NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Series Editor: Tom Watson

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PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC RELATIONS HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL THEORIZATION

Other Voices

Edited by

Tom Watson

Perspectives on Public Relations Historiography and Historical Theorization

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National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations

Series Editor: **Tom Watson,** Professor of Public Relations, Faculty of Media & Communication, Bournemouth University, UK

The history of public relations has long been presented in a corporatist Anglo-American framework. The National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices series is the first to offer an authentic world-wide view of the history of public relations freed from those influences.

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Perspectives on Public Relations Historiography and Historical Theorization: Other Voices

Edited by

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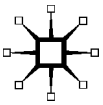

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This series is dedicated to my wife, Jenny, who has endured three decades of my practice and research in public relations ('I'll be finished soon' has been my response to her on too many occasions), and to the scholars and practitioners who have embraced and contributed so much to the International History of Public Relations Conference. They have come to Bournemouth University each year from around the world and reinvigorated the scholarship of public relations history. I hope everyone enjoys this series and are inspired to develop their research.

Tom Watson

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Series Editor's Preface

This series will make a major contribution to the history and historiography of public relations (PR). Until recently publications and conference papers have focused mainly on American tropes that PR was invented in the United States, although there have been British and German challenges to this claim. There are, however, emerging narratives that public relations-type activity developed in many countries in other bureaucratic and cultural forms that only came in contact with Anglo-American practice recently.

The scholarship of public relations has largely been driven by US perspectives with a limited level of research undertaken in the United Kingdom and Central Europe. This has been reflected in general PR texts, which mostly tell the story of PR's development from the US experience. Following the establishment of the International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC), first held in 2010, it is evident there is increasing level of research, reflection and scholarship outside Anglo-America and Central European orbits.

From IHPRC and a recent expansion of publishing in public relations academic journals, new national perspectives on the formation of public relations structures and practices are being published and discussed. Some reflect Anglo-American influences while others have evolved from national cultural and communication practices with a sideways glace at international practices.

I am attached to the notion of 'other' both in its post-modern concept and a desire to create a more authentic

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approach to the history of public relations. It was the UK public relations scholar and historian Professor Jacquie L'Etang who first used 'the other' in discussion with me. It immediately encapsulated my concerns about some recent historical writing, especially from countries outside Western Europe and North America. There was much evidence that 'Western hegemonic public relations' was influencing authors to make their national histories conform to the primacy of the United States. Often it was processed through the four models of Grunig and Hunt (1984). This approach did not take account of the social, cultural and political forces that formed each nation's approach to PR. It was also dull reading.

National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices will be the first series to bring forward these different, sometimes alternative and culturally diverse national histories of public relations in a single format. Some will be appearing for the first time. In this series, national narratives are introduced and discussed, enabling the development of new or complementary theories on the establishment of public relations around the world.

Overall, the series has three aims:

- Introduce national perspectives on the formation of public relations practices and structures in countries outside Western Europe and North America;
- Challenge existing US-centric modelling of public relations;
- Aid the formation of new knowledge and theory on the formation of public relations practices and structures by offering accessible publications of high quality.

Five of the books will focus on national public relations narratives which are collected together on a continental basis: Asia and Australasia, Eastern Europe and Russia, Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, and Western Europe. The sixth book addresses historiographic interpretations and theorization of public relations history.

Rather than requesting authors to write in a prescribed format which leaves little flexibility, they have been encouraged to research and write historical narratives and analysis that are pertinent to a particular country or region. My view is that a national historical account of public relations' evolution will be more prized and exciting to read if the author is encouraged to present a narrative of how it developed over one or more particular periods (determined by what is appropriate in that country), considering why one or two particular PR events or persons

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(or none) were important in that country, reviewing cultural traditions and interpretations of historical experiences, and theorizing development of public relations into its present state. Chapters without enforced consistency to the structure and focus have enabled the perspectives and voices from the different countries to be told in a way that is relevant to their histories.

A more original discussion follows in the concluding book because the series editor and fellow contributors offer a more insightful commentary on the historical development in the regions, identifying a contextualized emergent theoretical frameworks and historiography that values differences, rather than attempting to 'test' an established theoretical framework or historiographic approach.

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Reference

Grunig, J. and Hunt, T. (1984) *Managing Public Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).

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Notes on Contributors

Tom Watson, PhD**,** is Professor of Public Relations in the Faculty of Media & Communication at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. Before entering academic life, Tom's career covered journalism and public relations in Australia, the United Kingdom and internationally. He ran a successful public relations consultancy in England for 18 years and was chairman of the United Kingdom's Public Relations Consultants Association from 2000 to 2002.

Tom's research focuses on professionally-important topics such as measurement and evaluation, reputation management, and corporate social responsibility. He also researches and writes on public relations history and established the annual International History of Public Relations Conference in 2010.

Günter Bentele, Dr Phil., is Professor emeritus for Public Relations at the University of Leipzig. He held the first Chair for Public Relations (Öffentlichkeitsarbeit/PR) in the German-speaking countries from 1994 until his retirement in fall 2014. Bentele is author, co-author, editor and co-editor of some 40 books and more than 180 scientific articles in the fields of public relations, communication theory, journalism and semiotics, as well as editor of two book series. In 2004, he was President of EUPRERA and also honoured as 'PR personality of the year' by DPRG (German Public Relations Association).

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interest is in public relations history, specifically the influence of social reform, religion and women on the development of the field.

Jacquie L'Etang, PhD, is Professor of Public Relations and Applied Communication at Queen Margaret University, Scotland. She has a BA in American & English History (UEA), an MA in Commonwealth History (London) and focused her PhD on the history of the public relations occupation in the British Isles (2001). She has presented conference papers and published articles on history and historiography since 1995. She has also published on critical perspectives in public relations since 1989.

Stefan Wehmeier, Dr Phil.**,** holds a Chair in PR/organizational communication at the University of Greifswald, Germany. Earlier, he was Professor at the University of Salzburg, Austria, the FH Wien University of Applied Science and Assistant Professor at the University of Southern Denmark. He works on topics such as PR history, online communication, transparency and CSR, communication strategy and management. He has professional experience as an editor in PR and journalism.

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Introduction

Tom Watson

Watson, Tom (ed.) *Perspectives on Public Relations Historiography and Historical Theorization: Other Voices*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
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In this sixth and final volume in the *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* series, the focus is on historiography and theorization of the history of public relations. In the five chapters, leading PR historians explore aspects of historiography in essays that express personal views. They have reflected on the five preceding books of national histories, of which two have contributed chapters. The authors have also considered recent developments in historiography, the philosophy of history and historical sociology.

The series editor Tom Watson opens the book with an exploration of themes that arose from the five books; German PR historian, Günter Bentele makes a case for stratification models to interpret the emergence of PR; US historian Margot Opdycke Lamme considers the role of biography in the history of public relations; Jacquie L'Etang, from Scotland, discusses the philosophy of history from a sociological standpoint; and German PR historian Stefan Wehmeier argues for a different approach to PR historiography from the New Annalistic stance.

The opening chapter, 'What in the world is Public Relations', explores the history of public relations in a meta-analysis of 47 chapters covering 74 countries in the five books of the series. Tom Watson considers the Antecedents, Springboards and Restraints that have shaped public relations and the Historiography applied to interpret them in an attempt to identify common factors in the development of public relations, as well as important differences in the tapestry of histories that the series has produced. He found there were few generalizable factors other than, in many (but not all) countries, public relations' expansion since the middle of the 20th century has been fostered by political democracy and increasingly open economies.

Günter Bentele's chapter, 'Problems of Public Relations Historiography and Perspectives of a Functional–Integrative Stratification Model', challenges the widely held view that 'all communication and representation is PR' and argues that while there is a pre-history of public relations, the 'real' history of public relations as organized activity commenced in Germany, at least, in the early 19th century. He applies his 'functional–integrative' stratification model with its layers of historical activity in order to argue the case for historiography that is criteria-based and linked to the development (and backward steps) in practice and theory.

The focus on biography in Margot Opdycke Lamme's chapter, ' "Where the Quiet Work is Done": Biography in Public Relations', addresses the 'Great Men' approach which has been dominant in US approaches to the

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history of PR. She contends that a wider, more diverse and more questioning approach is needed in the use of biography for historical analysis and critique: 'As a field we have clung to drawing within the lines for long enough. We need to go back to finger painting, to the traces of our history, to start with ourselves and see where to follow the handprints of our profession.'

Jacquie L'Etang's chapter, 'Where is Public Relations Historiography? Philosophy of History, Historiography and Public Relations', makes a case for the history of public relations to be approached from sociological perspectives in order to identify and critique the societal role of public relations 'within the context of social change'.

The fifth chapter from Stefan Wehmeier, 'Historiography (and Theory) of Public Relations History', discusses positivist and postmodern approaches before opting for a reflective and constructivist analysis based on the 'Neue Annalistik' (New Annalistic) theory of history that has been proposed by German historiographer Lucian Hölscher.

