, but their layout... Writing the past is never a neutral act. Writing always asks the past to justify itself; to give its reasons... provided we can live with the reasons. What we want is a narrative, not a log: a tale, not a trial. This is why most people write memoirs using the conventions



not of history, but of fiction. It's their revenge against facts that won't go away (Aciman, 2013).

And, as the reputed philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote:

The traditional political lie used to concern either true secrets – data that had never been made public – or intentions. Modern political lies, on the other hand, deal efficiently with things that are not secrets at all but are known to practically everybody. This is obvious in the case of rewriting contemporary history under the eyes of those who witnessed it..... the difference between the traditional lie and the modern lie will more often than not amount to the difference between hiding and destroying (Arendt, 1977, p. 252-3).

I candidly add to this: what about that contemporary (vis-à-vis Arendt's description of the modern one) lie, more often than not inspired by public relations professionals?

### **Memory and mis-remembrance**

Here is the sample transcript mentioned in the first page of this paper:

In the early eighties we found ourselves directly involved in a memorable series of events which led to a restructuring of Italy's financial services industry. In 1982 the banker, Roberto Calvi, CEO of Banco Ambrosiano, the spearhead of Vatican finance, was found dead hanging from a rope off a London bridge. We were then working for Orazio Bagnasco, a leading Catholic financier, who was highly successful in his heavily advertised real estate investment funds (Europrogramme) and owner of the then-famous Ciga chain of luxury hotels.

Bagnasco was an attractive and seductive personality, a great marketer and excellent salesperson, besides being erudite and challenging on many cultural issues. Although the two of us were very different, we got along quite well. As the news of Calvi's murder by the Mafia broke (there was no way could it have been, as initially said, a suicide), I was attracted by his big thinking and we worked together on a strategy to avoid Calvi's bank being 'frozen' and taken under the management of a commissioner named by the Governor of the Bank of Italy., and to publicly and privately legitimate

my client (already a member of the board of directors of the bank) in becoming the new Chairman of the Ambrosiano. It was a very ambitious plan indeed. Going for him was his very close relationship with Giulio Andreotti, the 'sacred monster', many times prime minister and leader of the ruling Christian Democracy (Catholic) Party.

Against him was the Rome-based national daily newspaper *La Repubblica* which was publishing vicious attacks from its business editor Giuseppe Turani who challenged the real estate investment funds. As a consequence of the attacks, the funds' value began to plunge. I knew there was a close relationship between Eugenio Scalfari, newspaper's editor and backer of Turani's campaign against Bagnasco's funds, and Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the then Governor of the Bank of Italy and ultimate decision maker over the immediate future of Banco Ambrosiano. Ciampi, later in the 1990s, became Prime Minister and, in the early years of the new century, President of the Italian Republic.

I very vividly remember strolling and discussing with my client in the small square in Milan under the Banco Ambrosiano Headquarters near Piazza della Scala when we saw Calvi's private secretary, who knew many of the relationships between his boss and the Mafia and was expecting to be interrogated by the investigators that same afternoon, jump out of the window of the fourth floor and commit suicide. The vision was ghastly.

Bagnasco was telling me that his friend Andreotti had agreed to endorse his plan only if we could neutralize *La Repubblica* and get him officially received by the Governor. In the meantime the media covering the Ambrosiano case and Bagnasco's obvious intentions had many and varied views. However, *La Repubblica* was calling for the bank to be 'frozen' by Governor Ciampi.

I knew the paper's editor Scalfari well. I was confident that if he and Bagnasco were able to meet and chat for some time they would take to each other. I also decided to keep this attempt distanced from my old friend, the business editor Turani. I went to see Scalfari (who knew I was advising Bagnasco) and asked him to receive my client in a private conversation. The appointment was obtained. I also went to visit the Governor's private secretary and asked him to schedule an appointment with my

client, possibly the same day and before he would meet Scalfari. Got it! As one may imagine, the day of the two appointments we were both (my client and I) very tense.

He was in Rome in his suite at the Grand Hotel (one of the pearls of his Ciga hotel chain). There were no mobile phones at the time and I had remained in Milan to look after the media assault. The appointment with the Governor Ciampi was at 5 pm and the one with Scalfari at 6.30. We had many times rehearsed both encounters the day before in Milan. I figured that the meeting with Ciampi would be short and formal, so I started to call my client at the Grand Hotel at about a quarter to six. There was no reply and no one knew where he was.

I figured the first meeting might have taken longer and at 6.10pm called Scalfari's secretary to see if the two were together. Confirmed. From 7 pm I began to bombard the Grand Hotel and after several attempts I finally spoke to my client. He was upset by my call and whispered. I asked: "How did it go?" He answered with "very well" and added that he was in a very private meeting with Andreotti. So I exulted and, as we had agreed during rehearsals, leaked to a newswire service that my client had been received by the Governor.

The next morning I was at my desk in Milan very early (no internet then, only wire service). All the dailies had prominent news of the meeting at the Bank of Italy and suggested that the Ambrosiano story would quickly be solved, as we had eagerly worked for. *La Repubblica* had a fantastic editorial signed by Scalfari in which he praised my client as the best possible candidate from the Catholic camp to sort out the Calvi mess.

As I was reading with triumphant joy (no later than 7.30 am), I heard the tick of my wire service and saw the take as it was being typed by Ansa (the National press agency): it said that the news of the meeting was false and that the Governor had never received my client! Shocked, I woke my client (he never woke up before 9 am...) and asked him "but what the hell has been going on?" and told him of the Governor's statement. He yawned and said "oh yes, I did not tell you his secretary had called me at 4.30 pm to cancel the appointment!"

“But you said everything went well!” I panicked. He replied “I could not elaborate as I was speaking with Andreotti but was actually referring to the Scalfari meeting”. I immediately typed and released by fax a statement signed by me, as spokesperson of the client, confirming the Governor’s statement and saying that it had been my personal mistake, in the hope of easing the gaffe. Clearly it did not work. Scalfari was absolutely furious and the next morning wrote a second editorial under the title “a carpet merchant”. And that was the end of my client’s ambitions: The Bank was frozen, the real estate funds collapsed and my client never became Chairman of the Ambrosiano.

What can I say? Of course it had been my mistake. I was so full of adrenaline that I never doubted the extension of Bagnasco’s “very well” whisper on the phone to both appointments. Ah, the power of PR.

This episode and the way it is narrated is one highly personal perspective of events, as I remembered 30 years after they took place. Events that, in an Italian context, dramatically changed the dynamics of the Vatican financial system, of Italy’s financial system along with other collateral discontinuities in banking, politics, communication, real estate and luxury hotel investments and, importantly, the ties between criminal organizations, the Vatican and the banking system.

## **What had happened**

However, a fact-checking effort thirty years later found that the story does not reflect events as they actually happened:

Firstly, I checked on the mentioned articles published by *La Repubblica* in those days and was not able to find the two successive editorials by Eugenio Scalfari I so vividly remember. Did I invent them? And if I did, why? A first answer is that I would have hoped that the first one had been published and then my ego added the second one to consolidate my idea of Scalfari being so temperamental. On the other hand, *Repubblica* of those days (from June 14 to June 20 of 1982) is full of articles

concerning the protagonists of the event, many of them written by Scalfari and a content analysis does not substantially alter the role that those articles had on the decision by the Bank of Italy and the Treasury to appoint a liquidator rather than accept my Client as the new Chairman.

In probing for a rational answer to such a distorted memory I phoned Scalfari directly (he is still active..) and asked if he remembered the episode and could help me understand why I recall so differently from the facts. He, of course, remembered (sic) the events very well and added two comments: 1) you should tell your readers that you had a deal with me since 1975 when you helped me for a very small sum to launch *La Repubblica*; the deal was that I gave you three trump cards to play with me with the assurance that I would at least listen. When you called me to ask me to meet Bagnasco you were using your last trump card; 2) it is true that I am (was) highly temperamental and prone to sudden likes and dislikes; and it is true that I took to Bagnasco when I met him, so your scheme was sound. However, when you called me to apologise for having led me to believe that he had been received by the bank's Governor following's the Governor's public statement, I immediately reacted saying, "he is a merchant of carpets; that is what he is". Had you also told me that when you spoke to him right after our meeting and he said that "all went well" and that he was then in a private meeting with Andreotti I would have published that scoop and have renewed you another couple of trump cards".

I also wrote that Calvi's private secretary committed suicide following the discovery of her boss's body under the Blackfriars Bridge in London. I checked this memory as I wrote this paper and found out that the secretary's suicide happened three days *before* the discovery of Calvi's body. This is, however, excusable as Calvi had disappeared a few days before and a succession battle was already taking place at Banco Ambrosiano.

To conclude I will certainly, thanks to the effort in writing this paper, very carefully review my professional memories and certainly hope that other dilettante historians of our field will want to absorb the indicated caveats and add more.

By the way, only three days following my phone conversation with the almost ninety year old Eugenio Scalfari, in his typical and topical Sunday editorial in La Repubblica of June 3 2013, he wrote these words:

‘so-called narrative serves to seek into the past and tell it as an experience, useful for the present and the future. Narrating the past is therefore an essential element to give life ‘ a sense’. Those who do not narrate live in the present and the sense, significance and nobility of one’s existence flees away. In these obscure times, there are many who have given up narration, or have transformed it into a fable with no resemblance to reality. Narrations are obviously subjective as we all look at the past with our own eyes, but a check with the facts is always necessary followed by a comparison with the emerging differences. Fables instead are the preferred tools of demagogues who use them to attract the sillier ones.’.

The context of the rest of this article had nothing to do with our story, but I am left wondering (another self-construction?) about this striking coincidence...

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# **A Historiography of U.S. Corporate Public Relations: Why Current Understandings of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Corporate PR History Must be Reconsidered**

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## **1. Introduction**

Many scholars of public relations history argue for a more inclusive and theoretically diverse history of PR. However, within current histories of U.S. corporate public relations this goal is difficult to apply because of the dominance that Alfred Chandler Jr.'s (1977) theory of corporate development has within PR history. What results from Chandler's theory is an understanding of U.S. corporate public relations history that is too focused on the corporation itself while ignoring larger societal, governmental and individual influences on the creation of corporate PR. This historiography argues that new theories, such as Günter Bentele's (2010) stratification model, of PR history achieve a more accurate and inclusive history of corporate PR. However, for new theories to be applied and accepted within scholarship of corporate public relations history, scholars must first reconsider and cast off Chandler's (1977) theory of corporate development.

Since research in public relations history began in the late 1960s, there has been a focus in scholarship on corporate PR departments or agencies with corporate clients. Given the issues within the public relations field this is not surprising. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the public relations field has been dominated with concerns over legitimacy and professionalization. For public relations scholars, this focus on corporate PR attempts to fill this role of professionalization by providing PR practitioners historical roots within the corporate community. It is this corporate focus that makes Chandler's work so essential to many of these PR histories. However, the acceptance of Chandler's work additionally leads to limitations within the historical research in the field. This paper attempts to define the limitations of Chandlerian ideas and argues that public relations may be ill-served by unquestionably accepting his approach to corporate history.

## **2. The Power of the Corporation in Creating the Economy: Chandler and Tedlow**

Alfred Chandler (1977) and Richard Tedlow (1993) developed a theory of the modern corporations that attempts to answer why corporations in the United States are so dominant within the world economy and how these corporations developed into such a powerful force within U.S. and world finance. Both scholars approach this question by looking at the structures and behaviors of the corporations, as well as their internal operations. For Chandler and Tedlow, external stimuli, such as politics, consumers, and even individual actors, are secondary to management structure and internal organizational behavior (Chandler, 1977; Chandler & Tedlow, 1985; Tedlow 1993).

Managerial structures are the hallmark of Chandler's (1977) view on the growth of corporations. He argues that self-replicating middle management systems were a revolutionary development that allowed large American corporations to thrive in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For Chandler (1967), the American corporation is the "most important single economic organization in the American economy" (p. 71). Chandler and Tedlow (1985) build on this managerial focus by examining the strategy of managers within the field of communications. Using salient messaging to maintain corporate identity and image within the public, these corporate managers were able to sustain their goals of corporate goodwill and longevity (Chandler and Tedlow, 1985; Tedlow 1993).

According to Chandler (1977), corporate structures prior to the 1840s were familial or, at most, loose partnerships that were similar to those found in older European models of business that were rooted in the Renaissance. These hallmarks included the continual disbanding of certain businesses when partners died. Shares of stock within businesses were not prevalent during this time, nor were any type of large business that was involved in several different types of businesses. Moreover, these businesses went through changes in structure gradually in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century with the rise of merchants who imported goods from ports. However, even these merchant importers retained the traditional business models of their precursors. Artisanal manufacturing was another component of this business structure since factories in large scale production were non-existent because they were cost-prohibitive. Large scale businesses could only be found in rarified environments in the pre-1840 America. Plantations arguably were an example of large scale businesses with middle management in place. However, this point is debatable since plantation businesses were predicated on slave labor, rather than wage labor, and that owners oftentimes served as managers. Technological innovations coupled with population expansion during the 19<sup>th</sup>



Century led to a gradual change in corporate structure. Railroads served as a the harbinger for most of this change since they expanded throughout the United States in order to remain competitive and as a result created a middle management business structure (Chandler, 1965). These railroads created national corporate structures which permanently changed the dynamics of ownership and management within businesses (Chandler, 1977; Chandler 1990).

Chandler argues that in traditional businesses prior to 1840, owners and managers were oftentimes one in the same. However, because of the capital needed to facilitate large-scale railroad expansion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century there became a need for outside investors. The emergence of finance within corporations is a very complex narrative. Finance, particularly European finance, emerged in New York City in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These financiers were concerned with placing their money in solid investments that were not subject to volatility of markets or government forces. The stock exchange in New York boomed during this period and stockholding among non-managerial owners who were engaged in market speculation. Stockholders were not interested in railroad management, but were interested in profits derived from their investments. These investors effectively became the owners of railroads while managers, notably middle-managers, made the decisions concerning business operations. Owners wanted profits since their investment was exclusively monetary while managers of all stripes wanted longevity of the business because they were concerned with maintaining their careers (Chandler, 1965; Chandler 1977). Chandler makes particular note of how managers' careers in railroads were highly prized by the individuals. He argues that even within the communities of these railroad managers, these railroad jobs were recognized as highly desirable and respectable positions, no matter what the level the manager was in the company (Chandler, 1977).

Chandler argues that railroads' model of business became a template for other businesses emerging in that era, notably including communications, large retail stores, and factories (Chandler, 1962). His book *Strategy and Structure* provides an analysis of how individual fields developed within the American economy and utilized these principles first developed in railroads to create complex corporate systems that relied on middle management. This book is often mentioned along with *Visible Hand* as seminal works of Chandler that developed his managerial theories of corporate growth in the U.S. (Chandler, 1962).

This development of middle managers within those businesses occurred more slowly and at a much lower scale than railroads. However, according to Chandler these differences took place within the context of railroad expansion which permitted large-scale consumption

and production within the American economy. For Chandler, the consumer demand was already present given the large scale expansion of the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Chandler, 1959). Chandler cites westward expansion in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as an example of why American consumers were both increasing in number, but hard to reach by American businesses. American population growth and expansion coupled with technological innovation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries made it possible for larger more complex corporate businesses to grow in this era. This in turn laid a foundation for modern corporate businesses and later for corporate marketing to mass audiences. Railroads provided the technological innovation that then permitted other large scale businesses to develop within the U.S. economy. Because of railroad innovations, corporate production, distribution, sales, and consumption became integrated into a large corporate structure that replicated itself through its managerial stability (Chandler, 1977; Chandler, 1988; Chandler, 1990).

Richard Tedlow argues that the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw an increased consumer interaction with corporate entities as a result management sought to facilitate an “order to a social landscape” by using public relations to increase corporate credibility with consumers (Tedlow, 1977, p. xviii). Tedlow places the rise of public relations in the U.S. in the context that Americans are inherently concerned with public opinion. This is rooted even in Benjamin Franklin’s concern with his own image and that of the American Revolution. What businesses in this mass distribution and production era wanted was corporate goodwill by the public. This need for a consumer relationship with corporations was made even more important by external political trends, notably progressivism, which Tedlow argues had an anti-corporate political undertone. Tedlow (1977) also argues corporate growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century created an environment for the first time in which consumers in the U.S. were reached by the same companies. Grounded in Chandler’s theory of corporate growth, Tedlow argues that these businesses suddenly needed communication techniques to promote their products to a stratified consumer. Tedlow argues that the first phase of this new corporate communication was “unification” in which production and distribution became integrated (Tedlow, 1993, p. 11). This recognition of “national mass marketing” was facilitated by companies that produced consumable products who looked to railroad marketing and infrastructure as a template for corporate success (Tedlow, 1993, p. 15). Tedlow echoes Chandler’s themes of evolutionary corporate design and the role of middle managers. Particularly important to Tedlow is the rise of the mass-retailer and the combination of production and distribution of goods. He argues that early examples of production and distribution were marked by irregularity of local retailers who took advantage

of customers. The growth of large corporate retailers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century allowed for brands to be fully developed since they were in control of production and distribution. Packaging became of the utmost importance in this era since it promoted consistency with products manufactured by large corporate businesses such as Coca-Cola, National Biscuit Company, and Johnson & Johnson. These corporate communications ultimately led to American hegemony within corporate growth (Tedlow, 1976). American dominance in the corporate world gained salience because of these mass marketing efforts and, during times of economic downturn, the goodwill American companies had with consumers gave them an advantage over other non-U.S. corporations. Tedlow (1993) argues that this strategy of corporate communications through advertisements, public relations, and sales items such as catalogues were actively used in global economic domination by the United States.

### **3. Corporation Reconsidered: Critiques of Chandlerian Models of Corporate Growth**

The strength of Chandler's and Tedlow's explanation of corporate growth is that it provides a concise evolutionary depiction of corporate development. For public relations history, this corporate development created a business environment in which public relations was needed to persuade and influence consumers. However, this theory of corporations is subject to many criticisms. Foremost among these historical critiques is that Chandlerian theory is too myopic in that it largely ignores external factors that also shape business and that it is too preoccupied with the role of managers in corporate development. Chandler's exclusive focus on large corporations is another criticism of Chandler's work (Scranton, 1997). Focusing on a small segment of businesses in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Chandler and Tedlow provide only a generalization about the largest and wealthiest businesses in the U.S.

Given that one of Chandler's major conclusions is that these corporations served as a model for other businesses, this narrow focus on large corporations presents limited conclusions. By focusing on large businesses, Chandler also creates a problem of scale since smaller businesses and corporations are judged by a standard articulated for large corporations. Phillip Scranton (1997) likens this comparison to measuring wildlife by the lifestyle of an elephant over any other animal. This type of focus on large corporations skews any conclusions that can be made on small corporations or businesses because the standards do not take into account their uniqueness or business function. Even if Chandler were to expressly exclude smaller corporations from his analysis, his approach to large corporations is equally flawed. As Scranton (1997) points out, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

many large corporations, some one-third of the 50 largest manufacturers, were still privately held family businesses (p. 8). Scranton further shows that by 1930, one half of all large corporations within the United States were still family controlled units that did not divest management from ownership roles. Moreover, many smaller businesses were aware of what larger corporate management schemes were because these smaller companies oftentimes were “specialty” manufacturers that supplied larger companies with materials for their production (Scranton, 1997, p. 11).

This failure of inclusion is coupled with Chandler’s mischaracterization of the actors within the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrial era (John, 2012). Richard John, a doctoral student of Chandler, writes that Chandlerian views toward “robber baron” industrialists is flawed in that it eliminates them from the narrative of corporate growth and change in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. John attributes this focus on managers in Chandler’s work to his focus on men like Henry Varnum Poor, Chandler’s great-grandfather and subject of his dissertation. Poor did not think well of market speculators, and from this historical background and research interest Chandler focused on managers rather than the unsavory speculator as an agent for corporate change and development. According to John, Chandlerian corporate history suffers from an inherent “anti-investor bias” because of Chandler’s preoccupation with managers (John, 2012, p. 32). John’s argument is to illustrate the ultimate tension between traditionalists and industrialists within the 19<sup>th</sup> Century debate over monopolies. He argues that older, more-established people resented the rise of the industrialist and their monopolies because they were outside of traditional American values and ideals. His work ultimately links the debate between industrialists and progressives to include these more traditional upper-class Americans who were part of the establishment since colonial times.

Focusing on monopolism in 19<sup>th</sup> Century businesses, John argues that the figures shaping the debate on corporate growth were very influential in structuring the business world. Pointing to financiers like Jay Gould, John argues that 19<sup>th</sup> Century industrialists utilized legal loopholes and political lobbying as a method to increase their personal holdings. Unlike Chandler’s argument of corporate stability, John argues these financiers ultimately led to great levels of instability within American corporations because speculators’ primary concern was personal wealth. This focus on personal wealth and corporate instability is evidenced by Scranton’s argument that the panics of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century were created through speculation in corporate stocks and faulty banking loans (Scranton, 1997). Using stock market trading techniques, such as short-sales, these financiers developed reputations that centered on their own personal greed and manipulation of corporations, stock transactions,

and government regulations. Moreover, government regulation, as opposed to managerial stability, allowed these financiers to grow companies into large consolidated monopolies. John cites Jay Gould as a preeminent user of government regulation as a means to squelch competition

The manipulation of financiers, particularly in railroad development, illustrates why railroad corporations do not provide the type of model template of business that Chandler argues for (White, 2011). Richard White's analysis of 19<sup>th</sup> Century railroads shows that railroad financiers used graft with the federal government and reckless expansion in order to grow their businesses, oftentimes at the expense of the public and the companies themselves. This critique on railroads challenges Chandler's assertions that internal corporate structuring of management led to railroad and later large corporate dominance. White argues that corporate dominance particularly that of railroads emerged because of these railroad owners used the U.S. government as a means to "punish rival corporations while gaining advantages for themselves" (White, 2011, xxix).

This use of power over government and public is also seen in John's analysis of business communication. Instead of developing corporate communications that dealt with diversity of American consumers, John argues financiers like Gould merely bought press coverage from purchasing newspapers who cast him in a favorable light. Corporate marketing techniques were limited in their effectiveness and usefulness given the environment where press outlets could be so easily manipulated. However, simultaneous with this press acquisition, other popular press reviled financiers like Gould on a regular basis with particular attention being paid toward their personal greed and manipulation of stocks (John, 2011).

#### **4. Public Relations and Corporations: A Chandlerian Paradigm**

Chandlerian theories are seen in many public relations histories. The often-repeated historical narrative of PR argues that public relations as a professional practice with late nineteenth century railroad companies. Any public relations prior to railroad PR is viewed as a low-brow, unprofessional press agency which concerned itself with unethically promoting entertainers and theater troupes (Bernays, 1966; Tedlow, 1979; Miller 2000). The practice of public relations is alleged to grow in tandem with the growth of American industry with men like Ivy Lee serving corporations like Standard Oil. This narrative has an underlying purpose for the field of PR. It seeks to distance PR from non-corporate roots, and wants to

professionalize and legitimize the profession. Many practitioners and early scholars may believe that placing the field outside of this narrative makes public relations less legitimate of a profession, especially when much of the academic and professional literature of PR is targeted toward gaining a wider influence within management structures. This Chandlerian influence in public relations history also provides for a neat compartmentalization of the field in which PR practice is part of a clearly delineated evolutionary process.

Despite his criticism of Chandler's theory of corporate evolution, John does praise his work for its innovative "linkage of an empirically grounded model of the stages of American economic development with a technologically based explanation" (John, 1997, p. 153). According to John this is the reason why Chandlerian theory has so much salience outside of the historical profession, particularly in social sciences. It should be no surprise then given communication studies focus on social scientific research that Chandlerian explanations of public relations history are pervasive in the academic literature (Miller, 2000; Lamme and Russell, 2010). The use of Chandlerian theory within PR research has roots in larger issues that dominate public relations generally.

Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century public relations practitioners, notably Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, sought to create a professionalized class of public relations practitioners (Hiebert 1966; Russell and Bishop, 2009). Lee, who worked for various corporations, especially viewed public relations as a corporate practice. Bernays reiterated this ideal of public relations work being situated in the corporate context (Bernays 1965, Bernays 1966). A self-styled father of modern PR, Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud, wanted public relations to become a licensed practice that focused on obtaining public opinion and psychographic profiles of consumers. Bernays is perhaps one of the most controversial people within the field of public relations. He was known for placing himself in the creation of the field, and was notable in his self-promotion. His autobiography, *biography on an idea*, written in 1965 was an attempt by him to cast himself in the role as the founding father of PR. His book emphasizes the corporate roots of public relations and the manner in which public relations should be practiced in a corporate sphere. Much of Bernays's work in the 1920s and 1930s was corporate public relations, primarily that of tobacco companies. This may provide some insight into why Bernays placed corporate PR as the only true for of public relations (Bernays, 1966).

Corporate PR provides the type of legitimization and professionalization men like Lee and Bernays sought. By the time public relations scholarship emerged in the 1960s, this corporate-focused approach to PR had been entrenched by these early influential

practitioners. Early scholars, such as Scott Cutlip (1994), continued this theme of public relations as a corporate outgrowth. In his influential public relations textbook, *Effective Public Relations*, Cutlip describes the growth of PR in terms of corporate expansion, which implicitly reiterates Chandlerian themes. This textbook was first published in 1952 when Cutlip was a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Cutlip emerged as an academic in a time where communication programs were highly practitioner-oriented. Because of Cutlip's work has a practitioner focus and his scholarship is grounded in business theories as opposed to sociological and political theories that dominate the field today. Cutlip is also credited with writing the first substantial history of public relations as a field in *The Unseen Power*. This book frames public relations history exclusively within a corporation or corporate-focused agency. Moreover, his periodization of the beginning of PR squares with Chandler's and particularly Tedlow's (1979) views of corporate communications emerging from a revolutionary technological and social change within American business in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Chandler, 1977; Tedlow 1993). For Cutlip (1994), this places public relations not only in a professionalized context, but also makes public relations a key ingredient to corporate growth and success in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

This historical theme is reiterated in Excellence Theory of public relations first articulated by Cutlip's student, James Grunig (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). It is important to note that Grunig was not attempting to produce a historical theory, but a theory for PR practice. Excellence Theory in its entirety argues that in the past transparency within corporate communications has been lacking and that in order to fully engage with the public in a meaningful way public relations must listen to the public as well as speak to them. This form of public relations practice is known as two-way symmetrical communication, and its saliency within the academic field is largely due to the promotion of this theory within the discipline and the theory's testability within social scientific research (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

In his attempt to create a normative theory of public relations practice, Grunig created a four-model approach to explain the historical evolution of PR. This model represents public relations as a form of Whig history in which PR practice began in the unprofessional era of entertainment press agency, but that developed in both technique and ethics with its introduction into the corporate structure of railroads and large-scale department stores. The four models provide a historical progression of public relations from "press agency," "public information," "one-way asymmetric," to finally "two-way symmetrical communications." This last manifestation of public relations is a type of communications that embraces ethical

and socially responsible public relations. It also serves as a model that confronts the perceived deception that corporate public relations engaged in during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The “two-way symmetrical” model of public relations is commonly known as Excellence Theory of PR (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

Grunig’s Excellence Theory is inherently Chandlerian because it reiterates many of the progressive evolutionary themes of American business. The Four Models of PR delineate an evolution of PR practice that only becomes legitimized from lowly press agency when the profession links itself with business interests in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Moreover, the idea of two-way symmetric communication is rooted in the idea that public relations serves to promote corporate image and goodwill. According to the four models, this goal of PR is based on a historical heritage of PR that finds the true professional genesis of the field within 19<sup>th</sup> Century corporate America.

Excellence Theory gained salience in the academic community during the 1980s and 1990s because of its normative suggestions for practitioners. However, some scholars in the field of public relations adopted this four-model approach to explain PR history. It provided a narrative of professionalization and improvement and permitted neat historical periodization for the field. This historical characterization of PR as corporate is so pervasive in the field that in her survey of public relations history in 2000 Karen Miller declared that foundational history done on PR was Chandlerian in approach because the attention in these histories focused on corporate structure and growth (Miller, 2000). Later a 2010 study reiterated this, Lamme and Russell (2010) argued Chandlerian views of PR’s corporate growth is a consensus view throughout the academic field.

## **5. Moving Toward a More Accurate and Inclusive Public Relations History**

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of new approaches to public relations history. As Lamme and Russell (2010) point out, there are numerous areas of public relations practice that have been largely ignored by scholars. In the past 30 years most public relations histories focus on the history and evolution of American corporate public relations. However, as recent years have shown, new approaches to public relations histories have emerged that are outside of the corporate dominated PR narrative. Scholars outside the U.S., such as Bentele (2010), Karl Nessman (2000), and Tom Watson (2008), argue that the evolution of public relations outside of American has its own unique trajectory that is not a byproduct or emulation of U.S. practices. Moreover, these scholars are not influenced by promoting a Chandlerian paradigm because their scholarship does not attempt to legitimize



the field by rooting PR within corporate evolution as Grunigian and even Bernaysian histories do. Even within U.S. scholarship, Lamme and Russell (2010) and Coombs and Holliday (2012) show that the focus of public relations practice can and should include non-corporate practice such as religion, politics, social movements, and non-profits.

Bentele's (2010) stratification model of public relations history is particularly well-suited to explaining the field. Rather than place public relations as a linear outgrowth of business, Bentele's (2010) stratification model argues that public relations emerges from an evolutionary process that emerges within society over time. This process takes centuries to develop, much like any other sociological phenomenon. According to Bentele (2010), professionalized public relations practice is a natural manifestation of previous public relations practices that occurred within society, some of which innately occurred within mankind's social interactions. However, theories like Bentele's (2010) have issues being accepted within the larger public relations academic community because of the pervasiveness of Chandlerian paradigms. While some PR scholars may be unaware of Chandler's work, his theory of business evolution is so pervasive within the understanding of American business many scholars accept Chandlerian corporate evolution as an unassailable fact.

This blind acceptance of Chandler causes public relations scholars to think of public relations as only an outgrowth of business, rather than a larger societal communications process. Scholars like Bentele (2010) present a theoretically rich and complex account of public relations history. It is inherently more inclusive of divergent forms of public relations practice, which, in turn, creates a more accurate and theoretically grounded PR history. However, Chandlerian approaches to PR serve as a bulwark to this type of stratification model history. Chandler's (1977) work provides for a neat evolutionary compartmentalization of public relations. Moreover, it provides a pro-corporate and simple definition of the field that is appealing to those within the academy who seek to legitimize the field by creating a close association between PR and business. Only by recognizing the limits of Chandler's explanatory power and the accuracy of its historical arguments can the field of public relations be open to new, and more accurate, theories of public relations history. Unless scholars recognize both the widespread impact of Chandlerian ideas within PR historical scholarship and the limits of his work, PR history cannot begin to have a corrected and more theoretically rich historical narrative.

Despite this scholarship many scholars and practitioners approach to PR is to privilege the corporate voice and view non-corporate PR practices as either precursors to modern public relations practice or garish PR imposters who devalue and delegitimize the

field. What has emerged in the past three decades in many American public relations histories is a consistent periodization of PR as a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century practice and a characterization of public relations as a corporate endeavor. While some scholars have written pieces arguing for a broader conceptualization of public relations history, the corporate narrative dominates (Miller, 2000; Lamme and Russell, 2010). What results is a limited history of public relations and definition of the field that is overly narrow. If historians were to examine the critique of Chandler's (1977) depiction of 19<sup>th</sup> Century business, they would be confronted with this idea that public relations emerges from a highly volatile era of corporate growth, dominated by speculators who were concerned with personal wealth over corporate image. This historical critique actually provides some new opportunities for examining public relations history. PR scholars could examine public relations in terms of speculators, such as Gould, as means of market manipulation. Moreover, these corporate practices of railroads lobbying government entities could be examined to fully understand the power of government PR. While these depictions of corporate PR in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century could lead to results that are unflattering to the field, they would provide a more accurate narrative of PR development. Ultimately, if PR scholars recognized these limitations of the current historical narrative of PR, they would be afforded the opportunity to re-examine the rich history of PR during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and provide a more inclusive and accurate definition of the field.

Given these hallmarks of 19<sup>th</sup> Century corporations, this historiography traces PR history in context with the theoretical developments in U.S. corporate history. Many scholars of PR history argue for a greater inclusion of non-corporate PR history (Bentele 2012; Lamme and Russell 2010; Coombs and Holladay 2012). However, even within corporate PR history there is a rich source of communications between corporations and non-corporate publics. If Bentele's (2010) goals are to be achieved within PR history, scholars must recognize the pervasiveness of Chandlerian theory within PR scholarship and actively embrace these new theoretical critiques of Chandler's works. Removing Chandler's dominance in the understanding of corporate PR will allow application of the stratification model to corporate public relations history and give scholars greater clarity into the emergence of PR within U.S. corporations.

This preoccupation with U.S. corporate development not only creates an inaccurate portrayal of U.S. PR development, but creates a skewed historical narrative of public relations development outside the U.S. This allegiance to a Chandlerian view of public relations history also leads to an exclusively American view of the evolution of PR. When Chandler (1977) writes about the rise of modern corporations he is speaking exclusively

about American businesses. This leads to reoccurring themes of American corporate exceptionalism, dominance, and corporate hegemony. Other Western and non-Western public relations development is then viewed as developing as a derivative of U.S. corporate development (L'Etang, 2008). Even though Chandler's (1977) view of American corporate development has been shown to be inaccurate, his model of corporate development is oftentimes superimposed on other non-U.S. cultures. The result of this forced Chandlerian paradigm in non-U.S. PR history is that it suggests non-U.S. PR development innately followed a U.S. model.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications for Public Relations History**

Examining Chandlerian theory's impact on public relations three main conclusions emerge. First, Chandlerian views of corporate public relations development prevents a more inclusive and accurate view of public relations history. Knowingly or unknowingly, many public relations historians place PR history within the Chandlerian corporate context when they focus exclusively on historical events involving U.S. corporations. This type of focus supports a limited view of the field and confuses the genesis of PR practice. Scholars focusing on these corporate PR histories embrace this Chandlerian paradigm which, in turn, supports an evolutionary pro-business history of public relations. The end result of Chandler's (1977) influence within PR history is that his theories allow for a very narrowed view of PR history. Important areas of public relations history are excluded because of Chandler's influence in privileging a corporate narrative of PR.

Second, Chandler's (1977) preoccupation with American corporate development creates a theory in which non-U.S. public relations history is inaccurately portrayed as a derivative of American corporate history. This is problematic because it wrongly assumes a homogenous evolution of public relations among all nations. According to this view public relations in non-U.S. countries are borrowing the idea of formalized public relations from U.S. corporations. That assumption is not only wrong, but creates an environment where historical research is limited if scholars tacitly approve of Chandlerian corporate evolution.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the field of public relations' need for professional legitimacy fuels the use of the Chandlerian paradigm. However, approaching PR history as an emerging from early corporate development does not provide the field the type of historical professional legitimacy it desires. As recent scholars such as White (2012), John (2011), and Scranton (1997) show, corporate evolution in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was anything but professional. Attempting to achieve legitimacy for PR profession by

linking the field to corporate growth historically places the field in a context in which corporate deception, manipulation, and shameless self-promotion occurred. All of these traits are antithetical to modern professional goals of public relations, and are actions that PR organizations and practitioners publically eschew. Nonetheless, much of PR history places PR's growth in tandem with these corporate excesses of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

If public relations history wishes to embrace different theoretical approaches and have a more accurate record, scholars must recognize the inherent Chandlerian influence. Grunigian theories of PR practice, specifically the four models, along with early accounts of men like Bernays are inherently Chandlerian because they focus on a historical narrative of progressive evolution of public relations within a corporate structure (Bernays, 1966; Grunig and Hunt, 1984). As Miller (2000) points out, much of the early public relations histories accept Chandler as an unassailable fact of PR development. Only when scholars recognize the limits of Chandler's theories and the inaccuracy of its claims can PR historians write the new, and more accurate, history of public relations.

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**Public Relations Development as a Profession in Turkey:  
An Analysis Triangle, Educators, Practitioners and Professional Association**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study looked at the development of public relations in Turkey through two main focuses which are the development of public relations education and the development of public relations as a practice. For the study, the analysis of the public relations education offered at the universities in Istanbul was done. Secondly, interviews with professional associations, academics and practitioners of public relations were conducted. The curriculum analysis of different levels of public relations education (two-year, bachelor and graduate) provided insights about the issues in public relations education. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with the different participants in public relations. Of the interviews conducted on a variety of topics, this paper discussed the development of public relations practices, the development of public relations education, factors that affect the development of public relations and issues/challenges between the practice and education in Turkey. The study gathered data based on the understanding of public relations development through the main parties involved. The academic and practitioner participants of the study especially on the educational dimension shared different views. All parties indicated the role of the associations for the professionalization of public relations. Main problems range from education quality, to the gap between practitioners and academics.

*Key words:* Turkey, public relations education, professionalism, public relations practice, profession

## **Introduction**

It has been noticed that the public relations history and the development of public relations from occupation to profession in Turkey has not been analyzed as much as this area deserves. The frame of this history research is broad and it covers universities, professional associations, public relations agencies/consultancies, and organizations. In this way, political, social and economic factors that are responsible for the development of public relations from different perspectives were analyzed and the whole picture was visualized. The transformation of public relations from an occupation to a profession have been approached by using an integrated perspective and discussed in two main sections which are public relations education and public relations practices. In the educational dimension, the development of public relations education in Turkey was analyzed and in the practice dimension, the development of the practice of public relations in the public and private sector was analyzed.

The research has been designed in such a way that it discovers similarities and differences in education and practice and thus discusses the effects of them on each other. In this respect, professional associations are seen as important entities for elevating public relations practice and education and thus help professionalization. The researchers have taken into account the professional associations' points of view in the study as well. At the same time, the research aimed to look at the effects of social, political and economic factors at different historical periods, keeping their traces, uniting these periods and listening to the developments first hand. In reality, it is not possible to separate public relations from the social, political and economic structures of the world and the country. In Turkey, for example, public relations in addition to social and political developments, was first shaped by the economic factors during the 'Özal Period.'

In the research, public relations course syllabuses' of foundation (private) and state (public) universities' two-year degree, undergraduate, master and doctoral degree have been analyzed. The goal was to see the present condition with respect to public relations education at different levels. Moreover, interviews conducted with public relations academics, members of professional associations and practitioners helped to draw a frame of public relations and see the main dimensions. During the interviews, the data concerning the stories that the participants shared, the events that they witnessed, the criticisms they made and the things they did not approve of will be helpful for exploring public relations in Turkey. Each group's point of view is valuable in the sense that they help to understand public relations from different angles and compare and contrast the practice with the education.



Van Ruler (2005, p. 159) stated public relations practice suffers from its low standards wherever it is applied. Within the scope of this research, the in-depth data gathered and the examples shared by the participants will help us to come forth with a scientific analysis about public relations in Turkey. The researchers think and hope that this study will not only contribute to the education and practice of public relations, but also to the professionalization of public relations in Turkey.

## **Literature Review**

The roots of public relations and its development are discussed mainly in American literature (L'Etang, 2004, p. 9). Kazancı (2006, p. 5) states that in Turkey, most of the books written on public relations take the history of public relations as the practice of public relations in the USA. The factors that are responsible for the development of public relations in the world are economic, political, social and also it is obvious that the structure of the country and its characteristics have an influence on its development. Therefore, one has to look at the development of public relations in each area, taking into consideration both the global factors and the internal dynamics. Cutlip (1995, p.x) states that “studying the origins of public relations can provide helpful insight into its functions, its strengths and weaknesses, and its profound, although often unseen, impact on society.”

The first examples of public relations with the Republic goes back to Anadolu Agency founded in 1920 and Directorate General of Press and Information (named at that time Matbuat ve İstihbarat Müdüriyeti Umumisi) and *Irade-i Milliye* Newspaper started in 1919. (Sabuncuoğlu, 2004, p. 10; Bıçakçı, 2000, p. 112). The Publication and Representation Unit was founded in 1961 at the State Planning Organization and later Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Office and Press and Public Relations Offices in the ministries became active. (Sabuncuoğlu, 2004, p. 10). After the 1970s, in the private sector in Turkey, we witness public relations activities. (Sabuncuoğlu, 2004, p. 10; Bıçakçı, 2000, p. 113). The first public relations agency of Turkey called A&B was founded in 1974 and is still active (<http://www.ab-pr.com>). The period between the 1960s and 1980s is considered as the period in which public relations is ‘planned, defined and systematic.’ (Yamanoğlu, Hızal and Özdemir, 2013, p. 10)

Public relations education in Turkey was first given in 1966 at Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, School of Press and Broadcasting (Peltekoğlu, 1997, p. 87; Sabuncuoğlu, 2004, p. 11). The public relations association called HID at that time (currently called Turkish Public Relations Association- TUHID) was founded in 1972. The first

President and one of the founders of the Association was Alaeddin Asna ([www.tuhid.org.tr](http://www.tuhid.org.tr)). In addition to the public relations association, there are two other kinds of associations, one is the consultancy/agency association and the other one is the corporate communication professionals association.