Added together, these chapters comprise a major review of philosophical approaches to the history of public relations and the historiography of the field. They approach the debate from different perspectives and also review important recent contributions from other historians more generally and historians of public relations, in particular. The chapters are a loud, emphatic coda to the *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* series which has widened the knowledge base of the history of public relations around the world.

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What in the World is Public Relations?

Tom Watson

Abstract: *This chapter analyzes the antecedents, springboards and restraints that have shaped the development of public relations (PR) in more than 70 countries. Based on data from chapters in the preceding five books in the series, it proposes three common antecedents of PR activity – early corporate communication, governmental information and propaganda methods and cultural/religious influences. The springboards for PR's growth have been professionalization and education, along with the opening of economies and political plurality. The restraints have been political and economic, such as one-party states, dictatorships and closed economies. PR's historiography is also explored, and the chapter identifies periodization as the primary method. Future research should move on from the current discovery stage into more analytical and critical processes.*

Keywords: antecedents; historiography; history of public relations; PR; restraints; springboards

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One of the purposes of this series was to encourage scholarship that, from greatly varying national and cultural perspectives, brought new perspectives to our understanding of the development of public relations. In the five books that focus on 'national perspectives', insights and data have been gathered from 73 countries in all continents and regions outside North America, whose public relation history is already well recorded and interpreted.

Specifically, the series sets out to identify 'contextualized emergent theoretical frameworks and historiography that value differences, rather than attempting to "test" an established theoretical framework or historiographic approach' (Watson 2014/15, p. x). This is a relatively new field of historical research and, in many countries, is still at a stage of discovery and the first production of historical research and written outputs. It is, thus, lacking theoretical and historiographical frameworks, and of scholars who have built a corpus of research that can be debated and reinterpreted. However, this rawness can be an advantage in that scholars ask fundamental questions, discover connections and linkages, create new oral and text archives and start writing their own historiographical approaches.

Two examples of unexpected linkages that were exposed in the series but have yet to be explored are (1) the role of the US Government in promoting public relations in Europe in the immediate post-World War II era of the Marshall Plan (European Recovery Plan). Examples from Greece, Italy, France and Belgium show that PR was promoted as an element in democratization; (2) there is a similar example in Eastern Europe after 1989/91 when Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet bloc collapsed. Both periods need greater exploration but the 'democratization' factor only became evident when all these histories are analyzed together.

There was a similar instance of an individual PR adviser, Eric Carlson, who first primed public relations' development in Brazil in 1953 (Nassar, de Farias and Furlanetto, in Watson, 2014d) and then appeared in Costa Rica the following year (Fallas, in Watson, 2014d). Carlson is described as a professor from the US and it would be interesting to know more about him: Who was he? Which organization(s) sponsored his visits? What were their objectives? How was PR presented and defined at that time? There were other academics and trainers from the US who appeared in Latin American countries in the 1950s and helped shape PR's development, but there is cursory information about them and none appear to have contributed to PR scholarship or its body of knowledge.

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In *Middle Eastern and African Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations*, chapters from Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe and Nigeria reflected on the colonial inheritance of British governmental information dissemination processes, and how those methods continued to influence these countries for a decade or two after independence. This colonial connection is also evidenced in the chapter on the United Kingdom. It is also a confirmation that governmental communication was probably more sophisticated and engaged with 'best practice' concepts than scholars of propaganda and public administration history have previously been prepared to allow.

The series has also brought forward forms and practices of public relations that have evolved very differently from Western models or which started with these 'international' types of PR practice but then modified them. The prime examples of the culturally developed public relations are Buddhist (Thailand), Confucian (China, Taiwan and Vietnam), Islamic (Egypt, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf nations). Although 'international PR' is available for multinational corporations and those who seek uniformity of corporate and brand expression, there are parallel, confident models of culturally flavoured PR that have emerged over the past century (or more in the case of Thailand).

To further understand the variegated history of public relations, four themes will be explored in this chapter:

- **Antecedents** – Proto-PR (Watson, 2013) and early influences that shaped public relations practice.
- **Springboards** – The factors such as economic, political and social conditions, events and personalities that enabled PR to advance into a distinct field.
- **Restraints** – Cultural, economic, political and social aspects that delayed the emergence of PR as a fully fledged practice.
- **Historiography** – The interpretation of the history of public relations by scholars.

The chapter will conclude with suggestions for future research.

The data for the discussion that follows have been drawn wholly from the preceding five books in the *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* series. They are referenced as Watson 2014a (Asian), 2014b (Eastern European), 2014c (Middle Eastern and African), 2014d (Latin American and Caribbean) and 2015 (Western European). As this is the most extensive collection of scholarly writing

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on the history of PR outside North America, this author contends that they are a robust basis for analysis. Where references are drawn from specific chapters, authors are identified. Otherwise, readers should make a general presumption that analysis and commentary is based on the book series.

To prepare this thematic analysis, national histories have been scrutinized to identify key stages of development of public relations in a linear manner in order to identify the baseline influences and areas of practice that followed. Here are three culturally and politically varied examples:

> ***Hungary***: [Soviet era] Propaganda → "Economic propaganda" → [1990/91] Local PR Agencies and Professional Association → Education

This indicates that Soviet era propaganda and later 'economic propaganda' (a euphemism for promotional publicity) were the Antecedents, with the emergence after 1990/91 of local PR agencies and the early formation of a professional association being the Springboards for the formation of an expanding practice. This led to the creation of education and training which supported the institutionalization and professionalization of the field.

> ***Thailand***: Cultural antecedents [Buddhist; monarchical; proto-PR] → Governmental [1930s informational] → Corporate/Governmental [state agencies] → Corporate [US models in 1960s and 1970s] → Less developed Agency sector → Education → Corporate [local models]/MNC Corporate [Western models]

For Thailand, the Antecedents for public relations are much earlier than Hungary and are embedded in culture, religion and society through Buddhist practices and reverence for the monarchy. Public relations in a governmental informational form (Antecedent) can be traced to the latter part of the 19th century and was confirmed in the 1930s with the formation of a central governmental public relations and advertising organization. Subsequently, the growth (Springboards) of public relations has been gradual, mainly from corporate and governmental influences. Only in the past 20 years, has an agency sector formed and international models of public relations been introduced by multinational corporations (MNCs) and international agency networks.

> ***Turkey***: [1950s] Sub-category of Public Administration → [1960s] Governmental → Education → Corporate → [1970s] Agencies → [1990s] International agencies → Municipal/NGOs.

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In Turkey, which has a vibrant PR sector, the Antecedents, like Thailand, were in government but with PR considered as an element of public administration practice rather than having evolved from journalism and advertising, as found in other countries. The Springboard for growth was PR's emergence within government as a separate communication practice for which training and education were required. Subsequently, the field has both expanded and contracted, largely due to governmental attitudes and respect for communication with the populous.

Antecedents

Asia: PR began from three separate sources: colonial governments, cultural influences and governmental communication. Of the 11 nations reviewed in this chapter, only Thailand was never colonized or significantly occupied. Thus the impact of British, Dutch, French, Spanish and US colonial administrations can be found in Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam. These administrations developed informational systems, assisted the formation of newspapers and performed propaganda duties during wartime and when countering independence movements (India, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines). The French and US influences in Vietnam were, however, negated by Communist party control from the mid-1970s onwards (Van, in Watson, 2014a). As indicated above, Buddhism was a formative antecedent in Thailand, while Confucianism shaped PR in China, Taiwan and Vietnam. In Japan, post-World War II US occupation government helped create a public relations sector, although there were earlier propagandist practices.

Eastern Europe: The interpretation of the history of PR has two camps: those countries (Bulgaria, Poland, Russia and Ukraine) for which it is a late 20th-century phenomena that followed the breakup of the Soviet bloc from 1989 to 1991 and subsequent democratization; and those (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia) for which there was proto-PR during the 20th century and, in the case of Romania, back to the 19th century. For the first group, PR emerged as the US agency model, primarily engaged in political communications, and followed by promotion of branded consumer products. In the second group, there were strong indications of PR in commercial and governmental applications in Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia, before and

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during the Soviet era when the term was applied in the marketing of exports.

Middle East and Africa: As in Asia, there are three antecedents – colonial (Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda), cultural (Arab States of the Gulf, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and governmental (Egypt, Israel, South Africa, Turkey). The colonial influences were all British and expressed as informational processes from governments. It is notable that these processes have persisted. In the Arab world, the influence of Islam and tribal connections set the basis for indigenous PR, although a parallel model of US-style promotional activity evolved in the latter part of the 20th century. Governmental communication, sometimes political and propagandist, was linked to public administration practices as exemplified in the Turkish model discussed earlier.