## Methodology

The aim of the study was to look at the historical development of public relations in Turkey through two main focuses which were the development of public relations education and the development of public relations as a practice. In order to realize this purpose, curriculum analysis and interviews were conducted.

## *The Curriculum Analysis*

In the curriculum analysis, as stated earlier, public relations course syllabuses' of foundation (private) and state (public) universities' two-year degree, undergraduate, master and doctoral degree were analyzed. There are altogether 51 state and foundation universities in Istanbul. There are 17 universities which give two-year degrees, 14 universities have bachelor programs and 9 universities offer graduate programs (6 of which offer it with or without a master thesis, 2 of them without a thesis and one of them is with and the rest is without). 4 of them have doctoral programs in public relations. The names of these programs are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Names of Public Relations Programs in Istanbul**

Two-year Degree (17)	Bachelor (14)	Graduate (9)	Ph.D Programs (4)
Public Relations and Promotion (17)	Public Relations and Promotion (7) Public Relations and Advertising (4) Public Relations (3)	Public Relations and Promotion (3) Public Relations and Marketing Communications (2) Marketing Communications and Public Relations (1) Communication Strategies and Public Relations (1) Corporate Communication and Public Relations Management (1) Public Relations and Corporate Communication (1)	Public Relations and Promotion (3) Advertising and Public Relations (1)

Within the scope of the study, all the associate graduate degrees are given by the foundation universities. 2 bachelor degrees are offered by state universities and 12 by foundation universities. The master degree is offered by 3 state and 6 foundation universities and the Ph.D. program is given by 2 state and 2 foundation universities. From these numbers, we can conclude that public relations education is highly concentrated in foundation universities in Istanbul.

All the two-year degree programs are titled as “*Public Relations and Promotion.*” Of the bachelor degree programs; 3 of them are named as “*Public Relations*”, 4 as “*Public Relations and Advertising*” and 7 of them as “*Public Relations and Promotion.*” Public relations bachelor degree education except for 2 universities is offered at Communication Faculties. Of these two universities, one is under the Management Faculty and the other one is under Applied Sciences Vocational School. 3 of the master programs are called “*Public Relations and Promotion,*” 2 of them “*Public Relations,*” 1 “*Marketing Communications and Public Relations,*” 1 “*Communication Strategies and Public Relations,*” 1 “*Public Relations and Corporate Communication*” and 1 “*Corporate Communication and Public Relations Management.*” 3 of the doctoral programs are titled as “*Public Relations and Promotion and 1 as “Advertising and Public Relations.”*

The syllabuses of these programs were obtained via websites of the universities and were asked via email from the faculties. In this study, the researchers were unable to reach the course syllabus of 3 two-year degree programs, 1 bachelor program, 1 master program and 1 doctoral program. Altogether 14 two-year degree programs, 13 bachelor degree, 8 master degree and 3 doctoral program syllabuses were analyzed.

### ***Interviews***

The study aimed to gather data which would help to have a better understanding of public relations through the main parties such as educators, professionals and professional association members/representatives. Altogether 12 interviews were conducted face-to-face in Istanbul with the academics of public relations, public relations practitioners and the presidents- board members of former and present of the two professional associations which are Turkish Public Relations Association (TUHID) and Communication Consultancies Association of Turkey (IDA).

**Table 2. The List of Participants**

<i><b>Role</b></i>	<i><b>Gender</b></i>
1. H. Academic	Male
2. F. Academic	Female
3. E. Academic	Female
4. F. Practitioner, Member of Professional association	Female
5. E. Practitioner	Female
6.A. Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association	Male
7. B. Academic	Female
8. B. Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association	Female
9.I. Practitioner, Member of Professional Association	Female
10.S. Academic	Female
11. Z. Practitioner	Female
12.T. Practitioner	Female

Istanbul is the centre of the public relations sector in Turkey, therefore the interviews selected were from the state and foundation (private) universities of Istanbul, practitioners and members of the two mentioned professional associations headquartered in Istanbul. The practitioners were selected based on the members of these two associations and the companies which are listed among the “Most Admired Companies of Turkey 2012” and of the many parameters that made them the most admirable. The communication parameter was taken into consideration in the selection. Table 2 shows the list of participants included in the study, their gender and role.

All interviews except for one which took place at the participant’s home were carried out in the participants’ offices. The interview period was between the dates 8 May - 14 June 2013. Each interview lasted from 35 minutes to 1hour 35 minutes. All the interviewees had worked in the public relations field for 20 years or more. The questions addressed were based on L’Etang’s interview guide. All the interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants and the recorded interviews transcribed verbatim. The questions addressed in the interview are in Appendix A. For interviewees who were holding more than one hat such as educator, professional association members, etc all the questions in the study were addressed.

This paper is part of a bigger research project submitted to the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) on public relations history in Turkey.

## Results

### *The Curriculum Analysis*

Within the scope of the research, two-year degree, bachelor, graduate (master and doctoral level) programs were analyzed. It was noticed that in the two-year degree programs, there are many courses related with public relations. When we look at the mission of these two-year degree programs, it is natural that they have specific public relations courses. However, in the elective courses of these programs, it was noticed that the courses with respect to other related disciplines such as economics and sociology were very few in number. These two-year degree programs also provide intermediary work force for public relations.

When an analysis was made on the bachelor degree programs, we noticed courses such as Introduction to Communication, Principles of Public Relations and Principles of Advertising which are common in many programs, but also some other courses such as social responsibility, reputation management were listed as mandatory courses. The communication faculties' elective course pool is very big. This may be related to the fact that these communication faculties are in Istanbul and Istanbul is the center of communication. Another point related to this wide choice of courses can be due to the fact that the foundation universities allow students to take courses from other faculties as well. Students of these universities can select courses such as History of Turkish Economy, Justice Freedom and Security in the European Union and Urban Culture etc. However, when we looked at the mandatory course list, we noticed that some universities lack courses which have an interdisciplinary educational component. In other words, the public relations course syllabus is not strong in terms of sociology, psychology and philosophy. Some courses which are in all the programs were analyzed, but the analysis did not show us that in order to be a public relations graduate in Turkey, these courses are a must. We cannot claim that public relations programs should have a more static nature like the law or medical professions curriculum which are more standardized, but in terms of mandatory courses, there needs to be standardization. In the analysis, it was noticed that the departments emphasized having courses with a practice component. The gap, the disconnection between the public relations practice and academia in Turkey has been mentioned as an issue for a long time. Within this respect, the courses with the practice component may be helpful for the sector because there is a demand for better qualified graduates who can adapt to the work force. Another finding

was that the studios (practice units) of the faculties allow students to develop projects. In some universities, there are also real clients.

Regarding the master programs, we can conclude that a very large elective course repertoire, allows room for different specializations. This situation- as it was in the bachelor programs- can be explained in this way: the foundation universities give the opportunity to its students to select courses. Master programs can also be an opportunity for public relations practitioners who do not want to be academics. Therefore, in these programs there are courses which help specialization. When the mandatory courses were analyzed, it was noticed that there is not a common pattern among different universities' master programs.

Of the Ph.D. programs, only 3 programs were analyzed. Again we cannot say that these programs have similarities with one another. However, the contribution of the doctoral programs to the professionalization of public relations and their contribution to the theoretical background should be done by analyzing public relations dissertations.

### ***Interviews***

The findings were categorized under some themes. The results and discussion have been done under these headings which are 'public relations development in Turkey,' (development of practice and development of education), 'factors that affect the development of public relations in Turkey,' 'issues/challenges/problems that exist between the relationship of public relations practice and education,' and 'professionalization of public relations education and professional associations.'

The interviews yielded comprehensive information, but for the paper, the concentration was based on these findings.

### ***The Development of Public Relations Practices***

The participants in general stated that the beginning of public relations in Turkey dates back to the end of the 1950s (1958, 1959) and 1960s. One of the participants stated that there have been public relations practices since the Anatolian Selcuk and Ottoman Empire period, but modern public relations started with the period of the Republican (Z, practitioner, female).

All the participants stated that public relations in Turkey first started in the public sector. One participant mentioned '..... mainly, it developed from the need of the public sector to inform the public, the society and the citizens (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). Another academic stated that 'it is a public sector

initiation. In Turkey everything is initiated by the state. This is not only true for public relations, but for banking and for many other things as well.’ (F, Academic, Female). Along similar lines, another participant ‘.....In Turkey, different from other countries, the state, the public sector has an important role in the development of professions. He emphasized the role of the public sector by stating that the development of public relations in the public sector was way ahead of the private sector (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male).

The first institutions which conducted public relations were the Information Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, secondly the Ministry of National Defense and the Turkish General Staff. (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male). Another participant stated that the formal example of the practice was done by Anadolu Agency. (Z, Practitioner, Female).

In the interviews in general, the private public relations practices were first seen at the end of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the private sector public relations started developing in Turkey in the 1970s, it did not become an important branch in communication until the years 1980, 1990 and 2000. ‘....I do not believe that public relations was actually practiced in the years from 1970 to 1990. It was sort of a dormant period. The awakening between the periods of 1990 and 2000, and later after 2000 till now, public relations is viewed as a profession and its areas of expertise has been developed..’ (B, Academic, Female). In 1995, the definition of this occupation existed and agencies were in the lives of the corporations and there was a public relations strategy. But whatever the situation was, advertising was in the front frontier. Public relations was allocated a low budget and was not a must. You could do without it. If a budget cut was necessary, it started with public relations. I very clearly have observed that the importance of public relations has increased along the years and its role is better understood (E, Practitioner, Female).

The participants by saying ‘the emphasis was on the public sector, but passed on to the private sector.’ (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male), or the public sector initiated, but all the areas of expertise in public relations developed in the private sector (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female) emphasized the pioneering of the public sector for the public relations development in Turkey, but for today they state that the private sector public relations practices are more intense.

### ***The Development of Education***

The 1960s indicated the beginning of public relations education in Turkey. The public relations education in Turkey first started in 1966 at Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, School of Press and Broadcasting (Peltekoglu, 1007: 87; Sabuncuoglu, 2004:11). One of the interviewees described the first period of public relations education as follows: ‘....In Turkey, the public relations education between the periods starting in the 1960s till 1980 was done by rule of thumb. During these periods, people worked hard for the institutionalization of public relations, but they were not successful because there were not educators. Since the 1980s, because the number of educators and academics has been increasing, the education is getting better. After the 1980s till the 2000s, books on public relations were written. There is also structuring. Departments and disciplines have been opened. The names of public relations are changing as well. The education aspect is also increasing with the works done in practice.’ (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male). Another participant described the development of public relations education as follows: ‘....I cannot say that many things were achieved in education in the 1980s.... I do not remember for example, research about issues in public relations, or research in different topics being carried out. I can say that with the 1990s there has been an acceleration’ (H, Academic, Male).

The participants indicated positive changes in public relations education such as content, different types of courses offered and the interest that the academia showed to public relations. (F, Academic, Female). In addition to this, the public relations education development from the beginning to the present was shared as follows: ‘.....the education, more so than in the past is less standard and with more practice components. It is developing as an area where projects as teams are carried out and cooperation with the sector is accomplished.’ (B. Academic, Female). Along these lines, public relations education in Turkey is attempting to add more practice components to public relations education. Taking into consideration the demands of the sector, it aims to have more room for specialization in public relations. Despite this, the participants indicated many problems regarding public relations education in Turkey and this will be discussed in the upcoming sections of the paper.

### ***Factors that Affect the Development of Public Relations***

In the interviews conducted, a lot of factors such as political, social, and economical factors for the development of public relations in Turkey were mentioned. However, the



participants emphasized mostly the impact of the economy. One of the participants from the practice world stated that ‘.....I believe that Turkey is attracting investment, and that its getting better economically has had an impact on public relations development.’ (E. Practitioner, Female). She underlined the economic development influence on the development of public relations. Another interviewee described the parallelism of economy and public relations development in these words. ‘...I think that the acceleration of public relations is dependent completely on economy. When economy grows, and the investments of the business world increase, the increase in public relations and the service variety increase as well. At the same time, the increase of the business world is also dependent on the increase of the economy. The first examples of this were seen during the Turgut Özal prime ministry period. During this period, Turkey accelerated. During and after that, the public relations activities increased. But with the prime ministry period of Tayyip Erdoğan, there has been even more of an increase (F, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female).

Most of the participants evaluate the Turgut Özal period, Turkey’s passing into liberal economy and the strengthening of the private sector, as a very important and valuable period for public relations. ‘The Developments in the Turkish Economy between the periods of 1980-1990 are named as the Özal Period.’ (Karabulut, 2012, p. 978). An academic participant describes her thoughts on Özal period in these words: ‘.....in capitalism, we see privatization. Before this, we have what we call public relations practices as well, but after the Özal period, there is a structure which is integrated to the capital and I think that the structure of public relations has been affected. (H. Academic, Female). Another participant underlined the Özal Period as Turkey’s opening itself to the world and Turkey’s economy integrating with the world. (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association). A practitioner participant (T, Practitioner, Female) emphasized the importance of opening internationally by saying: ‘... it is an important step for the development of the public relations profession to pass from a closed society to an open one.’

One participant (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female) indicated that after the 1980s, the channels increased, the rules of operation changed and multinational companies started coming to Turkey more and more. He named this period as Public Relations Period I in Turkey. Another participant supported this point of view by saying ‘.....With liberal economy, new companies were born, new brands were launched, the media developed and increased in number and the contact points between the variety of media and people increased and quality wise changed. (H, Academic, Male).

Another point in the interviews that was brought up was changes lived in the political arena. One participant stated that: ‘.....the democratic developments in Turkey brought an important breaking point in public relations. (H, Academic, Male). These words imply that a country’s democratization has a direct impact on the development of public relations.’ The same participant also indicated that the military coup had a negative impact on the development of public relations.

Some participants claim that Justice and Development Party (AK Party) period (2003-.....) has tremendously affected the development of public relations in Turkey. An academic participant stated that the period with AK Party has been valuable for the development of public relations and explained why so in these words: ‘..... There have been many changes in the social aspect. Social projects increased in number, a need to manage them arose, the ideas needed to be communicated and there was a need to establish a dialogue. All these are important milestones for public relations in Turkey and public relations has experienced different applications.’ (F, Academic, Female). Another participant (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female) indicated that the AK Party has an incredibly good and high public relations capacity and this reflected in its leader’s communication. The same participant also indicated that the mistakes done in this period have shadowed the successful public relations practices as well.

In addition to this, one participant mentioned the fact that other managements and governments using and profiting from public relations have importance in the development of public relations. She explained the AK Party government’s contribution to the development of public relations in these words: ‘.....this government has a lot of public relations activities. It attributes importance and attributes importance with an intent. The Prime Minister attended the Golden Compass Public Relations Awards (Turkish Public Relations Association, Public Relations Awards) and for the very first time the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic gave a speech of fifteen minutes on communication (F., Practitioner, Member of Professional Association). One participant explained the influence of economic developments on creating the need for public relations in these words: ‘.....Turkey’s explaining itself to the other countries, introducing, exporting the internal dynamics in Turkey itself and its changes, convertibility etc. have created a percentage of transparency and information and communication need.’ (H, Academic, Male). Globalization, Turkey’s opening to external markets, external competition, foreign investments and multinational corporations coming to Turkey are among the points highlighted by all the participants of the study. For example, one participant stated that: ‘....Turkish brands wanting to present

themselves in foreign markets with a quality presence have indicated the development of public relations.’ (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). She underlined that the competition in other markets had a positive impact on public relations’ development. An international corporation’s corporate communication manager explains the effect of globalization on public relations with these words: ‘.....The budget and importance attributed to public relations have increased. The titles in the corporation have changed and varied. The level of people has also changed. It is now at the management level and executive board. I think that in the near future and this is already happening now, these people will be the future CEOs.’ (E, Practitioner, Female).

The positive effect of multinational and global firms operating in Turkey on the development of public relations and their being a role model for the other Turkish companies in Turkey have been emphasized by some participants. One participant explained the effect of globalization on public relations in these words: ‘.....The global impact is one of the important milestones. The practices of global companies in Turkey have taught many things to the Turkish companies and also to the sector in general.’ (F, Academic, Female).

Some participants mentioned the influence of the USA in public relations in Turkey. ‘.....America is a country that we follow closely in public relations, we take it as an example and let’s say as our idol. Therefore, we follow what is happening there, their case studies etc. with interest and attention. We do not follow each other that closely in Istanbul.’ (E, Academic, Female). Most people who participated in the study agreed and position Prof. Asna who got his public relations education in the USA as the turning point in public relations in Turkey. His return to Turkey, his practitioner and academic roles and his contribution to the foundation of the public relations association in Turkey are very important in this respect. One participant stated that bosses send their promising employees to the USA to learn public relations and this is important for the development of public relations. Another point made regarding the USA is that the developments there are followed very closely.

One of the participants explained the major change in public relations in these words: ‘....Now people who are graduates of very good schools are entering this profession. They see public relation as a profession and they have a desire to add it to their career plans. They see a future in public relations.’ (T, Practitioner, Female). One participant stated that (H, Academic, Male) one of the representatives of public relations practices in Turkey- the State Planning Organization- and the revision of the public sector institutions along with the revision of bureaucracy were very important matters for public relations.

The technological advances in communication, the developments in the media and social media, as in other countries, were stated among the factors responsible for the development of public relations. The development of the society and the consumers' being more interrogative were indicated as important for the development of public relations in Turkey. One participant stated that (E, Academic, Female) one of the pioneers of public relations in Turkey (considers as the mother of public relations in Turkey) who had been elected as the President of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) brought a definitive milestone. She thinks that this situation made public relations more reputable in Turkey. IPRA's second Turkish President is Ceyda Aydede (2003) and the third Turkish President is Dr. Zehra Güngör (2014).

In the interviews, the factors that affected public relations were mentioned as passing from individual consultancy to a variety of agencies, and the increase in public relations expertise. This was reflected in the words of one participant as follows: '.....This is also a reflection of the world trends, but the real reason is the growth. With the growth, form the needs. (F, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female).

### ***Issues/Challenges/Problems that are between the Relationship of Public Relations Practice and Education***

The participants underlined many issues about public relations practices and issues. For example, one participant described the development of public relations in Turkey in these words. '.....first nothing in numbers, later growth (increase) period and then more growth without any plan.' (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). In other words, increase has brought problems in education and practice. One participant stated: '....in every field, education affects practice. Not successful yet, but just starting now.' (A, Academic, Member of Professional Association, Male). These words imply that public relations education has just started not before, to affect the practice.

Almost all participants agree that the public relations education and the practice are not synchronized. Both the participating academics and practitioners agreed that the professional public relations sector in Turkey is ahead of its education.

In the academic world, it has been stated that despite many positive things such as the variety of courses offered, integration to the outside, following international publications and producing international academic works, there are many problems as well.

One of the participants explained the relationship between education and practice in these words: ‘....Initially practice and education were pieces that were tied to one another. The academic work triggered the sector and the academic expert led the practice. Later the gap between them opened. Now it is the practice which does the leadership.’ (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). Another participant supported this point of view in these words: ‘.....at some period , education and practice were equal to one another, but now practice is way ahead. Education is not sufficient enough to cultivate students who will do these jobs. We are always saying to the academic environment that these students need to be educated in different ways and still say.’ (F. Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female).

However, one academician has a different point of view from the one stated above. She criticizes that the public relations courses are inspired and adapted totally by the influence of the practice. ‘..... I believe theory and practice should not be separated to a great extent from one another. However, I see that as a member of the academic world, I see that the practice totally influences the structure of the course syllabus.’ (E, Academic, Female). Another academic summarizes the academic conditions by referring to the sector in these words. ‘.....Till now, I do not recall anything that the practice world in Turkey did besides naming, framing and defining public relations. Still in the academia, public relations is not completed. Practice by rule of thumb, still these are not perfect. The academia has observed what is done in the practice. Of course there are things done in the practice which have got my admiration, but the issue of the professional world is different and so is mine. What have I done in the academia? Followed the easy path. Whatever was done elsewhere, I shared on the academic shelves. I am so sorry for this. This was also my responsibility.’ (H, Academic, Male). Another participant along the same lines with this point of view claimed that the professional world was ahead of the academia in these words: ‘.....I think the practice directs more. We are not ahead in terms of academic publications, we are following the sector with what we do. We are shaping ourselves according to them..... We have a long way to go to integrate the practice and to produce together.’ (F, Academic, Female).

Another criticism was with respect to the insufficiency of research done. One academic’s point of view regarding this was as follows: ‘...Still in public relations there are fashionable trendy topics/concepts. About these trendy topics, people write things and say something, but there is not enough philosophical background, in terms of field work, it seems so limited to me. I can very comfortably state that the researchers are insufficient with the theoretical structure of public relations. In other words, the theoretical structure as an

interdisciplinary subject, for example, the philosophical dimension is weak to me. It could be with the critical perspective or historical dimension. The sociological dimension and the psychological dimensions are insufficient.’ (H, Academic, Male). The trendy concept criticism was made with respect to public relations programs names as well. ‘Unfortunately, the curriculums are changing constantly, each student is graduating under a different program, each year a fashionable graduate program is opened. Three years later something else becomes fashionable and other new things come.’ (E, Academic, Female).

Another problem indicated by a participant was the lack of standardization in education. Her words: ‘....If we want to create a milestone in education, we have to catch a standard in education. We have a serious problem with this. I do not think we have created a new era in the academics. The increase in the number of communication faculties does not imply an era. It is not an era to open undergraduate and graduate programs with different names.’ (E, Academic, Female). Another participant by saying, ‘...we cannot go anywhere with the practice of public relations if we do not form a structure of public relations with its theoretical background, with its philosophy, sociology, psychology and social psychology and its cultural aspect,’ (H, Academic Male) underlined that public relations education had to be interdisciplinary.

The thoughts of another practitioner on this issue are as follows: ‘.... I am among the people who do not think that a communicator should only study communications. I think that if a communicator has a multi-disciplinary perspective, then it is better. A good mathematical intelligence, a good marketing knowledge...It is a richness for corporate communication departments to have practitioners from different educational backgrounds, different cultures for the different places they hold.’ (T, Practitioner, Female)

Another point which came up was the relationship between practice and education. One participant who is both an academic and practitioner stated: ‘.....academy side is in its own shell and this is normal too and they are seen as an elite group. The academy needs to present what he/she has created and its knowledge load to the practitioner world and the channels should be opened.’ (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). Her words imply that the information which flows between the academia and the practitioners should be more effective. Another participant stated: ‘.... The dynamism is created by corporations. She brought forth a suggestion by saying ‘.... the children (students) in their eight-month period of education should be four months in practice and four months in theory and after their third year, they need to be outside and out of theory.’ (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Associations, Female).

Another problem that the participants mentioned was the opening of a lot of communication faculties in Turkey. In Turkey, public relations education is offered in communication faculties to a great extent. Having many public relations programs, the graduates not having a job upon graduation, lack of academics, problems regarding education quality, academics' teaching courses which are not in their expertise area and the departments employing academics with not good credentials were indicated in the interviews as causing more problems. '....600 graduates a year. There are not enough companies and money to take care of this number,' stated one participant. (I, Practitioner, Member of Professional Associations, Female). Another participant '....There is not enough demand to employ these graduates. Supply demand balance is disrupted. I believe that this numerical increase both in terms of students and academics in the near future will return to us as more problems.' (F, Academic, Female). One participant stated his anger at the opening of new communication faculties since there not yet qualified public relations academics, but on the other hand he said that for the establishment of the public relations profession, these communication faculties serve a purpose. (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male). This point of view was supported by a practitioner and academic: '.....the opening of communication faculties, the development of education in this respect initially made advertising and public relations programs benefit from this. Now this is reflected in the increase of public relations programs and two-year vocational schools and thus helps public relations' professionalization.' (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female).

A practitioner participant indicated her concern about the quality of things done in public relations. '..... my observation is that the companies grow, the needs grow, but I am not so sure that we get a result which has a quality out of these- I do not know. Are there enough people, graduates? Maybe there are enough, but not the correct people? I cannot observe this. I see that an agency that is working with us is also growing, but I do not see that quality is increasing at a similar rate.' (E, Practitioner, Female). The same participant declared their problems with the public relations agencies they had worked with: '.....We work with a lot of public relations agencies. As a company we want to evaluate what we are doing. We, as a company, developed a series of questions on how the process of public relations we undergo should be evaluated. We had some questions. In this process, I referred to the public relations agencies we were working with. Advertising value equivalency should not be a method for media return. This needs to be evaluated with research about perceptions. This was not done that way.' (E, Practitioner, Female).

In Turkey public relations suffers from the name it carries. One participant opened this topic in this way: ‘... the definition public relations is getting old and wearing out. I say this for Turkey. It is not trendy here to use the term ‘public relations.’ We say public relations, or corporate communication or external affairs. However, the reason why communication is used instead of public relations is related with the fact that public relations has lost its reputation. This reputation loss is in the terminology.’ (E, Practitioner, Female). An academic shared his thoughts on practice as follows: ‘I do not have heroes in the practice world and I wish that I did not have the opportunity to get to know closer the people who are considered as heroes in public relations. The practice of life dictates certain things different than we learn and should be practiced. There are other realities. These are shattered dreams about my values.’ (H, Academic, Male).

In the interviews, other criticisms were made about the professional associations. ‘...there are unfortunately many differentiating points in explaining the basic problems of public relations to the society, its ethical issues and content both in practice and theory. I think that the integration process (practice and theory) should be made by the association and that our professional association needs to be more efficient. There needs to be a control mechanism. But I have not seen this....All seems in the professional associations as consisting of media relations.’ (E, Academic, Female).

Another participant stated that she was a member of professional associations, but gave two reasons why she was not active in the associations: ‘First, I think the associations have a clumsy structure. They are needed, but they are not yet institutionalized. Secondly, my long work hours here. (T, Practitioner, Female)

Another point which came up in the discussions was about the changes in the criteria/characteristics of public relations practitioners from the beginning till now. ‘... it could be observed that a beauty queen and anyone who is pretty can do public relations jobs. Problems in the practice also brought some perceptions in the academia. Why should we study public relations and go to school. We need no education. With the professional changes, the perspective of both the practice and the academia have changed.’ (B, Academic, Female).

### ***The Professionalization of Public Relations and Professional Associations***

One of the questions addressed to the participants was about public relations as a profession and professionalization. Almost all of the participants stated that public relations is



a profession, but not an occupation. But one academic interviewee explained that public relations is still an occupation in these words: ‘...In order for it to be a profession, it has to have a body of knowledge and the entry to the profession and exit should not be that easy. Since there is not a situation like this, I cannot state that public relations has reached the level of a profession.’ (H, Academic, Male).

Some participants indicated that although they thought that public relations was a profession, it was in a transition level and that it had some shortages. For example, one participant stated that: ‘...There still needs time for it to be called a profession with its standards and accreditation.’ (B, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). Another interviewee stated: ‘...For me it is not an occupation, it is a profession. However, for it to be considered as a profession, there needs to be an intellectual body of knowledge. This also needs to be spread as much as possible. If you ask me if we are at that level now, my answer is no, we are at a transition period.’ (E, Academic, Female).

One of the participants stated: ‘... at the basic level, its foundation is journalism. In other words, it is a profession constructed on the journalism profession.’ (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male). Another participant explained why public relations was not an institutionalized profession in these words: ‘...it tries to be a profession. According to me, the people who make public relations a profession are academics. Academicians state more that it is a profession. When you look at public relations from the sector side, the public interest is neglected (there is an attempt to overcome this only through social responsibility projects) and also people who really do not know public relations are practicing it. When we take these into consideration, I do not think public relations is a real profession the way we understand it.’ (S, Academic, Female).

A member of the association explained the contribution of the professional association in these words: ‘... the biggest contribution is showing what public relations is to the patrons. The public relations association is heavily concentrated on education. First it educated the owners of businesses. Later, it helped the organization of public relations. In this organization, it made sure that the people who entered the field were not friends, relatives or a girl with beautiful legs, but rather someone with a public relations education.’ (A, Academic, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Male). Another member of the association explained the activities of the association in this way: ‘The public relations awards called Golden Compass Awards will be organized for the 12<sup>th</sup> time in 2013 by TUHID. These are the only public relations awards. I think we need to establish working relationships and communication with the media.’ They have signed a declaration with all the

journalism professional associations. A cooperation model has been formed with all the other associations. For examples, TUHID has a presence in the Turkish Quality Association. The association also has a role in the formation of the Association of Creative Industries. TUHID represents the profession in the 'Media and Communication Assembly' of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB).

The work of the association is very important for the professionalization of public relations in Turkey. The conferences and educational seminars have brought together academics and students and thus contributed to the education. The relationships formed with the international professionals associations and other stakeholder groups have helped the public relations profession to be recognized. The Golden Public Relations Awards have been going on for twelve years regularly and awarding the best public relations practices in different categories has created interaction. However, the few number of members, the gap between the academia and the practice as being large and the association not being able to realize activities to overcome this and not being a bridge between the academia and the sector are some of the weak points of the association. However, we have to take into consideration the hard work that has been done for the profession by the past and present Presidents, board members and members of the association. It is obvious that if the members get involved more with the association, the activities will be spread to broader areas. An academician made a comment about the people who were not becoming members of the association: 'If a person gains his/ her bread for the public relations profession, and says that this is my profession, and yet does not take a role in the association by being a member and getting responsibility, then this person's relations with his/her profession is very weak. If one day they see a job that offers them more money, like construction, then they can easily leave their position for this new job.' (H, Academic, Male). Another participant of the study shared her thoughts about the association by comparing it with the other international associations: '..... some other professions are doing different things because their opportunities and their size is different. We follow. We have activities for youth groups. And we especially attribute importance to them. Our group is small, but we are active. Other projects/activities are on their way.' (F, Practitioner, Member of Professional Association, Female). Therefore, the role of the association for the professionalization of public relations will increase more in Turkey with the hard work and sacrifice of many people from the academic and practice world of public relations.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In Turkey, public relations education at the two-year degree level, undergraduate level, and graduate/doctoral levels are quite widespread. Although the analysis was limited to universities in Istanbul, public relations programs are many in number. The fact that the number of universities in Istanbul are also many, increases the number of public relations programs. According to the Council of Higher Education there are 51 universities in Istanbul. When we summarize the syllabus analysis, there are positive things such as the variety of courses offered, increase in number of courses with the practice component, and elective courses with a specialization component. However, except for some core courses, the programs do not have any standardization. It may be seen as positive that different universities have different public relations programs, and thus creating a differentiation. On the other hand, public relations which is still in the professionalization process in Turkey needs to have public relations people who have similar knowledge levels and experience. The universities need to ask themselves what this ideal knowledge and experience for our graduates is. The universities are the key factor in demonstrating the real value and contribution of public relations and answering this question.

In the interviews conducted, it was highlighted by the participants that public relations needs to have an interdisciplinary approach. It has been reported that courses and researches concerning sociology, psychology, philosophy and statistics are limited in the programs. With the cooperative work of academics, practitioners and professional associations, program suggestions can be made or at least the core (mandatory) courses in public relations could be discovered and standardized in the context of Turkey. In the same way, what the positive outcomes of public relations education at different levels are and what the competencies and knowledge of public relations practitioners must be negotiated. This will also help the creation of different schools of thought in public relations. Certain faculties will focus on a different perspective.

The participants evaluated how public relations has been affected by political, social and economic factors from different angles. In the interviews the impact and outcome of factors such as democracy, liberalization, and globalization were shared in detail. It was stated that public relations initiated in the state institutions in Turkey, but currently, it is the private sector which is experiencing advancement.

In the interviews, the differences in point of view between academic and practitioner groups were very apparent. At this point, we suggest that practitioner and academics should get together and thus understand the issues and solve them together. Professional

associations can have an important role in this respect. TUIİD has contributed a lot to the development of public relations in Turkey, but its members should increase and more people should be involved with the development of public relations.

In Turkey, public relations is facing more than one problem: the disconnectedness between the academic world and practitioners, many students graduating with this degree and their employment problems, many public relations programs opening, but the scarcity of academics/lecturers in these programs are mentioned as the main problems. The participants think that it is the academia who follow the professional sector. The academic participants of our study seriously criticize the public relations academic environment. Some practitioners stated that they needed graduates who were suitable for the practice world, whereas some academics criticized the sector by stating that the sector only demanded media relations expertise and saw public relations as media relations. Another finding of the study was that the academics demand for public relations experts who are grounded in other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science and real intellectuals. Some practitioners complain that the faculties do not graduate students based on the needs of the sector.

It was emphasized that since the beginning till now, public relations managers have become top-level managers. This was mentioned as a very positive development. On the other hand, the quality of work produced under public relations was criticized. Moreover, it was mentioned that the terminology 'public relations' was viewed negatively and that because of its name, it had lost its reputation.

Public relations is an area of study which is preferred by students. Therefore many universities offer public relations programs. The participants all agreed that from the beginnings of public relations in Turkey, till now, many developments have occurred in the field in Turkey, but still there is a lot to do in the academia and the public relations education. It was observed that the practice was ahead of the academia, but yet the practice was not free of its own issues. Although public relations was named as a profession, not as an occupation by the majority of the participants, there was an effort to see public relations as a profession in Turkey. For the professionalization of public relations and protecting its reputation it is necessary for academics, practitioners and professional associations work and cooperate together. In this way, different parties will understand each other's expectations and produce common solutions.

This study will be continuing by conducting further interviews representing different parties of public relations. The curriculum analysis reflected the current situation. However,

the change of the course syllabuses will be done with a historical perspective as well. Also the analysis on public relations curriculums of communication faculties in Istanbul will help us to discuss the future of public relations education with the practitioners, associations and the academia.

Another factor that affects the public relations education in Turkey is the Bologna Process. In recent years many universities have become part of this process and constructed the course programs and its content according to it. The old public relations departments are restructuring themselves based on Bologna process goals and criteria and the new ones are being formed by taking into consideration the spirit of this process.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

One of the limitations of the study is that the analysis of the public relations courses was limited to the universities in Istanbul. The interviews conducted lasted in general long, but the limited number of interviews from the three main groups in public relations yielded rich data.

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## **Public Relations and its phenomena in Kazakh history**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Public Relations, i.e. phenomena of connection with populace in Kazakh history is researched in the article hereof. The word “karashy” as definite data met in zhyrs (songs) of Bukhar Zhyrau and Makhambet are analysed and Kultegin writings are estimated. Also the influence of peaceful Kazakh people public opinion on Semey atomic proving ground shutdown is definitely reported. The democratic feature of public relations is analysed and its influence on society development in modern Kazakhstan is comprehended.

**Key words:** Public Relations, karashy, Kultegin, Message, Semey atomic proving ground.

Gist of 500 definitions given to Public Relations concept is inclined to conclusion ‘Public Relations is managing by informing and predicting future’.

The names of American famous PR experts Ivy Ledbetter Lee (1877-1934) and Edward Bernays (1891-1995) are noticed as the first theorists and practitioners in history of Public Relations, i.e. connection with populace [1]. However, we can cite examples for Americans not beginning trying methods of connection with populace and its theoretical basis being done earlier than A. Lee and E. Bernays have done. Theory of setting Public Relations in Kazakh history had been written by Kazakh philosopher coming from old Otyrar, mathematician, music theorist Abu Nassyr al-Farabi (873—950) (in Latin — *Alpharabius*). As modern researchers say: “PR is a strategic control element” and al-Farabi said the next in his work ‘Civil Science’: “Happiness is prosperity, pleasure and acceptability and except it all is cunning, meanness and peccancy” and further he explained the reason of activation of these properties being in human in such a way: ‘There is one thing being a base for all these in human and those are actions and behavior comfortable for relations, common to cities and people living in definite order and the last are to be implemented just by control’. Role of PR as ‘a strategic control element’ was defined by al-Farabi in that way. By explanation of al-Farabi ‘control covers behavior and methods of virtuous properties organization and explains actions fixing virtuous behavior and actions’. This definition stated by al-Farabi is also one of the modern PR definitions [2. 44-45]. And the next American F. Seitel defines PR as ‘a

planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on a mutually satisfactory two-way communication' [3. 12]. Such a definition was given by al-Farabi before F. Seitel: 'One of the properties of human being is his making connection with another human or another people while achieving his aim. Everyone finds himself in that state' [2. 441].

There is an old word of Kazakh as '*karashy*'. This word is met in Bukhar Zhyrau Kalkamanuly, living in XVIII century and also it is met in zhyrs (songs) of Makhambet Otemisuly, the activist poet, living in XIX century. Makhambet has such verses as: 'I'm the *karashy*, who lost his house' [4. 116]. In Bukhar zhyrau's verses: 'Even your *karashy* leaves you, when your game is over' or 'Khan's being good depends on *karashy*' it is clear that the *karashy* is a man showing every action of the khan, controlling the country as acceptable. Thus, *karashy* was constant advisor of the head of the state and he was kind of counsellor and contact between the people and the khan. The academician Rabiga Syzdykova states the following in his research work 'Sozder soileidi (Speech of the words)': 'The word *karashy* mostly comes together with word the *khan*': ... 'If the *khan* has a *karashy* then his ship swims even in sand', 'If the *khan* wants his game to over, then he becomes enemy with his *karashy*'. ...These proverbs indicate that *karashy* is a man serving the khan, dependent on him, but at the same time he is political-legally and economically free representative of society. The *Karashy* is also met in the legacy of old epoch 'Yer Targyn' zhyr (hero epos). Hero Targyn says: 'What for I'm gonna be *Karashy* for the dog like you' [5. 35].

One proverb from the stated above as: 'If the *khan* has a *karashy* then his ship swims even in sand' gives the exact meaning of the speciality of modern PR expert. Thus, the expert putting connection with populace, actually saying PR expert is a type of speciality coming from long ago in Kazakh people history. Kultegin writings are also proof of this (VI century).

If we enter at the details of idea and content of Kultegin writings, which is the oldest variant of our writing history, then would find out how much weight was given to Public Relations long before Bukhar and Makhambet. There are such verses in 'Tonykok (Man in blue fur coat)':

"...I made no armed enemies  
Come to all-Turkish people,  
Even cavalry didn't approach.  
...Our country became a country again,  
And so the people did [6. 58]



The spirits of the Bumyn Kagan and the Isteme Kagan, uniting the Turkish people and making powerful state are sang in the following form:

My such ancestors as,  
The Bumyn Kagan and Isteme Kagan  
Formed the Turkish people world,  
While the whole world was conflicting,  
They went with their army,  
And made a peace... among the people of whole world,  
They became friendly [6. 59].

Some of these verses are devoted to the whole people. Thus, we see that even at the ancient times inner communication was given an important weight. On the other hand, although these zhyrs (songs) were devoted to the people of those times, we feel that they were also devoted to the modern generation of the Turkish people. As we stated above, we proved that we are friendly nation to the whole world by stopping mass destruction weapon test and that ‘Tonykok’ zhyrs (songs) demonstrate that friendliness in us is a property coming from our ancient ancestors. Verses like ‘And made a peace... among the people of whole world, They became friendly’ is a proof for that. It is the phenomena stated in the state level at those times and being told by Message of the President to people today.

We even have got accustomed to the opinion that sending Message to people in state level takes its beginning from the West. But the main source of sending message to people is in ‘Tonykok’ zhyrs of our national history! We call them zhyrs by their form. But those are the words of devotion to people by their content. The difference of it from modern Messages is in its not being devoted just for those years, if it was so, then Tonykok would just had gathered the people and tell them. But he made those words to be written on the stone. Thus, he devoted these words to the whole Turkish people coming in the following future. Getting in touch with with people of centuries, not with people of years was the main principle of that time. It was the strategical communication of putting path to the future. It is a kind of technology of getting in touch with future generations. Here the secret of writing it on the stone, as far as stone writing lives for centuries. We are the target audience of it. Our ancestors like Tonykok managed to make a giant communication mean from a simple black stone to his words achieve the target audience.

These our historical information and historical deposits influence on our feeling ourselves courageous nowadays. Ancient Turkish epoch brought its ancient Turkish wisdom to these days by self-informatization. We can value that as historical-strategical phenomena of Public Relations, that is to say a document of governmental and international Public Relations being kept in Kazakh history.

Modern Public Relations are like the inner structures of those historical connections. Meaning of modern Public Relations is not just in getting on well with modern people. But is a search of answers for yesterday's and tomorrow questions and consideration of their solvation. Also its main strategy is strategical communications. Strategical communications establish works covering the next day's, the next year's or further periods. By targeting these aims we get programs supplying their achievement.

From this point of view the Public Relations is the real civil science, the civil and democratic action. We have noticed from data above, that Kazakh people formed national technologies and theories in this direction even from those ancient times. Thus it demonstrates the Kazakh people as being democratic and modern from birth and they have always been very positive about future and peaceful ones. The next example we can site proving it is proposal of shutting down the Semey nuclear proving ground while commencing their way to independence. It is achieved through lobbyism, which is one of the methods of Public Relations. So it is a fact of lobbyism influencing the policy in Kazakhstan. The Semey atomic proving ground in Kazakhstan was known for its having been empoisoning the Kazakh steppes by radiation for 40 years. The 'Nevada-Semey' movement and its leader Olzhas Suleymenov rose the nationwide interest to state level and mounted a campaign and the people have supported it at once and all these factors gave an impulse to its shutdown [7]. They appealed to President of RK N.A.Nazarbayev. President N.A.Nazarbayev had supported them at once and signed a Decree about the shutdown of the proving ground in spite of objection of Soviet government leaders. So the Semey atomic proving ground was shut down on the August the 29<sup>th</sup> in 1991. That was a real document definitely demonstrating Kazakhstan's will to get independence even before breakup of the Soviet Union. That was not a political campaign just in Kazakhland, but also a political campaign of global level rising a problem of cleaning the world from weapon of massive affection. From the point of Public Relations this action was an international PR of Kazakhstan in demonstrating its independence and peacefulness and calling up other countries to peacefully coexist. The whole world began reconizing Kazakhstan as peaceful and prosperous country after that

event. Nowadays Kazakhstan is being recognized as stable and the most suitable country for investments of the world business society.

Public relations in Kazakhstan has created as a social institute. Public relations is now commonly used in administrative and business fields. The number of PR agencies are keep rising. National Association for Public Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (NASO) was established in 2001 on the initiative of several companies offering professional services in the PR market. All members of NASO are legal persons. NASO membership includes: "National Press Club," the BRIF Research Group agency, "Renaissance" agency, "Media System" and the company Promo Group Communications, PR-Management Company and Communication Agency "AGT Kazakhstan" [5]. The main strategic aims of NASO are to 1) position the PR industry in Kazakhstan; and 2) implement measures on an ongoing basis to improve the quality of PR-services

It achieves its goals by these methods:

- the development of relations between the PR-agencies and corporate PR-specialists of Kazakhstan
- Implementation of Professional and Ethical Standards
- cooperation with higher education institutions with the aim of assisting to prepare PR specialists in public relations, conducting master classes and workshops
- to provide an international co-operation
- lobbying PR industry in the media and in government
- to interact with the business community in Kazakhstan, representing the interests of the industry

The National Association for Public Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan supports an annual "Eurasian PR-event" international conference. NASO organizes the work of the Association Volunteer Center. The main purpose of Volunteer Center is to help to improve the quality of preparing for PR in the country by providing students with opportunities for practice in their specialty.

The professional and ethical principles Codex in PR of Kazakhstan has been adopted by members of NASO. The aim of the Codex is to give to PR some guidance on which NASO called to rely all the major players in the market PR. Annually Kazakhstan awards for the winners of the "Ak Mergen" prize in the field of public relations.

Since 2007 with a view to encouraging young people and all people to love to read Library Association holds PR-campaign "One Country - One Book". Based on the decision

special committee selects one book of one author and during one year in universities, schools holding conferences by the theme of this book. At the end of the year are summed up by the fact how many people have read this book. The most active readers and the best organizers of this event awarding a special prize.

Since 2009 several universities in the country was introduced to PR bachelors, masters and PhD. At the Department of Journalism of Eurasian National university (ENU) where I work we prepare bachelors. Next year we plan to open offices to prepare masters and PhD. Our study conducted on the basis of the credit system of the Bologna process.

According to the results of the international rating QS World University Rankings, in 2010 ENU entered the top 500 world universities (<http://enu.kz/news/>). At this time it ENU has 13 departments. The number of students on January 1, 2013: in an undergraduate program of about 10 thousand (from 58 specialties) Masters Program includes about 600 (62 specialties), PhD program of includes more than 130 (in 19 specialties).

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## **Public Relations Pre-History: The American Colonization Society's Use of Public Relations Methods and Tactics in the Early 1800s**

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The American Colonization Society formed in December 1816 with the objective “to assist in the formation and execution of a plan for the colonization of the free people of color, with their consent, in Africa or elsewhere.” (*National Intelligencer*, 1816)

This movement was created during what has historically been known as the “Age of Reform,” a time period between 1815 and 1860. Even as the reform was going on, people realized they were part of a movement. The *Christian Observer* noted in 1843, “This is the Age of Reform. The spirit of restless energy is at work upon the structure of human society, laboring to improve it, and for this purpose make experiments in a thousand forms.” (pg. 22) In 1841, Ralph Waldo Emerson declared, “The doctrine of reform had never such scope as at the present hour.” (Levine, 2011, pg. 191)

Originally founded as the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America, the formation of the American Colonization Society was supported by prominent American political leaders including President James Madison, President James Monroe, Speaker of the House Henry Clay, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall, and author of *The Star Spangled Banner* Francis Scott Key.

The society hoped to attract supporters, sway public opinion, raise money to charter ships and establish a colony in West Africa. In its first 51 years, the society transported over 13,000 free blacks from the continental United States to Sierra Leone and formed Republic of Liberia as an independent country in 1847.

Much has been written about the American Colonization Society. Most of the historical research has focused on its governing philosophy, its aims, and its efforts to create an African Colony of free slaves. In contrast, the focus of this research is on the society's efforts to promote its plan.

The society utilized many tactics and tools found in public relations principles to obtain public support and funding. These include use of high profile endorsements, identification and persuasion of a key public, lobbying legislatures for funds, effective media relations, creating its own publications and use of agents for fundraising.

These methods, many of which are still in use today by public relations practitioners, constituted a 19th century version of public relations that is in accordance with today's definition of the field from the Public Relations Society of America: "Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." (PRSA.org, n.d.)

This paper uses historical methods to discover actions taken to advance the American Colonization Society. These include a review of primary source materials through Newspaper and Periodical databases as well as through the Library of Congress.

Much has been written about the motivations of those supporting and opposing the colonization movement. Debating its motives is not the intent of this article, however, the writings of historians discussing the motivations of the movement often mention in passing the methods used for and against it. As a result, these writings serve as an invaluable source of information for those seeking to find and analyze the public relations methods used by proponents and detractors of colonization. The writing of Staudenraus was particularly helpful in this regard.

A review of public relations history prior to 1900 is a brief endeavor. Lamme and Russell in 2010 attempted to change this worldview with a synthesis of the existing material "from St. Paul to Theodor Herzl, from Elizabeth I to Frances Willard, and from Glastonbury Abbey to Westinghouse." (pg. 283)

Their research found that "no area of public relations history has been adequately researched" and concluded "scholars should continue investigating the ways in which public relations was used by people and organizations before the 20th century." (Lamme & Russell, 2010, pg. 356)

### **Brief History of the American Colonization Society**

Calling slavery a major political issue in early America would be a dramatic understatement. The issue was the proverbial elephant in the room in Congress from the

Declaration of Independence until the secession of the confederate states. Many in America came to see this practice as morally repugnant, while others, principally in the South, saw it as a critical component of American economics. (Tetlock, Armor, & Peterson, 1994)

Over time, many American political leaders came to realize that slavery would eventually be eliminated, either for moral or economic reasons. However, releasing people held in bondage for generations posed serious social and economic problems that needed to be addressed. Some worried that newly freed citizens would be able to control the democratic process and use it to seek retribution. Others simply feared that they would lose their jobs or that the economic upheaval would cause problems. Many, like Thomas Jefferson, opposed full integration to prevent interracial mingling. (Jefferson, 1918) Informed by sentiments like those espoused by Jefferson, others believed that existing prejudices would prevent full integration, even in a post-emancipation society.

Against these tensions, the American Colonization Society presented itself as a pragmatic middle ground. Colonizationists planned to transport free blacks to a colony in Africa where they could live as equals. This would end the moral outrage of slavery and eliminate “the great violation of the laws of nature,” while allowing the young democracy to avoid the difficult issues that would ensue from emancipation. (Staudenraus, 1961, pg. 20)

In 1816, the Reverend Robert Finley heard of colonization and proclaimed “this scheme is from God.” (Staudenraus, 1961, pg. 17) He convinced two Washington insiders, Elias Boudinot Caldwell and Francis Scott Key, to become supporters, and these two social elites began persuading their connections. In December of that year, these men formed the American Colonization Society. (*National Advocate*, 1817)

The society hired an agent to travel across the country, found auxiliaries in each city he could, and raise money to help transport people to Africa. The society received numerous high-profile endorsements and eventually received funding from multiple state legislatures and the United States Congress.

The movement gained momentum across the country very quickly, though its organizational arm experienced numerous problems that slowed its progress. It succeeded for a time, but because it represented a centrist compromise, advocates on both sides began to attack it. As public opinion hardened on slavery and more Americans began to demand full

emancipation or want protection for their 'peculiar institution,' the middle ground became enemy ground in the eyes of activists.

In the South, the society struggled as many saw colonization as an "emancipation plot," (Staudenraus, 1961, pg. 171) while the opposite problem occurred in the North. The early abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison detested the movement and claimed that "the permanency of the bloody system [slavery] depends upon the stability of the Colonization Society." (Garrison, 1927, pg. 36)

Still, by 1867, the 51st year of the society's existence, it had transported over 13,000 free blacks to West Africa and founded the Republic of Liberia as a free country. The society continued to publish a journal promoting colonization until 1919, and didn't officially close its doors until 1964, when it turned its records over to the Library of Congress. (Staudenraus, 1961)

### **Public Relations Methods**

The American Colonization Society used many tactics and methods to promote its plan. Many of these methods bear similarity to public relations activities today, while others were more specific to the 19th century. Specifically, the society promoted high profile endorsements, identified and sought to persuade a key public, lobbied federal and state legislatures for legislation and funds, sought publicity through newspapers, created its own publications of information, and hired agents to travel the world, raise funds, and found local auxiliary organizations.

#### *High Profile Endorsements*

The society worked for high profile endorsements in nearly every aspect of its existence. One of its earliest articles in the *National Intelligencer* included an endorsing letter from former President of the United States Thomas Jefferson. (*National Intelligencer*, 1818)

The society used its officers to gain legitimacy. From its inception, the national society had a President and thirteen Vice Presidents. These men existed largely in a symbolic role, serving to add credibility to society, rather than actually managing the day-to-day operations. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The society's presidents were often men of prominence who lent their credibility to the organization. These included Bushrod Washington (heir of America's first president and veteran



Supreme Court justice), James Madison (former President of the United States), and Henry Clay (Speaker of the House and Presidential Candidate). Madison in particular was able to help the society secure funding from the Virginia legislature with a letter to the body upon his election to lead the society. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The society's vice presidents were also well connected and served to provide legitimacy for the society. The original 13 included Clay, Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford, General Andrew Jackson, General John Mason, and Finley. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The society also sought to obtain credibility by soliciting the support of well-known individuals in every city where they had an auxiliary.

Nowhere was this more evident than in Virginia. Former President James Monroe served as president of the Loudoun county auxiliary organization, while the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, John Marshall, served as president of the Richmond and Manchester Auxiliary. The Vice Presidents of the latter auxiliary included Madison, a former governor of the state, a U.S. senator and other prominent government officials. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The society even obtained and published the endorsement of recognized figures from outside the United States. These included the Duke of Gloucester (*Maryland Gazette*, 1818a) and the President of Hayti. (*National Intelligencer*, 1819c)

These endorsements served to provide credibility to the society and help to explain its rapid early successes. These endorsements were emphasized through much of the society's actions.

### *Key Publics*

The American Colonization Society and its detractors realized that building support or opposition to the movement required the approval of specific groups of key publics. In an ironic twist, one of the most influential groups that both sides of the colonization debate sought endorsement from was free blacks. Many who were initially sympathetic to the cause, most notably William Lloyd Garrison, would turn against it when free blacks pled with them to change their stance. (Gross, 1932)

Garrison then led the charge against the colonization movement, peeling off financiers and endorsers. In his newspaper, *The Liberator*, Garrison spent 10 times more space criticizing

the American Colonization Society than he did promoting immediate emancipation. (Garrison, 1927; Staudenraus, 1961)

The colonization society sought from its earliest days to persuade free blacks that colonization was a good option; however, outside sources often suggested the organization had ulterior motives or methods. In its early days, the society sought to fight back against perceptions that it was for forcibly removing free blacks. The society responded strongly through an article in Washington DC's most prominent newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*:

An effort has been unfortunately made to prejudice the minds of the free people of color against this institution, which had its origin, it is believed, in an honest desire to promote their happiness. A suggestion has been made to them, which this society disclaims by the terms of its constitution, that they are to be constrained to migrate to the country which may be selected for the seat of our colony. No suspicion can be more unfounded. It is sanctioned by no declarations or acts of this society, from which alone our intentions can be candidly inferred. (*National Intelligencer*, 1818)

As the society matured, this problem did not dissipate. It actually increased over time. In one instance, free blacks in New York said that Liberian authorities were treating colonists unfairly, denying trading rights, voice in government, and return back to the United States. (Staudenraus, 1961)

In response to opinions like this, the society published testimonials from colonists and free blacks still living in the United States in newspapers. This, it was hoped, would change the opinion of both black and white opponents of the movement.

The society then began to go on offense, seeking the endorsement of prominent black leaders in order to gain credibility with this influential public. In one example, Elliott Cresson argued that the society should reach out to the respected black leader James Forten and offer him commercial benefits for endorsing the movement. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The society had some successes on this front. It was very fortunate to land the endorsement of John B. Russwurm. He served as coeditor of *Freedom's Journal*, the first black-owned newspaper in the United States. (Staudenraus, 1961)

Russwurm's defection and support for colonization came as a blow to black community leaders who still opposed colonization. "Increasing prejudice made it impossible to regain the unity and racial solidarity temporarily shattered by Russwurm's defection." (Gross, 1932, pg. 255-256)

The society also publicized its other actions to suggest its purpose was to support blacks who were suffering oppression. One of its early attempts at this involved a group of slaves in Georgia who could be freed if the society could raise enough funds to transport them to Liberia.

The society opened its plea in the newspaper by appealing to those who wanted to help the oppressed community. "An opportunity is offered by the American Colonization Society, to test the sincerity of those who profess an abhorrence to the slave trade." (*Providence Patriot*, 1819)

The society was unable to succeed in this regard, and its failure to persuade the black community appears to have substantially limited its success. Some of the early founders of ACS were abolitionists (Finley especially), while others like Francis Scott Key and Henry Clay were pro slavery. The general mission statement of the society probably aligned it closer with the anti-slavery movement; however, the opposition of most free blacks caused key abolitionists like Garrison to force the society to defend itself in abolitionist circles as well.

With many abolitionists, led by Garrison, turning their attention to fighting the American Colonization Society as a pro-slavery organization and southern proponents of the "peculiar institution" deriding it as an emancipation plot, the society found itself without much of a core base of followers. Any attempt to defend itself against one of these allegations could be used as proof that the other side was correct. This clearly had a negative impact on the society's successes as an organization that spread very quickly around the country at its founding was embattled for most of its history. Historians today still debate whether or not ACS was even an anti-slavery organization.

### *Lobbying Legislatures for Funds*

The American Colonization Society spent a substantial amount of time lobbying legislatures, both state and federal, for funding. This met with success that was short-lived.

This began during the Monroe administration when the federal government first claimed jurisdiction over the issue. (Staudenraus, 1961) The society was appropriated a small sum, though this was held up by constitutional concerns over the United States buying territory in Africa that could eventually become a colony. The society effectively lobbied the United States Attorney General to change his opinion on the Constitutional question, which allowed for the funds to be freed up. (Hall, 1852; Johns, 1867)

The money appropriated initially was not used effectively, however. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson ordered an audit of this funding. The auditors came to the startling, and somewhat scandalous, conclusion that Congress had appropriated over \$264,000 to transport less than 260 people to Africa. This earned the society substantial disdain. (Staudenraus, 1961)

The funding issue at the federal level was decided in the election of 1832. Henry Clay ran for president that year promising to aid the colonization movement; however, he was decisively defeated by Jackson. The re-elected president then vetoed funds appropriated by Congress during 1832 to the colonization society. (Staudenraus, 1961). Still, the society effectively lobbied for funds from both the Maryland State Legislature and the Virginia Assembly. For its part, the Virginia legislature appropriated \$30 per person transported to Sierra Leone. (Staudenraus, 1961)

**Table 1 – U.S. News Articles Regarding ACS 1816-1865**

Article Type	Count
Advertising	319
Features	30
News	2472
Business News	81
Images	40
Opinion and Editorial	531

### *Effective Media Relations*

The society was able to regularly get articles in the *National Intelligencer*. They were able to regularly post news about the society, opinion editorials, and meeting notices in its pages. The paper began in 1800 and was the leading political paper in the nation's capital. It was published daily from 1813 to 1867 (Husdon, 1873). The Intelligencer long served as the leading political paper in Washington D.C. and "had no rival in its contributions it made to the nation." (Ames, 1966, pg. 71)

The society's ability to place articles started very early when an opinion editorial appeared in *The National Intelligencer* endorsing the idea of colonization. One week later, the minutes of the inaugural meeting of the society were published in the same paper on Dec. 24,

1816. This spread to another publication a few days later on Dec. 30, 1816 later when the editors of the *National Advocate* published an editorial endorsing colonization.

The society kept up this publicity campaign. A search for “American Colonization Society” in the *Gale 19th Century U.S. Newspaper Digital Archive* on March 28, 2013 limited to the years 1816-1865 returned 3,442 separate entries. This means the American Colonization Society was mentioned in an average of 68 news articles per year during this time period. This is more than one mention per week for a 50 year period.

The Gale service further breaks this down by article type to give an impression of the types of articles that appeared. News type articles were the predominant form of coverage regarding the society, though there were many opinion and editorial articles as well as advertisements regarding the society (see Table 1).

In the early 1800s, there was no such thing as a national newspaper in the United States. Limits in communication technology and transportation would prevent a truly national paper from arriving until the onset of *USA Today* in 1982. Although, there are great arguments that the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* emerged as national newspapers during post WWII.

However, there was a way for articles to be spread across the country. Newspapers would regularly republish content from newspapers nearby. Because the cause of freedom benefitted from news and the exchange of information, the postal system allowed newspapers to be exchanged with other newspapers free of any postal charges. (Steffen, 2003)

Articles in the *National Intelligencer* were often picked up by local newspapers in other areas and re-run to educate different populaces. (*National Intelligencer*, 1819c; *Mississippi State Gazette*, 1819) The *National Intelligencer* also regularly reprinted stories about the American Colonization Society that appeared in other newspapers. (*National Intelligencer*, 1819a)

#### *Creating Publications*

The American Colonization Society created numerous publications in an effort to promote its plan. These ranged from a wide variety of pamphlets given to potential supporters and legislators to full journals providing information about Africa and the colonization movement. The society would eventually develop a long term strategy of published annual reports that detailed everything the society had done as well as a journal, known as the *African*

*Repository and Colonial Journal*.

The early publications started even before the society was officially founded. Finley published a pamphlet, *Thoughts on Colonization*, and distributed it to members of Congress and the Senate in advance of the society's initial founding. Soon after it was founded, the society published a 24 page pamphlet in 1817 to promote the movement. These continued over time. The society published *An Essay on the Late Institution of the American Colonization Society* in 1820. It would later publish a pamphlet to demonstrate the practicability of its plan. Loring D. Dewey created a pamphlet with facts and figures on how every black resident of the United States could be transported to Africa within a 40 year time period. (Staudenraus, 1961)

These attempts to gain notoriety often provided information about Africa and other generally interesting information to draw in audiences in a manner not dissimilar from how content marketers behave on the internet today. In its earliest days, the society sent agents to Africa, and upon their return, put together a committee to publicize the information that they found. (*Maryland Gazette*, 1818b; *Maryland Gazette*, 1819; *National Intelligencer*, 1820)

In 1820, the society took the next step to provide information about Africa. It created a journal called the *African Intelligencer* to help promote its cause. The journal existed for three stated purposes. First, it was to provide general intelligence about Africa including "geography, history and moral character of Africa in order to present to readers a distinct, and extensive view of the great objects to which the exercise of African philanthropy may be most profitably directed." (Prospectus, 1820, pg. 2)

The second purpose of the journal was to provide an overview of the slave trade, "and the means employed for suppressing it - with a journal of the current operations of our own, and European governments, to effect its entire annihilation." (Prospectus, 1820, pg. 2) Its third purpose was "recording and detailing the history, proceedings, and correspondence of The American Colonization Society, at home and abroad." (Prospectus, 1820, pg. 2)

Each of these three purposes is transparently public relations. Each appealed to a distinct reason for which someone might associate with or donate to the society. The first would allow the society to demonstrate its value for those interested in providing assistance to the continent of Africa and its inhabitants. The society's founder, Finley, argued that its existence would help Africa by building a stable civilization with Christian influences. (Staudenraus, 1961) This section of the *African Intelligencer* would help the society make this case to the public and appeal to those who agreed with it. The second allowed the society to appeal to those who

opposed the slave trade in any shape or form. It allowed the society to position itself as an opponent of the trade and a convenient institution for potential donors who opposed it. The third discussed the immediate goals and intentions of the society. It served as a means to provide continuing contact to existing followers and recruit new ones to the society.

The *African Intelligencer* only printed one edition as the society felt it was unable to recuperate the cost through sales to the public. However, it did serve as a very early attempt at a modern public relations tactic that is still used today by many organizations around the world.

In 1825, the society created the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, a publication similar to the *African Intelligencer* that would last until 1919. This became the central source for information on the society and was a regular opportunity to promote the society's work and successes.

#### *Agents, Fundraising & Local Auxiliaries*

The society hired Reverend William Meade as an agent. (Staudenraus, 1961) His job was to be a traveling promoter of the society. He would travel from city to city and form auxiliaries to the national organization.

To succeed in a city, he would first contact its prominent men and explain the project. He would then call a meeting, sometimes announcing it in the local newspaper. (*Raleigh Register*, 1819a) Once the auxiliary was formed, this would be announced in the newspaper with the names of the local officers. (*Providence Patriot*, 1820) In some cases this would include a strong endorsement statement as well. (*Raleigh Register*, 1819b) The society was able to get these announcements reprinted in other newspapers as well. (*National Intelligencer*, 1819b)

The language of endorsing articles in the newspaper often invoked religion and used very powerful language. The Raleigh board wrote in part:

The American Colonization Society, which may be emphatically called on of "the signs of the times," is making that progress in our country, which all instituted means for the promotion of man's happiness, in the hands of an all-wise and benevolent God, must ever be expected to make. The benevolence of its object is admitted even by the sceptic; and the practicability of the plan is no longer doubted by those who have examined the subject. Prejudice, which usually retires at the approach of light and truth, is in this instance giving place to sober judgment and liberal sentiments. The cause is too good to be lost. (*Raleigh Register*, 1819b)

Early agents of the society appear to have used the society's constitution as a tract. They report using it, along with a letter from the board in meeting with the Duke of Gloucester in England. (*Maryland Gazette*, 1818a)

Having an agent proved to be critical. In 1820, Meade decided to leave the Colonization Society and return to work as a minister. This proved to be very damaging to the society as this role was left unfilled for two years. Without an agent, auxiliaries stagnated as did growth. (Staudenraus, 1961) The society would again appoint an agent and grow accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

The American Colonization Society used many strategies and tactics to promote its plan, including high profile endorsements, attempts to persuade key influencers, lobbying legislatures for funds, effective media relations, creating its own journal of information and use of agents for fundraising. Many of these tactics would come to be known as public relations over a century after the society began.

This research is relevant, not because of the understanding it provides about the American Colonization Society or its particular uses of public relations methods, but because it exposes a gap in traditional public relations histories.

Histories of the field tend to start with institutionalization of public relations within corporations around the start of the 20th century. These occasionally expand back into the late 19th century with very primitive, and unethical by today's standards, communication methods. Such histories often use Grunig's four models (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and argue that public relations methods have evolved from the antics of promoters like PT Barnum to the more ethical communication models of today in the last 100 years.

Such a view is problematic in light of this research. It shows public relations methods and tactics in use long before traditional histories do. The actions of the American Colonization Society are more ethical and advanced than the actions of PT Barnum and his immediate successors.

In the view of the authors, the American Colonization Society is not an aberration. Rather, it is likely indicative of the way communication methods have always occurred. ACS, unlike many of its contemporaries, is easily accessible to historians because of its magnitude and the relevance of the issue that it addressed. Were society to have a complete understanding of



history, the authors suspect historians would find many more instances of public relations being practiced long before traditional histories assert the field existed.

This new view of public relations history has two profound implications for understanding the field. First, traditional public relations histories are valuable to the field; however, they might more accurately be described as histories of corporate public relations. This distinction is important because traditional histories often leave out or minimize public relations practiced in political and religious contexts. Both of these uses of the field are numerous throughout history, especially pre 1900, and deserve far more attention than they currently receive. In addition, it explains the need for the second implication.

Second, the view that modern communication evolved from practiced deceivers like Barnum to modern ethical communication is discredited by this research. Rather, this research suggests that the conduct of Barnum and early 20<sup>th</sup> century corporations is an aberration.

Changing this world view might help to change popular opinion of the field of public relations, which currently leaves a lot to be desired. If public relations professionals indicate that public relations has often been ethical, and that unethical conduct has been the exception rather than the norm, popular opinion of the field is likely to change. It may also assist in educating a new generation of ethical communicators.

Future research into the practice of public relations prior to 1900 is still critically necessary for the field. While ethics and many public relations tactics have always existed, strategies informed by theories still appear to have developed over time. A better understanding of how this happened will assist historians and professionals to advance the field moving forward.

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## **Gone with the Wind and 1939 Atlanta launch publicity**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Gone with the Wind*, the film of the famous and popular novel on the American Civil War, remains the most successful films of all time in terms of total box office revenue (Bloomberg, 2009). The film is also famous for its publicity handled by one of Hollywood's most famous publicists, Russell Birdwood (Thompson, 1993). Less well known is the efforts of legendary producer, David O. Selznick to manage the growing concerns of the African American community about the filming of a book which was regarded as racist and regressive in its portrayal of slavery and the ante-bellum Southern states. The film's US premiere over three days in Atlanta, Georgia, capital of the southern states in the American Civil War highlights these emerging claims on the film and the film company's attempts to manage them (Leff, 1999).

The film was notable for its film premiere in Atlanta, Georgia, just before Christmas in 1939. Regional film launches in the USA started to develop in the 1930s alongside Hollywood Boulevard and New York. *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta was on a bigger scale (Karnes, 1986). The film launch took place over three days with parades, costume balls, visits to veterans, and the film premiere itself. Events in Atlanta attracted massive crowds, unprecedented even for film premieres (Juddery, 2008).

The launch events in Atlanta provide an insight into the Southern states' pride in its pre-Civil War heritage, and resilience to have survived the difficult years following the American Civil War in the 1860s. The premiere also shows the sophistication of Hollywood's publicity techniques, able to incorporate these wider regional aspirations into the film launch. Its integration of events, celebrities and media can be seen as a forerunner of consumer PR techniques today (Hutchinson, 2012).

Events in Atlanta also provide a glimpse of the emerging discourse which would come to frame the film in later years - its racial stance, the treatment of slavery in the film and the issues of segregation which impacted on the launch of the film. However in 1939,

these issues did not impact noticeably on the publicity except with media serving African American constituencies (Leff, 1999). However, the African American actress Hattie McNeil who would go on to win best supporting actress in the Oscars in February 1940 for her role in the film, did not attend the launch as she would have had to stay in different hotels in Atlanta to the other members of the cast. The producer, David Selznick also worked hard to reduce the controversial racial tone of the book, and employed the National Association of Advanced of Coloured People as advisors on the film (Juddery, 2008).

The publicity around the premiere in Atlanta provides us with an important historical resource of emerging and in time competing narratives over how we regard one of Hollywood's greatest and most successful films.

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## BP – A century of justification

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In this paper I intend to use a case study of BP to critique and explore a methodological approach for researching frameworks of legitimization and justification in relation to brands. First I want to concentrate on the notion of discourse. For Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) and Wetherell et al (2001) discourse does not just reflect the world, but instead is a way of talking about and understanding the world which is dynamic, rather than static, playing an active role in creating and changing structures, identities and social relations. Fairclough (2003), more specifically, describes discourse in a tripartite way, as combining *material* aspects of the world, such as processes, relationships and structures, with the *social* world and the *mental* world of thoughts, feelings and beliefs (Fairclough 2003:124). Both descriptions sit within a social constructionist<sup>1</sup> premise that ‘knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true or false’ (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:5).

French philosopher Michel Foucault’s seminal text, *The Order of Things* (1970) is cited (Deacon et al 1999, Hall in Wetherell 2001, Jorgensen & Phillips 2002) as the starting point for this social constructionist view of discourse, and its usefulness as a critical framework. By investigating the structure of different regimes or ‘orders’ of knowledge, Foucault attempts to define the linguistic rules that are used within different regimes as a way of identifying what is considered to be true and false (2002:13) and proposes that such

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<sup>1</sup> Social constructionism is a term which relates to theories about culture and society centred upon the notion that knowledge is not treated as objective truth, but instead ‘the ways in which we understand the world are historically and culturally specific and contingent’ (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002:4-5). ‘Postmodernism posits contingency, uncertainty and ambiguity in opposition to modernist notions of truth, process, certainty through science and the rational control of self and society. At the heart of this more turbulent and perspectival view is a rejection of the capacity of language to fix meaning and pin things down once and for all’ (Wetherell et al 2001:5).

processes entail a precise operation which involves the application of preliminary criteria (Foucault 1970:xxiii). Describing his process as an ‘archaeology’ rather than a history (Foucault 1970:xxiv), Foucault charts the emergence of a network of analogies that were able to ‘transcend the traditional proximities’ (Foucault 1970:xi) and provide an ‘order’ of knowledge for different time periods.

The fundamental argument here is that it is only possible to have knowledge of things if those things have a meaning, and that meanings are developed through discourse. It is therefore discourse, and not the actual things, which produce knowledge. This concept of knowledge, embedded in a different discourse or *episteme*, emerges through history, so that new epistemes replace old ones, opening up new discursive formations, and thereby leading to new conceptions and ideas (Hall in Wetherell et al 2001:73-74). From a critical perspective this early work of Foucault theorises how patterns of language support power structures by restricting how we view and express social ideas, connecting us, unconsciously, to culturally ingrained and institutionally powerful ways of looking at things, thus influencing what is accepted as ‘legitimate knowledge’ in various aspects of social life (Deacon et al 1999:147).

Of particular interest for this paper on the justification process of BP is Foucault’s notion that classification and order are only possible as a result of preliminary criteria within each episteme, and it is the intention of this paper to concentrate on how and why particular criteria emerge, how they relate to other criteria, and thence why some criteria gain prominence over others:

The fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices – establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home (Foucault 1970:xxii).

The development of discourse analysis stems from Foucault’s notions of these ‘orders’ of knowledge. Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) attempt to distinguish between what they see as two levels, or ranges, of discourse, one which is local and associated with specific language use, and another ‘grand discourse’ which refers to broader systems (Alvesson & Kärreman 2011:1122). This builds on Fairclough’s (2003) idea that discourse analysis should oscillate between specific texts and broader ‘orders of discourse’, which he defines as ‘a network of social practices in its language aspect’ (Fairclough 2003:24). Fairclough then proposes that within each order of discourse one can identify elements such as genres,

discourses and styles and that these can be applied to promotional work within and from organizations:

Genres of governance include promotional genres, genres which have the purpose of 'selling' commodities, brands, organizations and individuals. One aspect of new capitalism is an immense proliferation of promotional genres (see Wernick 1991) which constitutes a part of the colonization of new areas of social life by markets (Fairclough 2003:33)

Jorgensen and Phillips embrace Foucault's concept of orders of discourse but are critical of the fact that Foucault focused on just one regime of knowledge in each of the historical periods he identified. Instead, similarly to Fairclough, they see contemporary discourse analysis approaches as more useful because they tend to operate with the vision of 'a more conflictual picture in which different discourses exist side by side or struggle for the right to define the truth' (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:13). This de-centred notion of the discourse subject's agency in which 'different discourses give the subject different, and possibly contradictory, positions from which to speak' (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:18) could be extremely useful as a concept for considering how brand users might relate and respond to brands in a multi-dimensional way. Here one might draw an analogy to Boltanski & Thevenot's (2006) idea of 'worlds' as potential discourse boundaries and areas of conflicts to be explored.

### **Economies of Worth**

Boltanski and Thevenot's *On Justification; Economies of Worth* (2006) aims to construct a solid link between political philosophy and sociology and in doing so outlines a framework for establishing 'what the worth of the worthy consists and how a justifiable order among persons is established' (2006:14). They identify that the critical nature of order and plurality of forms of agreement are two major difficulties in the construction of legitimacy (2011:38) thereby concluding that legitimization cannot simply be a question of principles of equivalence (2011:40). Instead they hypothesize that different orders of equivalence or justification can be argued to stem from a common model (the polity model) based on a notion of a higher common principle and a model of legitimate order, and that each different set of equivalences embodies the model in a specific way, depending on the order of worth (2011: 65-73). In the process of testing justification, Boltanski and Thevenot argue that judgement relies upon the ability to recognize the nature of a situation. Using classical philosophical texts as a theoretical framework, they identify six different polities, and from



these identify six different ‘worlds’, each of which embodies specific relations of worth (2011; 140-159). These worlds (Inspired, Domestic, Fame, Civic, Market and Industrial) embody principles of worth which can be used as judgement criteria. Thus, while in the World of Fame worth might depend predominantly on the opinion of others, in the Inspired World worth is detached from human recognition and attachment. This is important, for in order to be able to judge effectively it is necessary to agree upon the nature of the situation and then apply judgement criteria or principles which are ‘natural’ to that situation (Boltanski & Thevenot 2006:146). I aim to use this notion of a structure for critique as a model for analyzing and understanding the way in which brands attempt to confer legitimacy and are themselves subject to processes of critique and justification, within a legitimized structure.

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) focus more specifically on the action of critique, reconstructing a ‘critical sociology’ by analyzing the role of critique and its relationship to historical capitalism (2007:xiii). In doing so, they identify two specific critical strands, the social critique and the artistic critique and call for the application of ‘reformist’ as opposed to ‘revolutionary’ critique (2007:xv). This reformist critique embodies collective benefits of participating in the capitalist process, as well as individual ones. Boltanski and Chiapello call this new ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism the *new spirit of capitalism* (2007:7). This notion, I believe, could prove to be a highly valuable tool in helping to understand the type of critique that 21<sup>st</sup> Century organisations might currently face :

When it refers to the common good, the second spirit of capitalism invokes justifications that rest upon a compromise between the industrial city and the civic city (and secondarily, the domestic city), whereas the first spirit was rooted in a compromise between domestic and commercial justifications (2007:24).

A further aspect of Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2007) work which I find particularly useful for this paper is their interpretation and exploration of legitimization, which they describe as: ‘a mere operation of retrospective concealment, which must be unmasked in order to arrive at reality’ (2007:26). This suggests, I would propose, a potentially useful definition of authenticity as the difference between justification and legitimization. In attempting to evaluate how capitalism has responded to critique, Boltanski and Chiapello identify a difference between ‘tests of strength’ and ‘legitimate tests’ (2007:30-38). A test is always a test of strength, but it is only if the test situation is subject to justificatory boundaries that are genuinely respected, that such tests will be regarded as legitimate and

hence the situation will be justified (2007:31). The character of such tests, it is argued, depend on the value systems that a society (or *world*) recognize at any given moment in time (2007:32) and these value systems are tested by way of radical critiques (which challenge the validity of the test) and corrective critiques (which aim to improve the justice of the test) (2007:32-33). Such tests, I would argue, might provide a valuable methodology for analyzing processes of brand legitimisation and critique.

### **Understanding a Critical Framework for Brands: Ethics & Judgement**

In parallel to developing an understanding of the way in which Boltanski and Thevenot's (2006) and Boltanski and Chiapello's (2007) ideas of 'worlds' might be used in brand legitimization processes, it is also important to note and analyse ways in which brand justification is currently being academically critiqued. Kotler (2011), for example, calls for a reinvention of marketing in the light of the 'environmental imperative' (2011:132). This he explains as the growing acceptance of a world of finite resources, high environmental costs and consumers who are seeking 'corporations that care', epitomized by "LOHAS"<sup>2</sup> consumers living "lifestyles of health and sustainability" (2011:134). Kotler puts forward a new concept of 'Marketing 3.0' (2011:33): 'Marketers have viewed consumers as choosing among brands on the basis of functional (Marketing 1.0) and emotional (Marketing 2.0) criteria. But many of today's consumers are adding a third dimension – namely, how the company meets its social responsibilities (Marketing 3.0).'

Davies (2011) takes the 'environmental imperative' notion one stage further in his exploration of the concept of the political economy of unhappiness. Davies' paper aims to demonstrate how depression has become the hegemonic form of incapacity, costing economies vast sums of lost income and earnings. The immateriality of cognitive labour, he suggests, depends on new psycho-economic capacities such as enthusiasm, dynamism and optimism and this has led to the mind and its capabilities, or incapacities, being brought into the arena of mainstream economics. Davies summarises the different pathways taken in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century by neo-classic economics who focused on amoral, rationalist science and questions of rational choice and efficiency and the completely separate route taken by the social sciences of psychology and sociology. Davies' approach may be very useful for my paper in that the bringing together of these disciplines in the political economy of

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<sup>2</sup> Kotler explains that the concept of LOHAS consumers came from the Environmental Leader website (2009). 'One estimate placed 19% of the adults in the United States, or 41 million people, in the LOHAS or "cultural creatives" category' (Kotler 2011:134)

unhappiness may help explain and provide a structure for examining the merging of the economic and social in organizational communications, evidenced by the rise in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)<sup>3</sup> activities, reports and communications. Davies' summary of contemporary explorations of 'hedonia' and 'eudaimonia' may help provide an ontology for exploring this area (Davies 2011). For Davies, the Weberian insight that capitalism cannot sustain itself by offering more money, more choice and more pleasure, is at the heart of the crisis. The 'spirit' of capitalism is its promise of not only utility or *hedonia*, but also of meaning or *eudaimonia*; not simply psychological economic gratification, but a form of ethical fulfillment and the demonstration of innate self-worth. If a regime of capitalism neglects the latter, it encounters a moral crisis.

For Waters and Bortree (2012) it is the nature of organization-public relationships which may provide insight into judgement and evaluation processes. They used Hung's 'continuum'<sup>4</sup> of relationship types, which ranges from communal to exploitative, as a basis for questioning 313 students about their perceptions of trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment with regard to not-for-profit, retail and party political organizations. The main hypothesis here is that different 'types' of organization may determine attitudes with evidence to suggest that communality is often linked to higher perceptions of quality, but does not necessarily lead to greater commitment or control mutuality (2012:127). Waters and Bortree highlight how publics actually felt more committed to consumer organizations than political parties (2012:125).

In another study which focuses on the importance of the 'common good' within consumer judgement processes, Roper (2012) uses analysis of government and business discourse in New Zealand in the run up to the ratification of the Kyoto protocol to consider tensions around New Zealand's 'clean and green' country brand positioning and to understand how sustainability is discursively constructed in New Zealand. The analysis focuses on the conflict between an existing business-led neo-liberalist discourse and a newer government-led sustainability and ecological modernism discourse. One might argue that this is effectively exemplifying a conflict between civic and market/industrial worlds, but whilst Roper meticulously charts the emergence of a number of discursive themes and does

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<sup>3</sup> According to Theaker (2005) 'the practice of corporate social responsibility is usually regarded as a public relations function because this is where the company meets the public outside the usual roles of producers (or service providers) and customers' (2005:139).