Latin America and Caribbean: This regional grouping had corporate (Argentina, Brazil, Central America, Colombia, Mexico) and governmental (British Caribbean, Peru) beginnings of PR. The British Caribbean practices across three countries (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago) evolved from colonial governments, although there is little record, other than in Argentina, of Portuguese or Spanish colonial influence on Antecedents.

Western Europe: Other than in Germany and the UK, PR is mostly positioned as a post-World War II phenomenon. In the Netherlands, the *voorlichting* (information diffusion) tradition can be traced to the 18th-century Enlightenment and there is evidence of pre-World War II organized propaganda in Italy, but Germany with a strong corporate and governmental communications culture from the second half of the 19th century onwards and the UK with colonial and national governmental communications in the first half of the 20th century can be positioned in the pre-World War II period. In the aftermath of 1945, corporate (Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands,) and governmental (Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK) communication processes and operations set the base on which PR was to develop, followed soon after by the formation of professional associations. In some nations, notably Greece, Italy and the Netherlands, there was almost simultaneous evolution of corporate and governmental practices. In most of Western Europe, other than Spain, the influence of US approaches to organizational and promotional communication can be identified and will be discussed later.

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In summary, there were three common Antecedents of PR practices: early corporate communication; governmental (often colonial) information and propaganda methods; and cultural influences drawn from dominant religions (Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam). The timescale varies widely from timeless cultural influences to formation of German practices in the mid- to late 19th century and on to the final decade of the last century in Eastern Europe, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet bloc.

Springboards

Asia: Across most of Asia and Australasia, the evolution and rapid growth of agency PR in the 1970s and 1980s was part of a worldwide expansion, which was characterized by the formation of professional associations, the commencement of organized training and education and expansion of employment in the field. In this region (and others discussed later), the 'agency boom' was an outcome of the Springboards of PR's growth. The time scale varied: For example, Australia's development had a more than 20-year gap between the formation of a professional body (the Public Relations Institute of Australia) and growth of corporate PR in the 1950s, and the start of university-level degree studies in the 1970s. This was followed by rapid growth of the agency sector. However other countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan) focused on governmental communications to foster nation-building with formation of professional bodies, education and the agency sector following later. In China, India and Thailand, growth of the field came from governmental PR aided by the loosening of economic controls, notably in India.

Eastern Europe: Unlike Asia, with its varied speeds of growth of the field, political and economic change was concentrated in a three-year period from 1989 to 1991 and gave strong impetus to PR practice in all forms (agency, corporate and government). This could be considered as a 'democratic dividend' that led to rapid institutionalization, professionalization and expansion of education. Although Croatia and Slovenia had been outside the Soviet bloc in Yugoslavia, their PR sectors had limited opportunity to expand and benefited from changes at this time, although soon affected by the Balkan conflict of the early to mid-1990s.

Middle East and Africa: In former colonial nations, PR followed a similar track of post-colonial governmental communication supporting

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nation-building inside and outside the country, followed by corporate communication undertaken by major exporters, professionalization through formation of associations based on and with links to the UK's (then) Institute of Public Relations (IPR), development of training and education and then emergence of the agency sector, largely linked to major corporate clients. There was a similar sequence in South Africa. However, the sequence in the Arab Gulf and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was that the expansion of the oil industry fostered corporate PR that was followed by governmental growth and the formation of advertising agencies which set up PR offshoots. Professionalization, education and agency growth came later. In Egypt and Israel, governmental PR was followed by formation of professional bodies and then growth of education and the agency sector. In the Arab world, two models of PR practice evolved – local/indigenous and international – for different markets and clients. The local/indigenous model retains aspects of hospitality that are based on long-standing cultural communication.

Latin America: Although this region was less affected by World War II, it was not until the 1950s that PR began its growth. It is notable that Latin America, like Western Europe, was quick to professionalize. From the late 1950s onwards, practitioners met regionally and then linked with the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). As noted in the Introduction to the volume on Latin America and the Caribbean, 'the theoretical and practice base of PR did not, however, come from the former colonial powers but from the United States which, according to its Monroe Doctrine, considers Latin America to be in its sphere of influence' (Watson, 2014d, p. 2). Thus one of the Springboards for growth was the formation of professional associations at national and regional level. This paralleled growth of corporate communications practice and preceded the development of education and, later, formation of agencies. Only Mexico had a well-developed agency sector by mid-20th century. The British Caribbean followed a post-colonial model of governmental PR growing ahead of developments in corporate communication. This was followed by professional associations, similar to the former African colonies, which were linked to the London-based IPR, and then education. Agency growth has always been on a small scale.

Western Europe: As foreshadowed in the discussion of Antecedents, growth of PR came after World War II, and was fostered by US influence in several countries. This was delivered through the United States

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Information Service (USIS) operations which employed local practitioners and through visits to the US that were funded by the Marshall Plan (the European Recovery Program). The initial Springboards came from governmental activity and, as economies recovered, corporate PR. Most European countries also formed professional associations at this time (Italy had three at once in the 1950s), with IPRA coming into being in 1955, largely as a European initiative although the PRSA was involved. In the UK, which like Germany had pre-war governmental and corporate PR structures, the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) trade union played a central role in the formation of the IPR in order that its PR practitioner members would be professionalized and their activities given legitimacy (L'Etang, in Watson, 2015). Most countries, however, formed their associations from practitioner communities who sought professional status and employer recognition. Outside the Marshall Plan nations, Spain and Portugal struggled to develop their PR sectors until the 1970s as they were still under the rule of dictators. In Spain, professional bodies were gradually formed in the 1960s as controls on the formation of associations were eased (Rodriguez-Salcedo, in Watson, 2015). The agency sector in many countries started developing in the 1950s but did not accelerate growth for 20 years. In that decade, the first of the US agency networks started operating in Europe, following North American clients into revived markets.

In summary, a general pattern of the Springboards for PR development is proposed as:

> Government → Corporate → Professional Association → Education → Agencies

However, like all attempts at a general rule, there are significant exceptions according to culture. In some cases, such as post-war Western Europe and post-Berlin Wall Eastern Europe, the expansion of Government and Corporate PR while not utterly simultaneous often occurred in a similar five-year period. In most countries, professional associations preceded the introduction of specialist PR education and training, as these bodies sought education as a key element of professionalization and practice legitimization. These associations were persistent advocates and were supported by IPRA and PRSA in the preparation of sample educational curricula.

As commented upon in the section on Asia's Springboards, the growth of the agency sector was an outcome of the general growth of the sector,

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professionalization and education. It was to prosper from the 1970s onwards, once the groundwork had been done to establish the field in many countries. Other observations are the influence of British governmental communications practice in many former colonies and of the US in Eastern and Western Europe and in Latin America.

Restraints

Asia: PR's growth in this region has been limited and slowed at various time across the region. In China, it is only in the past 15 years that agency PR, the most commercially sensitive form of practice has thrived. As in neighbouring Vietnam, the one-party state and state corporatism had limited promotional activity for several decades in favour of propaganda and controlled media. India, post-1947, maintained a controlled statist economy for three decades before gradually easing restraints after which both corporate and agency PR expanded. However, the legacy was that its practice model was long based on media relations and publicity tactics, with little consideration of strategic communications approaches. Post-independence, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore focused on nation-building and media controls which limited growth of non-governmental PR but as these economies opened up and greater media freedom was allowed, the field began to expand. Singapore is now the main Asian regional hub for corporate and agency PR and media/creative industries. PR in the Philippines was restrained and, to some extent, abused in the Marcos era but expanded once those controls were released.

Eastern Europe: From the end of World War II to the early 1990s, PR was heavily controlled or non-existent in much of the Soviet bloc. Its growth only began when the previous regimes were replaced in democratic elections. From the 1990s to the mid-2000s was a period of great expansion of all forms of PR. In the early period, as reported in the Russia chapter and other countries, political PR and campaigns to reinforce new democratic structures and then EU accession funded growth. As suggested earlier, PR's growth has been a result of the 'democratic dividend'.

Middle East and Africa: Quite diverse restraints have applied to PR in this region. South African PR operated under the apartheid era controls of media and personal liberties from the 1950s to the early 1990s. Although there were some characteristics of normal professional development, such as industry organizations and higher education, growth and reputation were very troubled. PR in Israel was restrained

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from 1948 for 30 years by a collectivist mentality that limited criticism of government. This was reinforced by media controls. When more pluralist views arose, media (and PR) began to expand. So much so that the past two decades since 1995 are considered as a 'golden age' for PR (Magen, in Watson, 2014c, p. 53). The progress of PR in Turkey has often been related to government's varied attitude and respect for it. Similarly, Egyptian practice has been affected by governmental controls on media and political turbulence. A once-thriving PR sector in Zimbabwe has been virtually wiped out since 2000 by government policies and the collapse of the economy.