<sup>4</sup> Hung's continuum of organizational-public relationship types includes: One-sided communal; Communal/mutually communal relationships; Covenantal relationships; Exchange relationships; Contractual/symbiotic relationships; Manipulative relationships; and Exploitive relationships (Waters & Bortree 2012:124)

attempt to understand why conflict arises, she does not critique the process of conflict resolution, or the specific impact this has for the New Zealand brand. She does, however, identify that ‘when the stakes are high, discourse construction becomes a strategic exercise, often involving communications professionals’ (2012:73).

Also focusing on the issue of representation, Grigore et al (2010) consider the construction of an economic justification of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concluding that both large and smaller corporations can benefit from the competitive advantage and enhanced reputational ‘assets’ that CSR can provide. The important point here is about the link between CSR and reputation and the implicit acceptance of a justification framework in which stakeholders ‘value’ CSR and organisations might ‘justify’ their roles within society. Indeed CSR is covered as a PR practice in a variety of both functional and critical PR texts each of which cover the issue from the fulcrum of rhetoric versus action, either critically or formatively (Gordon 2011, Harrison 1997, Heath 2001, Jefkins 2004, L’Etang 2008, Maloney 2006, Tench & Yeomans 2006). The critique of public relations and CSR, and indeed the debates about best-practice, focus significantly on communications processes linked to actual delivery of organizational activities. There is little focus on why CSR has become a dominant public relations discourse and this is an area which may be fruitful to explore in relation to attempting to understand how brand users assess and interpret the worth of organisations.

Linking specifically to BP, Harlow et al (2011) coded 413 paragraphs from the BP website Deepwater Horizon response statements in 2010 to study BP’s initial image repair strategies and revealed that BP focused on ‘describing how it would correct the problem and describing how it would compensate the victims’ (Harlow et al 2011:82). Whilst useful as a method of describing response, there is acknowledgement, however, of some of the challenges of coding these paragraphs. Balmer (2010) conversely provides a commentary on BP’s aspirational brand positioning in the light of the disaster, highlighting the dissonance between the organisation’s brand positioning which ‘emphasized BP’s environmental, good corporate citizen and green credentials’ (Balmer 2010:97), embodied in its sunburst logo (2010:99), and its real life actions which were misaligned with this ‘brand exuberance’ (2010:97).

## **Research Findings**

In this study, a content analysis of 40 cuttings randomly selected between 27 July 2009 and 18 October 2011 was undertaken. The cuttings all focused on BP and appeared in

national quality newspapers / media outlets or PR Week from the UK (The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, the BBC and PR Week). The study did not focus on crisis management responses. Apart from those happening before April 2010, all the cuttings mentioned the Gulf of Mexico disaster, with 40% highlighting the fact that 11 people died. Despite the analysis covering the time period of the rig explosion, 50% were business articles, 7.5% were features and 10% focused on financial issues. A third of the media articles (35%) included a quote from the Chief Executive of BP and a third (35%) included a quote from an alternative BP spokesperson. The predominant narratives emerging from these articles were the value growth of the organisation's operations (25%), the development of new oil fields (50%) and BP's focus on safety (45%). The latter did not just emerge as a result of the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion, as one might expect, but rather all three of these narratives were consistently covered across the three years covered in the analysis (2009, 2010 and 2011). BP is often given opportunity to express these values, for example chief executive Bob Dudley is quoted as saying 'I am determined that we will emerge from this episode as a company that is safer, stronger, more sustainable, more trusted and also more valuable' (Pagnamenta 2011a) and 'increasing production at Rumaila [in Iraq], the world's fourth-largest oilfield, has been a massive undertaking' (Pagnamenta 2011b)

Despite the fact that 'environmental disaster', or environmental impact, was a consistent theme, being covered in 60% of coverage, the media were equivocal in their judgement of BP with 42.5% of coverage being neutral in tone, 22.5% positive in tone and a third of the cuttings (35%) negative. Those articles which were negative all occurred within the year of the Gulf of Mexico accident, appearing from May 2010 to the end of April 2011 and only two articles accuse BP directly of complacency (5%). Prior to and following this disaster 'year' more positive articles appear.

Many of the articles focus on BP's financial performance, with this often being seen in a positive light, for example: 'BP employs 96,000 people in 100 countries and accounts for £1 in every £6 received in dividends by British pension funds' (Whittell 2010). BP is described as the 'Britain's largest company by market value' (Pagnamenta 2009a) and 40% of cuttings discuss financial results. 45% of the articles talk about the costs of the Deepwater Horizon spillage. Other significant corporate descriptors for BP are its use of advanced technology (17.5%) and its sponsorship of the 2012 London Olympic games (7.5%). In particular, articles focused on BP's expertise in 'frontier, difficult drilling' as being a positive aspect of the industry which nationalised petroleum organisations would not undertake (King 2010), with BP being praised as 'a world leader in technically challenging deepwater drilling'

(Arnott 2010b). A further interesting point to note about corporate visibility for BP is that 82.5% of the articles contained a visual image. Whilst 33% were of the Gulf of Mexico disaster, 30% visualized other aspects of BP's operations, 14% were of the chairman and 22% used a BP branded infographic, using the BP logo and colours.

To provide a contrast to these mediated messages, a discourse analysis technique was applied to the third edition of *Our Industry*, a hard-backed, bound volume presented to University College of Swansea by BP (Llandarcy) Ltd in July 1958. First produced in 1947 by BP, the object of the text is to describe the functions of both the industry, and an integrated oil company, and to show employees 'how their individual effort fits into the wider picture' (BP 1958:1). If we consider Fairclough's notion of genres and styles (2003:33), then we can see that this publication is not a handbook in the traditional sense, but rather an industry history with an explanation of technical processes. In effect the volume is an argument built on facts and figures and scientific evidence which uses significant levels of detail to paint a picture of a technically advanced and thorough industry. In the first 100 pages there is only one mention of BP, and the company history only appears in the final chapter. BP is positioned as an industry component, but whilst the text only refers to the organisation a handful of times, the vast majority of the photographic plates are of BP activities (87 plates, most of them with two pictures) and thus its role in the industry is implicated throughout.

Focusing on Alvesson & Kärreman's (2011) recommendation of analyzing the specifics of language use, then we can see that the language used is inclusive, involving the reader and drawing him into the industry – 'Ours is a young industry' (1958:5). A second significant and consistent quality of the language is the use of superlative and hyperbole, positioning the industry, and the organisations within it, as technically advanced, for example: 'a very highly scientific business (1958:8); 'the most highly technical processes in modern industry' (1958:9; 'a very high degree of careful planning' (1958:11); 'rapid advances' (1959:85); and 'highly trained and specialized supervision' (1958:143).

A more interesting aspect of the volume begins to emerge if we use Foucault's idea of regimes of knowledge which Deacon et al interpret as 'institutionally powerful ways of looking at things' (Deacon et al 1999:47). Using this approach, two distinct themes can be identified below the surface of the text: a systems theory understanding of industry structure which is manifested in what we will call the 'externalisation' of petroleum organisations which are seen as part of the bigger organism of the industry; and secondly the implicit international nature of the industry (and the organisations within it). Threaded throughout the

BP volume is a narrative of structures and processes which position the industry as system, within which BP works. The industry runs on process: the Marketing department passes information to the Refining Department, which in turn relies on Research (1958:12). These are all supported by a range of other branches: Supply Department, Transport Department, Engineering Department, Sales Department and Accounts Department (1958:197). There is a sense of the externalisation of issues and problems, which are industry challenges, rather than corporate ones; 'The industry has always tried to carry out distribution in the most efficient manner consistent with meeting exigencies of its customers' (1958:196). Safety, for example, is an industry issue; 'Good practice in safety demands foresight and the rigid application of the regulation in force in all refineries, installations and depots' (1958:148). This is echoed 50 years later when media coverage analysis reveals that safety becomes an issue for the US government, the US oil industry regulators, and all deep sea operators in the Gulf of Mexico which have their licences to operate suspended, with only two cuttings specifically accusing BP of complacency.

A similarly implicit understanding underlying the text is the inherent international nature of the industry. This is not an industry made up of smaller, national, corporate players but an integrated global system which demands scale and unparalleled degrees of co-operation. There is constant reference to 'the world output of oil' (1958:5) and the world being supplied with oil (1958:12) from oilfields across the globe, in the USA, the Middle East and Scandinavia, for example (1958:91). The structure of the narrative takes a global approach discussing exploration, refining and distribution in a global context and there is a sub-text of how commercial interests are connected with government and national interests (1958:406).

Finally if we focus on the idea of orders of discourse, described both by Fairclough (2003) and Alvesson & Kärreman (2011) as 'grand discourse', then two distinct themes emerge: the supremacy of the oil industry as being vital to global survival; and the fact that market orientation is accepted and unquestioned. Taking marketing orientation first, the industry, and by implication BP, is seen as successful because it adheres to market demands: 'a very high degree of careful planning and organisation if costs are to be kept to a minimum and yet demands of all types of consumer are to be met without delay' (1958:11); and 'Any company's business depends on its sales' (1958:12). There is an unquestioned acceptance of the primary goal of oil organisations: 'Within our industry the aim of all those responsible for exploration, production, refining, research and distribution, is to satisfy, both in quantity and quality, the needs of the consumers wherever they may be located' (1958:196).

A further grand discourse is that of the vital nature of the industry. The volume starts off with a Biblical tone, referring to the fact that ‘the first known references to it are in the Bible’ and ‘a third of the heat and power at the disposal of mankind from coal, water and all other sources, comes from oil’ (1958:5). This is followed up with a continued sub narrative on the way in which the industry is ‘essential’ (1958:6) and a ‘godsend’ (1958:89): ‘The petroleum industry, perhaps more than any other impinges on the daily life of men and women throughout the world’ (1958:173); ‘the demand for petroleum products is developing at a higher rate than practically any other commodity’ (1958:196); ‘The ever-growing demand for oil by a world hungry for energy means that the petroleum industry cannot pause in its quest for fresh sources of oil production’ (1958:413).

In addition to a consideration of company discourse, fifteen BP adverts, ranging from 1922 to 2012 were analysed semiotically to explore consistency, or otherwise, of corporate message. Whilst the symbolism changes from smart, clever people choosing BP, to motor racing supremacy and sporting analogies, there is some consistency of message. Historically the company progresses from a focus on British innovation, financing and products (20%) to a late 20<sup>th</sup> Century focus on corporate social responsibility (33.3%). Cutting across the decades, however, there is a consistent representation of the organisation as highly technical and advanced (47%), international (20%) and benefitting from continued investment (33.3%). The predominant message is that BP is the best (or premium) (60%).

## **Conclusion**

My original thesis was to compare BP’s justification narratives against a socio-economic background of the development of the PR industry, considering notions such as: when in the face of an aroused public conscience, commercial organisations started to communicate with the press (Bernays 1928: 62); the call for for “accuracy, authority and fact” which Ivy Lee formalised in his 1906 Declaration of Principles (Tench & Yeoman 2006:9); and the development of methodologies of persuasion and corporate PR and the communications imperatives of privatisation, which, for example, led to the consultancy Dewe Rogerson receiving £23 million for promoting the privatisation of British Petroleum (Miller & Dinan 2000: 21). My findings, however, reveal a surprising consistency of narrative and message for BP over 100 years of the organisation’s existence, with four major themes.

The first theme is *investment* which first emerged in early 1920s adverts. It is consistently referenced in the company’s 1958 handbook and is emphasized, often as value



growth, throughout the last five years. The fact that despite the Deepwater Horizon incident over 60% of contemporary media cuttings analysed were situated in the business and finance pages, shows that financial issues are important post the 1980s privatization, but the earlier texts reveal that this theme is not new and not a post-privatisation focus. The second theme is *technology and science*, appearing first in 1930s adverts, reappearing in the handbook and being used throughout adverts and communications in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A third theme is the *international* nature of the organisation, explicitly emphasized in 1940s adverts about tanker haulage, threaded throughout the structure and text of the 1958 handbook, and re-iterated consistently in latter day messages about the development of new and emerging global oil fields. The final theme is that of the *market orientation* of the organisation, manifested in 1950s adverts about product supremacy, the market orientation evident in the handbook and in ongoing advanced product advertising in the last five years.

Given such a consistent picture, is it useful, or possible to use Boltanski & Thevenot's (2007) worlds as a structure of critique for analyzing such message structures? Theme one, investment, can be argued to sit within the framework of a *civic world*, in which actions are justified in the light of the common good, or the system. BP's financial investment is frequently seen as a necessity for global advancement, to secure energy and fuel efficiency for the future, linked to the identified meta-discourse of the vital nature of the industry. Even after the organisation's flotation, the message is clear that the company is not just operating for shareholders. This is not a question of simple utility or *hedonia*, but *eudaimonia* (meaning) (Davies 211). In addition to investment, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a new focus on corporate social responsibility seems to emerge in the form of Olympic, community action and renewable energy advertising. This might also be aligned with a *civic* justificatory framework, and therefore if we also take into account the fact that in the 1958 manual the company highlights its infrastructure and social investments (1958:410) and the satisfaction for employees of enjoying 'the best living and working conditions' along with 'a sense of enthusiasm in a job worth doing and a spirit of progress' (1958:12), we might begin to see that this theme, which links to Kotler's notion of Marketing 3.0 (2011), is not new to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but a consistent long term message from BP.

Theme two, technological advancement, sits clearly within the justification framework of Boltanski & Thevenot's *industrial world*. Here being the best, highly advanced and innovative, with a continued focus on opening up new oil fields is seen as admirable behavior within a technologically determinist global framework. The third theme of internationalization can also be argued to sit within this judgement criteria. The final

consistent theme for BP, market orientation, is justified within the concept of the *market world* in which actions which support the market are seen as right and justifiable. Here BP excels with its highly systematic, product and customer orientated approach. The usefulness of Boltanski & Thevenot's concept is the way in which it provides a meta-structure which can take into account different historical factors and yet at the same time allow us to consider a grand discourse, such as that proposed by Foucault, which supercedes temporal and socio-economic considerations, even dramatic ones such as the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The result is a the identification of a series of three strong legitimation frameworks for BP, based on the civic, market and industrial worlds which remain as relevant to the organisation in 2013 as they first did in 1912. It also, perhaps, offers a new way of seeing brand legitimization processes as more long term and historical in nature, rather than driven by short-term consumer demands and concerns.

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## **A history of bad publicity: a reassessment of the ethics of First World War atrocity propaganda in Great Britain and Australia**

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This paper will explore the impact that negative interpretations of the word ‘propaganda’ have had upon histories of the British and Australian home front in the First World War, and argue that simplistic notions about the ethics of propaganda have resulted in an inaccurate representation of how the public interpreted propaganda, and through it, the war. The now infamous Allied anti-German atrocity propaganda campaigns from the First World War will be used to interrogate the idea that propaganda is inherently unethical, untruthful, and functions solely as a top down communication channel. The reality was more complex, as atrocity propaganda drew upon existing moral ideals within the community about what constituted a ‘just war’, and emerged from important dialogues about war that were peculiar to the early twentieth century. Through an exploration and redefinition of the word ‘propaganda’, coupled with a consideration of the historical context in which atrocity propaganda was produced and received, this paper will demonstrate that propaganda had a more nuanced genesis and reception in Great Britain and Australia than has been perceived to have been the case. From the 1920s, atrocity propaganda was overwhelmingly written about as a cynical form of communication engineered by the British to manufacture hatred against the German enemy (Evans, 1987, p.31; Gullace, 1997; Haste, 1977; Ponsonby, 1928; Wilson, 1979).

The reputation of atrocity propaganda and the war it supported are both poor, and their appalling reputations have served to mutually reinforce each since the end of the war. It is the purpose of this paper to separate subsequent negative appraisals of the war and its supporting propaganda, from how it actually functioned during the war. In many ways, the consequences of that terrible war have occluded the voices of those who fought it. While some famous British propagandists had second thoughts about what they were doing at the time - witness A.A. Milne’s newly unearthed poem of 1918, in which he wrote “In MI7b/ who loves to lie with me/ About atrocities/ And Hun Corpse factories” (Esnor, The Telegraph, 2013), others were less cynical. The Hun Corpse Conversion factory is an

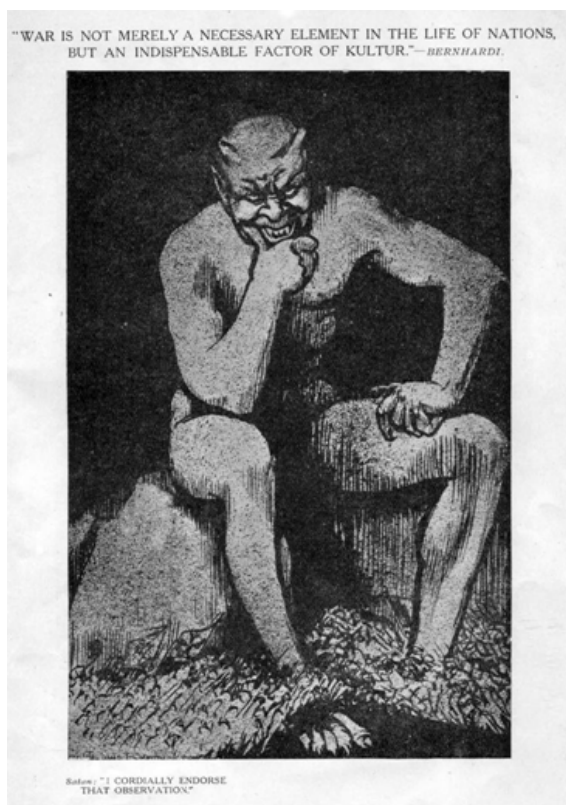
excellent example of the blatantly ridiculous lies that that were promulgated during the war – in this particular tale, Germans were accused of converting the bodies of Allied soldiers into soap. However, it is important to remember that these sorts of exaggerations were actually reasonably rare in official propaganda, and that many other propagandists, both government and non-government, were genuinely outraged at the events that had actually taken place in Belgium.

Yet the accretion of a centuries worth of repudiation and bad publicity has meant that the moral justifications for the war that were contained in atrocity propaganda (which were accordingly given great credence at the time), have been neglected by many historians. However, the scenario of Just war that was presented in atrocity propaganda was central to contemporary popular conceptions of the war. Atrocity propaganda argued that the British army was morally obliged to intervene, because innocent women and children were being threatened by men who had lost their humanity. This was central to British war aims. From the outset, the British declared that it was a just war because they were defending the rights of small nations against Germany (the invasion of Belgium by Germany was the public trigger for Britain to enter the war). Because Germany broke the treaty it had signed to respect Belgian neutrality, Britain could claim that it was adhering to a reasonably consistent set of codes about what constituted a just war. However, as the war progressed, Britain could claim that its involvement in the war was even more justified, as allegations spread about German atrocities in Belgium and France. Of course, Britain also entered the war for more complex geo-political reasons (for example its treaty with France), as did other nations (Steiner and Nelson, p.252).

This *real politik* interpretation of Britain's involvement in the war has meant that the atrocity propaganda which contained the heart of Britain's Just war defence for its involvement has frequently been dismissed as being entirely disingenuous (Evans, 1987; Gullace, 1997; Haste, 1977; Ponsonby, 1928; Wilson, 1979). However, for many people, including even those who produced atrocity propaganda, it contained the truth. Charles Masterman, for example, was in charge of the production of British propaganda in 1915, and he certainly believed in the veracity of some of the propaganda that he oversaw. During his stewardship, the infamous and subsequently discredited Bryce report into alleged German outrages in Belgium was published (*Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages: appointed by His Britannic Majesty's government and presided over by the Right Hon.*

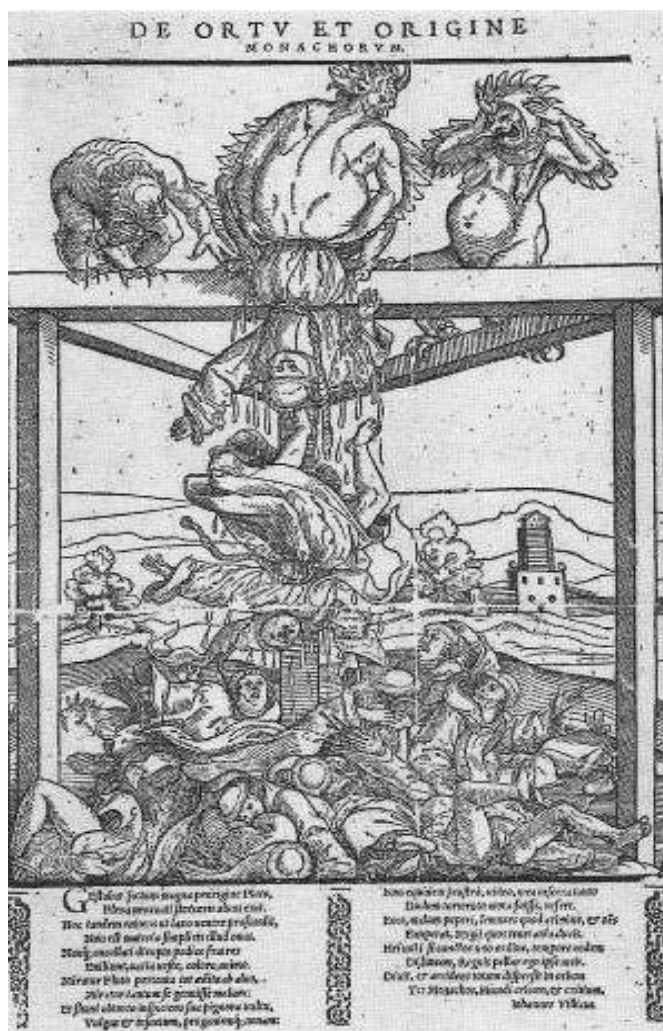
*Viscount Bryce*. 1915). The Bryce report (which will be discussed in more detail later) endowed subsequent atrocity propaganda with the imprimatur of the truth. In the late 1970s, historian Trevor Wilson comprehensively demonstrated that the report had been flawed as a legal inquiry (Wilson, pp.373-375). However, flawed as it was, many of those involved in its construction believed that they were reporting the truth about the German military in Belgium. It is important to note that Masterman appeared to have genuine faith in the report at the time. On the eve of the report's release, he wrote in a letter to the Chairman of the Committee, Lord Bryce, 'And I wish – as I have no doubt you wish – that you could have disproved the evidence or brought in the verdict of "Not Guilty". But as it was true the world must know it that it may never occur again [Masterman's emphasis]' (Bryce MSS 248, Bodleian Library).

That Masterman believed he was engaged in a positive moral campaign when he published atrocity propaganda may startle the modern reader. Indeed, the fact that atrocity propaganda in general contained moral justifications for the war may come as a surprise to many people, as on first examination, atrocity propaganda appears to be a profoundly immoral activity. To contemporary viewers many items of propaganda are so hate-filled, that it initially seems to be a false assertion that a Louis Raemaekers cartoon of the Devil leering as he endorses German writer Bernhardt's maxim contains a moral argument. *Image 1*



*Image 1.* Louis Raemaekers, *Raemaekers Cartoon History of the War*, American reprint, 1918. [Online project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34031/34031-h/34031-h.htm>]

Yet on further examination it becomes apparent that the fault lies not just in the anti-Germanism of the cartoon, but also in the fact that it is deeply moralistic. Swollen with self-righteous indignation, many Allied cartoonists depicted the German with deep and abiding loathing. Thus, it was not a surfeit of morality that created these cartoons, but an excess of it; aligning the devil with Germany seems shockingly intolerant today, but conventions in caricature (as a form of satire, caricature is perhaps one of the most moralistic forms of art) had been using this metaphor since the Reformation (Robertson, 2010). As this image of the devil excreting monks demonstrates, Satan had a long involvement in European politics and caricature, and his inclusion in Great War cartoons was hardly remarkable. *Image 2*



*Image 2. The workshop of Lucas Cranach, The Origin of Monks, flyer from 1545. Obtained from Luther Blisset, Q, William Heinemann, London, 2003*

Following the war, atrocity propaganda came to be defined by its errors and exaggerations – and many items (some which will shortly be discussed) were extremely distasteful. Dutch cartoonist Louis Raemaekers' was in fact quite mild compared that of later



propagandists, but it was his more anti-German work which subsequently became emblematic of atrocity propaganda. Raemaekers' cartoons were disseminated by Wellington House amongst the Allied and neutral nations. Inspired by Raemaekers, whose work acted as a definitive template, cartoonists pushed the depictions of the hyper-masculine German even further. The imposition of simian physiology on the 'barbaric Hun', and its ruthless rendering down of the German into the alien Other, are some of the iconic images of the war. The consistency of atrocity propaganda across the English speaking Allied nations was remarkable. The fact that atrocity propaganda prosecuted a just war, in that it asserted the British fought the war to defend the rights of small nations, and those of non-combatants, and the fact that many people genuinely believed they were fighting a just war, has largely been forgotten. Part of this is to do with the wholesale rejection of the war itself. Alon Rachamimov observed, 'Lifting a page from pacifist wartime critique, intellectuals, first in Britain and then in France began to view war itself as the ultimate evil and challenged the notion of German guilt. This "pacifist turn"...tended to relativise events in Belgium and France, and discredit atrocity stories as vile propaganda' (Rachamimov, p.2). As stated before, the poor reputation of the war, and its propaganda, were mutually reinforcing. Thus the decline of the reputation of atrocity propaganda – indeed, of the word 'propaganda' itself - began shortly after the cessation of hostilities, when the meaning of the war began to be reassessed, not in the light of triumphant victory, but with a grim sense that the butcher's bill and economic hardship had rendered the victory meaningless.

Australian artist Norman Lindsay and American artist H.R. Hopps both crafted images of giant Hun-apes that have become exemplars of the grotesque lies that were fed to people during the Great War; essentially, these images represent the distilled essence of masculine sexual aggression against feminine helplessness. The sado-sexual menace present in these images have since become exemplars of the sexual politics underlying atrocity propaganda (*Images 3 and 5*).



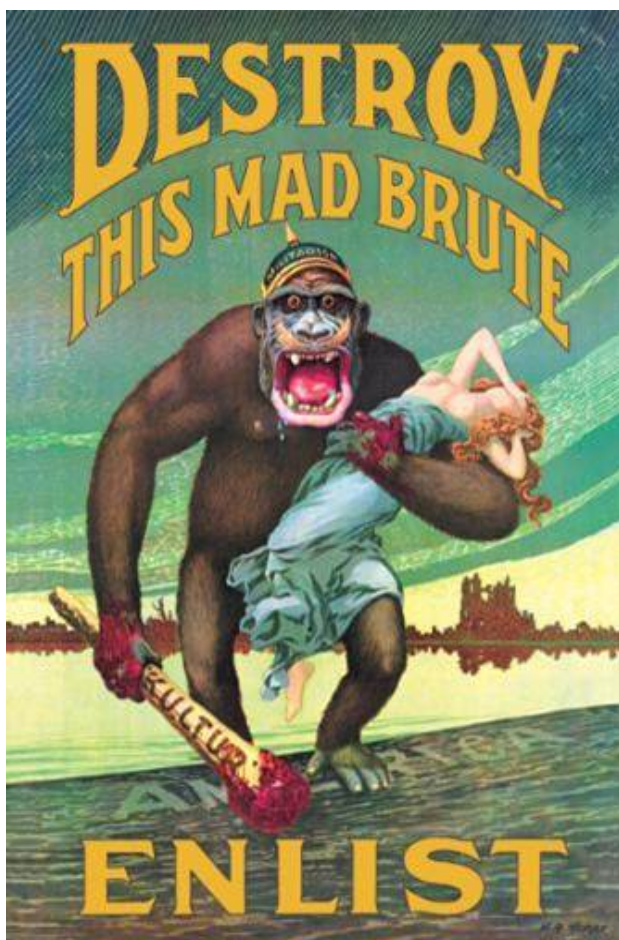
*Image 3.* Norman Lindsay, Australia, chromolithograph on paper, recto, Detail: “*The Thing we Fight*”, ‘Our Reason for Entering the War’, 1918

Over the past thirty years, many scholars have taken these kinds of images, or the narrative accompanying them, and used them to judge the ethics of atrocity propaganda *in toto*, without investigating the broader historical context in which they were created or the entire oeuvre of atrocity propaganda – which is enormous, and consists of pamphlets and books, as well as posters. For example, cultural destruction was also an important focus of atrocity propaganda. In a British publication of late 1914 (which was edited by a Belgian), the destruction of churches and the Louvain library figured equally alongside more dramatic stories of abuse of civilians. As ‘Sacrilege in the church at Aerschot’ (Image 4) demonstrates, the British had a much broader notion of what constituted an ‘atrocity’ than has been subsequently acknowledged. In the painting, a reasonably quotidian image of German army life is portrayed as taking place amongst precious religious art and architecture.



*Image 4. 'Sacrilege in the church at Aerschot', in Everyman: Special Belgian Relief Issue, November 1914, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Library.*

However, generally only the most select and distasteful items have been examined by historians. In the Australian case, the sexism of these images has led two historians, Carmel Shute, and Marilyn Lake, to condemn atrocity propaganda as an inherently sexist activity in which the titillating helplessness of the female acted to lure the men into supporting the war. Marilyn Lake wrote, 'Often people's interest in atrocity stories seemed to have a distinct sado-sexual tinge' (Lake, p.22). For Shute, the fact that the images were so blatantly sexist led her to reason that the *entirety* of atrocity propaganda was untrue, and that no Belgian women were raped (Shute, p.17).



*Image 5. H.R. Hopps, United States of America, *Destroy this Mad Brute*, chromolithograph on paper, 1917*

The horror of these images, combined with the inclusion of some of the more outrageous tales of atrocity propaganda in the Bryce report (ie., babies being impaled on pikes), has resulted in scholars entirely discounting stories of rape and human rights abuses in Belgium. For example, the previously mentioned Bryce report (which was published both as an act of propaganda and also as a serious report into humanitarian abuses in wartime) and the accompanying ephemera such as pamphlets and posters, have been judged by numerous historians as containing only lies. Significantly, some of the criticisms of the Bryce report have simply been historically inaccurate themselves. Both Cate Haste and Gary S. Messinger, who to date have written two of the most influential books about British Great War propaganda, made strong assertions about the inaccuracy of the Bryce report without actually investigating whether or not their assertions were true.

Haste set the tone in 1977, writing of the Bryce report: ‘While it is the case that modern warfare produced casualties and mutilation on an enormous scale, and that the Germans were hard in their treatment of civilian resistance, there is very little evidence from German sources to support the assumption of large-scale organized terrorization and incendiarism as

part of German military policy' (Haste, p.94). Haste does not supply any references to back up this statement. For instance, what German sources did she consult to make this statement? As will be discussed in more detail later, historians John Horne, Alan Kramer (2001 - *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*) and Isabel Hull all demonstrate that terrorization of civilians was in fact part of German military policy. As Hull wrote, 'the atrocities occurred because two forces converged: the unintended consequences to ordinary soldiers of a far too ambitious war plan, and the *conscious and customary acceptance among officers that making the risky plan work might require using terror against civilians* (my italics)'' (Hull, p.211). However, Messinger and Haste exonerate German military policy without serious consultation of German sources - the consequence of this is that they are unduly harsh towards the Bryce report. In 1992, Gary S. Messinger scoffed:

'...the stories which the Bryce Report invited readers to believe were so sensationalistic that their negative effects upon public understanding should have been obvious. The report accused German soldiers of such atrocities as using Belgian civilians as human shields in combat; indiscriminately destroying buildings; raping women and young girls; cutting off the heads of babies; cutting off women's breasts; thrusting bayonets into children and then hoisting the children as if on a spit; cutting off children's hands and ears while their parents were forced to watch; shooting at children; and nailing a child to a farmhouse door (Messinger, p.73).

The great tragedy of the Bryce report is that because it reported some of the more outlandish allegations amongst the absolutely true ones, the entire report came to be regarded as totally unreliable. However, many of its accusations were correct - Germans did execute civilian hostages in Belgium, and use them on occasion as human shields - this was even acknowledged by American historian James Morgan Read (who was extremely hostile to atrocity propaganda) as early as 1941 (Read, pp.108 and 286). The German army did indiscriminately destroy cultural property. And of course women and young girls were raped. It is absurd to contemplate the notion that the German army was the first invading force in the history of mankind not to commit rape. As French historians Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker asserted in their re-assessment of sexual violence during the Great War, rape is a fundamental instrument of war: 'women are victimised twice over, as human beings and as future child-bearers, and they are the first whom invaders want to humiliate. Their tortured, raped bodies become proof of the conqueror's power' (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, p. 47). Why Messinger asserted that rape was a highly unusual activity in a country occupied by an invading army is an interesting question.

By 1995, the notion that the Bryce report was a series of outrageous falsehoods had become unassailable fact. Rather than being regarded as one of the first serious (albeit flawed) investigations into human rights abuses during war, the report was dismissed as a document designed to inflame the lusts of men. In a book chapter titled *Love and Death: War and Gender in Britain, 1914-1915*, Susan Kingsley Kent launched an extraordinary attack on the report, describing it as a ‘pornographic orgy that fostered voyeurism and made war sexually “exciting”’ (Kingsley Kent, p.158). Kingsley Kent then went on to detail a number of atrocities, including pack rape, with a tone designed to engender extreme scepticism. Kingsley Kent concluded, ‘this kind of imagery linked sex and war in the conscious and unconscious minds of Britons...It needs to be emphasised that the images of violence and cruelty were images, primarily of acts against women, so that the rape and sexual mutilation of women served as one of the major means by which the war was imagined and represented by contemporaries’ (Kingsley Kent, p.159).

Denial that atrocities were committed at all by Germans in Belgium became a consistent feature across Allied historiography – from Australia, to Great Britain and the United States. This consistency indicates that the neglect of the broader humanitarian aspects of atrocity propaganda has partly been a result of the fact that the word ‘propaganda’ came to be regarded with intense suspicion following the Great War. It is therefore fitting to note that it was the propaganda of the First World War that changed the word from having a reasonably neutral meaning to a word with sinister overtones. In 1921, American author Agnes Repplier wrote, ‘One of the ill turns done us by the war was the investing of this ancient and honourable word with a sinister significance, making it at once a term of reproach and the plague and torment of our lives’ (Repplier, p.5, quoted in Fellows, 1959, p. 184). While the word’s origins lie in warfare, emerging from the religious torment of the Thirty Years War when Pope Gregory XV created the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in 1622 (Finch, p.367) – as Will Irwin observed, the word ‘propaganda’ did not have a ‘miasmic aura’ until the aftermath of the war (Irwin, p.3, quoted in Fellows, 1959, p.184).

By the 1920s, several landmark publications, some fictional, others non-fiction, began to challenge the entire moral edifice upon which the Great War had been built. In the immediate aftermath of the war, people began to question the moral legitimacy of the war against Germany. Eventually war guilt came to rest squarely upon the shoulders of the Allied propagandists themselves. The members of the Union of Democratic Control, of whom British parliamentarian and influential counter-propagandist Arthur Ponsonby was a member,

believed that ‘British propaganda lay at the heart of all that was wicked about [the war’s] outbreak and conduct’ (Badsey, p.27). Ponsonby was one of the first and possibly most vehement and influential critics of First World War atrocity propaganda. He wrote in his book *Falsehood in Wartime*, ‘This is no plea that lies should not be used in wartime, but a demonstration of how lies *must* be used in wartime. If the truth were told from the outset, there would be no reason and no will for war’ (Ponsonby, p.27).

Ponsonby’s assumption that a war can only be sold through lies is problematic, and perhaps a little simplistic. As public relations theorists argue today, truth is a much more effective way to sell a message (Bowen, 2007). Despite the gross generalisations and bombastic caricaturing of Germans, some atrocity propaganda did in fact relate to real events – this in turn partially illuminates why atrocity propaganda from the First World War was regarded by the populace as credible - not because they were ‘ignorant’ (Ponsonby, 1928, p.26 ) but because of the surrounding context of the war. As strange as it may seem today, atrocity propaganda often told the truth. The attacks on the civilian towns of Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool by the German Navy were portrayed in posters, and reflected concern amongst the British populace about the possibility of continued attacks on civilians by German forces.

By separating First World War propaganda from its surrounding historical context, historians were (consciously or unconsciously) drawing upon the ‘hypodermic needle’ definition of propaganda, in which the populace is injected with the political poison of the day by the government. However, how the production and reception is much more complex than this. It is important therefore to provide an alternate definition of propaganda to replace the hypodermic needle theory for a more subtle one. As David Welch observed, ‘Most writers today agree that propaganda confirms rather than converts – or at least is more effective when the message is in line with existing opinions and beliefs of most consumers’ (Welch, p. xviii). For example, in Australia, propaganda was actually sometimes produced by the community, as the government was dependent upon volunteers to distribute and sometimes even design the posters.

Thus, in order to seriously assess the role of atrocity propaganda in the British and Allied home fronts during the war, one must firstly recognise that propaganda is *not* an independent entity capable of manufacturing hatred out of thin air. It is instead a medium which draws upon the concerns and hopes of its time – in short, it is a historically situated



form of communication. While propaganda can help to influence historical outcomes, it is also a product of history, events and existing moral structures. In the historical period under examination in this paper, it formed part of the narrative of sense making that emerged as the moral confusion of war took hold. Certainly, propaganda influenced history through the broadcast of particular viewpoints – but these viewpoints were not just created by propagandists - they drew upon centuries of discussion about the laws of war. In order to be effective, propaganda must ‘make sense of political and social reality to the point that the propaganda message will become significant of a whole political cosmology’ (Taithe and Thornton, p.2). In a democratic nation, propaganda simply cannot be persuasive if it does not contain existing societal morals and fears. As Jacques Ellul explained, ‘Propaganda must not only attach itself to what already exists in the individual, but also express the fundamental currents of the society it seeks to influence’ (Ellul, p.38). Thus not only does it influence society, it is influenced by society.

The hypodermic needle theory is highly misleading in that it describes an opposite reality, one in which propaganda creates a new and completely fabricated reality and imposes it upon the world. Yet when examined, this is an absurd proposition. War propaganda of course is as much a product of its historical circumstances as the human beings who produced it. Moreover, in democratic countries real and compelling events must take place for people to begin to be willing to go to war – to sacrifice sons or husbands, or indeed even their own lives. Propaganda alone cannot achieve this level of commitment. Perhaps the tail has wagged the dog on occasion, but it is doubtful. What makes propaganda of the mendacious kind so powerful is not that it can manufacture new realities out of thin air, but that it insinuates itself into existing threats.

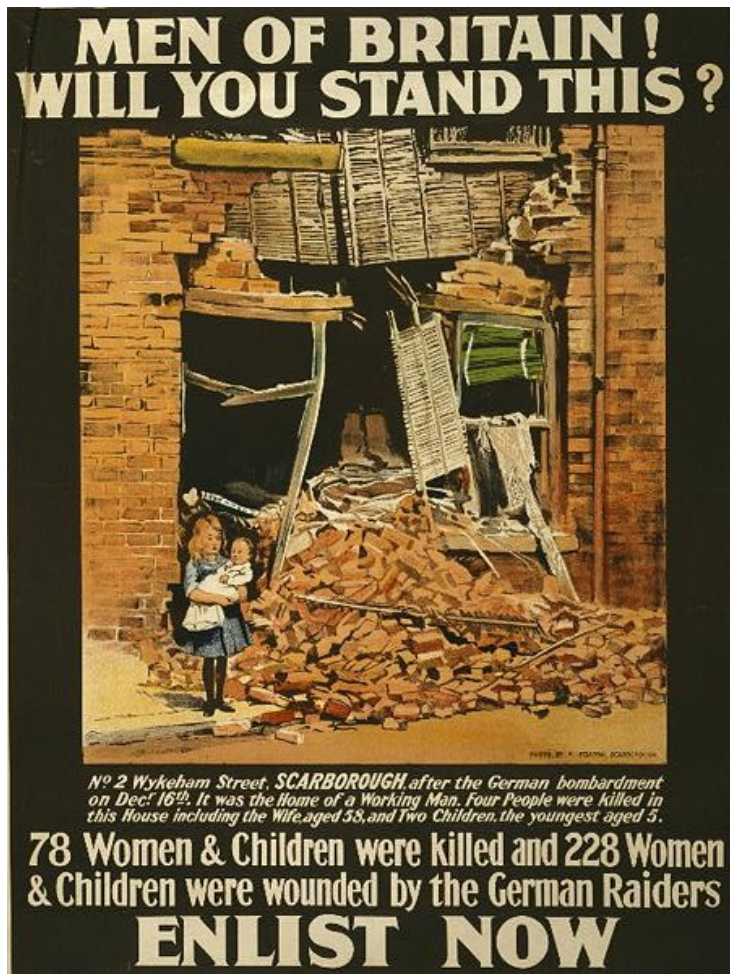
Therefore, the idea that the Germans had abandoned their humanity through attacks on Belgian civilians was made much more credible when their navy attacked small British towns. German Zeppelin raids in Great Britain also added credibility to the idea that the German Military had little respect for civilian lives. During the war aerial bombardment killed 1,413 Britons and wounded 3,408, many of whom were civilians. This is a significant number of people, and as James Morgan Read speculated, galvanised support for the war in that more men attended recruiting centres immediately after Zeppelin raids (Read, p.192). However, these historical circumstances have mostly been neglected by scholars, who have preferred to isolate particular kinds of atrocity from the broader context of the war.