Latin America: In the nations of Central America (Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), there has been correlation between democracy and the growth of PR (Fallas, in Watson, 2014d). PR prospers in nations with open economies and political pluralism, but is weak in dictatorships and one-party states. This correlation was also found in Peru where statism for much of the second half of the past century ossified PR, as well as the media and other modes of communication, until the 1990s when the national Constitution changed (Sánchez de Walther, in Watson, 2014d). Argentina and Brazil both had periods of military government that limited media and personal expression that, in turn, restrained PR. Once these periods had passed, and the economies were opened to external investment, PR grew in all forms, as did education and training.

Western Europe: The development of Spanish PR was arrested during the Franco era that ran from 1939 to the mid-1970s. However, practitioners found that they could develop near-normal campaigns by carefully avoiding topics and attitudes that could cause problems. Even so, it proved difficult to develop professional bodies because the regime had laws against the formation of association. From the end of the Franco period, PR accelerated its growth to similar levels of other Western European nations (Rodriguez-Salcedo, in Watson, 2015). Practitioners in Greece, which had a military dictatorship from 1967 to 1974, continued to grow their businesses and in turn the industry by avoiding controversy. Tourism and the attraction of inward investment were important campaign themes that aided PR's development during both restrictive regimes. Greek practitioners had another problem: they were unable to separate PR from advertising. Latterly, their professional association has been subsumed into an advertising sector-dominated organization (Theofilou, in Watson, 2015).

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When considering Restraints upon PR, it is possible to generalize more than was possible for Springboards. The generalization is that PR thrives in democratic environments in which there is a relatively open economy. This can be applied to agency, corporate and governmental modes, although there is insufficient historical evidence that this viewpoint could be extended to non-profit or activist PR. It also appears that, while tactically led publicity and media relations are the most common forms of practice, propaganda is not fostered by association with promotional and persuasional forms of communication.

Historiography

The analysis of historiographic approaches has been undertaken using the same regions as the discussion of the other aspects. Periodization, not surprisingly, was the most common approach whether as timeline narratives or date-based stages of development.

Asia: Bentele's functional-integrative structural model (Bentele, 2010) was adapted to Thai historical circumstances when advancing four strata of public relations evolution (Tantivejakul, in Watson, 2014a). Periodization as 'period', 'phase' or 'stage' was applied to the histories of China, India, Indonesia and Taiwan. Other national histories were expressed as time- and date-based narratives. The China chapter took the longest view by placing the antecedents of PR-like activity in ancient times; whereas the histories of former colonies such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan (a Japanese colony), and Vietnam commenced at the eve of World War II or soon after 1945 when independence movements arose against the colonial powers.

Eastern Europe: Historiographic interpretation came in two discrete sets: those which identified antecedents and those which vehemently placed the arrival of PR as a post-Berlin Wall and democratization phenomenon, with no backward consideration of promotional activity in the preceding Soviet era. Timelines were adopted in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. Thematic approaches that emphasized institutionalization followed by education and training were used for other countries. Only the Poland chapter had the specific historiographic model of 'transitional public relations' (Ławniczak 2001, 2005) utilized to interpret the evolution of PR.

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Middle East and Africa: There was little consistency of interpretation across the very diverse group of countries. Three chapters – 'Egypt', 'Israel' and 'Turkey' – used periodization. Thematic analysis was applied in another three – 'Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe', 'Nigeria' and 'Uganda' – possibly indicating the commonality of British colonial public administration approaches to information dissemination. However, Raaz and Wehmeier's (2011) 'fact-event oriented, periodizing and theorizing' was used for Israel and was the only instance of a specific historiographic model.

Latin America and Caribbean: Most chapters applied timelines as analytic processes and to shape narratives, while authors noted that there was little resource in the form of archives and research on which scholarly approaches could be formed. The Peru chapter used a bibliographic approach through which a half-century of PR texts were analyzed to build insights into the formation of PR in the country and create a narrative through which institutionalization could be scrutinized. For Argentina, the country's economic growth and industrialization was an allegory for a century of PR progression as a field of organizational communication.

Western Europe: Periodization was adopted in several chapters as a route to explore themes and influences: the number of periods ranged from three in Austria, focused wholly on the post-war period, to seven in Germany, where analysis started with pre-history or proto-PR influences. Bentele's functional-integrative structural model (Bentele, 2010) is the most fully developed model: as noted for Thailand earlier, it can be adapted for different national histories. Otherwise, the region's histories were expressed as narrative timelines, with sideward looks at influences (e.g. postwar US programmes) and the subsequent evolution of national approaches.

Future research

In collating the histories of PR from 73 countries in 47 chapters in five books, the jam has been spread rather thinly. For many countries, these chapters were the first or an early effort to record and interpret the introduction of PR as a defined practice. For example, the history for Central America (Fallas, in Watson, 2014d) covered six countries most of which had not collated any form of history in text, audio or visual archives. It was a major effort by Carmen Mayela Fallas from Costa Rica to gather

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material, with assistance from academic and professional colleagues, into this chapter. They now have a basic history, at discovery level, which can be built upon, analyzed and critiqued. They were not alone in undertaking basic research.

The major research challenge for PR historians is to gather oral histories, organizational records, personal archives and artefacts of all types before the early generations of practitioners fade away. The creation of archives is an important step to enable research to be conducted in ways that challenges the verities often retailed by those with personal legends and progressivist myths to create and perpetuate. The example of Edwards Bernays' self-aggrandizement has long over-balanced the understanding of PR's development in the US, where the 'Great Man' myth has only recently been confronted (Watson, 2014e).

Research also needs to test the application of Western models of PR as the sole or major model practice. As I noted in a *Public Relations Review* commentary:

> By applying a framework from a Western corporatist culture to post-Communist Eastern Europe or communitarian Southeast Asia, a dangerous short cut has been taken. More encouragement must be given to nascent historians to go to archives, gather interviews and data, and develop historical analyses. (Watson, 2014e, p. 875)

Although this commentary was published during the period in which the *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices* series has been written, the vast majority of authors have written chapters based on the evolution of PR in their countries without comparison to Western corporate or agency models. PR has thus been portrayed as a rich tapestry of models and concepts, which (and mixing metaphors from jam to carpets) covers the basis of future research.

The series has also established a larger community of PR historians world-wide. Although some have met personally through attendance at the annual International History of Public Relations Conference, there are a similar number who are joining this new and growing group of scholars. In addition to fostering national histories, I hope that 'cooperation between PR historians must grow ... with comparative studies across nations, cultures and organizations' (Watson, 2014e, p. 876).

As the editor reading all the chapters in five preceding books, there appear to be numerous cross-cultural and transnational links to explore. For example, who was Eric Carlson and who sent him to Brazil and

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Costa Rica in the early 1950s? How did the court of King Chulalongkorn of Thailand conduct a media relations campaign in Europe at the end of the 19th century, and what impact did it have in Europe and on Thailand? How did the USIS, Marshall Plan resources and the Occupying Forces conceive PR and then promote it so effectively in post-World War II Europe and Japan? This list could go on and on. It shows the intersection of public relations with culture, economics, politics and society, and with media and other methods of promotional communication. There is so much to discover, analyze and critique.

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2

Problems of Public Relations Historiography and Perspectives of a Functional–Integrative Stratification Model

Günter Bentele

Abstract: *Historiography is presented here as a reflective part and sub-discipline of history. There are some important questions for the historiography of public relations, beginning with the origin of public relations, the definition of public relations and related concepts and periodization to mention some of the most important. A functional–integrative stratification model with five different strata is presented with the aim of giving some answers to the formulated questions and solution to problems. All public relations are descended from forms of communication, but not all types of communication can and should be understood as public relations.*

Keywords: historiography; history of public relations; periodization of PR history; prehistory of public relations; public relations; stratification model

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1 Introduction

Historiography is not just writing history, but can, should and is sometimes defined as a reflective part and a sub-discipline of history (see Simon, 1996; Völkel, 2006). Historiography reflects, on a meta-level, the different objects of history (persons, organizations, social systems, societies etc.), their status, roles and developments in history. Historiography reflects history as a discipline, reflects the regional, time-dependent and methodological perspectives from which historians are writing, why and by what criteria which historical segments are selected for historical descriptions and accounts, what type of history is important and what sources can be used. Combining such criteria, it is possible to distinguish a number of different types of historiography: event chronology, personal history, mentality history, history of the court, national histories, economic history, women's history and so on. Acknowledging the legitimacy of all these perspectives, which in all types of history-specific perspectives and interpretations play a crucial role, this finding should not lead to a total relativism, meaning that there are no criteria at all, to distinguish between right or wrong interpretations, right or wrong reconstructions of historical processes. It can be argued, that 'there is no "universal" or "right" history, but a series of "interpretation of interpretation"' (L'Etang, 2008, p. 321). From my point of view, these two positions must not be seen as a contradiction, but can probably be reconciled. This position that there is no 'right' history but only a series of interpretations seems to be a form of relativism that ultimately gives up the idea and the aim of any historical truth. Of course, there have been many discussions in historiography, and also within the theory of knowledge during the past 2000 years, related to the problem of the recognizability of the world.

The object of the public relations historiography is the history of public relations. So far, with a few exceptions, public relations history is written as national history, as history focusing on persons, their role in the history of the professional field, the history of the occupational and professional field and sometimes the communication history of organizations. There is not much comparative history so far.

Oddly, the object of public relations is seldom defined precisely in historical accounts; it remains rather uncertain. Often, it is used as a more or less fuzzy concept, more an intuitive and approximate idea of public relations than a precise definition and description. In recent

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articles about writing public relations history it is stated: 'Public relations is difficult to define, which makes it hard to pinpoint its origins' (Lamme and Russell, 2010, p. 284). In my perspective it might be difficult to define public relations, but it doesn't seem the best solution to give up the aim of common definitions and the aim to build agreed understandings of phenomena such as public relations. The strategy to take everything that seems to be somewhat similar to this term certainly gives results, but the question arises whether certain techniques (tactics) of the church in the 10th century, fund-raising events in the 17th century, political strategies and lotteries of the 18th century can and should be discussed under the same classification or term of 'public relations' (Lamme and Russell, 2010, p. 342).

Because we have many perspectives of public relations histories at the same time, we have many different histories of public relations so far. This chapter[1] will deal with some positions of a contemporary public relations historiography (Section 2), discuss some of the most important questions and problems of public relations historiography (Section 3), especially in a global public relations history perspective. Furthermore, I will discuss a specific model, the functional–integrative stratification model of public relations evolution (Section 4) which claims to be able to answer some key questions.

2 A brief look at current PR historiography

When we consider the situation of public relations historiography in the meanings of (a) the writing of history and (b) reflection upon history writing, we observe changes. During several years, only in one country, the United States, did public relations historiography seem to be at a more advanced stage: some specialized professor positions for PR history, regularly published articles about public relations history in different scholarly journals, some books about (US/American) public relations history marked a difference to other countries. In most other countries the situation was not as advanced. In many countries, writing of public relations history still seems to be in its infancy. The situation started to change when Tom Watson began to organize the annual 'International History of PR Conference' (Bournemouth) in 2010 (see http://historyofpr.com). Looking at the literature, but looking also at these conferences, it was possible to

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distinguish between three different types of historical publications concerning PR (Bentele, 2013a):

1. National PR histories of a rather descriptive nature: research about the historical development of public relations, especially in one country. Examples include Kunczik (1997) and L'Etang (2004). Among shorter versions are history chapters, especially in American textbooks. This is a type of public relations history with a rather general claim (Cutlip, 1994, 1995). But these examples are more or less national PR histories that focus on the US. A very short overview of examples of national public relations history for many countries was given by Sriramesh and Verčič (2009) and van Ruler and Verčič (2004); a much broader view is given in the *National Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations* series edited by Tom Watson.
2. The second type includes studies that focus on specific aspects, for example the historical development of individual firms such as Krupp, Siemens, AEG or other organizations. Also parts of the professional field, such as that of PR agencies (Nöthe, 1994) or communal public relations (Liebert, 1995). Case studies show only the historical development of smaller segments of the professional field, but they can nonetheless also provide deeper insights into the field as a whole. A special subtype of these publications includes studies of famous practitioners such as Edward L. Bernays (Tye, 1998) and Ivy Lee in the US (Hiebert, 1966), Carl Hundhausen (Lehming, 1997) and Albert Oeckl (Mattke, 2006) in Germany.
3. The third type of publications reflects various problems of public relations historiography on a meta-theoretical or methodological level. Approaches to public relations historiography are discussed as well as different periodization models and so on. Examples include Bentele (1987, 1997, 2013 a, b), L'Etang (2008, 2014), Hoy (2002), Raaz and Wehmeier (2011), Lamme and Russell (2010), Logan (2014), McKie and Xifra (2014).

In Bentele (1997) and later in Bentele (2013a) I put forward two different approaches of PR historiography: (1) the *fact or event-based approach of PR historiography* and (2) the approach consisting of a *model and theory-based historiography.* The differentiation in Bentele (1997) was taken up by Hoy (2002), Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier (2007), Wehmeier, Raaz and Hoy (2009) and Raaz and Wehmeier (2011). Hoy (2002) who proposed three types: (1) fact/event-oriented, (2) periodizing and (3) the model/

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theory-oriented). In my opinion, however, the second, periodizing type is a subtype of fact-oriented historiography. Therefore I retained the original two-part classification.

If we review the first approach, *fact-and-event-based PR historiography*,[2] this type still constitutes the most widely diffused approach and represents the initial phase of a historical preoccupation with most varied phenomena. The approach is rather simple: until now only scattered cited and published facts have been collected and arranged in chronological–historical sequence. An example of this method is the article 'Milestones in the History of Public Relations' in Heath (2005, p. 915). The milestones begin with the year 1800 BC and end in 2002, shortly before the *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* was published. It concentrates mainly on PR history in the United States. Similar examples, focused mainly on Germany, can be found in Szyszka (1997) and Liebert (2003). A more recent example, but with a more global claim, is in Lamme and Russell (2010).

In the field of historical research this type of historical writing corresponds more or less to the older method of 'historicism', the classic type of historical writing in the 19th century, which was based primarily on *events* which were derived from *sources*, which in turn had to be *understood* and *interpreted*. In the 20th century, under the influence of the emerging social sciences, 'structural historiography' established itself in the field of history in a critical departure from historicism. This type of historical writing concentrates mainly on examining how social and economic structures evolve over lengthier periods of time. As applied to public relations history, the astonishment of laypeople and also of PR practitioners is often considerable when it can be demonstrated that PR phenomena, that is, typical PR tools or PR methods in politics or the economy, are nothing new. In other words, they have ancient 'roots' or precursors that can often be traced back as far as the Greek polis.

If, beyond such collections of facts, attempts at systematization become discernible which in general lead to chronological tables and also models of periodization, then one can speak quite reasonably of the existence of a (reflective) PR historiography. To that end, as a rule, understandable and specifiable criteria for defining the periods have to exist. The fact-based approach in its earlier and simpler examples fundamentally lacks any (conscious) theoretical grounding. It does not entirely do without a theoretical preconception, however. In this approach too it is at least necessary to assume a particular concept of 'public relations' in order

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to be able to gather facts on the development of the phenomenon at all. Since the understanding of PR varies widely within this approach, which has until now been the most widely diffused, inconsistencies emerge in part within the historical descriptions and in part divergent approaches also emerge within the same type of PR historiography. Among the examples are the two (mutually exclusive) views according to which, first, PR is as old as the history of humankind itself and, second, PR is of only recent date, that is, only began with industrialization in Europe (Ronneberger and Rühl, 1992) or only *sensu stricto* at the beginning of the 20th century (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1994; Broom, 2009). A material-rich, more recent work is the monograph of Lamme and Russell (2010). On one hand, the fact-and-event-oriented type of PR historiography can be assigned to this article; on the other, the authors used reflective conceptual distinctions. The work, which claims to present 'a new theory of public relations history by removing the imprint of the traditional timeline and examining what scholars have found and defined to be evidence of public relations at work prior to the traditional starting point of 1900' (Lamme and Russell, 2010, p. 289) focuses on the (global) search for PR tactics within the past 2000 years. There are four areas of public relations distinguished in the society: (1) religion, (2) education, (3) politics and government, (4) business, but different social, political, economic, cultural and media conditions remain widely disregarded. I doubt whether all these activities can be discussed under the umbrella of 'public relations'.

The 'model and theory-based' approach can directly be linked with James E. Grunig's 'four models of public relations'. This distinction between four different types or models of PR (publicity, information, asymmetric communication and symmetric communication) is interpreted by Grunig and Hunt (1984) not only systematically but also historically. The four models of public relations or the entire diagram (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 22) are viewed as a simplification of complex reality but, at the same time, through the introduction of distinguishing criteria (e.g. communications objectives, communications structure, underlying communications model), it becomes transparent and, as a kind of ideal type, useful as an aid in understanding and reconstructing actual PR activities.

The historical interpretation was originally also presented by Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 25) as a subdivision of phases: the publicity type is placed mainly in the phase between 1850 and 1900; the information model

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begins around 1900; the beginning of the asymmetric communications model is placed around 1920; and that of the symmetrical communications model is placed much later, in the 1960s and 1970s. This model-based subdivision of periods is not further specified or elaborated.