An article by Nicoletta Gullace is an excellent example of this tendency. She analysed the relationship between atrocity propaganda and international law through the prism of a feminist framework. By analysing the significance of atrocity propaganda as a ‘conscious use of gendered violence to justify military, foreign, and domestic policy’ (Gullace, p.715). Gullace claimed that the British government used atrocity propaganda to ‘explain the arcane language of international law to a democratic public increasingly empowered to support or reject its enforcement.’ In her argument, she envisaged First World War propaganda as following a logical trajectory, in which atrocity propaganda was part of a *symbolic* domestication of the war for a British audience (Gullace, p.716).

She was certainly incorrect in describing atrocity propaganda merely as a symbolic activity, because as stated before, the Germans themselves ‘domesticated’ British atrocity propaganda themselves in 1914 when they shelled Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby, killing numerous non-combatants. ‘Remember Scarborough’, a poster produced by the British Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC) just before the close of that year was a ‘typical’ atrocity poster, invoking the deaths of women and children at the hands of the German barbarian: ‘the Germans who brag of their “CULTURE” have shown what it is made of by murdering defenceless women and children at SCARBOROUGH’. (IWM PST 5089) Yet Gullace does not mention these particular items of atrocity propaganda in her article, nor does she mention the attacks themselves. Although the author does mention Charles Masterman’s use of ‘attacks on unarmed towns’ she does so only very fleetingly through the use of a quote by Masterman. In this manner, Gullace creates the impression that the attacks on towns were merely part of a constructed narrative produced by British propagandists who ‘skilfully played on humanitarian sentiment’, *not* real events with serious consequences for unarmed civilians (Gullace, pp.737 - 738). By omitting the posters produced in response to direct attacks against British civilians, Gullace omitted the broader historical context in which atrocity propaganda was produced and received.

Indeed, early British atrocity propaganda was reasonably tame, as evidenced in a poster published in 1915, which contains the following text under the image of a bombed out house: ‘No.2 Wykenham street, SCARBOROUGH, after the German bombardment on Dec.r 16th. It was the Home of a Working Man. Four People were killed in this House including the Wife, aged 58, and Two Children, the youngest aged 5. 78 Women and Children were killed and 228 Women and Children were wounded by the German Raiders ENLIST NOW’. *Image 6*



*Image 6. IWM PST 5119, Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, Great Britain, 1915.*

Admittedly, the image does include a little girl standing in front of the wreckage with her doll, and the text focuses upon women and children as victims rather than the male non-combatant victims. However, this poster is nonetheless reasonably factual, and relies upon German attacks on English soil to ‘domesticate’ the situation for the British rather than solely rely upon the tropes of hysterical and helpless women and children.

Moreover, as has been previously mentioned, the most memorable (and detested) atrocity propaganda about attacks on women and children in Belgium has recently been reappraised. Since the close of the Great War, historians have dismissed claims that Belgian women were raped by German soldiers. It is only recently that academics have reassessed some of these claims as based on reality (Horne and Kramer, 2001, p. 71; Gregory, 2008, p. 308). Although Horne and Kramer mention atrocity propaganda in a footnote of their article about the German invasion of Belgium (which was the first serious attempt to reconstruct what happened following the war), as they say ‘there is no comprehensive analysis of the atrocity propaganda in the First World War (Horne and Kramer, 1994, p.4). For a serious

analysis to occur, it must also acknowledge the events that would have influenced the populace to believe it.

In this light, a reassessment of Great War propaganda has recently begun (although not in relation to atrocity propaganda). In 2012, David Monger extensively explored official British home front propaganda, and in doing, so rejected the condescension of previous historians by engaging with its greater role as an extension of community values. He concluded his book thus: 'What this book has hopefully shown is the value of taking such patriotic language seriously as an expression of sentiments considered valid and meaningful by their proponents and at least some portions of the population at large. Rather than an 'obsolete language', explorers of First World War patriotism may find a set of ideas that remained vibrant, relevant and resonant to those who lived through the period' (Monger, p.247). However, atrocity propaganda itself, to date, has retained its status as the emblem of the lies and deceit employed by government into duping young men into fighting an unnecessary war.

Yet atrocity propaganda too represented ideas that were 'relevant and resonant' to those who lived through the Great War. The ideals contained in atrocity propaganda were particular to those of the early twentieth century. Because of the legacy of the 1899 Peace Conference and the 1907 Hague Conventions, wars of the twentieth century were different from previous wars (Finch, p.xii). In many nations, there was a growing sense of optimism, amongst pacifists and socialists that war itself could be prevented. More pragmatically, it was believed by many that war could be limited in a way that would make it more humane (Kramer, 2007, p.25). Some countries such as the United States (who remained neutral until 1917) were strongly committed to the humanitarian ideas contained in these new laws. Allan Kramer explains:

The shock and outrage felt by contemporaries in the countries of Germany's victims and in neutral states can be explained not only by the breach of international law. It was also because the killing of civilians and the destruction of cultural monuments during the entire war did not, with the exception of aerial bombardment, even involve complex modern technology or long-range artillery fire, but unsophisticated weapons...most of such killing was done face to face...In this sense, too, German warfare was held at the time to represent a reversion to barbarism (Kramer, 2007, p.27).

However, as Kramer then points out, the Germans were in fact ahead of their time, in that they had already adopted the ruthless doctrine of Total War. In this definition of war, all

civilians are legitimate targets, because all civilians contribute to the war effort. It was not until the Second World War that the Allies embraced this attitude and wholeheartedly engaged in a series of ‘morale bombing’ campaigns against civilians in Japan and Germany. However, during the First World War, there was a gulf of understanding between the Allies and the Germans about what constituted the ‘best’ way to conduct a war. In the case of Germany, it did not include the protection of non-combatant civilians or their property. Horne and Kramer have argued that ‘from the outset, the German response was endorsed, regulated and generalised’ through to the very top of the government – the Kaiser. In a telegram from the Kaiser to President Wilson on the 7th September, German atrocities against Belgians were defended by him, as Germans had been forced to “take the most drastic measures in order to punish the guilty and to frighten the blood-thirsty [Belgian] population from continuing their work of vile murder and horror’. Further to this Horne and Kramer quoted the diary of General Karl von Einem, who noted in his diary that he had ordered “all the houses burned and the inhabitants shot” in reprisal for supposed Belgian resistance’ (Horne and Kramer, 2000, *War Between Soldiers and Enemy Civilians*, p.158). Isabel Hull goes even further in relation to German atrocities in Belgium and France: ‘Neither the Wartime German government nor the Weimar parliament denied them. Instead, they defended them as regrettably necessary reprisals against illegal franc-tireurs (whom subsequent scholarship has shown did not exist) the object of the atrocities was to force civilian obedience and to re-create in the occupied zones the reliable order of home’ (Hull, pp. 210-11).

Conversely, amongst the Allies and neutral nations there was a genuine belief that war had been made more civilised, and that those who indulged in violence against civilians had regressed into medieval barbarism. These differences are reflected in two documents, one from Australia and one from Germany, which relate to international law and the conduct of the military. So important were the concepts laid out in Hague in 1899 and 1907 that they were distributed to Australian troops in a booklet. In the *Notes on the Laws and Customs of War*, which was written for the Australian Imperial Force in 1914, Ambrose Pratt wrote ‘The British Empire is making war against German soldiers, not against peaceful German citizens’. Pratt continues, ‘Civilians – men, women and children – were in olden times at the mercy of an invading army. This cruel doctrine has been abolished. Under the modern laws of war, civilians are entitled to enjoy security for their persons and property so long as they shall remain quiescent and refrain from hostile attempts against the invading troops’ (Pratt, p.1.). The German doctrine, however, stated the opposite. In the *German Handbook of*

*International Law*, it stated that ‘war is in its essence violence, [and] the violent force of the conqueror in the conquered land is *completely unlimited*. [my emphasis]’ (*German Handbook of International Law*, 1915, quoted in Kramer, 2007, p.26).

Thus, the Germans and the Allies had profoundly different conceptions of the best way to *ideally* conduct a war (this is not to say that the Allies were not guilty of war crimes against civilians too). Where German military doctrine was dangerously pragmatic towards civilians, Australian and Great British doctrine strove to encompass the violent contradictions of war by creating a rule bound theatre of war in which the line between the military and civilians was clear, and never to be blurred. Allied atrocity propaganda reflected these differences in doctrine. In Great Britain and Australia, idealism about the moral responsibilities of soldiers towards civilians provided a vital propaganda message, which was that ‘the enemy of the Allies [was] a brutal barbarian whose defeat was essential to the survival of civilised life on the planet’ (Roetter, p.66).

This belief assisted these governments to inspire the populace to support and sustain a long and relentless war. Atrocity propaganda of the Great War therefore was more than a simple series of hate messages generated by the government to manipulate the populace. It is also an important historical source for modern historians, as it reflects the deep and enduring moral convictions held by both the populace and government about how war should be conducted. It portrayed real military actions conducted by the Germans against civilians, as evidenced by the posters about attacks on civilian British towns. Moreover, it did not simply create fantasies about the rape of Belgian women by German soldiers, as these events also occurred. Therefore, the enduring perception in histories of the First World War that atrocity propaganda was inherently mendacious is extremely problematic, particularly as it has left a historiographical legacy of misinterpretation about why people supported the war.

By investigating the deep cultural beliefs held about war in Great Britain and Australia, and coupling them with the military conduct of the Germans during the course of the war, this paper has demonstrated that atrocity propaganda cannot be clearly comprehended without investigating the historical context in which it was produced and received. Through rejecting the ‘hypodermic needle’ model, and adopting a more complex one which acknowledges that propaganda is historically situated, a broader picture of how atrocity propaganda functioned during the Great War has begun to be formed.

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## **Rethinking *PR*: Epistemic tensions of the public relations disciplines**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The premise of the present paper is a reflection on the episteme of public relations viewed as an evolving discipline, founded at the fragile limit between social and human sciences.

By its social fundamentals and functions, public relations could be defined as a hybrid science of *economy* (meaning originally in Greek the administration of the household) and *society* (referring originally to the member associations or Roman “societies” or to “companies” in the modern meaning of the word). In that sense, the reconsideration of the discipline would refer to include in its research portfolio the examination of the local cultural values of various forms of membership and social relations: “The communicative relations amongst these associations in civil society, between civil society and politics, between politics and the market economy (together forming the political economy), and the presentational activities of government itself are the four social sites of PR”, asserts Kevin Moloney in his metaphoric interpretation of the “great Niagara of PR” (2006, p. 5).

In this paper, we attempt to expand the methodology of public relations beyond the boundaries of the four social sites mentioned by Moloney. Our endeavour is not exceptional. In fact, all studies or expert positions argue that we are facing major changes in the profession of public relations, with probable effects for the entire paradigm. Our argument supports the re-examination of the discipline from the humanistic angle and expands the margins of the PR discipline towards similar hybrid disciplines such as cultural history. Our point aims at reconsidering the “public” roots of the relations, namely the power of public man and of his public history, which incorporates both collective and individual experiences to the degree where that can shape and build a unit of meaning (be it *discourse*, *story*, *image*, *reputation* or *fame*). This approach would enrich the theoretical interpretations of the public sphere as well as the field of applications of public relations.

Analysing public relations with the methods of cultural history is not very common since the PR discipline has become an instrument of global business and its examination is often incorporated into the study of other organisational disciplines such as social marketing or consumer culture. On the one hand, being a young discipline, it suffers from epistemic tensions, because of the separation of the scientific domains - history and cultural studies opposite to social sciences and business communication; on the other hand, the academic communities not always adopt similar discourse and methodologies because of the primary specialisation of the concerned researchers.

The paper is structured in two parts: the first one is theoretical and examines the epistemic tensions created by the fact that public relations is a new disciplines, using subjects and research methods migrated from formal disciplines (cf. Dogan & Pahre, 1990). We shall outline the fact that dominant paradigms in public relations have neglected the humanistic roots of public relations although the disciplines of language and communication have been treated in the humanistic studies long before their second formalisation in the social, political and organisational sciences. The applied part of this paper consists in placing public relations in the vicinity of cultural history as a discipline whose object of research is the examination of the presence of the “corporate” and “public” man in certain cultural and historical settings (societies). We shall examine the public presence of the Romanian merchants, the public issues in the corporate life (and their connections to ethnic groups of merchants). We shall examine the multicultural public sphere which was the product of the creative tension between West and East, Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and by the geographical fact of being placed in the commercial roads from Constantinople/ Istanbul to Vienna or Leipzig.

Key words: cultural history, epistemology, humanities, hybridisation in social sciences, collective memory.

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## **Tracking the rise and rise of internal communication from the 1980s**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines historical development of internal communication. It found the roots of modern day practice lie in 19<sup>th</sup> century publications originally written by and for employees that were subsequently edited by former journalists, who became known as industrial editors in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their desire for journalistic freedom involved gaining management support at the expense of employee involvement. Periods of industrial unrest saw publications used predominantly for propaganda and persuasion. Although dominance of this journalistic approach was challenged at several points, the importance of the employee voice was not recognised until the mid-1990s, with emergence of social media and a return to valuing personal communication. Professionalism in internal communication has shifted from the industrial editor to the qualified practitioner. Rather than progressive phases, the paper found a resistance to change but argues practitioners need to be agents of change rather than reactive reporters of news.

*Keywords:* internal communication; company magazine; industrial editors; professionalism; employee voice; agents of change

### **1. Introduction**

The role of internal communication within public relations has often been ignored in the literature (Yeomans, 2006) although there is growing recognition of its importance (Zerfass

et al., 2011). This paper sets out to examine historical developments in order to determine whether internal communication reflects a continuous historiography with distinct phases or if it has been influenced by 'critical incidents' either within or outside the field.

From a public relations perspective, internal communication is firmly part of the strategic corporate communication mix (Welch & Jackson, 2007) with a focus on a distinct 'audience'. However, in many organisations it reports into the human resources department, or is viewed as 'internal marketing', suggesting the discipline does not have a solid historic foundation. The importance of establishing a recent history of internal communication, underpinned by understanding of its origins, is to inform the current trajectory of travel and determine whether the past can help give practitioners a stronger voice in the public relations literature and practice.

Existing internal communication literature pays cursory attention to its historical antecedents, which are often summarised in developmental stages. Pilkington (2012) aligns internal communication to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four stages (although without indicating any historical data to this approach), describing these as: entertaining, informing, persuading and employee engagement. Smith and Mounter (2008) cite three evolutionary phases proposed by Brandon (1997), to which they assign the labels: industrial relations (pre-1960s), realistic journalism (1960s-1980s) and marketing (post-1980s). They contend a fourth stage could be added to include listening and employee contributions. Brandon (1997) does not provide any evidence to support his progressive model, using it mainly to argue for employee communication as "the marketer of management strategy to employees". Melcrum (2012) presents three evolutionary eras: craft experts (1940-1960), strategic partners (1960-2000) and organisational connectors (21<sup>st</sup> century), again with no justification for their segmentation.

Definitions of internal communication support a focus on the discipline as grounded in stakeholder theory (Welch & Jackson, 2007), direction of information flow (Kim, 2007) and efficient provision of information (Vercic et al., 2012). The distinction reflects conceptualisation within separate academic and professional heritages. Employee engagement emerges from human resource management and organisational psychology, whilst concentration on transmission of information falls within corporate communications (Welch, 2011).

This study considers the relevance of linear explanations of the historical development of internal communication whilst drawing on the approach of Lamme and Russell (2010) to

establish a set of parameters for understanding the past, and suggesting opportunities for future research.

The methodology employed has primarily involved investigating literature and artefacts as sources. In particular, the archive of the Institute of Internal Communication (IoIC) provided materials from 1949 to date. Additional input has been sought through direct communication with people who could add personal insight or knowledge of key incidents (see Acknowledgements).

## **2. Introducing the employee publication**

The origins of formal internal communication lie within the increasingly industrialised society of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to meet the need to replace “the loss in personal contact between employer and employee” (Haynes, 1922, p.81) with a written publication “as a means of communication between the members of the organisation”.

In 1834, the German nationalist economist, Friedrich List, advised a group of German factory owners to set up newspapers for their employees (Nessman, 2000), although the first recorded company magazine appears to have been the *Lowell Offering*, “written, edited and published by female operatives” between 1840-45 at the New England Lowell Cotton Mills (Mercer, 1948, p.406). Despite the appearance of independence, a former worker is quoted as claiming the *Offering* was “controlled by corporation influences” (*Voice of Industry*, 1845). This reflects an on-going question regarding the extent to which employees are engaged in creating and contributing towards publications.

The British soap manufacturer, Lever Brothers, introduced its *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, “written for and by employees” in 1895 (Black, 2007, p.134); which was superseded by *Progress* magazine in 1899, which sought employee input but was edited by the company. Similarly, Turner (2011) claimed that although clerical staff originated railway staff magazines debuting in the 1880s, they reflected the interests of management rather than railway workers, which he attributed to the clerks’ position within the companies’ hierarchy. Again, the German industrialist, Krupp launched an employee newspaper and established a film department for internal communication in the early 1900s (Hediger, 2009), which Fear (2005) argued reflected a culture of authoritarian control, suggesting any communication would reflect the company voice.

Black (2007, p.131) observed that the majority of early company magazines were “of the company, funded and edited by the company, and produced in the name of the company,

even though material to fill the pages of the publication may have emanated from the staff. Few magazines were edited and produced solely by the workforce”.

The concept of a company publication developed simultaneously in many countries including the U.S., U.K., Germany, India (Gupta, 2005) and Canada (Germain, 1996). Some early company publications had a global reach, which Black (2007) argues served to improve communication between staff working in different locations; noting a circulation of a quarter of a million for the Lever Brothers *Progress* magazine by the early 1920s. Others launched local versions: the National Cash Register (NCR) publication, *National Post*, was introduced in Britain in 1899 (Rickards, 1974), sixteen years after the company introduced its U.S. employee magazine, *NCR News* (Mercer, 1948). Mercer (1948) observed notable growth of company publications in the U.S. from 1900; listing thirty-five titles first issued before 1910, although an unknown number had disappeared without record by the 1940s. A survey by the University of Chicago in 1921 (Haynes, 1922) found a quarter of publications had originated before 1917, with 65% reaching at least 1,000 workers. Mercer (1948) indicated that although the number of publications increased to 1928, it fell by over half by 1930, and remained low until 1936, after which there was a renewed interest in response to industrial tensions with the number published reaching 1,000 by the end of 1941 (double the 1928 level) and over 5,000 by 1945. By 1948 the company publication was prevalent in American industry, despite being a significant investment, with a circulation of 40,000,000 copies distributed each month, and an estimated total expenditure of \$50,000,000 a year (Mercer, 1948). In Britain, paper rationing during the 1940s impacted on production, but the formation of the British Association of Industrial Editors (BAIE) in 1949 marked a renewed focus on the employee publication (Wilson, 1974).

### **3. Propaganda or freedom: the editorial dilemma**

The establishment of the employee publication reflected recognition of the importance of employee relations, stimulated in the U.S. by the development of management theories as evidenced in the Hawthorne Studies conducted between 1924 and 1933 at the Western Electric Company factory near Chicago (Hassard, 2012). Western Electric reflected the industrial paternalism common in pioneering companies. However Hassard (2012, p.1431) described this as “hard-edged” and “tough-minded anti-unionism”, while Beirne (1957) noted management introduced employee welfare programmes to deter organised labour. The American Plan (Heale, 1990) of industrial relations applied employee communication to sell the benefits of company policy, with company magazines “a central component of postwar

welfare-capitalist initiatives” (Brown, 2005, p.142). Two decades later, Powlison (1947) similarly favoured internal communication as a means of reducing industrial unrest, whilst observing indifference among workers who failed to be engaged in the corporate information provided to them.

In America, Brown (2005) observed the emergence of personnel departments after the First World War, which valued employee magazines as an efficient form of communication. These publications were increasingly produced by “the qualified editor” (Mercer, 1948) with Henry (1972, p.105) citing U.S. data published in 1966 indicating that one in three journalists who gave up working in mass media within ten years of qualifying joined “house organs or subsidized trade papers”. This raises the editorial dilemma between corporate control and the independent viewpoint of editors who saw themselves as “journalists in industry”, acting “for the express benefit of a community of whom we ourselves are part” (Samain, 1956, p.54).

In 1961, Smith (p.61) argued the industrial editor should be distinct from public relations, although research in 1957 revealed 63% of public relations departments had responsibility for employee publications (Bird & Yutzy, 1957) and less than 30% of industrial editors worked full time on publications (Wilson, 1974). Smith (1961a, p.61) claimed company publications support employee “morale-building” with news that is “related to them and to their jobs”. This informative role is emphasised by A.G. Wareham (1956), editor of the *Daily Mail* who considered the internal publication should reflect the appearance and composition of external newspapers. The leading British industrialist, Lord Stokes (n.d.) advised industrial editors to “fight to produce a paper which is credible, attractive to its readers, and not just a management propaganda sheet”; a point reflected in his company’s newspaper *Leyland Mirror* that included criticism of management (Snobel, 1975). This attitude appears to mark a shift in the 1970s. Consultant Frank Jefkins is cited (Snobel, 1975) as arguing that internal publications should be used to convince employees of “management’s ability to run the business profitably” rather than their traditional remit to “maintain staff loyalty” act “as an entertaining management gift” or “a pulpit for paternal management”.

Smith (1961b, p.193) claimed the concept of ‘industrial editor’ emerged after the Second World War, changing from a task allocated to the amateur staff member to a position fulfilled by a qualified journalist to a specialist occupation with claims to be a profession. However, this progressive perspective diminishes the input of employees in favour of the professional communicator, yet reinforces the position of the internal publication firmly under management control. Indeed, Bell (1973) argued industrial editors had won the confidence of management by taking a professional approach to their role that carried the responsibility of



being “a member of the management team” (p.7), rather than believing the role is an independent or detached one.

This focus on professionalisation of a technical editorial function at the expense of employee involvement appears to have taken internal communication away from the belief of Alexander Heron, who in 1942, argued that employee communication is “a two-way sharing of information; it is not a persuasion or propaganda campaign; it requires the freedom and opportunity to ask questions, get answers and exchange ideas” (cited Hay, 1974). Thirty years later, Churchill (1974) noted a credibility gap with companies believing “the mere existence of a journal solves their communications problem”. He stated that unless employees are provided some involvement or control of house journals, critical underground publications are likely to emerge to campaign against management.

D’Aprix (1979, p.25) contended the problem was the focus on the role as a journalistic one charged with managing “broad-circulation media” rather than as an organisational communicator addressing strategic issues. This emphasises human relationships rather than a mechanistic production perspective of communication. D’Aprix positioned corporate communicators as proactive “foreshadowers and interpreters of change” (p.26) instead of reactive journalists or reporters of news. Although he questioned the competence of corporate communicators to respond to the challenge, D’Aprix highlights the theme of facilitating interpersonal rather than mass media communication, in order to build employee relationships and in effect, fulfil the prescience of Heron. Leading into the 1980s, the suggestion is that the focus on professional production of employee publications came at the expense of effective internal communication.

#### **4. New technologies and new thinking challenge the dominance of the house organ**

The 1980s and 1990s were periods of global economic change, driven primarily by technology. In the U.K., this period is associated with political change, industrial unrest and individualism linked to ‘Thatcherism’. In the U.S., according to Wright, (1995) the 1980s brought a period of brutal, global competition where corporate performance was measured mainly on the price of a company’s stock. Achieving improved performance meant cutting the fat to the bone including shifting a number of manufacturing jobs to highly motivated foreign workers. Quate (1986) reported that in the U.S., attitudes and values of the nation's workforce were changing. Employees were reported to increasingly expect their companies to do something about their problems and at all levels they were complaining that they wanted and needed a lot more information than their companies provided.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Bland (1980) argued that internal communication has to be put into perspective as an important management tool. Parsloe (1980, p.19) reported that the CBI emphasised that it was management's job to communicate to all employees and it was "dangerous" to rely on the unions to communicate management's message. However, there is evidence that communication was often an afterthought. Holmes (1986) reported that only 34% of shop floor workers believed that management cared about the welfare of employees. The presentation to a workforce of a blunt choice between changing its working way of life at a weekend's notice or picking up its cards, as in the case of the Murdoch move of newspapers to Wapping, is reported as "an act of gross insensitivity" (Holmes, 1986). According to Quirke (cited in Knight & Knight, 2009) the 1980s reflect a time of change communication in the U.K. related to large-scale issues such as privatisation and health service reforms. An advertising approach, based on presenting the case for change with an exciting picture of the future, logos, and a 'what's in it for you' reflects a period of persuasion.

The house journal still dominated practice in the 1980s and Parsloe (1980) correctly predicted that there would be considerable attitude barriers to be overcome before new methods of employee communication would be introduced. The question of editorial freedom is raised again by Bland (1980, p.60) who advises that the company newspaper "must have a high degree of editorial freedom...management have to learn that although they're paying for the paper it's in their worst interests to exercise a journalistic *droigt de seigneur* on its contents". Bland goes on to suggest that the occasional piece of management propaganda can be included, but only if it clearly states who wrote it. There is little evidence in the archives to suggest that this guidance was followed. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) argument for the emergence of a new era of internal communication, described as open, was premature. Indeed, at the time they highlighted a preoccupation with internal communication technique that led to a conclusion that a great deal of money was spent on achieving a degree of journalistic slick which did little in communicating to employees but did much to satisfy the egos of communications technicians.

Feedback receives minimal attention in the literature and where it is discussed (Quate, 1986) it is related to company newspapers. In one rare case, the policy of a company newspaper was to print all communication from employees except those judged to be too personal or individual (such as a complaint about a particular supervisor). Analysis of the feedback items indicated that company policies and procedures were of concern to employees. Bland (1980) emphasised the importance of two-way communication, arguing that without feedback the line between information and propaganda can be lost. However,

Bland points out that two-way communication should not be consultation; it is about telling employees something then asking them about the details.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) highlight potential differences between external and internal publics in claiming that unlike external publics an organisation has the power to create different kinds of employee publics. This is because management has the ability to change tasks, constraints and involvement. The practical implications of this are left under-explored as the ensuing development of the excellence model of public relations is drawn primarily into the external communication arena. A two-way approach was described as making publications more employee-centred than management centred although this in itself is not dialogical and Grunig and Hunt (1984) also argue that symmetrical programmes also use many non-traditional, non-print media and techniques that emphasise interpersonal communication and dialogue with management.

By the end of the 1980s the processes of internal communication were becoming more established. An Institute of Directors (IoD) survey in 1989 found that in companies with more than 1,000 employees, 80% had some sort of planned communication system, an increase of 30% in five years. Presentations from top management are also reported as being more prevalent (Knight and Knight, 2009). The development of practice resulted in debate in 1989 about changing the name of the British Association of Industrial Editors (BAIE) to the preferred choice, the Institute of Corporate Communications. However, a majority vote was not secured, so the name remained the same until 1995 when it was changed to British Association of Communicators in Business, branded as CiB (Knight & Knight, 2009).

Wright (1995) describes the 1990s as an era of downsizing and outsourcing. The concerns of employees were not so much about salary as they were about job security. However, Wright (1995) found that practice was still dominated by technical journalistic skills such as producing slick employee newsletters instead of concentrating on developing relationships with employees. Indeed, Brobyn (1995) continues to argue the case for the value of house journals, in spite of the growth in use of email, videos, interactive computers and CD-ROM systems, grandly claiming that the house journal could help make a good company into a great one. A BAIE survey in the mid-1990s reveals that there were 4,000 different paper based publications in the U.K., with a combined readership of over 20 million. However, in the face of this tide of publications, Donnelly (1995) argued that these traditional approaches were not enough, highlighting a need for employees to be better informed, consulted and involved. Smythe (1997) provided a good case for a new internal communication planning role, that of information broker marrying the information needs of the audience with that of the suppliers.

Wright (1995) observes a trend in the 1990s to attempt to strengthen marketing by focusing on the customer. In a rare example of connecting internal communication to what would now be termed 'employee engagement', Wright suggested that the 1990s brought a renewed importance to the concept of discretionary effort for employee communication. He described this as a theory that concerns those things individuals expend above and beyond what's needed to do the basic job and the idea of going out of one's way to do those things you're not expected to do. Towards the end of the 1990s changes in practice were emerging that included a growing appreciation of the importance of involving employees. Clutterbuck and James (1997) argued that the internal communication function was one of the fastest growing management disciplines. In the U.K., it was claimed that two-thirds of internal communication departments were formed between 1992 and 1997. However, Clutterbuck and James (1997) also observed that many in-house practitioners had yet to get across the message that internal communication is a pervasive process on which successful business strategy depends. Their research at the time revealed that a journalistic or public relations backgrounds still predominated among internal communication practitioners and that two of the six tasks regarded as most important — facilitating feedback and motivating employees — were not among the tasks that internal communicators considered they did well.

A rare example of where practice had moved beyond publications is described by Jones (1996) at British Airways. The programme included chief executive breakfast briefings that were informal, designed for groups of 15 people and lasting around an hour. Interestingly, they were largely unstructured in terms of content, with the agenda being led by the participants. This was combined with an annual business fair. An aircraft hangar was converted into a self-contained theatre in the round, which was used for presentations. The host/facilitator was a professional television presenter but the presentations were developed and delivered internally. The final session of the day was a question and answer session at which the chief executive and four of his directors — different directors each day — took questions from the floor and from remote sites around the airline's network which were linked to the auditorium by live television. This approach reflects Grunig's (1992) conclusion that communication with the CEO and others in top management seemed to be an integral component of the symmetrical communication system that is a key attribute of an excellent organisation. At the same time Smythe (1997) points out that the role of real-time listening is a central part of the psychological good health of an organisation.

Although significant steps were taken in the 1990s to develop practice, Clutterbuck and James (1997) claimed that it lacked benchmarks against which performance could be

measured. What measurement there was tended to focus on inputs rather than outputs. Although many employee periodicals carried out reader surveys, relatively few evaluated the impact of them on achieving specific communication objectives, such as enhancing understanding of business goals or improving people's knowledge of the organisation. Finally, in a radical proposal at the time, Wright (1995) recommended that public relations executives recognize their ability and responsibility to function as agents of change in the corporate workplace making certain their organisations communicate honestly and regularly with employees on topics the rank-and-file workers consider important.

## **5. The engagement movement is established and qualifications underpin more strategic practice**

The first decade of the new millennium saw an economic and dot.com boom and bust. The emergence of web 2.0 and social media generated changes that have transformed the way we now communicate externally (Brown, 2009; Phillips & Young, 2009; Wright & Hinson, 2011; CIPR, 2012). This has led to similar technologies being introduced inside organisations. At the same time, a greater understanding of employee engagement has emerged (Welch, 2011) and, in times of austerity, this led to increasing government interest in engagement, especially in the U.K., which has an employee engagement deficit (Rayton et al., 2012). Other factors, such as greater regulation, the complexities of different national labour laws and the importance of maintaining a “licence to operate” have all led to a greater focus on internal communication (Quirke, 2008, p.xii). As a result, it has become a more strategic function in the last decade and it has been consistently identified as a key area of communication practice, growing in importance (Zerfass, et al., 2010).

According to Miller (2012), 55% of internal communication practitioners in the U.K. believe that they are expected to have a good understanding of social media and an additional 33% felt they are expected to ‘know all about’ social media. However, a pilot study in Europe (Friedl & Vercic, 2011) suggests that digital native employees still prefer more traditional channels, such as e-mail newsletters, intranet news, and employee meetings. Silverman (2012) highlights significant barriers for organisations to embrace internal social media, including; knowledge and understanding – about how to mobilise communities, leadership – a lack of skills and awareness and loss of control, fear – of failure, change, and unwillingness (or inability) to commit sufficient and sustained resources to internal communication. As Huang et al. (2012) observe, internal social media enables multi-directional rhetorical practices but the extent of participative behaviour by employees is determined by dominant

norms. Confidence and trust is a prerequisite, not just trust in the technology but in the intentions of management as well. The culture of the organisation is therefore a critical consideration and this may explain why the use of internal social media has lagged behind that for external social media.

As society became more mobile and with the growth of wireless communication and cloud services, the potential for employees to use their own devices for access to internal systems opened up more opportunities and challenges for internal communication. According to research conducted by BT (2012), almost four in five (77%) employers now permit the use of personal devices at work and almost half (47%) of employees already use their own devices for work purposes. The benefits cited for using personal devices have so far largely ignored the potential increase in employee engagement through the improved ability to connect with 'unconnected' employees.

In the last decade, a more sophisticated understanding of employee engagement has emerged. In a U.K. government sponsored review, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) identified 50 definitions of employee engagement. These often focus on either a job or organisational level, differentiated by Saks (2006) as individual role performance or the contingency of performance based on economic and socio-emotional resources received from the organisation. Saks found that organisational engagement is a much stronger predictor of outcomes than job engagement. MacLeod and Clarke (2009, p.9) conclude that that engagement is broader than individual job factors, it is a "workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success". Alfes et al. (2010) highlight presence in work performance and connectivity. They identified a broad set of drivers; meaningfulness of work, voice - being able to feed your views upwards, senior management communication and vision, supportive work environment, person-job fit, line management style. Of these, meaningfulness and voice were highlighted as the two most important factors. Both aspects had significant implications for internal communication practice. The creation of meaning is dependent upon connection of organisational aims to jobs and understanding of deeper levels of the purpose of the organisation; these are fundamentally communicative processes. Voice is the provision of opportunities for employees to express their views and know that they are taken seriously which is also a communication process; upward feedback, that is associated with symmetrical communication (Kim, 2007).

The widening scope of the role of the internal communication practitioner was documented by Dewhurst and FitzPatrick (2007) as encompassing six facets; leader, advisor,

manager, deliverer, local agent and specialist. Twelve competencies were identified that reflect a mixture of business understanding, planning, relationship building and craft skills. Drawing on developments within the field of Human Resources, the new role of the internal communication business partner became established and as Pilkington (2012) highlights, this required a high degree of gravitas.

This is also a period of growing professionalism through education and training. In 2000, Kingston University in London launched the first postgraduate diploma in internal communication management in the U.K. It was established when senior communications managers from Parcellforce, BT and IBM approached the Industrial Society and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) with the aim of forming an association of internal communication practitioners. A key objective was to develop a qualification that would help to ensure consistent high standards and contribute to transforming the discipline into a profession. In the U.K., Melcrum, an internal communication publisher, launched its well-known Black Belt training programme in 2005. In 2008, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) launched a specialist certificate in internal communication followed in 2009 by a specialist diploma qualification, taught at Masters level. Both qualifications emphasise the linkages between internal communication and employee engagement and can be studied face-to-face or online. In 2010, the first dedicated textbook in the modern era of internal communication management, *Exploring Internal Communication*, was published to support CIPR qualifications (Ruck, 2010; 2012). In 2008-9, IoIC also launched qualifications; a foundation-level diploma of proficiency in internal communication accredited by Southampton Solent University and an advanced diploma of proficiency in internal communication. The foundation includes a significant focus on practical skills such as writing, sub-editing and proof reading, the advanced certificate takes a broader approach, both including elements of assessment by interview panels. The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) offers an accreditation programme with three stages; application, production of a portfolio, and an examination, including all elements of the communication process including ethics. More recently, in 2012, the University of Central Lancashire launched a full Masters qualification in internal communication management. This is designed for part-time students who are generally in full-time employment in a range of sectors and organisations and it is taught through a blended learning delivery course format.

Firm data for practitioners working in internal communication and completing a qualification is not available. However, more than 600 students have now completed a CIPR

specialist internal communication qualification, 130 students have completed an IoIC qualification and it is estimated that 350 people have completed the Kingston University post-graduate diploma. This represents a significant cohort of practitioners taking a more strategic approach to practice, based less on publishing skills and more on coaching senior managers and communication problem solving.

In recognition of a management led approach to internal communication, establishing the value of internal communication became important and measurement became more sophisticated (Hargie & Tourish, 2009; Ruck & Welch, 2012). In 2012, a dedicated internal communication measurement matrix was published by CIPR Inside as a framework for best practice, incorporating outputs and outcomes in the following areas; channels, content, conversations, voice, sentiment, behaviour, and ROI.

Despite the significant growth of education and training and the growing understanding of the value of internal communication, practitioners still faced significant obstacles in turning learning into strategic action. Ruck and Trainor (2011) found that 56% of practitioners spend less than 10% of their time on employee feedback/research, 81% of practitioners wanted to give more attention to employee research and feedback and 71% wanted to spend more time on strengthening line manager and team communication.

## **6. Conclusion**

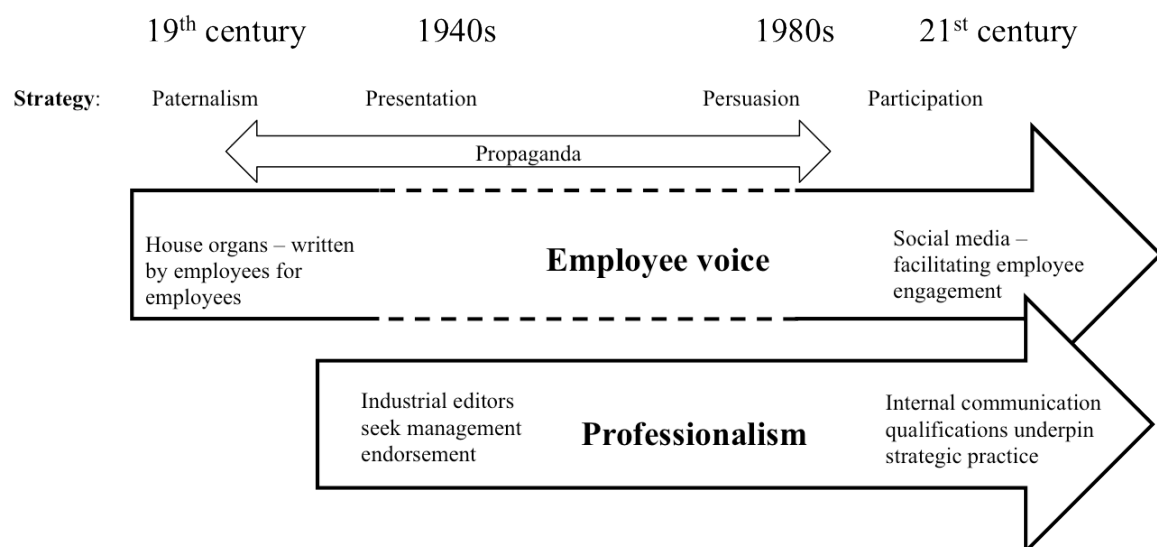
The roots of modern day internal communication practice lie in publications originally written by and for employees that were subsequently edited by former journalists who moved in-house to become industrial editors. Internal communication has been positioned as paternalistic management. However, industrial editing has overwhelmingly involved selling company policy to employees. Industrial editors have sought journalistic freedom in order to gain the support of management at the expense of employee involvement in internal communication. The dominance of a journalistic approach to communicating with employees has been challenged at several points in history, notably Heron in 1942, Churchill in 1974, D'Aprix in 1979, Grunig and Hunt in 1984, Wright in 1995 and Clutterbuck and James in 1997. However, it was not until the mid-1990s that practice started to encompass a broader approach. Figure 1 illustrates how the issues of voice and professionalism have impacted practice.