It seems to be clear that a PR historiography which has models of this type as its starting point is much more grounded in theory than the simpler type of fact-based PR historiography. The method of this type of historiography is alongside and on the basis of a collecting of facts, mainly its systematization of historical facts. The aim is not only the description of the development but rather – going beyond this – the explanation of historical developments. In addition to functions specific to the professional field of PR, this type of historiography also obviously has social scientific functions. The limits of this approach, of course, lie in the quality and the empirical validity of the underlying models. Grunig in an unpublished manuscript (Grunig, 1996) goes one step further. Traditional PR historiography is described as 'linear', as 'male dominated', as 'white dominated', and 'U.S. dominated' (Grunig, 1996, p. 7). In this new approach, J. E. Grunig no longer views PR history as a linear process leading from the publicity model to the symmetrical communications model but rather these models are seen as 'magnifying lenses' for describing the previous development and, this being an explicit claim, for explaining it. According to this line, the history of public relations is pursued as a history of ideas, and this procedure is specified by distinguishing the historical elements that make up the 'idea' of PR. Historical elements that constitute the broad 'notion' of public relations include, for example, the idea that human communication is generally an alternative to force and violence. This is, according to Grunig (1996, p. 116), the most basic idea of public relations and means that the PR function in organizations emerges when the environment or growth in the size and power of an organization makes it necessary. This also explains why and when a specific management function develops; that the fundamental idea of symmetrical PR communication can only be achieved through the process of developing a profession; and that, contrary to PR historiography up to this point in the mid-1990s, a diversity of approaches to practising public relations is observable.

The second type of public relations historiography includes a clearly defined theoretical foundation. It is also defined by a clear method (metatheoretically reflective systematization) with the transparent aim of describing and explaining the evolution of public relations ideas,

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practices and structures of the professional field from a socio-historical point of view. Most questions and problems involving PR historiography, as formulated in the first section of the chapter, can only be addressed and solved in the framework of model- and theory-based approaches. This is valid also for decisions concerning the historical point in time from which public relations can be classified and based on the factors and influences from which public relations has developed. In the next section I introduce a theoretical model which could be a basic model for a globally applicable PR historiography and therefore serve as a model for comparative research on the history of public relations.

3 Questions and problems of PR historiography

What kinds of questions, problems or challenges arise in public relations historiography? McKie and Xifra (2014) argue that there are three challenges: (1) global and social diversification, (2) questions of scale, method and ecological inclusiveness and (3) what is public relations for? Some years ago, L'Etang (2008, p. 319) in her important article on public relations historiography also deals with 'challenges that emerge in trying to write PR history' and discusses methodological strategies and tactics of history writing. She argues for a 'reflexive' account, meaning that the researcher should be aware of his or her own positions and should reflect his or her regional, time-dependent and methodological limitations and perspectives. L'Etang (2014) focuses on historical sociology approaches to make reflexive critique more concrete and analytically deeper. Jacquie L'Etang states that 'historiographical issues that have arisen to date in PR relate to: definitions and scope of the field; the use of PR typologies as explanation; periodization.' She also mentions 'the relationship between PR and public communication, the inclusion or exclusion of propaganda ...' among other issues (L'Etang, 2014, p. 657). One issue seems to be missing in this enumeration: the question of the origin of public relations. In the following sub-sections I discuss some of the most important questions and problems.

3.1 The question and problem of the origin of public relations

When did PR really begin and where? The answer to the question of the beginning and origin of public relations remains an important question that isn't easy to answer. The question is actually answered very differently

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in the literature, although Logan (2014, p. 661) states that there would be 'little disagreement that the origins of U.S. corporate public relations correspond to the railroads, the onset of the industrial revolution ... and the tremendous growth overall of America's business during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'. But US corporate public relations is not identical to public relations generally. What if, in other countries, we can observe earlier public relations activities in politics or other areas? What if there are historians who argue that public relations begin with the early mankind? Or at least 2000 years ago? For example, Lamme and Russell contend (2010, p. 354): 'It can be concluded that the intentional practice of public relations is as least 2000 years old.'

Avenarius (2000, p. 67) argues that we should see a first, prehistoric period, then a second period of public relations that lasted from about 2000 BC to about 1500 AD. Avenarius differentiates six great, partly overlapping periods until today. Was there really public relations in antiquity and the Middle Ages? The question must be allowed if public relations existed in ancient imperial times such as Egypt, Babylon, the Diadochi, Rome, India and China.

If the origins of public relations are set in Greek and Roman antiquity, then the question should be: Why the line is drawn here and not in the Stone Age or the period of Cro-Magnon man? It becomes clear that certain definitional criteria are necessary for a theoretically well-founded concept of public relations. I discuss this question below.

But what criteria can be applied for the beginning of public relations, that is 'real public relations', not only of human communication? In my view it doesn't make much sense to take the concepts of communication and public relations as synonyms.

The criterion 'existence of the term public relations', as discussed by Binder (1983), is not such a criterion. And are there specific socio-historical and socioeconomic conditions (e.g. the existence of a developed media system)? Is it the criterion that we must see practitioners work in public relations activity as a main job in labour-structured organization, such as a specialized department? Is it primarily the existence of particular instruments or tactics of communication or communication technologies? Is it a professional, specialized and planned human activity that marks the beginning of PR or should all these criteria be considered together?

Or did public relations only arise with the European industrialization during the 19th century which Ronneberger and Rühl (1992) and many

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other authors argue for? For these scholars the origin of public relations can only defined by basic socio-historical and socioeconomic conditions. In the area of industrialization, a set of socio-cultural changes happened: a rapid growth of the population, a full monetization of the economy, a change of the social consciousness to a consciousness of classes and social strata, resulting from industrial division of labour and planning, the rapid rise of literacy of the population through compulsory education and some other changes. Ronneberger and Rühl (1992, p. 50) mention three elementary and 'constitutive principles' of public relations: (1) public attention, (2) a general principle of competition in society and (3) public communication understood primarily as an establishment of a public sphere through mass media. These three principles point to certain social conditions, which are seen as essential for the emergence of public relations.

It seems logical that public relations cannot have emerged 2000 years ago and also during the 19th century. These different responses demand that different discourses are addressed with the aim of designating criteria and possibly to form common models.

3.2 The problems of the definition of the term 'public relations' and of differentiating the prehistory of public relations from the 'real history'

Is there a prehistory of public relations and a 'real' PR history, as most US textbooks see it? It seems to be clear that a precise definition of public relations is necessary in order to answer the questions of the origin and the development of public relations, worldwide. If we tentatively take a definition of public relations which is widely used, such as the Grunig's 'public relations is the management of communication between an organisation and its publics' (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 8), then we should investigate if there was a phenomenon such as 'management', if there were organizations of that type and if there were stakeholder groups of organizations in ancient times. One can imagine there are problems of interpreting concepts such as management or stakeholders and applying or transferring them directly to these times. A similar problem comes up with 'medieval public relations'. If there too many difficulties to do so, one conceptual strategy could be to distinguish a prehistory of public relations (or, as Watson, 2013, p. 3 says, a 'protohistory') from the real or actual history of public relations. Another, similar strategy is to speak of 'antecedents' (Cutlip, 1995), 'older roots' or 'beginnings' of public

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relations and 'today's practice' (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 74). This strategy has often been used in general history as well as in public relations history in articles and books. In most cases, the criteria to differentiate between these two phases (prehistory or antecedents and real public relations) are not clearly stated in most publications. After all, some criteria such as the existence of an organization, the use of symbols and other instruments such as slogans, staged events, campaigns) are mentioned in order to designate innovative patterns that shape today's public relations (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 76).

In my research, I differentiate between a (long) prehistory of public relations (Layers 1 to 4) and one phase of 'modern' public relations. 'Modern' public relations in Germany is set at the start of the 19th century, because all criteria for this concept are fulfilled: modern public relations is defined by organized and full-time public relations activities of an organization (e.g. a department) managing the information and communication processes between the organization and the (internal and external) publics or stakeholders. Furthermore the existence of a developed media system and a developed public sphere (Habermas, 1990) are necessary as important social conditions. If all these conditions are fulfilled, an occupational field of public relations in the strict sense can emerge. According to these criteria, modern PR can be identified at the beginning of the 19th century and, in Germany, therefore public relations is now over 200 years old. Parliamentary democracy as a precondition for public relations is not necessary, but every political system has strong impacts on the occupational field of public relations.

3.3 Problem of periodization and period division

What criteria can be given for distinguishing between the various periods of public relations development? Do these criteria apply globally, for each continent and each country, or are they only valid for certain countries or continents? For American PR history, the situation seems to be clear. Though there are differences in periodization in different textbooks (see different periodization models in Newsom, Scott and VanSlyke Turk (1993), Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Broom and Sha (2013)) there are also many similarities.

If one looks at another country, with a different political system, the situation differs. In Germany during the Nazi period, for example, the question arises: Did industrial or political public relations exist (albeit under a different name), or should this period be seen as PR-free? (This

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stance was taken by practitioners such as Albert Oeckl, who had their first professional experiences during the Nazi time.) Was everything during the Nazi period absorbed by propaganda activities, which had nothing to do with public relations? And, later, did public relations exist in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or in other Eastern European (Soviet bloc) countries, albeit with a basic socialist understanding? The answer to the last two questions is important for PR historiography insofar as it becomes clear that any PR historiography presupposes, first, a conceptual preconception of public relations – in this case an acceptable differentiation between public relations and propaganda – and that, second, it becomes clear that the history of PR cannot be considered independently of different forms of societies, political and economic systems, and the structure of 'the public sphere'.

This next question is related to the last one very closely: Which periods of development can be distinguished? The periodization of Avenarius (2000) differs clearly from the periodization of Oeckl (1964, p. 93), which begins with Alfred von Tirpitz 1894. The second phase consists for Oeckl of the time between 1933 and 1945 and the third phase opens in the post-war period in 1945. Szyszka (2005, p. 17) identifies an early stage beginning in the second half of the 19th century, followed by a second, institutionalization phase (1945–1960), an initial phase (1960–1970), a positioning phase (1970–1985) and, finally, a period of expansion and differentiation (1985–today).

Bentele (1997, p. 163) proposed six periods from the 'middle of the 19th century' to the mid-1990 (p. 161). Recently, seven periods were elaborated:

A. Prehistory of public relations;
B. 1st period: emergence of the occupational field (beginning of the 19th century until 1918);
2nd period: consolidation and growth (1918–1933);
3rd period: the Nazi dictatorship (1933–1945): public relations and propaganda;
4th period: restart and recovery (1945–1958);
5th period: consolidation of the professional field (1958–1985);
6th period: boom of the professional field; professionalization (1985–1995);
7th period: influence of the Internet, globalization, social media (1995 – present);

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There are different criteria, which are important for the differentiation of the periods. The following criteria seem to be important:

- **a.** The political system. Especially for Germany, the different political systems have a strong impact on the development of public relations and mark period boundaries. Public relations in the 19th century (Prussia) and the German Empire, beginning with 1871, has different structures compared with public relations during World War I. The parliamentary system of the Weimar Republic again altered the structures and with the beginning of the Nazi era, many aspects changed. Structures and activities changed again after the end of World War II; the beginning of the new parliamentary democratic system provided a framework for the profession as a whole, but offered also new organizational possibilities (e.g. the possibility to found PR agencies);
- **b.** The criterion of economic development and economic influence. Industrialization and, later, the example of economic booms (6th period) are examples for the importance of this criterion;
- **c.** Communications technology development (e.g. development of the Internet in the 7th period of the Bentele periodization model);
- **d.** The professional field (e.g. impetus for professionalization in the 7th period);
- **e.** Looking at the PR development on a global scale, cultural and regional criteria must also be added.

An important question is whether these criteria are globally valid or whether they apply only to certain countries, continents and/or historical periods. Periodization models of the United States should be compared with those in Germany, UK and Spain for the reason that the political system histories have varied greatly.

3.4 Problem of conceptual and empirical definition of public relations and related phenomena such as propaganda, journalism and advertising

An important problem in PR history relates to the conceptual and logical separation and distinction of phenomena that are related to public relations despite clear differences. The conceptual demarcation problems refer to the context of the phenomena on the reality level.

Was there any kind of public relations in the Nazi period and was all public communication propaganda? Was there really public relations in

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the GDR, albeit with a socialist basic understanding or was the information activity, for example, in a cultural institution nothing more than 'propaganda'? To answer these last two questions seems to be important, at least concerning PR historiography in Germany. Again it becomes clear that every PR historiography on the one hand presupposes a conceptual pre-understanding of public relations, in this case an acceptable definition for propaganda, but on the other, it seems evident that PR history may not reflect legal forms and different structures of the public sphere.

The problem cannot be discussed here intensively, but public relations and propaganda, conceptually as well as historically, have connections. The terms 'public relations' and 'press policy' are also linked historically. Today, these are analytically and by definition clearly separable, but this was not the case in the 19th century (Bentele, 2013b).

4 Functional–integrative stratification: preconditions and elements

In the following section, the functional–integrative stratification model is presented; an approach that can answer some of the questions that arose in Section 3 and may help solve some historiographic problems.

4.1 Some preconditions and a different perspective

A fundamental and actual historical precondition for a stratification approach is that public relations, just as with other forms of public communication such as journalism, advertising and propaganda, has evolved historically from interpersonal forms of human communication. But public relations cannot be understood as being identical with communication: the term 'public relations' is not synonymous with the term 'communication'; public relations can only be understood as a certain type of communication. Second, public relations in the sense of systematic communications management, this is an additional precondition, is historically and currently always associated with the production of organizational–internal and/or organizational–external public communication. 'Public communication' includes communication with internal publics of organizations. Two basic requirements can be derived from these preconditions: First, PR historiography can basically only be pursued meaningfully in the context of the history of communication and, second, only in the context of the development of public communication.

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PR historiography would lose out on essential insights if it were to ignore these contexts. A third precondition would be that public relations always should be understood as a form of organized communication activity of organizations, not of single persons. Given these positions, PR historiography is demeaned if it were to view itself primarily as a form of historiography that concentrates on famous persons or companies.

If public relations history is understood as part of the more general history of public communication, logically there would be a close connection with the professional history of journalism. In this context of a type of co-evolution of two professional fields, it would seem somewhat implausible to assume that the professional field of journalism would have developed before professional field of PR. There are arguments and indicators that might show exactly the opposite case.

4.2 Functional–integrative stratification

What can be understood by the term 'functional–integrative stratification'? By applying this term, I wish to designate a theoretical perspective that is based on the 'stratification principle', a fundamental principle of the evolutionary processes in different spheres: biological evolution (e.g. the evolution of sensory organs such as the eye, the evolution of the human mind), and in the evolution of societies. I think that this principle could be applied and should be used for the social evolution of communication and communications systems. The perspective of functional–integrative stratification can, so the argument goes, also prove fruitful for the historiography of human communication history, as well as the historiography of public relations as a part.

The evolution of public relations is in this perspective first examined functionally, that is, in the context of related public communication (e.g. journalism, advertising) as well as superordinated social systems (politics, economics, culture, science etc.). With that, in addition to descriptions, as are common in the fact-and-event-based approach, patterns of explanation are also made available. Second, the evolution of PR is viewed as an integrative co-evolution; that is, public relations is seen as an integral part of the history of human communication as well as of the history of 'the public sphere'. Third, this 'stratification model' designates an important evolutionary principle, one which until now has not been much thought about or used in the history of communication. This approach is by definition genetic, that is, development-based, since we are dealing with historical reconstructions. The approach attempts to place system-theoretical,

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communications-theoretical and evolutionary-theoretical insights in relation to one another (for this combination see Luhmann, 1995).

Stratification models have been used until now mainly in geology, biology and psychology, in addition to philosophy. Geological stratification models, for example, show different strata from different periods.

Philosophical, biological and psychological stratification models are quite well known. Aristotle distinguished five strata of the being: hyle (matter), being, creatures, soul and mind (see Wagner, 1957). When philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950) developed an ontological stratification model in the 1930s, he distinguished between (1) the anorganic world, (2) the organic world, (3) the spiritual world and the mental world (Hartmann, 1940, p. 188).

More precise stratification models are being used today mostly in evolutionary biology and developmental psychology. Riedl (1980), an Austrian biologist, for example, presents a model in which biological evolution, beginning with quarks and atoms and continuing through molecules, biomolecules, cells, tissue-animals, organ animals, animals, human individuals, groups and societies all the way to civilizations and cultures, is conceived as a development of strata or layers, whereby one layer overlays another and at the same time elements of genetically older layers are 'contained' within genetically more recent layers. The younger layers are built on the older layers and contain the latter materially or at least their elements or principles.

The phylogenetic evolution of biological organs (e.g. the nervous system), but also the ontogenetic evolution of mental abilities and capacities (e.g. emotions), can be understood with the aid of stratification models (Schmidt, 1977). For all that, stratification is not the only evolutionary principle: differentiation and hierarchization are also fundamental principles. Furthermore, evolution can at the same time perfectly well be understood as a sequence of phases.

The stratification approach is largely unknown in the history of communication and media research and little used. Nevertheless, a prominent precursor for this approach exists in a century-old study by Wolfgang Riepl. As early as 1913, Riepl, a German historian, who studied the circulation of news in Greek and Roman antiquity, formulated his 'law of complementarity':

> On the other hand there exists to a certain extent as a basic law of the evolution of communications that the most simple means, forms, and methods, once they have become ensconced and are found to be usable, cannot be

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> lastingly supplanted or set into disuse by even the most perfect and highly developed means, forms, and methods, but instead continue to maintain themselves alongside the latter, the only requirement being that they have to search for other tasks and areas of application. (Riepl, 1913, p. 5)

Oral communication and its structural environment were pushed back and modified by the emergence of writing, but not entirely driven out. Through the development of communications technology, in this case the telephone, oral communication regained lost terrain. Further examples can be easily found: despite the development of the printing press, human handwriting has not disappeared nor has painting suffered extinction because of the development of photography or photography been replaced because of the advent of moving film. Television has neither driven out films nor theatre nor the daily newspaper, although – seen in terms of society as a whole – the functional losses of the older media were and are clearly ascertainable. Television, understood as a technical and social system, 'layers itself' on top of older media as functional systems, and the latter maintain themselves as independent media and are themselves incorporated into the new medium as integral parts, as 'sublayers'. There are similar occurrences since 'online communication' and 'the internet' began developing: oral and written communications media, stationary and moving images, and, moreover, the old telephone technology, are integrated with each other.