In reviewing the history of the house organ, it is curious that industrial editing was dominant for so long as it was very often management propaganda that did little to engage employees. This has to be reviewed against the prevailing social and economic conditions of



the time, primarily periods of very significant industrial unrest and power struggles with organised labour. Today, many organisations continue to over emphasise one-way communication that represents the management position only and fail to give employees the voice that they expect. However, perhaps practice is going is going full circle, with internal social media used by employees for employees becoming the equivalent of the Lever Brothers' *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, "written for and by employees" in 1895. It is still early days, but the signs are that many command and control cultures still exist and until employees trust senior managers the potential of involving employees more in internal conversations will go untapped.

As D'Aprix (1979) argued it is now time for internal communication practitioners to be more foreshadowers and interpreters of change instead of reactive journalists or reporters of news. Instead of focusing purely on impersonal media, practitioners could focus more on understanding the importance of personal communication inside organisations. They could also go further and, as suggested by Wright (1995), become agents of change in the corporate workplace making certain organisations communicate honestly and regularly with employees on topics the rank-and-file workers consider important.



**Figure 1: Voice, Professionalism and Propaganda**

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## **Frankfurt versus Bonn 1949: Revisiting the campaign to become Germany's capital city**

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This study is revisiting a somewhat peculiar competition the German public became witness of during 1948 and 1949. Since Berlin was occupied by the allied powers, the soon to be western German Federal Republic was in need of a new seat of government. Four cities entered the ensuing race, though only two could reasonably hope to be picked: Frankfurt am Main and Bonn on the banks of the river Rhine. After 12 years of totalitarianism their respective campaigns redefined political campaigning in the fledgling German democracy. The following paragraphs are therefore not just the arbitrary account of a random PR campaign, but the remarkable tale of a competition between two rivals that at the time by implication tested and set the rules of engagement for communication campaigns in a post-fascist society. This study will therefore explore not just strategies and tactics deployed, but also touch upon questions of ethical standards and practice that ultimately may feed into a discussion about a modern understanding of PR on the one hand and – on the other - concepts of propaganda the German political caste had been accustomed to in the preceding era.

A note of clarification to help us avoid a common misconception: Bonn was never Germany's capital, only seat of government. To demonstrate their conviction that the western German political entity was meant to be provisional only and would soon merge with the east into a unified German state, the constitutional assembly which had been tasked with drawing up a constitution and design institutions for the Federal Republic explicitly considered the location of government offices and parliament as a technical issue only and intentionally refused to decide on a new capital for West Germany (Nickel, 2001). Instead, it was agreed to select from a group of contenders a seat of government and parliament. Four cities had vied for support and spent months lobbying the constitutional council members. Kassel in northern Hesse stood little chance in part because of the severity of war damage and – perhaps more importantly – it was thought to be awkwardly close to the border with the Soviet sector and no western government at the time was keen to set up shop within an hour's drive of Russian tanks (Scheld, 2010) Stuttgart in the south was had lost its commercial bases during the war. It was literally bankrupt and therefore deemed unfit to provide the needed infrastructure, most

importantly office space, for a newly formed government and thousands of civil servants (Bericht der Kommission, 1974)

Frankfurt's strength and advantage in this competition was its historical reputation as Germany's political hub it had accrued in the course of centuries. Since the middle ages it was a free city that had its municipal privileges granted and guaranteed directly through the Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation (Macek, 2010). The city's cathedral had since the 14<sup>th</sup> century regularly served as meeting place for the electoral college of worldly and ecclesiastical lords that picked the Emperor who subsequently in a sacral procession was led to the town hall for his coronation. Selecting and crowning the emperor had previously been the exclusive privilege of the Pope in Rome. This historical and political transition emphasizes the status Frankfurt had gained in the course of time (Gall, 1994). After the empire's decline and fall as a result of the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Frankfurt became capital city of the German Confederation and later on focal point for movements of national freedom and unity. In 1848 St. Paul's church served as venue for the first national parliamentary assembly. Here it was decided to invite the Prussian king to accept the imperial crown of a re-united German Empire (Mick, 1997, Ribhegge, 1998). The memory of Frankfurt's role reverberated in public perceptions during 1948 and 1949 when the constitutional assembly deliberated the location for the future government.

By contrast Bonn was talked about as something of a backwater. Its leafy suburbs, historical quarters and princely Baroque style palaces were renowned and one easily got the impression that the city had been by-passed by the industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bonn was a reputable university town located between forests and rolling hills of the Rhine valley, whose beauty had been projected on canvass by English and German romantic painters alike. The prince-archbishop of Cologne had resided here in a magnificent palace and constructed fashionable hunting mansions. As far as reputation goes, its past status did not recommend Bonn as host city for a new federal government (Schnee, 2007). Frankfurt, however, for the first time in history did not have to defer to Berlin, whose informal rank as Germany's premier city for two centuries had been founded on the might of Prussian army regiments. Now the political playing field was more even and open for Frankfurt to pursue ambitious objectives (IFSG, Magistrat, Nachtraege, 337).

In summer 1948 an assembly of Germany's first ministers, that represented the new country's constituting states (Laender) had given Frankfurt's mayor Walter Kolb reason for optimism when it recorded that parliament, government and the presidential office may well

take residence in Frankfurt (BA, Buero der Ministerpraesidenten an OB der Stadt Frankfurt am Main, No. 127, 17.8.1948, Z.12/34) Yet mayor Kolb was poignantly aware that the president of the constitutional assembly Konrad Adenauer, a former mayor of Cologne and influential leader of the Christian Democratic Party, was a vocal supporter of Bonn and thus a formidable opponent (Bendix, 2002). Still throughout 1948, Frankfurt's Councillors had unshaken confidence that a decision would go in favour of their city. (IFSG, Magistrat, Nachtraege, 337, Besprechungsprotokoll der Magistratskommission zur Unterbringung des Bundesparlaments. 29.10.1948).

In the public sphere and behind the scenes support for the two major contending cities was divided largely along political party lines. Whilst Social Democrats backed Frankfurt's efforts, their competitors, the Christian Democratic Party supported Bonn, which incidentally was adjacent to the home town of their leader, Konrad Adenauer, who in the course of this year-and-a-half-long controversy was to be elected West Germany's first head of government. To wonder if his and his party's ascendancy in national politics tipped the contest is intriguing and debatable (Schwarz, 1986; Recker, 2010). Initially, Adenauer's designs received a blow when his party broke ranks and failed to unite behind its leader. The party chapter in the state of Hesse, whose largest city was Frankfurt, dissented from the party line in an attempt to show geographical loyalty. This split among Christian Democrats made Frankfurt's mayor Walter Kolb believe once more his city would carry the day. His confidence was thus that he agreed to pre-record a radio address to be broadcast in recognition of a favourable vote in the constitutional assembly (Hessischer Rundfunk, 1949).

Even though early on Frankfurt's chances were considered most promising neither contender could be sure of the final outcome. The starting point of Frankfurt's communicative efforts to position itself as suitable host for a new government date back to a symbolic but certainly not negligible decision taken by Frankfurt's mayor Walter Kolb who in 1947 made arrangements to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Germany's first national parliamentary assembly at Frankfurt's St. Paul's church, whose re-construction from war damage he had been strongly committed to. This monument's symbolic value for democracy and national unity cannot have escaped any observer's attention (Gerhardt, 2009). Perhaps more significantly, on the eve of the formal campaign to lobby the constitutional assembly members Frankfurt could confidently not just lay claim to past status, but also point at a current resurgence in fortunes: The western allies - USA, UK and France - had set up a joint office for economic coordination in a Frankfurt suburb not far from where the German



Laender – which would later merge into a West German state – regularly held meetings of their first ministers (Gerhardt, 2009).

Frankfurt's readiness to take on the task and host the government was further demonstrated by the decision taken by the municipal council and mayor Kolb to construct a parliament building well ahead of any decision about the government's future location. (IFSG, Magistrat, Nachtraege, 337, Besprechungsprotokoll der Magistratskommission zur Unterbringung des Bundesparlaments, 29.10. 1948). This building site alone would serve as evidence that Frankfurt was prepared and eager to offer the legislature a fitting home. At the same time Frankfurt's academy for education studies was earmarked to be converted into the Cabinet office and chancellery. No less spectacular was the move to immediately start rebuilding the historical opera house while most of the city centre's private homes were still in ruins. The iconic message a new opera house would send to the decision takers was unmistakable: This is a city they could not only work in, but one that despite vast war damage soon would have the amenities that rendered urban life comfortable.

Bonn in the meantime made good use of promotional opportunities that arose in 1947 and much more so in 1948. Throughout this period Bonn's interests had been actively lobbied for by the government in the state of North Rhine Westphalia whose support for Bonn dates back to 1947 when senior civil servants had been in Bonn for a professional development course. They returned with stories about friendly and caring hosts who soon had earned themselves a reputation for being both helpful and professional.

When months later a seat for the newly installed constitutional assembly was needed, Bonn's mayor and chief executive were much quicker in signaling an interest on behalf of their city than were either of their potential rivals in the region. As a result the state government of North Rhine Westphalia came round to believe that Bonn was fit for a pivotal national role and should be preferred over the much larger alternative sites: Duesseldorf and Cologne. (N80/26, Wandersleb, 1. Vermerk, 6. July, 1948). It was apparent that its municipal administration's willingness to take on a risk secured Bonn an edge over regional and national competitors who were slow in identifying and grabbing their opportunities (N80/26, Wandersleb, 1. Vermerk, 6. July, 1948). Only with delay and perhaps less persuasively other state first ministers tried to advance Koblenz, a medium sized town in the Rhineland-Palatinate, and the smallish Celle in Lower Saxony in the discussion about the location for the constitutional assembly (HSTAD, NW 53/679).

As the rivalries between the cities competing to host the constitutional assembly grew, Kolb contacted in writing the chairman of the conference of state first ministers to remind him of Frankfurt's current position as central traffic hub as well as its days of past glory that in his view deserved to be taken into consideration. This approach was countered by North Rhine-Westfalia's First Minister Karl Arnold, a champion of Bonn's candidacy, who in a letter to his peers drew attention to Bonn's attractions, not least its nostalgic charm and popularity as established holiday resort which before the war was considered to be a byword for a superior lifestyle. As far as a supportive infrastructure was concerned Arnold promised the ancient University in town would provide legal expertise and open its libraries to facilitate the work of deputies and staff working for the constitutional assembly. Most prominently, the Museum Koenig, a magnificent historical building and home to the anthropological collection, had been earmarked as the venue for the sessions of the constitutional assembly (Hoeroldt, 1974; Schumacher-Helmold, 1974)

Christian Stock who as head of the Hessian state government also acted as chairman for the assembly of state prime ministers sent a trusted assistant to visit the competing cities and to report back with the expectation to develop a clearer view of the respective strengths and weaknesses (N80/20, Bonner Geschichtsblaetter, SW23). This fact finding party reported back to him that Bonn could accommodate 500 delegates to the constitutional assembly and in surrounding cities there was more space available. 60 Restaurants were open for business, good wine bars, theatre and entertainment. Perhaps not less importantly spacious buildings had also been found to host the assembly: Apart from the Museum Koenig the constitutional assembly was allowed to use the Academy of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

The decision to choose Bonn as location for the constitutional assembly earned the city immediate international prominence. On decision day itself no less than 200 offices had to be made available as workspaces for journalists. Fifty additional telephone landlines were installed and 25 new telefon boxes erected close to the venue. This media attention could serve to magnify Bonn's relevance and to multiply the power of its voice in the ensuing debate about the seat of government. Soon Bonn's popularity was not just boosted by the satisfaction of assembly members and staff with living conditions in the city (Wandersleb, 1969). Journalists were impressed by the local administration's dedication in painstakingly preparing the city for its new role as seat of government ahead of a decision the constitutional assembly had not yet taken. Indeed from September 1948 onwards Bonn's municipal civil service set out to plan accommodation, office space and prepare logistics needed for a future

government and parliament (N 80/20 II. date missing). More specifically the municipal council in Bonn drew up and published a register that listed the city's capacity and ability to host not just the constitutional assembly and - later on – government offices as well as parliament and provide the necessary infrastructure. The overview dealt with the quality of life in town, highlighted the structurally well to do economy and celebrated the absence of heavy industry. The information also carried thinly veiled threats: If Bonn were not selected, growing dissatisfaction could grow among citizens in the region, comparable to the alienation in the 1920s when talk in the Rhine region was about breaking away from the country (N 80/20 II. date missing).

In its efforts Bonn was comprehensively backed by the state government: In a letter to the members of the constitutional assembly First Minister Arnold summarized on October 29<sup>th</sup> 1948 in great detail how the Land North Rhine Westphalia was prepared to support the new federal government if it were to set up store in Bonn. In effect he attached a list of infrastructural commitments, the core of it consisted in ten large office buildings which the state government made available to accommodate government staff free of charge. In brief Arnold promised to provide 1800 office rooms and a total of 50.000 square meters of space for politicians and their staff in Bonn (N 80/147; Bonner Geschichtsblaetter, vol. 2).

By November 1948 two features conditioned the debate: Firstly, conflict had become more and more party political with Adenauer and his supporters advocating the merits of installing the government in Bonn, whilst the SPD and southern chapters of the CDU strongly seconded Frankfurt's interests. Secondly, in Frankfurt's municipal council initial fears were heard which suggested the bid and ensuing campaign would not be plain sailing, instead the outcome was open and the political support evenly balanced. (Laufen, 1962). While the constitutional assembly in autumn and winter 1948 shirked a decision and kept postponing the delicate issue (HSTAD, NW 53/706; N 80/20) the civil servant Hermann Wandersleb on behalf of Bonn engaged in what during the coming months amounted to a full-fledged campaign that was mainly targeted at the decision makers in the constitutional assembly. In December 1949 Wandersleb addressed a letter at the members of the Social Democratic Party's executive council to plead for their support and even recruited an architect for Bonn's new council housing programme who sympathized with the SPD (W, 24). Wandersleb apparently encouraged and coordinated letters written and sent by the trade union leader Hans Boeckler who hoped to wean Social Democrats off their support for Frankfurt. (HSTAD, NW, 53/706).

As Frankfurt's municipal leadership opened up to the fact that their support was drained, they appointed the city councilor Fritz Fay to lead their campaign. Fay started a fight back by contacting the constitutional assembly and questioning Bonn's claims. He argued that expenses in Bonn would be far higher than estimated and that space for living and offices would not be available within the tight time frame. In brief, he insinuated Bonn would not meet any of the deadlines and therefore made untenable promises. (W, 77).

Late in 1948 the constitutional assembly decided to establish a parliamentary committee to look into the contenders' bids: The committee did not only peruse written material, but also visited all candidates and in the course of this process considered carefully implications a decision may have on the respective city's population and economy. Frankfurt on paper still had a strong bid and both the economic and financial arguments that were presented all seemed to favour the city located in the centre of Western Germany (IFSG, Magistratsakten, As 3.441. Protokoll Magistratssitzung, 12.2.1949). However, the mood dampened somewhat when the councilor for public works informed his colleagues that in informal meetings the committee members had painted a more critical picture of Frankfurt. They had been put off by the hustle and bustle in Frankfurt and found overall that the atmosphere in Bonn had been more welcoming. To make things worse, hotel managers in Frankfurt were found to take great care to satisfy affluent American guests in exchange for dollars. With German customers they were less welcoming (IFSG, Magistrat., Nachtraege, 338). And Kolb himself admitted that some of his municipal departments had failed to treat parliamentarians as it would have been expected (IFSG, Magistratsakten, As 3.443, Protokoll der Magistratssitzung, 3.10. 1949). Frankfurt's cause was not furthered by its campaign manager Fay who was expected to lobby for his city among members of the constitutional assembly and the constitutional committee. Instead he had acquired a notoriety for random drunkenness (IFSG, Magistrat. Nachtraege, 338, 2.11. 1949). The impression to be valued and appreciated in Bonn, the personal attention and support they received here seemed to have had dramatic impact on committee members. When on April 28<sup>th</sup> 1949 their report was submitted to the constitutional assembly Bonn's hopes seemed much improved, though its victory was far from definite. (Bonner Geschichtsblaetter, 1974). Clarity needed until May the 10<sup>th</sup> to materialize when based on the committee's recommendation the parliamentary assembly voted on Frankfurt and Bonn. Bendix argues (2002) that still on that day most observers would have confidently placed a bet on Frankfurt when members met for the constitutional assembly's decisive session. To the surprise of many Bonn carried the day by 33 to 29 votes (Hoeroldt, 1972).

What seemed like a definite decision and the end of a dispute that had been dragging on for months, didn't give the protagonists any respite. The "office Bundeshauptstadt" which on behalf of the state government of North Rhine Westphalia managed the works needed in order to turn Bonn into a seat of government was equipped with a communications unit which soon had to work extra hours as a result of spreading rumours that suggested Konrad. Adenauer had manipulated the two Christian Democratic delegates from Hesse. Indeed he had made good use of a feigned draft for a news story never intended for publication which a friendly reporter had played into Adenauer's hands. The text detailed how the Social Democratic leader Schumacher would publicly interpret a vote for Frankfurt as a shattering and lasting party political defeat for Adenauer's Christian Democrats. In an attempt to save their party from this embarrassment the two Hesssian Christian Democrat members in the constitutional assembly had little choice but to return to the fold and switch their allegiance in favour of Bonn. Since Schumacher subsequently kept denying he ever would have used a vote for Frankfurt for party political point-scoring, it appears the message may have been fabricated by Adenauer entirely for its effect on his own party and in particular two dissenting members (Bendix, 2002; Schumacher-Hellmold, 1974). The debate about manipulated parliamentarians fuelled widespread criticisms in Germany amid fears that the wrong city may have been selected. Particularly strong was the opposition voiced in the print media: 140 out of 150 leading German newspapers stood side by side with Frankfurt and none of the international papers came out in favour of Bonn (v. Wechmar, 1970).

No less of an irritant from Bonn's perspective was the persistent political opposition that demanded to revoke the decision. The state parliaments both in Hesse and in Stuttgart passed resolutions that in outright terms condemned the vote for Bonn and called it a mistake for political, geographic and historical reasons (BA, Z 12/85). The meetings of state first ministers both in May and June provided a stage for heated controversy which essentially questioned if the decision taken on 10<sup>th</sup> May was at all legitimate. Not surprisingly the occupying powers France, United Kingdom and the United States were keen to see this dispute settled for good. Bonn's envoy Wandersleb directly lobbied the American High Commissioner McCloy since it was known that the Americans in contrast to the British and French had sympathy for Frankfurt (Wandersleb, 1969). When the allied High Commissioners announced late in June that for organizational reasons they would assume that Bonn will be confirmed, Frankfurt's councilor and campaign manager Fay informed his state's first minister that this statement by the allied powers would preclude further debate and impinge on a final decision the Bundestag may want to take. (BA, Z 12/85). His fears were confirmed

when the allied commissioners agreed to withdraw military personnel from Bonn and thus accede to a fundamental condition postulated by German politicians who wanted to see their new seat of government demilitarised (Wandersleb, 1969). The *Stuttgarter Zeitung* outrightly criticized the decision by the allies as an attempt to pre-empt a vote which by now it seemed certain the national parliament, Bundestag, would want to take as soon as it was established after the first general election scheduled for autumn 1949 (HSTAD, NW 53/695). The campaigns for Frankfurt and Bonn thus did not only continue, but gained unexpected momentum when the heads of state governments confirmed on July 4<sup>th</sup> that the Bundestag would revisit all facts and take a final decision on the seat of government. This was bound to be seen as a sign of hope in Frankfurt while it strengthened Bonn's resolve to have its initial success confirmed.

The Bundestag, West Germany's national parliament, was due to meet for its constituting session on September 7<sup>th</sup>. This was the timeframe campaign managers in Bonn and Frankfurt had at their disposal to win over public support and put across their arguments to the men and women who were likely to vote on the issue. On July 7<sup>th</sup> North Rhine-Westphalia's first minister Arnold had invited 300 journalists for a press conference to brief them about the progress that was being made and the infrastructure installed already for the new government (W 118; W 3). Frankfurt responded by inviting editors of German newspaper on a fact finding tour in the city that was intended to familiarize them with the building works for government accommodation that were under way already (W, 118).

When on September 7<sup>th</sup> the newly elected members of the Bundestag arrived in Bonn, the municipal administration had painstakingly arranged for their welcome. They were asked about their preferences with regard to accommodation. Surveys were conducted to establish what kind of flats or houses they were looking for. Leaflets were produced to introduce the city, give advice and indicate public transport options. Impeccable organization and smooth routine too, when shortly thereafter the first German President Theodor Heuss was elected and the Bundestag met for its constituting session. Technical hiccups or awkward flaws do not seem to have disrupted the ceremony as in Frankfurt some may have secretly hoped (W, 17).

To hijack the Bundestag's decision on a seat for government and parliament the Social Democrat Erich Ollenhauer took an early initiative by tabling a motion for parliament to pass a bill which was to stipulate that henceforth parliament and government should be reside in Frankfurt. This motion stirred a longish debate which was later on assigned to a special committee whose task it was to regurgitate all facts and come up with a judgement as to

which city was best prepared (Bericht des Sonderausschusses, 1974). By now the final decision was imminent and the activities of lobbyists and communicators in Bonn and Frankfurt were frantic. In Frankfurt in a last ditch attempt promotional brochures were drawn up and sent to parliamentarians who sat on the special committee. Publications were intended to highlight the facilities the city was at the time constructing to host government departments and parliament. A second brochure aimed at illustrating available family housing. Facts and figures were showered on journalists, and refuted by opponents. Mayor Kolb himself had visited members of parliament to put across arguments that were to prove Frankfurt's suitability as seat of government: He particularly emphasized that living costs are lower than in Bonn. As would have been expected the government in North Rhine Westphalia was not prepared to take any of this data at face value. Instead, they sent a research team to Frankfurt in an effort to explore and calculate costs of living, compare them and prove Frankfurt's official figures erroneous. They found that hotel accommodation was comparable in price, while food appeared to be more expensive and textiles happened to be less expensive than in Bonn.

Likewise, Frankfurt's strategy was not exclusively aimed at portraying one's own strengths, but also at questioning and undermining the opponent's credibility. The fundamental claim: Bonn had skewed the numbers and would not keep promises in terms of the space and numbers of accommodation units that had allegedly been reserved for government officials (W, 10). In turn Frankfurt had stepped up its hospitality and strove to be an exemplary host that wined and dined members of parliament on fact finding missions in the city. This largesse may have backfired when it was portrayed as wastefulness in the media (Der Spiegel, 1949). Yet Frankfurt's mayor Kolb was undaunted and until the eve of the vote he reiterated that the economic facts were stacked in Frankfurt's favour. Yet, with apprehension it was noticed that Konrad Adenauer, a staunch supporter of Bonn and by now Chancellor of a West German government would use his leverage to close ranks and coerce his parliamentary party to vote for Bonn (IFSG, Magistratsakten As 3.4443, 31.10.1949). In the decisive meeting Adenauer urged his followers within the parliament party to choose a seat of government that was a good distance away from Germany's allied military government. Naturally, Adenauer was aware that Frankfurt at the time was still occupied by American forces, indeed they had used the city for their high command. Cunningly, Adenauer made the military's withdrawal from Frankfurt his *conditio sine qua non* in the selection of a seat of government. He did not forget to point out that a withdrawal of American forces from Frankfurt and their relocation elsewhere would cost the taxpayer what at the time was the

breathhtaking sum of 150 Million Deutschmark (BA, Kabinettsprotokolle, Bundesregierung). An amount, he argued, that could not be justified, but would have to be raised if a new government in Frankfurt required the move of US forces to another base. Just before the votes were cast the Hessian CDU parliamentarian Hilpert sensed what damage Adenauer's claim could do to Frankfurt's cause. He immediately contacted the American military authorities who clarified that the number Adenauer had cited was vastly exaggerated (Bendix, 2002). By the time the information filtered through voting was under way: 176 votes were cast in favour of Frankfurt, 200 members of parliament voted for Bonn as Germany's seat of government.

It is probably not surprising that both contemporaries at the time and historians of German post war history focused much of their attention on Konrad Adenauer, the Federal Republic's first Chancellor. It is perhaps partially owed to this coverage or to his towering position in the era that his vested interest in the Rhineland and his outspoken support for Bonn were related to the outcome of the dispute between Frankfurt and Bonn. Much more important in the context of the story I have been trying to relate here is the consideration as to whether his somewhat unscrupulous personality and his readiness to deploy tricks to achieve political ends may have conditioned the tone and style of the campaign. For Adenauer the purpose justified the means: Manipulation of news in an effort to win over dissenters in his own parliamentary party raises questions of ethical conduct. Subsequently, allegations that he may have allowed or even encouraged the bribery of parliamentarians to consolidate a majority could never be corroborated. Still, if the culture of discourse in this controversy did not raise to higher ethical standards, Adenauer is the central figure one may want to hold to account. Adenauer's apologists may need to be reminded of the very final phase in the campaign when shortly before voting started Germany's Chancellor produced feigned financial data to make a withdrawal of American forces from Frankfurt appear unaffordable. There is at least the suspicion of manipulation and the concern that figures about the office space and accommodation available in the two respective cities are not grounded in reliable calculation, but instead the result of somewhat creative fabrication driven by vested interests. In autumn of 1949 a leading newspaper published a comparison to illustrate the infrastructure Bonn and Frankfurt could have offered the ministerial civil service. The data presented was overwhelmingly in Frankfurt's favour and yet another proof of dubious content the Bonn campaign resorted to as a means to advance its cause (Der Kampf fuer Frankfurt geht weiter, 1949a).



Adenauer and his contemporaries had over years become accustomed to strategic communications operated by the Nazi regime. Now, in 1948 the political objectives had fundamentally changed and were geared toward building a democracy. This objective may have appeared to be morally unquestionable to a degree that it could have vindicated dubious – certainly unethical – procedures in achieving it. Particularly Adenauer throughout his chancellorship was known to be unscrupulous in his choice of communication tools, not least when he hoped to establish a government friendly public television channel or when he called for a director of government propaganda to be appointed to his cabinet (Rosumek, 2007).

Beyond any doubt, the degree of destruction and destitution in the immediate post war era may have accentuated the awareness both in Bonn and Frankfurt that hosting government and parliament were instrumental in channeling urgently needed federal money into depleted municipal coffers. Therefore, the stakes were high which may have added to the robustness to the campaign. Yet the picture is perhaps more complex and a focus on ruthless and unscrupulous practice risks downplaying another defining feature: The campaign run by Bonn was consciously responsive and careful to take target audiences into account. Arguably, Bonn was successful because early on it engaged in building a broad alliance that encapsulated most relevant stakeholders, while Frankfurt's campaign start was marred by over-confidence and a degree of complacency frontrunners sometimes are beset by. The government of North Rhine Westphalia had been on board and supportive of Bonn the very moment the discussion about a new seat for government was pushed on the parliamentary council's agenda. Later on, members of parliament, who were to vote on the question, found that in Bonn they were being helped by the authorities, had their requests taken care of and queries answered with great care and consideration. On the eve of the decision, they felt Bonn had bespoke answers for them, provided housing and was eager to rebuild the infrastructure.

Chancellor Adenauer in this phalanx of deciders may have been a particularly visible and by all accounts powerful figure. One may even argue that he and the unethical practices he deployed may have impinged on the result. However, it is worth reminding ourselves that the ultimate decision was by no means a close one, but carried by a sizeable majority of parliamentarians. While Adenauer's backing may have helped Bonn gain momentum in the early stages of the campaign and earned an edge at the time of the final vote in parliament, his political weight and tactical cunning may still not account for the eventual majority of 24. More realistically he was one – albeit a visible and important – factor in a winning strategy which essentially hinged on the recognition that broad alliances are instrumental in achieving

communication objectives. If there is a lesson to be learned from this case that may have informed subsequent campaigns in democratic systems and parliamentary settings, it is perhaps best summarized by the necessity for recruiting support, integrating decisive stakeholders and forging alliances. If this advice were to be ignored, even a head start – as Frankfurt has demonstrated – may not suffice to guarantee desired outcomes. More specifically, the limited concern with ethics in communications in the course of this campaign may be owed to the historical context just as much as to individual personalities involved. Twelve years of unscrupulous Nazi demagoguery may have left its impression on communicators in the late 40s, not least Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first Chancellor and staunch supporter of Bonn as seat of government.

### **Archival Material: List of abbreviations**

Bundesarchiv Koblenz (referenced BA)

Bestand Buero der Ministerpraesidenten des amerikanischen, franzoesischen und franzoesischen Sektors (referenced Z 12)

Hauptstaatsarchiv Duesseldorf (referenced HSTAD)

Bestand Staatskanzlei, Buero Bundeshauptstadt (quoted NW 53)

Bestand Parlamentrischer Rat (referenced NW 179)

Institut fuer Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt (referenced IfSG)

Stadtarchiv Bonn (referenced B)

Preussische Zeit (referenced P)

Nordrhein-westfaelische Zeit (referenced N)

Sammlung Wandersleb (referenced W)

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# **The Rise and Fall (and rise again?) of media relations professionalism in the United States**

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There's an adage in sports that officiating is at its best when it goes unnoticed. The same could be said for public relations – that when it is at its best – it is rarely perceived. However, media relations is one function of public relations that must, at least to some degree, become a very known facet of public relations practice with at least one audience – the journalists with whom relationships are sought. Media relations has been defined as the “systematic, planned, purposeful and mutually beneficial relationship between journalists in the mass media and public relations practitioners” (Supa & Zoch, 2009). Media relations has further been characterized as the “tip of the public relations iceberg – the most visible part” (Shaw & White, 2004, p.494). However, the way we view media relations today is substantially different from how it has been practiced in the past. The purpose of this paper, then, is to examine the development of modern media relations in the United States through the lens of the historical developments that have led us to where we are today in establishing those mutually beneficial relationships.

## **An Overview of the modern practice of media relations**

The modern practice of media relations, while ever evolving due to new communication tools still holds, at its core, a dependence on the development of relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners. Supa (2008) writes that the current state of the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists, characterized by Voros and Alvarez (1981) as adversarial, is based on a tradition of mistrust and misinformation. However, recent research shows that media relations is considered a primary

function for many public relations practitioners (Darnowski, DiStaso, Fussell-Sisco & McCorkindale, 2013).

Media relations continues to be an important component to the public relations function. But why is it so important? Why do public relations professionals use media relations to achieve their goals? It is clear that going through the mass media is not always the best way to achieve communication goals with all audiences. In fact, Grunig (1990) states that “situational theory of public relations implies that only the unsophisticated public relations practitioners would try to communicate with active publics through the mass media” (p. 19).

Media relations benefit the public relations practitioners in two major ways. First, it is the most efficient way to reach large audiences. In the instances where the goals of public relations are to increase awareness, create or reinforce positive organizational reputation, disseminate an organizational point of view, or create some sort of cognitive, affective feeling about an organization, media relations is generally very effective (assuming it is done well).

Secondly, by transmitting organizational messages via the mass media, and through the gatekeepers of that media, public relations practitioners are able to utilize a “credible third party” for their organizational messages (Geary, 2005). While the publics’ confidence in news media may in fact be on the decline (Geary, 2005), messages that are “vetted” by major news organizations are still perceived as more authoritative, and therefore for the media relations professional, provide an organizational message with credibility.

As a function of public relations media relations is not immune to criticism. James Grunig, one of the best known U.S. public relations scholars, has been a critic of the practice for many years. He states that “the relationship between public relations and journalism continually produces conflict because many practitioners will do whatever it takes to gain exposure for their client organizations in the media” (1990, p.19). He further writes that practitioners often practice a “manipulative” rather than “interactive” relationship with the media. This manipulative relationship is at the heart of the conflict between the professions, although many practitioners today recognize that it is ineffectual to work with journalists in this fashion. And though Grunig states that “there is seldom good reason for an organization to communicate with a mass audience” (1990, p.19), media relations has been, and will continue to be, a major aspect of public relations practice for many more years.

## **Toward a taxonomy of the history of media relations in the United States**

Understanding the history of media relations in the United States helps us to better know the reasons behind the traditionally antagonistic relationship and also to help future practitioners better realize success. In order to investigate the rise of professionalism, this study proposes a taxonomy for the study of media relations, and identifies, in an overview fashion, key figures and historical cases that relate to each of these historical figures.

As Pimlott wrote in 1951, “there have been press agents almost as long as there have been newspapers. They existed in the United States during the eighteenth century, and probably earlier in England” (p.6). The current study particularly looks at the development of these so-called “press agents” (the media relations practitioner) in the United States. It focuses on the United States as its unit of analysis for several reasons. First, because as a nation, the United States is fairly young, and extensive record keeping allows us to examine in detail the role of the influencers of the media. Secondly, because the proliferation of media in the United States has grown exponentially over time there have been more opportunities to exert some influence over some aspect of the media. And finally, the growth of public relations in many countries has been based on practices created by practitioners in the United States, and while there are certainly notable exceptions to this, it might be generally agreed upon that these three factors taken in concert make the United States an appropriate unit of analysis. This study proposes three distinct eras of media relations practice in the United States. They are briefly outlined here.

The first era of media relations in the United States is the “protohistory” (Watson, 2012). This period, from approximately 1690 (the publication of *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick*) until 1833 (the mass popularization of newspapers by *The New York Sun*), is marked by a definitive blurring of the lines between public relations and journalism – exemplified by the antecedents to the American Revolution. Citizens at the time, such as Samuel Adams and Benjamin Franklin used their printing presses to communicate their public relations messages, in this case messages meant to be disseminated in order to support the breaking away of America from British rule. While these events should not necessarily be considered media relations (and would likely be more accurately described as propaganda), they did set the stage by showing the importance of communicating messages to the masses via the media, particularly since there was no wholesale support for the revolution at the time.

The second era of media relations could best be characterized as “the rise of the press agent.” This era should not be confused with the press agency model of public relations (Grunig, 1984), but rather refers to a time where organizations first employed person whose

primary responsibility was to communicate messages about that organization to various publics. In other words, this era primarily coincides with what many scholars would refer to as the beginning of modern public relations. However, within the realm of media relations, the beginning of this era starts somewhat earlier than what is traditionally thought of public relations – from approximately 1833 until the end of World War II. While many figures rose to prominence during this era of media relations, two in particular had a strong influence on modern media relations, and guided the practice of media relations into two very distinct directions. Those men, Phineas T. Barnum and Ivy Lee, approached media relations very differently, though both were clearly successful, and both were tremendously influential on the next era of media relations practice.

The third era of media relations practice can be identified as the “modern” era of media relations practice. This era starts at approximately the end of World War II, and continues through the present day. Within this era, we can see a distinct difference between *professional* media relations practice – inspired by the work of early public relations pioneers such as Ivy Lee, and *publicity* media relations, inspired primarily by Barnum. While this essay makes no judgment about whether those who practice publicity media relations are or are not professionals, the practice of this type of media relations does not conform to what many public relations practitioners consider to be the “ideal standards” of public relations. However, for both types of media relations, the modern era is exemplified by the standardization of practice, including tools, strategies and audiences.

### **The Protohistory of Media Relations**

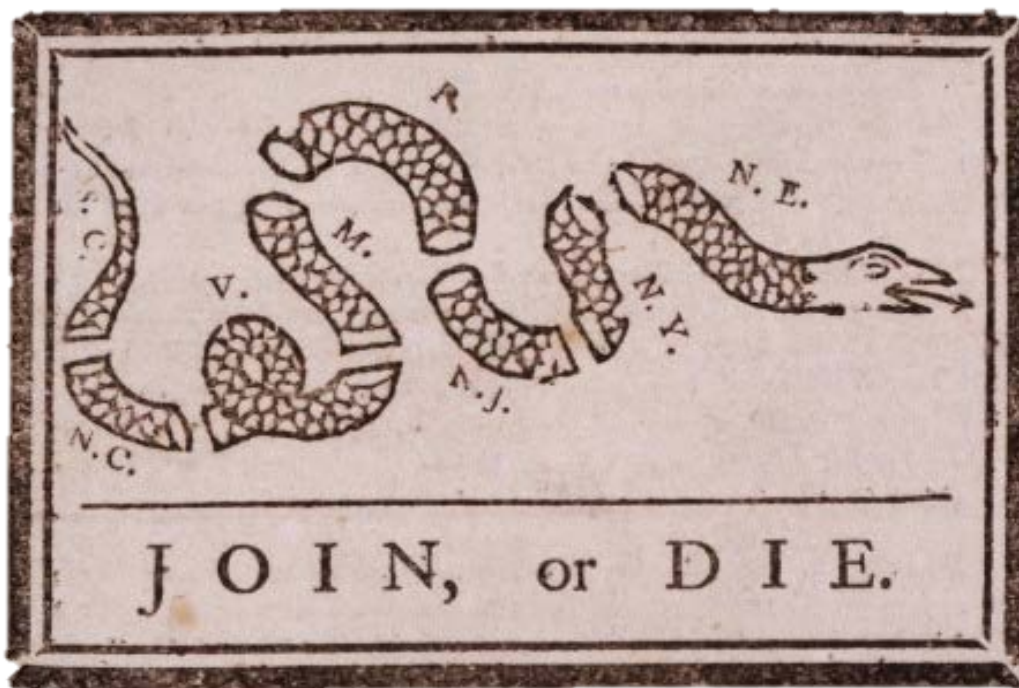
The protohistory of media relations in the United States, from approximately 1690 until 1831, covers a fairly lengthy span of time; however, the most prolific media relations-related aspect of this period was the lead-up and execution of the Revolutionary War. Though there was not, at least in the beginning, wholesale support for revolution against England, many of the people in control of the printing presses at the time were in favor of revolt. Samuel Adams was one of those individuals whose ability to relay messages via his controlled media helped to spur public consent for the revolution. According to Lattimore, et al. (2004):

Adams was to the communication dimension of the Revolutionary War what George Washington was to the military dimension. Adams recognized the value of using symbols like the Liberty Tree that were easily identifiable and aroused emotions. Adams also used slogans that are still remembered, like “taxation without representation is tyranny.” Because he got his side of the story to a receptive public



first, shots fired into a group of rowdies became known as the “Boston Massacre.” Adams directed a sustained-saturation public relations campaign using all available media. He staged the Boston Tea Party to influence public opinion. (pp. 22-23)

While the term “public relations” was added by Lattimore, and in fact this type of communication would be described today as propaganda, the idea that mass mediated messages could be used to influence public opinion was clearly established. Adams was not alone in harnessing the power of media.



**Fig. 1 Franklin's "Join or Die" print**

Figure 1 shows a famous print by Benjamin Franklin, originally published in 1754, that was meant to indicate to the colonists, because he considered the colonies fragmented, that if they did not join together, they would perish. Other printers, such as Paul Revere, also created images (printed in newspapers, pamphlets and other media) that were meant to inspire both colonists and colonial leaders to revolt against England.

There are myriad examples of these types of mass media propaganda materials being used, not only to support the revolution, but for other causes as well. The key aspect of this period of media relations is the acceptance of the role that the media play in influencing public cognitions. The protohistory, then, is best defined as the era in American media relations that encompasses the early development of media, where the publisher and publicist are one and the same, and they are reaching a fairly small audience that did not provide

feedback. The concerns of professionalism for this era were nil, and decisions more aligned with goal accomplishment, by whatever means necessary. And while, from a modern perspective, we may view the tactics as unethical, these early publicist/publishers might argue that the ends justified the means.

### **The Rise of the Press Agent**

When, in 1833, the penny press began with the publication of the *New York Sun*, the mass media was brought to the people of the United States like never before. It began an era of journalism that over the next twenty years would see the rise of the *New York Times*, the introduction of newspaper sections (sports, society, money, reviews), special editions, nationwide coverage due to inventions such as the telegraph, and the formation of a group of journalists that would eventually become the Associated Press. But with all the growth, and the increased emphasis being placed on bringing value to the consumers of the newspaper, came the need to constantly present new information. Enter the press agent, or publicist, the person whose job it was to provide information to the journalists in order to fill the growing news hole.

This era defined many aspects of not only journalism, but of public relations as well. It might be best classified as an era of not only growth of the fields, but an era of trial and error with regard to professionalism. This era, lasting until approximately the end of the Second World War, in many aspects set the antecedents for media relations today. Many people played major roles in helping to define media relations – but perhaps none more so than two individuals, P.T. Barnum and Ivy Lee. Both were highly successful in establishing relationships with journalists, and though they went out about in very different ways, both had a major impact on the practice of media relations.

Barnum, known for many events, promotions, quips and stunts – summed up his own contributions to the media relations landscape in a letter written to his partner James A. Bailey shortly before his death in 1891: “I am indebted to the press of the United States for almost every dollar which I possess and for every success as an amusement manager which I have ever achieved” (Saxon, 1989). Saxon continued to describe Barnum’s affection for the press:

On earlier occasions he was fond of attributing his success to “printers ink” – when a friend was expatiating on this topic at a banquet honoring him in 1874, the showman interrupted to remark, “Yes, without printer’s ink I should have been no bigger than Tom Thumb” – under which heading he also included advertising. The effective use of the latter, and of publicity in general, was a matter of keen study to him, and

especially in *Humbugs of the World* and *Funny Stories* he recalled those expert practitioners among his contemporaries who had made a lasting impression on him. (p. 76)

Barnum knew the media, and knew how to garner attention for his “amusements”. Whether it was parading through Europe with Tom Thumb, promoting Jenny Lind across the United States, or plowing a field with an elephant in North Carolina, he attracted attention like few others. He was the father of ~~the~~ modern publicity, and has served as the inspiration for many people, and tactics, in media relations.

Ivy Ledbetter Lee, born in 1877, would not have been old enough to remember Barnum at the height of his fame, but would have been witness to the legacy of promotion that Barnum left behind, and would have understood how publicity techniques could be used. Lee, however, was weaned on journalism by his experience working in the newspaper industry, and through his work involving corporate clientele (most famously the Rockefellers) he came to use different methods in establishing media relationships. Instead of the “publicity stunt”, Lee argued the philosophy of full disclosure. As Hiebert (1966) explained (in quoting a conversation between Lee and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.)

“Tell the truth,” Lee told Rockefeller, “because sooner or later the public will find it out anyway. And if the public doesn’t like what you are doing, change your policies and bring them into line with what the people want.” (pp. 4-5)

In a speech to the American Railroad Guild in 1914, Lee expounded his theory of the importance of working with the public, keeping them as an ally rather than as an audience to be manipulated.

The people now rule. We have substituted for the divine right of kings, the divine right of the multitude. The crowd is enthroned. This new sovereign has his courtiers, who flatter and caress precisely as did those who surrounded medieval emperors. (Hiebert, iii)

According to Hiebert (1966), the idea to transform the concept of publicity into public information was not born out of Lee’s mind, but rather was a reaction to the 19<sup>th</sup> century press agents. Hiebert states, “Lee played a key role in its evolution [public relations], changing the direction from fraud, hoax, distortion, and stunts to factual information, understanding and sound policies” (p. 9). Clearly, Ivy Lee’s career represented a fundamental shift in professionalism from the Barnum style, though both methods of garnering public attention would continue to be used, and are in fact still in use today.

Toward the end of this era, though, what we refer to as “media relations” today did not exist – at least the name of the practice was not in popular use. The term “publicity”

continued to be used for any attempt to gain the attention of the media. In his book, Baus (1942) defined publicity as the “dissemination of information for a motive” (p. 7). However, he carefully delineated that public relations and publicity were two separate entities:

All publicity is public relations, but not all public relations is publicity. Every publicity act and technique is ipso facto public relations. It follows that publicists should understand public relations. Their work should always be framed with an overall public relations objective in mind. Giving service, not telling about it, is the fundamental of public relations. Publicity is a subsidiary technique with the function of doing the telling. As Rockefeller said, it is not so important to do the right things as to let people know you are doing the right thing. That is publicity’s job. (p. 6)

There existed, at least to some degree, confusion as to how the “new” field of public relations would develop. While Baus was trying to differentiate publicity from public relations, he may have been one of the few. Pimlott (1951) indicates that when leading public relations professionals organized in the United States for the first time in 1936, they called themselves the National Association of Accredited Publicity Directors, and it was not until 1944 that they changed their name to the National Association of Public Relations Counsel. Also, the American College Publicity Association, which started in 1917 as the American Association of College News Bureaus, did not change its name to the American College Public Relations Association until 1946. Pimlott (1951) identifies the name change by the following passage:

In 1935, there were still only ten public relations counselors in the New York telephone directory as compared with 76 “publicity service bureaus.” By 1939, there were 74 as compared with 120, but the publicity category continued to be the more numerous until the war. In 1948 there were 336 entries under public relations and 232 under publicity. Both groups had grown in spectacular fashion, but public relations firms were increasing in number more rapidly than publicity bureaus. (p. 9)

Clearly, there was a shift taking place from publicity to public relations, and early proponents of the separation between the two, such as Baus, were becoming more the norm. While there could be numerous factors that explain the idea behind shifting from publicity to public relations, it can most likely be attributed to a move toward professionalism. Those who worked in a corporate or firm environment were likely eager to legitimize their profession, and to move away from the Barnum-type tactics. If Baus (1942) was right, those within the practice wanted to indicate they were capable of more than just increasing awareness of clients – that in fact their skillsets answered a greater organizational need.

Those organizations which became known as public relations were more likely to align with Ivy Lee’s concept of publicity, which he said was “the actual relationship of a company to the people, and that relationship involves far more than saying – it involves

doing” (Hiebert, 1966, p. 11). Hiebert notes that Lee did not use the term “public relations” until later in his career – but we can conjecture that Lee meant to indicate that communication professionals were to do more than just talk about an organization, they were to ensure that the organization must truly establish relationships with the public.

Toward the end of “the rise of the press agent,” the lines were being drawn between those who favored the tactics of Barnum, and those who ascribed to a more Lee-like view of the public relations function. In hindsight, at stake was not just the future of the defining characteristics of the profession of public relations, but the future of the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners. Had there been at that time a wholesale changeover to Lee’s version of public relations – a reliance on truth and service as fundamental to the relationship to the journalists, the relationship may not be as contentious as it is today. But this was not the case.

One of the “issues,” both at the time and currently, with disregarding the Barnum-type publicity is that it is, in fact, effective. The adage “why fix something if it isn’t broken” applies well to this circumstance; if those who practiced publicity were not earning coverage for their clients, the Barnum-style tactics would have gone away. But publicity, in that sense, can be an effective tool for practitioners. DeLorme and Fedler (2003) discuss one such case:

On the evening of July 18, 1920, a man walking through New York’s Central Park said he heard a splash and found a woman’s handbag and hat on the ground near a large lake. The woman was named Yuki Onda, and a letter in her hotel room seemed to explain why she committed suicide; she had fallen in love with a U.S. Navy officer who would not marry here. Using lanterns, spotlights, and rowboats, police dragged practically every square inch of the lake but failed to find her. On July 26, a critic for *The World* suggested that police looking for Miss Onda should drop in at the Astor Theater and watch a movie titled “The Breath of the Gods.” The critic had gone to review the movie and discovered that Yuki Onda was the name of its leading character. “It appears from ‘The Breath of the Gods’ that Yuki did not commit suicide after all,” he reported. Rather, she had returned to Japan and married a prince. (p. 124)

This type of publicity is what Baus (1942) refers to as “ballyhoo,” and is as good a term as any to describe this type of Barnum-type publicity effort. Ballyhoo, according to Baus, is the “art of creating interest by gags, screwy concoctions, and unusual combinations...is bunk made into legitimate news by being actually staged” (pp. 145-146). In other words, ballyhoo is what we might term publicity today.

The era of the rise of the press agent, then, was a tumultuous time for media relations in the United States. If the protohistory was the infancy and toddler years of media relations, then the rise of the press agent era was certainly the formative teenage years, with the

accompanying identity formation and angst that characterized it. However, it did establish the antecedents for the modern era, and also contained the beginnings of an identity of professionalism for both the media relations function, and public relations as a whole.

### **The Modern Era**

The Modern Era of media relations starts at the end of World War II, and continues through today. This era is marked by massive changes in demographics in the United States, as well as the rise of professional associations for public relations practitioners, including the Public Relations Society of America. It is during this time period too that we see the first academic programs dedicated to public relations (earlier there were university-level courses in public relations – but full programs were not developed until after the war). This era is also characterized by rapid growth in technology, from the wire to the wireless, and from the face-to-face conversation to the text message, or post, or tweet. However, while the tools have changed, there is a greater landscape change that the modern era has created. That is the separation and continued disassociation between Barnum-type publicity and Lee-based public relations.

In the modern era the term media relations, to those that practice it, has come to represent the ideals of what being a professional means. Ethics has played a major role in modern practice, as have characteristics like honesty and transparency (to be fair, these are not universally-adopted, but are established as professional ideals). Most media relations practitioners today, working in a public relations setting, value the concept of earned media – that is, an audience's exposure to a message via the mass media that originates from an organizations' media relations people. Blatant attempts at publicity are generally frowned upon in this arena – although some of the earlier Barnum-type practices have survived and become integral parts of media relations practice, including such things as the product launch party, the awards ceremony, and the satellite media tour. These tools are generally not thought of as blatant publicity attempts – but are all based on the early concept of manufacturing news to attract the media.

Barnum-type publicity, or ballyhoo, is also alive and well, surviving the ideals of professionalism brought to the field by the public relations community. However, these types of publicity are generally reserved for specific industries, such as sports and entertainment, where they are generally accepted by the media that cover those industries. In fact, today's entertainment industry might generally accept what Woods (1941) described:

Publicity is accepted for dissemination without cost because its message is considered of sufficient public interest or importance to impel various media to use it solely on the basis of its value to those reached by these media...To succeed in its purpose, therefore, publicity must at all times make a strong claim on the attention of the public, or to that segment of the public toward which it is directed. (p. 4)

In other words, there is no such thing as bad publicity, so when a celebrity decides to make a sex tape, or go to rehab, or dress in an outfit made completely of lunch meats and duct tape, as long as it is covered by a segment of the media and disseminated to an audience that has interest, it can be considered a success.

As much as changes in the media relations/publicity profession have brought on these distinctions, the changing nature of media has had an equally major impact on the media relations function. Seitel (2007) effectively sums up the changes that have occurred during the modern era of media relations:

Where once the media were dominated by a handful of powerful, truth-minded reporters and editors at a handful of newspapers and three national TV networks, today the media are fragmented, omnipresent, busy 24 hours a day/seven days a week, and populated by a breed of reporter who is aggressive, opinionated, sharp-elbowed, and more than willing to throw him or herself personally into the story being covered...Today, more often than not, with competition from thousands of daily newspapers, talk radio stations, cable TV channels, and bloggers as far as the eye can see, reporters have few qualms about using anonymous sources, losing their historic anonymity, and becoming part of the story. (p. 173)

While this certainly does not define all journalists, it does speak to a changing industry, one that continues to evolve, and has become much more keen on the activities of the media relations professional. As Seitel indicates, journalists today are very aware of those who attempt to exert influence over the media, and have become highly critical and self-aware. Particularly in an era where traditional journalism is being threatened, it is likely that this critical perspective of both media relations and publicity will continue.

The modern era of media relations represents, to some degree, an overlap of media relations and publicity, and a blurring of what the established standards of professionalism are within the field. This era has seen many changes in the media landscape, and in the public relations landscape, but the traditions set forth early in this era and during the last, have helped to define where we are today.

## **Conclusion**

Since there have been media, mass or otherwise, individuals have been attempting to exert some measure of influence over the information the media provides. In the

development of the United States, in particular since the media was first made widely available to the public, the relationship between journalists and those who provide information to those journalists has varied greatly. Similarly, the tactics used in media relations have varied from the publicity stunt, such as Barnum parading elephants through a town to promote his shows, to Ivy Lee's press release, to the utilization of social media to send story ideas and messages. What has remained fairly consistent is that both publicists and media relations practitioners have attempted to garner for their client organizations a noticeable level of coverage within the media.

The tactics used by these individuals have an ebb and flow. What is considered a stunt to one generation may represent a high level of professionalism to the next. The tactics evolve, and change from generation to generation. While we would today not likely see an elephant walking down our main streets, we don't think twice about tuning in to watch a Hollywood awards show, which ultimately garners the same result – making the public aware of an industry they don't have direct access to. Whereas it might have been considered the norm to arrange a "whiskey tour" for journalists in the 1950's, today we might look at that as being an attempt to unethically influence the journalists. It would likely have been considered rude in the early days of press agents to attempt to communicate a message in 140 characters, but today, many journalists welcome a tweet as an effective media pitch. Some tools remain very similar, and are used in very similar fashions, but as the media relations function continues to develop, and as media change, tools such as the press release may also ebb.

Professionalism within media relations belongs to each generation. And while looking backward from today we can see the history of the media relations function as a rise to professionalism, a return to less ideal standards, and ultimately to a "norming" of the profession to a mutually (between practitioners and journalists) agreed upon set of "acceptable" rules for practice, this vantage is to some degree arrogant. Practitioners have always acted in a way which best benefited their clients, and though through the lens of history we may view terms such as "publicity" in a negative light, there is little doubt of the effectiveness it had, and continues to have today.



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# **The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and the appointment of the first public relations professional to work for the British Royal Family**

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## **Introduction, Methodology and Key Personalities**

2013 is the sixtieth anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second of England, which occurred on 2 June 1953.

This research draws on the personal files of Sir Thomas Fife Clark, Sir Jock Colville and Lord Swinton which are held in the archives at The Churchill Archives Centre at Churchill College, Cambridge. Fife Clark provided public relations advice to the organising committee of the Coronation while on secondment to the Ministry of Works. The Ministry of Works, in turn, provided project management advice and services to the office of the Earl Marshall, the Duke of Norfolk, who was responsible for overall organisation of the Coronation.

Sir Jock Colville was Joint Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Winston Churchill from 1951-1955 and had previously served as Private Secretary to Princess Elizabeth from 1947-49. Lord Swinton was a Cabinet Minister at the time of the Coronation and a long-time adviser to Churchill.

The paper seeks to provide a chronicle of the decision to recruit a professional media relations practitioner, Bob Hoare, to work on the public relations aspects of the 1953 Coronation. Mr Hoare worked alongside courtiers, who typically had no professional experience or knowledge of the media and – in the majority of cases - had poor regard for journalists. The author proposes that this appointment was made in response to a combination of social, cultural, political, technological and media changes occurring at the time. The resulting pressures from the public and media demanded a more professional approach to public relations than that adopted by the Royal Family and their advisers up to the Coronation.

## **Literature Review and The Context to the Appointment**

There are various historical dimensions to the appointment of Bob Hoare as the first media professional to work in public relations on behalf of the Royal Family. These include:

1. Public relations practice in the UK in the 1950s.
2. Public relations practice in the Royal Family
3. The new Queen, the media and visual framing
4. The 1953 Coronation event and the issues it revealed
5. Social and political changes and developments in media technologies

### **Public relations practice in the UK in the 1950s**

The rich literature on public relations in the UK does not contain explicit references to the history and nature of public relations practice in the British Royal Family for this period. The reasons may well be discretion on the part of contemporary sources that have left few traces of their work behind or a view that the work of the Buckingham Palace press office was neither political communications, public relations nor media relations.

Discretion seems to be the explanation for the reticence of Sir Thomas Fife Clarke, who chooses not to describe the Coronation episode in his own published writing. He only mentions the Royal Family once in his book on the Central Office of Information (COI), in which he briefly describes a visit to COI HQ in Lambeth in 1967 to mark the 21st anniversary of the department (1970, p.47-48) and quotes from a message received later from Buckingham Palace:

‘Her Majesty is very well aware of the help and support the Central Office of Information gives to herself, to members of the Royal Family and to their various Households and Staffs for which both she and they are most grateful,’ (Clarke 1970, p.48).

Fife Clarke’s decision to make no recorded reference to his own role in the public relations dimensions to the Coronation reflects the somewhat detached style associated with Royal Family public relations at the time. The archive material certainly shows a Buckingham Palace public relations operation which is not synchronised with the demands of the media nor with public relations practice at the time as described by L’Etang (2004).

The developing professionalism and the breadth of public relations activity in the UK’s public sector and consultancy is carefully documented by L’Etang in her historical study. Mindful of the historical content, she refers explicitly to the “colonial associations” of political communications. The definition she gives to political communications as the UK dealt with the erosion of Empire fits tightly with the substance the public relations undertaken by the Royal Family both on its own account and on behalf of the government of the day as it

mixed diplomacy with intelligence and public relations. This blended approach and the difficulties in pinning it down to a single definition are identified by L'Etang, who observes that 'Such processes illustrate clearly the difficulty in distinguishing between public relations, propaganda, intelligence and psychological operations.' (2004, p.93)

These notions of colonial and political communications are helpful in guiding any consideration of public relations in the British Royal Family of the 1950s. There was certainly a diplomatic aspect to Royal public relations and civil servants from the Foreign Office with diplomatic experience could be found working in Buckingham Palace. The diplomatic dimension to Royal public relations can be seen as a pre-cursor to globalisation of media and the emergence of nation-level public relations which followed in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The concept of nation-level public relations was described by Stephen Tallents in his 1932 pamphlet, entitled *The Projection of England* along with some practical steps on how it should be delivered. Tallents' pamphlet contains a template for the public relations goals of a major national event such as the Coronation and even anticipates the emergence of new media channels to help the projection of messages and material. Prior to technological communications, according to Tallents, a country's reputation was built on interpersonal communication at international and diplomatic meetings, but today: 'If a nation would be truly known and understood in the world, it must set itself actively to master and employ the new difficult and swiftly developing modes which science has provided for the projection of national personality' (1932, p.2).

He also shows a profound understanding of the importance of media technology infrastructures in enabling global delivery of content and messages, pointing out that the UK's "cable companies and news agencies girdle the earth.....Here surely are conditions very favourable to the effective projection and sympathetic receipt of England's image, would she but master the art of casting it worthily upon the screen" (1932, p.7).

Gregory (2011, p.195) has written extensively on the history and practice of public relations in the UK Government and on public sector communications, defining the term 'public sector' as covering 'a wide range of institutions and organisations which are funded from public taxation and are there to serve a public purpose for the country's citizens as a whole.' She goes on to record that in post-war period, communications responsibility for government, government departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies has fallen to 'civil servants who are politically neutral and whose role is to provide information about and to explain their work.'

The British Royal Family is funded largely by taxation and certainly serves a public purpose. As an institution, it lacked any sense of an obligation to explain its purpose, which was such a feature of post-war public sector communications elsewhere. Yeomans (2009, p.148) has commented on the openness in public sector public relations at the time and cites Cole-Morgan's (1988, p.148) summary of the objectives of the information division of each department or public body as to:

1. Create and maintain informed opinions about the subjects with which each department deals.
2. Use all methods of publicity, as suitable, to help the department to achieve its purpose
3. Assist and advise in all matters bearing on relations between the department and its public
4. Advise the department on the public's reaction to the policies or actions of the department

According to Gregory (2011), these objectives would 'find resonance' in the departments of most liberal democracies.

The motivation and aim of public relations activity oriented around explanation was to help build solidarity among an informed body of citizens. This communications work emerged against a wider context of post-war political consensus in the UK and a tacit agreement among political parties on areas of change such as the National Health Service and other aspects of the welfare state, for example.

This post-war agenda of explanation of public sector activity, the work of government departments and new legislation is seen by L'Etang (2004, p.27) as a response to the political and legislative changes which were effecting the changes in society and the public sector. 'New legislation swept away longstanding arrangements and new rights and procedures had to be explained to the public at a local level.' This mood of political and social change certainly seems to have pervaded the priorities of practitioners. L'Etang goes on to cite the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) President for 1960-1961, Alan Eden-Green, who worked as a volunteer in Woolwich during the bombing of London in World War II and went on to work in local government public relations (L'Etang, 2004, p.27): 'After the war, there was a lot of legislation which had to be put into plain language and interpreted to enquirers.'

## **Public Relations in the Royal Family in the 1950s**

Although the Royal Family could not accurately be described as a department of government, it was clearly lagging in pursuing the mission of explanation which characterised public relations in other areas of public life at the time. The calls for openness in Royal communications were relatively mute in the 1950s but the crescendo of calls for the Royal Family to engage in explanation continued for over 50 years and grew louder over time. It led to examples such as the Queen paying tax on some of her private income and, in July 2013, the Prince of Wales's principal private secretary, William Nye, being called to the House of Commons to defend the corporation and capital gains tax exemptions enjoyed by the Prince's £847m hereditary Duchy of Cornwall estate (Booth, 2013).

The public image of the Royal Family in the early 1950s was controlled largely by one man, Commander Richard Colville, who did not consider it his role to explain their work. Colville served as Press Secretary at Buckingham Palace from 1946-1968 when he retired. He was educated at the elite British public school, Harrow, and spent his career in the Royal Navy before joining the staff at Buckingham Palace on 1947. The Royal Family and the Household were fond of Colville but even those who admired him concluded that while 'he had a heart of gold...he was extremely rude [to the press] and was the last person who should have been press secretary,' (Hardman 2011, p.83). The joke of the day amongst editors was that in appointing Colville, the King had confused the needs of the Fleet (i.e. Royal Navy) with Fleet Street, the central London thoroughfare which was home to most national newspapers at the time.

According to the Queen's biographer, Robert Hardman, Commander Colville was a 'fascinating choice' for the job for two reasons. 'First, he regarded the press as little better than a communicable disease. Second, he remained in the job for more than twenty years' (Hardman 2011, p.84)

private interview with a member of Royal Household who served Her Majesty the Queen from the 1990's onwards recalls that Commander Colville was still remembered by press and courtiers alike as the 'abominable no-man.' This derives from his modus operandi which was that any activity by the Royal Family that was not specifically described in the Court Circular of official engagements could be neither reported on, commented on, nor could any photographs or film be made of the Royal Family outside these engagements. According to this interviewee, Colville regarded photographers as a particular nuisance rather than viewing them as the prelude to favourable picture coverage in the press.

The historian, Ben Pimlott, records that the ban on pictures extended beyond the existing Royal family to include recently dead Royals, who could not be played in film or television and also inanimate Royal palaces. Specifically, in Coronation year, Colville decreed that 'nobody would be allowed to film any of the Royal residences internally or externally before the end of the year' (Pimlott 2002, p.184). In his biography of The Queen, Pimlott records Colville's operational style in the role of press secretary, first to the King and then to his daughter, Queen Elizabeth.

'An unbending ex-naval officer with no knowledge of the press, which he treated with a combination of distrust and lordly contempt. He helped to inspire the view that the Palace owed the press nothing and that it would be better if the newspapers confined themselves to publishing official hand-outs.' Pimlott 2002, p.182)

Colville was perhaps one of the most unique senior UK practitioners of media relations and public relations in the post-war period. He held the media in contempt and they hated him in return. He scorned normal public relations conventions and declared on one overseas tour that, 'I am not what you North Americans would call a public relations officer,' (Hardman 2011, p.83). For Colville, there was no such thing as good publicity. It was all bad.

According to his successor, Sir William Heseltine, Colville delivered 'the administrative side with terrific efficiency and won the respect of all those he had to deal with in that way...but his approach to public relations was certainly a very negative one.' (Hardman 2011, p.84.)

'Richard Colville had an old fashioned aristocratic way of dealing with people,' recalls Sir William Heseltine. "He insisted on calling people by their surnames but reporters in Fleet Street were not really very enamoured of being called "Smith" or "Jones" in authoritarian tones. One of the things that started Bellisario (Ray Bellisario was one of the original royal paparazzo) down the road to his deep antipathy to the organisation was Richard's handling of him' (Hardman 2011, p.85)

### **The New Queen and The Media**

That such an entirely negative approach to public relations was accepted by the media reflects the shared sentiments of the public (i.e. the readers of the press), the media and the Palace towards what was acceptable and desirable to consume as news related to the Royal Family. Pimlott (2002, p.182) describes a set of relationships between the media, the public and the Royal family, which handed an entirely negative power to the Buckingham Palace press secretary, Commander Colville. 'Taking public enthusiasm and saccharine press



coverage as a royal right – and indeed deriving satisfaction from it – the Court felt no obligation to give anything in return or to feed the loyal appetite for innocuous details which, in Coronation year became a compulsive hunger.’

The deference of the media was on show in Kenya, where Princess Elizabeth became Sovereign on the death of her father King George VI while travelling with no press support in her entourage. It fell to the senior courtier travelling with the new Queen and Prince Philip, her private secretary Martin Charteris, to ask the media to stand back and take no photographs of the couple as they left the Treetops safari lodge to return to London. Even without the unsympathetic hectoring of Commander Colville, all of the journalists and photographers present complied with Charteris’s request (Pimlott 2002, p.169).

For Pimlott, at the time of the Coronation, the *modus operandi* of the British media towards the Royal Family was ‘an alliance of proprietors and readers.... and the complicity of editors and journalists ensured that the media would regard anything that was potentially embarrassing to the Royal Family as untouchable’ (2002, p.186).

At the same time, the new media technology of television was causing concern at all levels of government and within the Royal Family. Churchill himself was concerned about the effect that televising of the Coronation service would have on the mystery of the monarchy and Sir Jock Colville counselled that ‘Whereas the film ceremony can be cut appropriately, live television would not only add considerably to the strain on the Queen (who does herself not want TV) but would mean that any mistakes, unintentional incidents or undignified behaviour by spectators would be seen by millions of people’ (Pimlott 2002, p.190).

It took a media campaign led by the Daily Express and some thoughtful intervention by Lord Swinton before Churchill returned from a weekly audience to announce a reversal of that decision. ‘After all, it is the Queen who is being crowned and not the Cabinet....if that is what she wants, it shall be so,’ Hennessy 2006, p.242).

The Buckingham Palace press operation was resistant to any sense that the Coronation or any aspect of the life of the Royal Family should be a ‘vehicle for entertainment’ (Pimlott 2002, p.184). Yet for some around the new Queen, she was very much seen in the frame of the entertainment business, with Churchill explicitly using the metaphor of cinema in describing Queen Elizabeth’s fitness for her role. ‘All the film people in the world...if they had scoured the globe, could not have found anyone so suited to the part’ (Pimlott 2002, p.170).

As the period of court mourning came to an end and Queen Elizabeth began to appear on public duties, it did not take long for the popular newspapers to see the opportunities to boost circulations using pictures and articles relating to the young Monarch. However, anything potentially embarrassing to the Royal family was regarded as untouchable and, according to Pimlott (2004, p.181) the 'self restraint required little effort of will' as a result of the self-censorship to which newspapers had become accustomed during the second world war. While pictures and articles were useful for circulations, the Fleet Street consensus was that any short term gain in circulation coming from a disloyal or negative article would be wiped out by a longer term loss of reputation.

Photographers shared Churchill's view of the Queen as a woman with film star qualities, with Cecil Beaton (1973, p.114) recording a meeting with a barely concealed cinematic sexuality. 'The purity of her expression, the unspoilt childishness of the smile, the pristine quality of her pink and white complexion, are all part of an appearance that is individual and gives the effect of a total entity.'

### **The 1953 Coronation**

The planning for the Coronation was undertaken by the 16<sup>th</sup> Duke of Norfolk, who, as Earl Marshall, was responsible for the organisation of the Coronation ceremony. More particularly, as a senior hereditary aristocrat holding an office of state under the Sovereign, he was in charge of managing the pageantry and protocol associated with the crowning of the new Monarch. In effect, this was a separate planning team apart from Buckingham Palace, but one which shared a similar set of courtly and aristocratic values in the approach to their work. The Duke of Norfolk was also at the centre of the debate as to whether or not the Coronation service should be televised, which has been widely written on by historians such as Hennessy (2006: p242) and remains a topic of contention. In particular, there is a lack of agreement as to whether the new Queen herself or others, such as the Prime Minister or her advisers made the first decisive move on televising the ceremony. According to Lord Swinton, who is described by Hennessy as a "veteran sage and fixer in the last Churchill Cabinet," it was definitely the Prime Minister and not the Queen who made the first move towards televising the day (Swinton, 1966: p138)

The Ministry of Works was the government's building department at the time and had a central role because it was responsible for co-ordinating the transformation of Westminster Abbey in the six months before Coronation Day. The Ministry of Works carried out extensive building work to re-configure the Abbey, including the creation of three tiers of

seating in order to increase the capacity of the space so that it could accommodate over 8,000 guests. The Abbey itself was closed for 6 months from January to June 1952 to allow the work to take place.

While the construction and organisational dimensions of the Ministry of Works' scope of work were clear, any communications remit was not clearly defined at the outset. Instead, the shape of the public relations tasks evolved over several months in response to unanticipated pressures from the media and clear gaps in the capability that existed across the triumvirate of Buckingham Palace, Earl Marshall's office and the Ministry of Works which were all involved in the delivery of the Coronation as a project.

The scale of building work required at Westminster Abbey meant that the Ministry of Works was central to the project management aspect of the Coronation. In this role, they provided a project team to support the Earl Marshall. It was the Earl Marshall and his team of mainly aristocratic and military officers who were soon challenged by unfamiliar demands from the media for which their military careers had not prepared them.

### **Social, political and media changes**

The unfamiliar demands from the press had a social and technological dimension. Specifically, there were requests from the BBC for more access to different areas of Westminster Abbey for filming throughout the Coronation service. In the emerging visual media arms race, the print press demanded photo opportunities of the Queen, keenly aware of the need to compete on visual terms with the new medium of television. In a taste of the more democratic and populist tone to come, newspapers also sought to engage with their readers and seek their opinions. The Daily Mirror, for example, published to the Earl Marshall the results of its reader poll on what role the Duke of Edinburgh should play in the Coronation.

The social drivers behind these pressures reflected the barely detectable changes in British society from uniformity and compliance to a more questioning, open and meritocratic approach, as observed by historians of the period (Hennessy 2006, Kynaston 2012). In the more open societies of North America, print, radio and television journalists from Canada and the United States were particularly assertive in making demands for visual access and swift onward transmission of pictures from the event.

The files of Sir Thom Fife Clarke include a letter from a Canadian journalist to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, which had been forwarded to the Ministry of Works. The writer had approached Churchill directly after being frustrated by the responses he received from the official PR operation. His appeal to Churchill invokes his wartime service as a

bomber pilot in Europe in requesting help to ensure that the pictures for his paper are put on one of the three planes tasked with transporting the television film from the UK to Canada and the USA on the day of the Coronation, immediately after the ceremony is finished (FICA 2/4/1).

Closer to home in the UK, at the date for the Coronation approached, the media began to reflect the growing egalitarian mood in society and a wish to be involved in the celebrations. The Daily Express led a campaign for increased television access, which culminated in a poll in the paper calling by a large majority for the wedding to be televised. There were also calls for close up pictures of the ceremony and of the young Queen. The Duke of Norfolk joined with the Buckingham Palace press operation of Commander Colville in refusing all discussion of close up television pictures with the BBC, declaring at one press conference that: "There will not be what the television people are used to these days, which is the close up...there will be none of that."

A lack of understanding of the technical demands of television coupled with an unsympathetic approach led to frustration from broadcasters and journalists with the public relations operation of the Earl Marshall's office and the Palace. The combination of gentlemanly amateurism and arrogant refusals also led to impatience on the part of print journalists who were concerned about access to close up pictures and swift onward transmission of the pictures throughout the UK or abroad.

The frustrations over the public relations operation and the arrangements being put in place to support press coverage of the Coronation led to gentle lobbying behind the scenes, according to letters in the Fife Clarke archive. The matter came to a head when open and "strong representations" were made to the Minister of Works at a November 1952 press conference to discuss the planning for the Coronation.

### ***The appointment of RGS Hoare***

This pressure was swiftly responded to in December 1952, with the appointment of a senior ex-journalist, R.G.S (Bob) Hoare as Chief Information Officer in the Earl Marshall's office. The appointment was reported in the weekly magazine, Newspaper World, under the headline, "From Row to Triumph." The article went on: "Considerable satisfaction was being felt in newspaper offices this week at the action taken by the Earl Marshall's office in appointing a fully-qualified journalist and public relations officer to take charge of the Press inquiries regarding Coronation matters for which that office is responsible" (Anon, 1952).

The editors of The Times, Telegraph and several other national newspapers all wrote to the Earl Marshall congratulating him on the decision to recruit Bob Hoare (FICA 2/4/1) and expressing their wish to work productively with him in the coming months.

The appointment is reported in Newspaper World, with a quiet sense of satisfaction. “The establishment of this bureau evolves no doubt from strong representations which were made to the Minister of works at his recent press conference. He was inclined at the time to take rather lightly the complaints of the Press but several representatives pressed their point and he promised to do what he could to solve the problem. He has kept his promise most adequately. (Anon, 1952). In a note to the Ministry of Works dated 12 November 1952, Churchill’s fixer, Lord Swinton declares the appointment of Bob Hoare as “very satisfactory” (FICA 2/4/1).

The evidence from Sir Thom Fife Clarke’s papers suggests that in his role at the Ministry of Works, Hoare went on to build strong links with the national and international media in the lead up to the Coronation. In particular, he represented the interests of the media to the Earl Marshall and other courtiers within the Royal Household with the understanding of an experienced journalist who had turned PR practitioner.

Specifically, in response to calls for swift onward transmission of photographs and television film (as evidenced by the letter to Churchill from the Canadian journalist), Hoare was involved in the design of a complex logistical operation to get print and television pictures across the globe as quickly as possible in order to meet the demands of broadcasters in the USA and Canada to see the Coronation the next day (in the days before live satellite links or digital transmission). Almost 100 Police cadets were drafted in to act as motor bike couriers to get photographic film and TV film from the cameras of correspondents out to Heathrow Airport for onward travel to Canada and elsewhere.

The result was that an estimated 27 million people out of a population of 36 million watched the live broadcast in Britain with the number of people owning television sets doubled. In the United States, 55 million - around one third of Americans – watched the broadcast the next day or tuned in for photographs accompanied by radio feed on the day. (Beddell Smith 2012, p.89)

For the new media of television, as the radio industry had already learned, ‘Royalty was a big audience puller,’ (Chapman 2005, p.217). The lingering differences in the sense of decorum between North America and the UK persisted with Chapman going on to recall how dismayed the British (or at least certain sections of the British press) were to learn that when the film of their event had been sent to America by aeroplane and then screened on television,

there had been a deodorant advert just before the ritual anointing. The television coverage was widely considered to have been successful, popular and impactful, with Ward (1989, p.78) dubbing the BBC's output 'the apogee of its post-war history.'

In view of this success, the historian Peter Hennessy (2006, p.242) has wryly observed: 'Unsurprisingly, therefore, several players have taken credit for getting the BBC's cameras into Westminster Abbey.'

Details on Bob Hoare's career after his work on the Coronation are incomplete, although records confirm that he served as Chief Information Officer at the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance in the 1960s and became a Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations. He received the honour of being made a Member of the British Empire (MBE). Hoare was also made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order, (MVO) a dynastic order of knighthood recognising distinguished personal service to the Sovereign. Unlike other state honours which are recommended by politicians or a specially-formed committee, admission to the Royal Victoria Order remains the personal gift of the monarch, making the award a touching recognition by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and her advisers of the valuable work Bob Hoare did in connection with the Coronation.

Perhaps Bob Hoare's most enduring legacy is that he paved the way for a more professional approach to public relations in the British Royal Family. At Buckingham Palace, Sir William Heseltine, assistant press secretary under Commander Colville, took over the role in 1968 when Colville retired.

In 1970, when Sir William Heseltine was promoted to Assistant Private Secretary, the Queen looked outside the confines of Buckingham Palace for a replacement press secretary in a move which marked a substantial break with the Colville era of militaristic courtiers running public relations.

Instead, the Queen appointed an experienced journalist, the BBC's Royal correspondent, who was put in the unusual position of reporting his own appointment live on air during a news bulletin. While the record is true that 'Ron Allison was the first professional journalist to become a member of the Royal team, hired straight from the BBC, where he had spent the previous four years as Royal correspondent' (Harding 2012, p.87), Bob Hoare's short term contract with the Earl Marshall office pre-dated that appointment and paved the way for a more professional approach to public relations in the British Royal Family 17 years earlier.

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# **The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management: Origins, Influences, Issues and Prospects**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper will present an analysis of the driving forces and key issues, particularly the competing values and worldviews of the participant organizations that were debated and discussed extensively during the formation and early years of the Global Alliance (GA) and sets this within the context of other internationalisation initiatives undertaken by the public relations practitioner community. It will also draw parallels between the formation of the GA and the emerging phenomenon of globalisation at the time, a drive to professionalize public relations and propose that GA's formation was both an indicator and driver of this wider phenomenon, but also an inevitable consequence of it.

The paper examines the early meetings between members of several national and international associations in the late 1990's to the signing of a letter of intent by more than 20 associations in 2000 and finally to an agreement on a vision, mission, objectives and structure for an international alliance in 2002.

A mixed research methods approach is taken which is largely qualitative and includes examination of secondary sources such as original presentations made by PRSA, IABC, CPRS, and CIPR, future Global Alliance leaders' documents from that period and IPRA archives available at Bournemouth University, as well as selected papers on the history of



national or international public relations associations from the IHPRC. Primary data will be obtained via interviews which will be held with key actors involved in the negotiations, those who shaped GA in its early years. In addition, the paper explores the wider research and publicly available information describing the formation of other international organisations such as IPRA and IABC as well as those who became international or attempted to do so such as PRSA, CIPR and others. This will allow the placement of GA negotiations and ultimate agreement into comparative context. In order to assess the formation of GA against a global backdrop, the paper examines the influence of emerging globalisation as well as the pressures of establishing global standards at a time when ISO standards were popular. This context provides a setting and platform for the discussions in the 'pre-formation' years of the GA.

The importance of this research paper is two-fold. First, it captures an important period in public relations history – a period that previously remained in the experiences of the limited number of actors involved but not available to the 160,000 members of GA member associations or to the wider practitioner and academic communities. Second, it looks at the process of GA's formation from a contextual position, particularly through a comparison with other attempts at PR association internationalization with the lens of globalisation and a drive to professionalism providing the necessary perspective.

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**Public Relations: Profession or Craft? An Analysis  
Based Upon the Literature of Professionalism**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** While some people who practice public relations refer to their line of work as a “profession” others consider it to be merely an “occupation” or a “craft.” This paper suggests concerns of this nature should focus more upon individual practitioners than the entire occupational group.

**Design/methodological approach:** The research methodology used for this article is the historical/critical analysis approach that focuses extensively upon an extremely thorough literature review examining scholarly works about professions and professionalism and then relating the opinions of a number of scholars to various aspects of professionalism and professionalization in public relations. The scholarly opinions reviewed in this paper include those of Caplow (1954), Carr-Saunders & Wilson (1933), Converse (1938), Cogan (1955), Etzioni (1969), Flexner (1915), Goode (1969), Hughes (1965), Liberman (1956), Marshall (1939), Tawney (1920), Vollmer & Mills (1966), and Wilensky (1964).

**Findings:** This article asks where public relations stands in the debate over recognition as a profession. Is there a place for public relations as a traditional profession? Does it qualify as a semi-profession? Is it merely a trade? The paper shows how public relations is intellectual, practical and skilled but criticizes a lack of traditional professional criteria.

Based upon a historical analysis of the literature of professionalization, the paper claims one could argue successfully both that public relations is a profession and that it is not. Although it appears public relations might not be a profession in the traditional sense, the field does have many elements and characteristics of professionalism and professionalization.

The paper further suggests while public relations might not meet all of the criteria of the traditional professions, many individual practitioners exhibit high degrees of

professionalization in carrying out their duties. This gives rise to the possibility that, because of its uniqueness, the practice of public relations should not be examined as an occupation or a profession, but that individual public relations practitioners should be typed as professionals or non-professionals based upon their level of professionalism. This is to suggest the question of whether or not public relations is a profession should be asked in terms of the individual and not the practice.

**Practical implications:** In today's modern age of sophistication and specialization many occupational groups contend for acceptance from society by seeking recognition as "professions." They do this by emphasizing the services their vocations offer and by building a body of specialized knowledge and techniques with which to administer these services. Growth of the professions has brought to prominence a set of occupations that never figured prominently in ideological thinking that have tended to dominate recent public discussion. This paper suggests public relations is one such occupation.

**Originality/value:** The scholarly literature does not appear to contain any major publications on this topic.

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# **Hidden (pre)history and unknown histories of PR: Contributions of French *Annales* movement to public relations historiography**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The scarcity of studies on PR historiography is one of the characteristics of research in the field of the History of PR. In addition, the scant historiographical studies of PR have discussed how the history of PR has been explained. Nevertheless, some elements of PR (e.g. personal reputation) existed prior to the industrial age. Therefore, much historiographical work remains to be done, both from inside —how PR history has been explained by PR scholars— and outside —how historians have approached PR history and prehistory through the study of social phenomena, such as public opinion and reputation. The purpose of this paper is to analyze why PR historiography should include the major contemporary contributions to History as part of its aims. Consequently, we have focused on the most influential historical school of thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the French *Annales* movement, taking some of its most relevant members as examples: Jacques Le Goff, Bernard Guenée, Claude Gauvard, and Roger Chartier.

## **Introduction**

Public relations has recently taken an interest in historiography (e.g. Bentele, 2012; L'Etang, 2008a; McKie & Xifra, 2012), this interest manifesting itself in explanations of how public relations scholars have approached public relations history (e.g. Hoy *et al.*, 2007; L'Etang, 2008a).

According to Bentele (2012), the history of public relations cannot be considered independently from different forms and structures of societies, political and economic systems, and the structure of the public sphere. Rather, PR historiography must be embedded within a theoretical framework of social history, national histories, and world history. This statement suggests that the perspective introduced by the *Annales* movement may be useful in

researching the history and prehistory of public relations. Certainly, this historiographical movement deals primarily with the pre-modern world, prior to the French Revolution, with little interest in later topics.

The *Annales* movement is a group of historians associated with a style of historiography developed by French historians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is named for its scholarly journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, which remains the main source of scholarship, along with many books and monographs. The movement has been highly influential in setting the agenda for historiography in France and numerous other countries, especially regarding historians' use of social scientific methods, emphasizing social rather than political or diplomatic themes, and for being generally hostile to the class analysis of Marxist historiography.

The movement has dominated French social history and influenced historiography in Europe and Latin America. Its prominent leaders include co-founders Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. The second generation was led by Fernand Braudel and included Georges Duby, Pierre Goubert, Robert Mandrou, Pierre Chaunu, Jacques Le Goff and Ernest Labrousse. Institutionally, it is based on the *Annales* journal, the SEVPEN publishing house, the *Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme* (FMSH), and especially the 6th Section of the *École pratique des hautes études*, all based in Paris. A third generation was led by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and includes Jacques Revel, and Philippe Ariès, who joined the group in 1978. The third generation stressed history from the point of view of mentalities (*mentalités*). The fourth generation of *Annales* historians, led by Roger Chartier, emphasize analysis of the social history of cultural practices.

The main scholarly outlet has been the journal *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale*, founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, which broke radically with traditional historiography by insisting on the importance of taking all levels of society into consideration and emphasized the collective nature of mentalities. Its contributors viewed events as less fundamental than the mental frameworks that shaped decisions and practices.

Braudel was editor of the *Annales* from 1956 to 1968, followed by the medievalist Jacques Le Goff. However, Braudel's informal successor as head of the movement was Le Roy Ladurie, who was unable to maintain a consistent focus (Burguière, 2006). Scholars moved in multiple directions, covering in disconnected fashion the social, economic, and cultural history of different eras and different parts of the globe. By the 1960s, the movement was building a vast publishing and research network which reached across France, Europe, and the rest of the world. Much emphasis was given to quantitative data, seen as the key to

unlocking all of social history (Burke, 1990). However, Paris ignored the powerful developments in quantitative studies which reshaped economic, political and demographic research in the U.S. and Britain, and France fell behind (Revel & Hunt, 1998, p. 45).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how contributions by some recognized members of the *Annales* movement can help to develop public relations historiography.

### **Jacques Le Goff and the social construction of the imaginary in the Middle Ages**

Jacques Le Goff is, together with Georges Duby, the most prolific French medievalist, particularly of the 12th and 13th centuries. Le Goff is sometimes considered the principal heir of the *Annales* movement. He succeeded Fernand Braudel in 1972 as head of the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS). Along with Pierre Nora, he was one of the leaders of New History in the 1970s. Since then, he has dedicated his work to studying the historical anthropology of Western Europe during medieval times. He is well known for contesting the very name "Middle Ages" and its chronology.

As an agnostic, Le Goff (1982) adopts an equidistant position between the detractors and the apologists of the Middle Ages. His opinion is that the Middle Ages formed a civilization of their own, distinct from both the Greco-Roman antiquity and the modern world. Among his recent works are two widely accepted biographies, a genre his school did not usually favor: the life of Louis IX, the only King of France to be canonized, and the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Italian mendicant friar.

From a public relations perspective, Le Goff (1994) considers the history of propaganda as part of social history, cultural history, the history of the imaginary and the history of the symbolic, without which "a true political history is not possible" (p. 519).

Although true propaganda institutions did exist in the Middle Ages, such as the chancelleries, preaching (not necessarily religious), orators, or, among others, the heralds of arms, this period should be considered as "pre-propagandist or of diffuse propaganda" (Le Goff, 1994, p. 520). Thus, studying medieval propaganda means accepting a typology of forms with no clear boundaries, as among these forms we also find the chronicles of the historians of the age, which were also instruments of persuasion.

Jacques Le Goff established the main features of medieval propaganda within the context of the history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*), of which he was one of the leading lights. The concept of "mentalities" became widely known and gained historiographical importance during the '70s and '80s thanks to the fact that between 1968 and 1989 publications of the third generation of the *Annales*, led by Le Goff, spread all over the

planet, exerting a significant influence on historiography and social science (Burke, 1990). Despite its wide dissemination and popularity, there is no precise and universally accepted definition of either the term "mentality" or the "history of mentalities".

More than designating a well-defined concept, the word "mentality" has been used as a descriptive term to refer to a broad and imprecise field of study that takes in behaviors, everyday gestures, the unconscious, emotions, popular beliefs, forms of consciousness, ideological structures and social imaginary, among many other possible elements. This led to Le Goff himself stating that "the historian of mentalities coincides particularly with the social psychologist. The notions of behavior and attitude are, for both one and the other, essential" (Le Goff & Nora, 1974, p. 731). This statement can be extended to public relations practitioners, who also deal with attitudes and behaviors.

The mentality is defined according to ways of thinking, feeling, imagining and acting consciously or unconsciously, individually or collectively. Thus, human activity, from personal words or gestures to the great acts of a social group, forms part of the field of study addressed by the history of mentalities. Accordingly, propaganda and its effects on publics, information flow throughout history, and reputation building, are the themes, along with public opinion and many others (such as time, space, power, money, justice, body, madness, private life, or death), found in the history of mentalities and addressed by Jacques Le Goff throughout his works, with close attention paid to social imaginary building (e.g., Le Goff, 1981, 1999).

In this context, information, communication and propaganda are structural elements of the medieval imagination – of the mentalities of the men and women of the Middle Ages. Therefore, the characteristics of medieval propaganda established by Le Goff (1994) respond to an approach to the phenomenon drawing on the history of mentalities.

### *Features of medieval propaganda*

*The origins of black propaganda.* Le Goff (1994) argued that during the thirteenth century the Catholic Church denounced a greater sin widespread throughout Christendom: *fraus* - fraud, deceit, illusion. This sin grew with the emergence of the new market economy (Le Goff, 1980, 2013) and also developed in the field of politics. While in earlier times disputes between the *sacerdotium* and the *imperium* regarding the Gregorian Reforms were based on the belief that each party was within its rights and the argument therefore concerned the truth (*veritas*), from the thirteenth century onwards power was not sought through legitimization of

the truth, but through lies. Hence propaganda history shows, in addition to its religious origins, this close link to the lie.

According to this French medievalist, although black propaganda was born in the Middle Ages, propaganda was used for positive ends prior to the 13th century. From this standpoint, some of those activities considered as positive propaganda might be framed within the idea of ethical propaganda (St. John, 2006) or that of weak propaganda (Moloney, 2006) as a public relations form. The *exempla* are one such form.

*The exempla and the origins of ethical propaganda.* According to St. John (2006), public relations practitioners must analyze and demonstrate the ethical contribution of propaganda in structuring and facilitating dialogue that allows public agreement to be reached and a debate to be entered into that benefits the client, its shareholders and broader democratic society. This idea of ethical propaganda was first developed back in the Middle Ages, despite a lack of the economic and business structures in which public relations is currently practiced.

The significant religious component of medieval propaganda meant that at their core messages often had two values essential to Christianity: justice and peace. Le Goff (1994) has highlighted the existence of a medieval propaganda that clamored for values such as harmony, the common good, and the calming of internal conflict. From this perspective, another form of propaganda coexisted alongside manipulative propaganda in the Middle Ages whose purpose was to exorcise conflict and social and political rupture. This was also a precursor to the vision Bernays (1928) offered of modern propaganda as a form of public relations, “as essential to the management of information” (Weaver *et al.*, 2006).

This idea of ethical propaganda was also present in public life, and was embodied in a series of very specific propaganda tools born out of the Middle Ages, such as the sermon – the genre of persuasion *par excellence*, the *auctoritates* (authorities – texts recognized as being worthy of credit because they gave clear witness to the truth)– aimed at reviving use of the Bible for propaganda purposes, the *rationes* (primordial reasons) and the new ways of thinking that scholastic theology included in propaganda speeches, and the *exempla*, which found in propaganda a means of using the seduction of stories and storytelling (Le Goff, 1981).

The *exempla* were “the great mass media of the 13th century” (Le Goff, 1981, p. 399). Although for the French historian the sermon was a great means of disseminating the imaginary, sermons are rhetorically constructed through stories and anecdotes (*exempla*, examples) that help preachers legitimize the veracity of their discourse. The sermon “stuffed



with *exempla*" (Le Goff, 1981, p. 399) was not pronounced only during the Holy Office; it was also pronounced in churches or public squares, it being a precedent of the conference and the meeting, to the extent that preachers became idols of the Christian masses. Anecdotes of *exempla* were received by the audience "as historical, true" (Le Goff, 1981, p. 311).

*Public and public opinion as medieval institutions.* Le Goff (1994) considers there to have been in the Middle Ages, and particularly between the 13th and 15th centuries, a *public* and a *public opinion*, two terms that designate reactions to propaganda. The French historian argues that these two phenomena, the medieval dynamics of which are yet to be explored, require further in-depth analysis. Thus, he asks why when the French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux preached to an enormous crowd in a field at Vézelay (France) it elicited an enthusiastic response from many crusaders, while his speech was not successful when he was in Paris preaching the abandonment of the city in favor of seclusion in churches.

Furthermore, Le Goff (1994) also calls for further research into the target groups of propaganda and how it is adapted according to these publics. It is often addressed to a "representative minority" (p. 522), as is the case with the *sirventès* (or service song), a genre of Occitan lyric poetry used by troubadours and aimed at an influential social and cultural group in Occitania (Aurell, 1992). In order to better define types of propaganda publics, however, Le Goff (1994) proposes analyzing in more detail the modalities of how propaganda is delivered: stating, calling for and proclaiming are different forms of communication aimed at different publics.

*The Middle Ages as a setting for new forms of propaganda.* Medieval propaganda found in Catholic liturgy one of its best media. Thus, new forms of propaganda in the Middle Ages include the elevation of the Host during the Eucharist, the monstrances shown to the faithful, the introduction of the Feast of Corpus Christi, the appearance of the dais (architectural and sculptural piece made of stone, metal, carved wood or fabric, which was used to cover a throne, altar, pulpit, catafalque, statue, a work of the church or a place for certain personages to sit on solemn occasions), these all constituting forms of "propaganda by appearance" (Le Goff, 1994, p. 523).

*The role of communications actors.* The importance of communication intermediaries is also an area of interest to the French medievalist. Thus, a history of medieval propaganda should take the following intermediaries into account: messengers, ambassadors, orators, commentators of paintings. Just as important as the intermediaries are the places where propaganda occurs: around princes, parliaments, assemblies, or the public squares of cities, the true spaces of medieval propaganda (Le Goff, 1994).

*The rise of image as a communication channel.* Le Goff is particularly interested in vehicles of propaganda. If oral discourse experiences new developments, writing takes on a new prominence. The image, enriching its dual role of informing and educating, acquires new functions, and gestural communication undergoes spectacular development. The duel, feudal gesture *par excellence*, acquires new dimensions and new forms among princes, among cities, in clashes between power and its subjects (Le Goff, 1994).

*Emotion as a basis of medieval propaganda.* "A history of propaganda is a history of sensibility" (Le Goff, 1994, p. 524). Medieval propaganda was "a call to emotion" (p. 524). Indeed, emotion is one of the main sources of propaganda, and one of the foundations of communication in times of the network society, and "the drivers of collective action" (Castells, 2012, p. 134). From a public relations perspective, L'Etang (2008b) argues that emotions constitute important capital in the practice of public relations, as it is not possible to manage communication without sensibility.

*Geographical varieties of medieval propaganda.* Propaganda differs according to societies' monarchical nature: propaganda is not the same in France as it is in Naples, for example. Propaganda has deeply-rooted characteristics in Italy thanks to the earliness of the Renaissance, with the communal structure, the importance of cities and the emergence of princes. On the other hand, the propaganda of medieval France is influenced by rhetoric. Therefore, we must refer to *propagandas* and not *propaganda*, as the different forms must be analyzed according to institution, type of society and cultural diversity (Le Goff, 1994).

*Reputation through images and laughter as a propaganda medium.* Le Goff (1994) considers propaganda to be an intertextual discourse. One element of this discourse is iconographic, the iconographic image being one of the great channels of medieval propaganda. What is more, images are very present in literary genres –another medium in the discourse of medieval propaganda– such as the *ars dictaminis* –a description of the art of prose composition, and more specifically of the writing of letters–, poetry and, as we have already seen, the *sirventès*. This lyric poetry expanded the field of propaganda to controversial and satirical literature, reaching its peak in the Modern Age.

The case of causing offense via defamatory painting (Ortalli, 1994) has highlighted the crucial importance of *fama* in the Middle Ages. As Le Goff (1994) pointed out, "the authority of propaganda is often based on reputation; attacking the reputation of your opponent is a way of destroying him as a potential propagandist" (p. 525). This satirical propaganda was used by the French medievalist to highlight the importance of laughter as a

medium for propaganda (Le Goff, 1999). What better way to discredit the enemy than to laugh at him?

*The new symbols of power as propaganda weapons.* These new symbols of power are connected through the use of images. Good examples of this are paintings where the image of the powerful is imposed through aesthetic beautification, the force of realism in the facial features, insignias, emblems, the coat of arms in a time when heraldry pervaded all of society. Besides these paintings, princes made exotic animals instruments of their own image. Thus, "zoos build the reputation of a prince" (Le Goff, 2004, p. 526).

As in Roman antiquity (Perez, 1989), another vehicle for propaganda were coins. Through their inscriptions –the effigy of the prince or the image of the patron saints of the city or the nation-state– they became instruments of propaganda.

Chronicles, as discussed in the next section, were the quintessential vehicle of reputation; but so were monasteries, like the one in Poblet, Catalonia (Le Goff, 1994).

*Memory and history as propaganda mechanisms.* According to Le Goff (1982), propaganda uses one of the main foundations of the West: religion. But it is "a historical religion" (Le Goff, 1994, p. 526). History was the great reference point for medieval propaganda, but it was a history full of myths, particularly myths regarding origins, such as the Trojan origins of the kings of France. "It is a manipulated history, steeped in memory, which is the goal and target of propaganda" (Le Goff, 1994, p. 527). This statement is highly original and pioneering, as it opens up an unexplored territory in public relations: its role of establishing, maintaining or restoring historical memory. As Le Goff (1994) asserts:

"Ultimately, the great target of propaganda, the memory, full of holes and lies, formed by the interests and passions of propagandists, has been the fascinating and deceitful raw material of a history that has the tendency to turn into a huge piece of propaganda" (p. 527).

#### *Medieval propaganda, social imaginary, and historical anthropology*

According to Le Goff (2010), social imaginary is built and thrives on legends, myths. It might be defined as the system of dreams of a society, of a civilization. A system capable of transforming reality into passionate mental imagery. And this is critical to understanding historical processes. History is made by men of flesh and blood, their dreams, their beliefs and their daily needs. Therefore, the construction of the collective imagination is a form of constructing social reality.

Indeed, Le Goff (1999) has shown that medieval imaginary comprised a world with no boundaries between the real and the fantastic, between the natural and the supernatural, between the earthly and the heavenly, between reality and fantasy. One such example is the

birth of Purgatory. In this, the spreading of the idea of Purgatory through the sermons of preachers like Jacques de Vitry, Caesar of Heisterbach and Stephen of Bourbon (Le Goff, 1981) was of central importance. These preachers told stories in which they underscored the importance of pronouncements in which the living were entrusted with the soul of those close to them suffering the pains of Purgatory.

As Burguière (2006) points out, according to Jacques Le Goff's thinking, the imaginary forms part of the field of representation, although unlike the latter, which mentally reproduces a perceived external reality, the imaginary is creative and poetic "in the etymological sense" (Le Goff, 1999, p. 423-424). This distinction is crucial because it introduces a creative intermediate stage between the perceived object and the mind of the receiver. This is the stage at which the persuasive communication that Le Goff (1994) considers medieval propaganda intervenes, but it is also a good example of the precedents of modern public relations as a creator of symbolic spaces (Mickey, 1997; Zhang, 2006). From this perspective, the imaginary is a form of perceived image that goes beyond mere representation.

This approach to history is part of a very specific tradition Le Goff developed from 1972 onwards, when he was elected president of EHESS: historical anthropology, "which aims to understand man in history as a whole, body and soul, in his material, biological, emotional and mental life" (Le Goff, 2010, p. 204). The important thing is therefore to vary the sources: in addition to written texts, the historian must recognize the importance of the word and gesture and how these work throughout history. From this perspective, the history of public relations as a means of communication should also be an operation in historical anthropology, in a similar way to Le Goff's research on medieval propaganda addressed in this section.

Jacques Le Goff opened up a path which was followed by Bernard Guenée and his disciple Claude Gauvard.

### **Bernard Guenée and Claude Gauvard: Public opinion and reputation in the Middle Ages**

Bernard Guenée and Claude Gauvard can be considered colleagues and disciples of Jacques Le Goff and his ideas regarding historical anthropology. They were both interested in the history of mentalities and some of its phenomena. In particular, they have addressed the area of public opinion and reputation (*renommée*) in the Middle Ages.

Bernard Guenée (1927-2010) began his career as a secondary school teacher in Colmar and then at the *lycée* Marceau of Chartres. In 1956, he became a lecturer at the Sorbonne before obtaining a position as professor of medieval history (1965) at the same university. During the 1970s, he was a visiting professor at the prestigious universities of Yale, Oxford and Princeton. From 1980 onwards he was also director of studies at the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Section IV)*. Bernard Guenée was elected member of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in 1981. He was also member of the Royal Historical Society (London) and the Mediaeval Academy of America (Massachusetts).

The work of Bernard Guenée focuses on the history of medieval institutions, and political and cultural history of the High Middle Ages (14th to 16th centuries). He also specialized in the reign of Charles VI of France (1380-1422) and medieval history. He was distinguished by his re-readings of medieval institutions such as the royal entries or the *renommée* (reputation).

His interest in information and political propaganda was evident in his work *L'Occident aux XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles: Les États* (1971), although his key work in this respect is *L'opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Âge d'après la "Chronique de Charles VI" du Religieux de Saint-Denis* (*Public opinion at the end of the Middle Ages from the Religieux de Saint-Denis "Chronicle of Charles VI"*, 2002), which starts with an analysis of the speech made by the King of Navarre to the Parisians in 1357, aimed at demonstrating this strength of popular opinion that the powers that be seek to conquer at any cost.

To support this hypothesis, and to analyze all the complex elements inherent in this opinion, Guenée (2002) refers to the *Chronique de Charles VI* (Pintoin, 1839). Written by historian Michel Pintoin (aka *Religieux de Saint-Denis*), this chronicle has the merit of not only being faithful to events, but also paying attention to the opinions expressed by contemporaries of the age, from the *wise* ("sages") and *people in authority* ("gens d'autorité") to the citizens of Paris (Challet, 2003).

Guenée (2002) examines the state of opinion on royal births, *laudes regiae* (processional hymns) and processions, highlighting the different states of opinion regarding, for example, the birth of the King's first-born or the birth of a male or female child.

Furthermore, the French historian provides an almost semiotic analysis of public opinion during the reign of Charles VI. In his study of the different stages of the relationship between Charles VI and the French, Guenée (2002, 2004) shows how during the decade of the King's madness (1392-1402), which followed a period in which trust had been established between the monarch and the people (1388-1392), several years of grief and fervor were

followed by a period of crisis and division. On this point, Guenée (2002) asserts that public crying, tears and expressions of joy became (pre-established or spontaneous) ritualized codes aimed at conveying a message to the powers that be. The people used calculated silences or verbal exaggerations which were not only indications of the state of opinion, but a clear example of the rhetorical dimension of public communication.

But opinion did not lie only with the people, which is why Guenée (2002) distinguishes between the opinion of the people and that of the wise. Although Pintoin (1839) does not distinguish between nobles and non-nobles, Guenée (2002) states that taxes generated hostility between the two groups, as the people were burdened by them to the benefit of the nobility. The opinion of the people is characterized by a lack of reflection. In the face of a public rumor (*rumor publicus*), the people expressed their opinion publicly. At first as a whisper, but one “which swells with passion and soon becomes the comments of all (*fama publica*)” (Guenée, 2002, p. 157).

Among the non-nobles he highlights an elite group, the “wise” (Guenée, 2002, p. 106), whose reaction to rumor was quite different and whose opinion had great influence. They avoided inopportune reactions and waited until they were better informed. They then took their time to add their own value judgment (*judicium*), which was carefully weighed and based on proven facts.

This is an elite group “with authority and who have the reputation of being wise” (Guenée, 2002, p. 145). From this perspective, the opinion of the wise plays a similar role to that of experts today, and is an example of legitimizing a group of opinion leaders who emerged centuries before the theoretical construction of public opinion and its leaders. Indeed, this is another interesting precedent, that of legitimization through reputation. Furthermore, it also suggests that reputation is a social institution that precedes the industrial revolution and that managing it, by act or omission, is not exclusive to today’s world.

Public opinion during the reign of Charles VI also interested Guenée’s main disciple, Claude Guavard, who, as well as analyzing public opinion during the reign of Charles VI (Gauvard, 1985) in more detail, has also focused her research on reputation in the Middle Ages. Influenced by Jacques Le Goff, Gauvard bases her research on methods found in anthropology and sociology.

Claude Gauvard is professor emeritus at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. After studying history at the Sorbonne, she became a lecturer at the University of Rouen. She defended her doctoral thesis in 1989, becoming professor at the University of Reims (1990)

and later at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (1992), where she taught the history of the Middle Ages until 2009.

According to her, "historians must distinguish between the interpretations of men of the Middle Ages and reality" (Gauvard, 2008a, p. 49). French *chroniqueurs* conveyed the opinion of the elite and the majority did not reflect the opinion of the people. Thus, when it comes to the Charles VI *Chronicle*, the problem is really knowing to whom medieval propaganda messages were addressed. Whilst it is clear that the political elites were the principle recipients, what Gauvard (2008a) questions is whether the powers that be really only wanted to reach those elite, as suggested by Pintoin (1839).

Although the role played by the *chroniqueurs* in medieval propaganda was a fundamental one (Guenée, 2008), the same can be said—as we have seen from Guenée's (2002) analysis of the work of Pintoin (1839)—of their role in reflecting a state of opinion or, perhaps better, of opinions. This is also observed by Gauvard (2008a) when analyzing the example of the Jacquerie of 1358.

The Jacquerie was a popular revolt by peasants in late medieval Europe. It took place in northern France in the summer of 1358, during the Hundred Years' War. Focused in the Oise valley north of Paris, it was violently suppressed after several weeks of violence. The rebellion became known as the Jacquerie because the nobles derided peasants as "Jacques" or "Jacques Bonhomme" for their padded surplice, known as a "*jacque*" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 155). Their revolutionary leader Guillaume Cale was referred to by the aristocratic chronicler Froissart as Jacques Bonhomme (Jack Goodfellow) or Callet.

Unlike mainstream historiography (e.g., Mollat & Wolff, 1970), Gauvard (2008a) argues that these revolts were not spontaneous or unrelated. The first acts of violence were disseminated through rumor, which spread quickly from one village to another. This French medievalist also shows how news of the events that took place in Paris in February 1358, when unrest on the streets caused the death of two of the King's marshals, was quickly spread and interpreted by people in the villages. Thus, no barrier existed between the city and the countryside, rather quite the opposite (Gauvard, 2008a).

The organization and dissemination of the Jacquerie was based on rumor and "very popular modes of information" (Gauvard, 2008a, p. 50), demonstrating the existence of a subversive public opinion, directed against the nobility, but with a political and social foundation and its own logic. Therefore, "the gap between the elite's opinion and that of the people was not so great: the distance was rather the result of how the elite viewed the people.

One single public opinion is to be found among these different social layers" (Gauvard, 2008a, p. 51).

The great contribution of Claude Gauvard as a (non-recognized) public relations historian, however, is her analysis of medieval reputation based on research of the development of the state in the legislative and judicial fields; fields which promoted the expression of public opinion. This public opinion took the form of common reputation (*commune renommée*), which medieval jurists defined as *fama publica*, the French jurist and royal official Philippe de Beaumanoir defined at the end of the 13th century as "what a large group of people think" (Akehurst, 1992, p. 747), and was referred to in *La très ancienne coutume de Bretagne* as "that which is notoriously common in parishes, fairs or markets" (Gauvard, 2008a, p. 51).

It is a view shared by everyone, dealing with knowledge of the facts (*fama facti*) or the reputation of individuals (*fama personae*). The use of these expressions was extremely common at the end of the Middle Ages, particularly following the development of inquisitorial procedure, and with it, the routine use of the inquest and witnesses (Mausen, 2006). The concept of *fama publica* was very formalized and did not in any way resemble an uncontrollable rumor. It was used in court proceedings to substantiate the truth, and in particular to verify the veracity of testimony during the inquest — in both civil and criminal trials. It was, therefore, a legal concept, and the question is whether its contents correspond to a sociological reality like that of reputation today. According to Gauvard (2002), *fama* can be applied to the criminal deed or to the reputation of the accused.

According to Gauvard (2002, 2005, 2008b), the legal dimension of medieval reputation is not as obvious as its sociological dimension, which confuses it with noise and rumor. It circulates and is deformed according to collective needs, taking into account the difficulty inherent in exchanges and information. Indeed, as Le Goff (1994) noted, there is nothing more tempting, in a society divided into opposing groups, than to denounce the enemy by denouncing his bad reputation. Inquisitorial procedure provided the means of doing so.

In the Middle Ages, however, the reputation of nobles tended to be immediately apparent, as it was intrinsic to them, rooted in the succession of a family or lineage. Gauvard (1993, 2005, 2008b) provides evidence of trials where lawyers considered nobles as men of honor, "because honor was an intangible virtue" (Gauvard, 1993, p. 10).

Gauvard's research (1985, 1991, 1993, 2002, 2005, 2008b, 2008b) has revealed the mechanisms by means of which good and bad reputations were defined, according to whether



they met or violated the rules emanating from the powers that be and society. Anyone with a bad reputation had every chance of being convicted or expelled. Anyone with a good reputation, on the other hand, could not be convicted of a crime.

This is not a precedent of litigation public relations, then, the strategies of which attempt to repair the reputation of those involved in a court case. Here reputation acted as a prior presupposition, inseparable from each individual, the valuation of which impinged upon and influenced the ruling in a trial. Hence the existence of the piece (of evidence) *per famam* (Gauvard, 2002). Unlike today, in the Middle Ages the social dimension of reputation exempted one from being convicted.

### **Roger Chartier and the cultural origins of the French Revolution**

Roger Chartier is a French historian and historiographer and leader of the fourth generation of *Annales* historians. A specialist in the cultural history of Modern Europe, he works on the history of books, publishing and reading and is considered, along with Jacques Le Goff and the fathers of the *Annales*, the leader of the history of mentalities.

Roger Chartier's works are described by Kraus (1999) as follows:

"Authors, texts, books, and readers are four poles linked by Roger Chartier's work on the history of written culture; poles between which he attempts to draw connections through a cultural history of social life. The concept of 'appropriation' makes it possible for this perspective not only to give rise to these research topics, but also put them in touch with reading practices that determine appropriation, and which, in turn, depend on the reading skills of a community of readers, author strategies, and text formats" (p. 18).

In his book on the cultural origins of the French Revolution, Chartier (1991) does not restrict his definition of the political culture of the old regime to the two classical narrative fields: the one corresponding to the nation-state exercising its authority and that corresponding to philosophical thought, as proposed by Habermas (1962). Rather he awards it its own field of discourse established on the basis of intellectual sociability and its practices manifested at a micro level.

To understand the new political culture emerging from the end of absolutism is therefore to discover the progressive politicization of the literary public sphere and the shift of criticism towards fields from which it was traditionally banned — the mysteries of religion and the State. These two perspectives, though not incompatible, nonetheless point to two different ways of understanding the place political culture occupies in intellectual culture: the former situates political culture within modes related to voluntary association

(clubs, literary societies, Masonic lodges); the latter within claims for and attainment of the public use of criticism (salons, cafes, schools, newspapers).

Chartier (1991) distances himself, then, from a homogenous or unequivocal understanding of public opinion. What he wishes is to highlight the politicization of the literary public sphere and establish its space within intellectual culture, explaining the circuit of ideas as a motor that generates, from its reception, appropriations which carry with them the cultural baggage of each individual, on the basis of which it develops an interpretation. Ideas, like texts, are not the property of their creator, acquiring their own history from their diffusion. Opinion is therefore not a simple ideological acquisition or imposition, but rather an act of interpretation that takes on different movements. Chartier (1991) warns that in the old regime public opinion was not understood as popular opinion, as the definition awarded to people by dictionaries of the period was that of a manipulable entity, at once silly, rambunctious, and inconsistent.

"The public are not a people" (Chartier, 1991, p. 42), and public opinion was therefore not associated with the one held by the majority. The *Encyclopédie* (*Encyclopaedia or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Crafts*, 1751-1772) does not recognize the idea of *public opinion*: *opinion* is a category of logic (a judgment by the intellect, ambiguous or uncertain, as opposed to the evidence of science) or, in the plural, a term taken from legal language; with regard to the public, it only classifies the *public good* or the *public interest*, preservation of which is entrusted "to the sovereign and to the officials who, under his orders, are charged with this responsibility" (Chartier, 1991, p. 29).

While the king is the guarantor of the public good, he does not guarantee public interests, and the extension of public space is therefore not observed. Its construction will mean the loss of the bond between individuals and the king, along with the guarantee that information will be controlled by the government. This relationship is replaced by "[...] a very different mechanism: the public exposure of private discrepancies" (Chartier, 1991, p. 48).

Accordingly, Chartier's (1991) contribution —by contrast with a traditional understanding of the history of ideas, which attributed an almost mechanical role to the diffusion of philosophical thought— is that he does not consider the French Revolution (and its main political direction) a result of the influence of philosophical ideas, but analyzes the forms of appropriating ideas and ways of thinking of the enlightened by the educated and non-literate social strata. What Chartier (1991) does is to research "how the direct or indirect echo of an intellectual debate which regarded itself as a means of persuading and mobilizing

public opinion shifted social polarizations to transform cultural objectives" (Burguière, 2006, p. 280).

The French Revolution should be considered a conflict of representations (Chartier, 1991), although this does not imply that it took place only in speeches and the imagination. This clash of representations revealed that social actors did not act according to their interests or their social status, but according to the idea that was held of them.

Thus, Chartier (1991) entrusts the building of political space to a new class, while to the people he awards the role of receivers of a new representation of royal power. Combined, these would come to constitute the foundations of a politicized population and lead to the fall of the Ancien Régime.

This construction of representations is a remarkable historical example of the symbolic dimension (that is, of constructing symbols) of public relations. The best example of this is that it was the French Revolution that shaped the Enlightenment, because it chose authors from the 18th century as its precursors. At the same time, the Revolution did not only affect the Enlightenment but also what came before it. On the one hand, there was a complete rupture, a new world with a new calendar, new ways of speaking, a new vocabulary, etc. On the other, there was a search for precursors ranging from the Enlightenment back to Antiquity (Chartier, 1991).

Chartier's (1991) interpretation is that the French Revolution presupposes there are constructions of canons in all societies, including the contemporary one, and that these canons end up feeding the reputation of a period and its main manifestations and cultural products.

Although Roger Chartier has not researched strategies for constructing representations in any great depth, his work contributes a new approach to research in the history of public relations — the history of representations approach. From this standpoint, the idea of appropriation can be useful in understanding the success and the failure of public communication strategies or, in short, how these strategies have functioned since from the invention of the printing press. Furthermore, it also adds to our understanding of how the increase in reading matter led to an increase in sociability and public relations activities; how forms of reading have influenced (and still influence) reception of the public relations message; or, by contrast, how public relations strategies and tactics influence forms of reading.

## **Implications for the history and historiography of public relations**

As Burguière (2006) suggests, one of the principles of the *Annales* movement was that understanding our present and our society requires a methodical and reasoned confrontation with the past. Indeed, the *Annales*, and especially Marc Bloch, as well as employing the traditional method, which consisted in following the course of history, added a new methodology: the march backwards that starts from the present to go back to the past by means of its progressive reconstruction.

A good example of this is found in the study conducted by Bloch (1921) on the role of rumors and false news during the First World War. In this research it was the medievalist who dealt “with the new conditions of information created by the censorship of war as a kind of experimental Middle Ages” (Burguière, 2006, p. 40) to understand the functioning of a society in which oral transmission prevailed. As Ginzburg (1973) argued, the study of *the royal touch* (Bloch, 1924) began to germinate in Bloch's thinking around the time he began to analyze false rumors.

The experience of World War I served the French historians of the *Annales* as a “laboratory for studying the mentalities” (Burguière, 2006, p. 46). Thus, for Bloch (1921), by openly exposing individuals to death, war gives rise to psychological conditions (attitudes and representations) which in times of peace remain much more repressed or masked in our modern societies than they were in the medieval world.

In many ways, these new psychological conditions were similar to those of the medieval world, the state of alertness and psychological isolation of men at the front giving the words of the few men who broke this isolation (the news broadcasters) a power of persuasion that also recalled the conditions of the Middle Ages (Bloch, 1921).

According to Bloch (1921), beliefs play the dual role of being disturbing and yet providing structure in equal measure — making an entire imaginary occult resurface; they have an emotional power that can unite and strengthen the social bond but also install anguish. Thus, the mentalities are for Bloch (1921) at once a cognitive and an emotional structure, a system of representations and a receptacle of unconscious images that persuade rather than inform the social actor.

Public relations is a “meaning-construction process through the use of symbols, interactions and interpretations” (Zhang, 2006, p. 27). From this perspective, a historical anthropology approach to public relations history is needed. For example, Chartier's work (1991) has shown the crucial role played by the method of the history of representations in analyzing the evolution of the public sphere and public opinion. Furthermore, the history of

public relations forms part of the history of mentalities, and can be included in the field of cultural history, a discipline that combines the approaches of anthropology and history to look at popular cultural traditions and cultural interpretations of historical experience, examining the records and narrative descriptions of past knowledge, customs, and arts of a group of people (Burke, 2004).

Mentalities historians approach the mentalities by distinguishing "in customs and their institutionalization the retention, resurgence or processing of very old ideas that may be mixed with much more recent forms of thinking" (Burguière, 2006, p. 90). The elements of medieval propaganda proposed by Le Goff, Gauvard's view of reputation and the public opinion of Guenée and Chartier are some of these ideas. Thus, the historians object of this article can be considered public relations historiographers. Furthermore, Le Goff's list of characteristics of electoral propaganda constitutes a research agenda for historians of propaganda and public relations.

In his study on the *Annales* movement, Burke (who considers it a movement rather than a school of thought) concludes:

"In my own view, the outstanding achievement of the *Annales* group ... has been the reclaiming of vast areas for history. The group has extended the territory of the historian to unexpected areas of human behaviour and to social groups neglected by traditional historians. These extensions of historical territory are associated... with collaboration with other disciplines" (Burke, 1990, p. 10).

The history of public relations should draw upon this interdisciplinary approach to go beyond considering only the history of the profession and use the research methodology of historical anthropology, as the historians we have discussed in this article have done, to further advance research in the history and historiography of the discipline.

### **Conclusions and future research**

The work conducted by these historians —and others from different contemporary schools— suggests the existence of a hidden historiography of PR. This historiography can help public relations scholars learn more about the history of the discipline and how today's critical concepts, such as reputation, played an important role in the past, in particular prior to the industrial age. Certainly, these historians have analyzed research fields that have never before been of interest to public relations scholars, such as laughter and humor as a manifestation and means of discrediting or enhancing reputation (e.g. Le Goff, 1999).

By contrast with Habermas' theories (1962), Le Goff, Guenée and Gauvard suggest that public opinion has existed since the Middle Ages. Guenée (2002) bases this on the two thousand pages written by Michel Pintoin; Gauvard (2008a) on the presence of rumor as a manifestation of Roman *fama* and the future reputation of our days. Le Goff (1994) and Chartier (1990) consider it a manifestation of the mentalities as seen through a long-term (*longue durée*) view of history.

Indeed, as Guenée (2002) stated: "In this field, as in many others, realities have progressed far beyond names" (p. 10). It is beyond doubt that the standards of the *Annales* movement—and especially those of the history of mentalities—have permeated the traditional subjects of study (from political to social studies), provided a major boost to the analysis of other issues (death, the body, social behavior, reputation, among others) and, most strikingly, shown an extraordinary power of attraction in most historiographical trends.

The founders and key members of the *Annales* movement were specialists in the Middle Ages. Our paper has therefore focused on this particular period in the history of public relations. However, this does not imply that its history does not extend back to Antiquity, where, for example, *fama* was first conceived as a precursor to modern reputation. Neither does it imply that medieval institutions ended abruptly with the discovery of America, a historical event that marks the beginning of the Modern Age according to dominant principles regarding the division of history.

Le Goff (2004), following Braudel's long term (*longue durée*) concept, also talks about a long-term Middle Ages. That is, medieval civilization continued until the Modern Age, to the extent that this can be regarded as a time of consolidation for medieval institutions. A good example of this in the field of reputation would be the concern of princes for their image as an instrument of reputation and propaganda in the Modern Age (see Strong, 1984).

According to Braudel (1958), there are three levels of historical time:

- The long term (or level of structures with great stability: geographical frameworks, biological realities, productivity limits, even some ideological phenomena...).
- The *conjecture* (intermediate stage in which change is perceptible: economic series, processes of change, phenomena of profound transformation that in historiographical terms have been called revolutions, such as the Industrial Revolution and the Bourgeois Revolution...).

- The event (the most visible but least significant, and which would have been the most common time-based approach), which forms part of the domain of chroniclers and journalists.

Further research should focus on how these three time periods affect the history of public relations, which will depend on our approach to the field. If public relations is seen as a “functional social system that provides organizations as well as individuals with legitimacy and trust” (Bentele & Wehmeier, 2007, p. 299), we can situate the history of public relations at the *conjecture* level. The same is true if we opt for a professional approach. However, the questions still remains of whether a long-term view exists with regard to the history of public relations. This is one of the most fascinating areas of future research for the discipline.

To answer this question we must look beyond the reduction of public relations to only a management function, as it would then be meaningless to talk about its existing prior to the Industrial Revolution. The data in this research, for example, support the idea of public relations as a form of propaganda (e.g. Bernays, 1928; Moloney, 2006; McKie & Munshi, 2007), a practice dating back to the early exercising of political power, its history very much *longue durée* in character.

Therefore, we consider the approach of Mexican-American philosopher Manuel De Landa as innovative and useful in providing a dispersed view of the history of public relations. Based on the work of Fernand Braudel and the ideas of the physician Arthur Iberall (1972, 1987), who considered the different stages of human history to actually be caused by critical transitions, De Landa (1997) argues that these stages are not progressive steps in a development where each step leaves the previous one behind; that is, they are not strictly individual stages themselves. On the contrary, “like the gaseous, liquid, and solid phases of water they can co-exist, and each new human phase is added to the previous ones, co-existing and interacting with them without leaving them in the past” (De Landa, 1997, p. 16). This perspective is similar to that proposed by Burguière (2006), who calls Braudel's (1958) long term idea “anthropological time”, or in other words, “a time made of overlays, restarts and sometimes sudden innovations taken from a very ancient cultural background common to almost all of mankind” (Burguière, 2006, p. 90).

From this nonlinear perspective of history, the history of public relations parallels the history of mankind, as some of the structures it has addressed, like public opinion or reputation, form part of this cultural background posited by Burguière (2006). Public relations has also coexisted in different states, some of which are as old as humanity itself. From this standpoint —and because public relations deals with mentalities— public relations

is a *longue durée* phenomenon and its historians should approach it as such. Consequently, there is no prehistory of public relations.

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