Not only for biological and psychological development but also for the development of communication, a 'principle of stratification' can be meaningfully assumed. This principle can be provisionally formulated as: media, communication patterns and communication systems that have formed within anthropogenesis and human history and have shown themselves to be successful are preserved within the overall evolution, often as autonomous systems. Crucial media or communications systems (communication, language) form the basis and the precondition, the lower layers, of more recently emerging media and systems. It is thus possible to describe some important principles of development: differentiation of the entire system, subsystems becoming independent, hierarchization within the entire system and linking of subsystems are principles of development which are closely tied to stratification.

4.3 The stratification model as a model of a public relations historiography?

What can now be deduced for the historical development of public relations from the development principle of 'stratification'? First, it should

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be noted that the transfer of models which are effectively used in biology or psychology into use in social sciences and communication and media research, as well as in public relations, has nothing to do with a naïve 'biologism'. It is important to note and discuss the differences between biological and social processes and structures. However, evolutionary development can also be assumed in societies. In the same way that the originally purely biological concept of 'autopoiesis', for example, has been made fruitful for social systems by Luhmann (1995), 'stratification' as a developmental principle can be useful in reconstructing social-communicative developments.

The existence of information and communication processes is the logical and historical precondition of the existence of public relations processes. All public relations processes are communication processes but not the reverse. The 'communications layer' and therefore most of the communication rules have been preserved in public relations, just as in other forms of communication. But communication is likewise the precondition of the 'base layer' for other types of communication which have evolved historically: written communication (e.g. in the form of written correspondence), telephone communication, mass communication of the most diverse forms.

A first delimiting criterion and one which at the same time marks a historically verifiable 'layer boundary' is that of the public structure of communication. Along this line, Ronneberger and Rühl (1992, p. 51) have described the characteristic feature 'public communication' as one of the three 'constitutive principles' of public relations in the emergence phase. When communication becomes public, certain structures are changing. Public communication at the ancient Greek agora and the ancient Roman fora had already developed certain formal rules and structures and certain communication forms, which could also be learned and transmitted to other people. The rhetorical rules of Aristotle can be linked to the free political speech at the agora. When communication became public communication, this was still not sufficient to be public relations.

The next – logical – delimiting criterion is the necessary link to organizations. The communicators responsible for PR communication are organizations which conduct their own communication, be it as social systems that communicate internally or externally or by engaging someone from outside (e.g. PR agencies) to handle this function.

Within such a developmental model, it would only be logical if public relations would initially emerge as a communications function of social organizations (e.g. government organizations or business organizations)

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before becoming autonomous in the form of regular vocational or professional activity, organizational departments and so on. It can probably be assumed that a general historical rule has developed: in the first stage, it became necessary for every (small) organization to communicate internally and also externally. In this first stage, the owner(s) or organizational leader(s) themselves communicated 'functionally' whereas in later stages the communication function of the organization developed into independent and specialized departments. To be a 'functional public relations practitioner' means, that the owner(s) or the leading person(s) act not only in certain production and management roles, but also in the role of a public relations practitioner. This feature can be reconstructed on the basis of individual historical examples. One example, which has been studied well is the communication history of the Krupp company from the beginning in 1826 (Wolbring, 2000).

It is quite logical that within this historical process basic procedures and communications tools have been developed, tools which are still valid today before one could even speak of a separate form of communication called 'public relations'. This can and should be examined historically. Within the evolution of public communication a large number of tools and procedures were developed and used separately before a large range of these tools were aggregated, so to speak, into a 'toolbox' by a particular group of experts, that is members of the occupational field of public relations. This field later has developed into a profession. While the tools of media relations must have developed in close contact with journalism, it frequently happened that public speeches, for example, a series of written communications tools, or even more complex tools such as fund-raising were used by individuals or organizations and implemented at a very early stage without one necessarily having to speak of 'public relations' in the sense of a professional field.

At the next stage of development, organizational forms of an independent public relations function emerge within the overriding (political or economic) organizations. This is the stage of public relations as an occupational field and as a profession. As German examples, the efforts of Prussia at the end of the 18th century to convey regular information to newspapers (Groth, 1927, p. 37), the establishment of a full-time working 'press spokesman' (Karl August Varnhagen von Ense) during the Congress of Vienna (1813–1814) under the Prussian Chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg, and the establishment of the 'Ministerial Newspaper Office' and of the 'Literary Cabinet' of the Prussian government in 1816, and again in 1841 can

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be mentioned as early examples of organized forms of public relations. In the area of business, the Alfred Krupp manufacturing organization looked for a 'literatteur' (German: Literat), a 'literate person' in 1866, whose duties were to observe the outside world, to report to the owner Friedrich Krupp and to inform the outside world about important events and developments from within the firm (Bentele and Wehmeier, 2009; Wolbring, 2000). The typical instruments of press relations (press releases, press meetings, press conferences etc.) began development during this phase.

Having organizational communication as one's main occupation and, at the same time, seeing this as a distinguishing feature of a particular historical layer is something that could be observed at the latest since the beginning of the 19th century. One can assume that typical occupational patterns (work routines, typical sets of tools) gradually developed through the assignment of duties within the respective departments. In the 20th century an occupational field and thus a profession then develops by degrees.

The emergence of PR as a regular vocation, and later profession, was decisively influenced by one particular factor that has not yet been addressed here: the development of mass communication. It can generally be assumed that the expanded activities of the media and their expanded influence through mass diffusion, together with the expanded influence of government authorities and companies, nonetheless also involved increased risks for institutions (e.g. through negative reporting). Institutions presumably reacted to the greater influence of economically independent and influential media through increased public relations activities by, for example, establishing industrial public relations departments as early as the 1870s. It has also been shown particularly in the public relations history of the US that the mainly business-critical media activities of 'muckraking journalism' led to the formation of corporate PR and thus to the establishment of independent PR consultants and PR agencies (Ewen, 1996; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Hiebert, 1966).

Part of the logic of this development is also the fact that in some areas early on, overall at the beginning of the 1950s, a professional self-conception developed. In Germany the establishment of a professional association, the German Public Relations Association (German acronym: DPRG), with regular meetings, congresses and educational material, followed in 1958. This development is linked to a growing process of professionalization, which was supported also by the production of practitioners' reflective literature from the beginning of the 1950s. In

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this, for the time being, a final phase, the emergence of a social system of public relations can be observed. This social system can be viewed as a subsystem of public communication and has important functions in society as a whole. It is characterized by certain social functions, labour organizations, professional roles, professional decision-making programmes as well as by a mixture, typical for this social system, of methods, procedures and tools (Bentele, 1997). The contours of a theory outlined in this way have indeed become clearer since the essential contribution of Ronneberger and Rühl (1992).

Figure 1 shows the attempt to depict the entire development leading from the stratum or layer of interpersonal communication to public relations as a social system in a stratification model. A crucial aspect of this view is that the model is not only a *sequence of phases* in the sense of a succession but also a *layered development*. That is, the early layers in evolutionary terms are 'contained' in the more recent layers. Interpersonal (human) communication is thus seen as the historically first, systematically foundational 'layer' out of which certain forms of public communication and, in particular, media-mediated public communications, such as journalism and public relations, among other forms, have developed.

The basic communication functions, for example representation, expression and self-representation, as well as persuasion, are contained in all forms of interpersonal communication, whether linguistic or non-linguistic. Thus, because figures of rhetoric can already be made out in Greek and Roman antiquity or because a religious building, such as a cathedral, also fulfils communication functions such as representation, one is not obliged to speak of 'public relations' in ancient times. These functions too are preserved in more recent layers. In some cases they take on certain new forms. The formation of a layer is attended and influenced by certain social conditions.

The structures of the public sphere, regulated both by politics and the state (national and international law) on the one hand, economics (market demands) on the other also influence the development of public relations. Likewise, the emergence of the professional field of journalism in connection with the emergence of the mass media occurs in close interaction with the development of public relations. This might be an important evolutionary mechanism in the historical development of public relations (Schönhagen, 2008, 2009), but not the only and probably not the decisive one: intra-organizational reasons such as the necessities of the division of labour (Bentele, 2013a) were at least as important as the first mentioned mechanism.

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Layers	Criteria
5) *20th and 21*st *centuries*: Public relations developing into a social system	Profession as a structured *social system*
4) *19th and 20th centuries*: Public relations as an occupational field with professional aspirations	PR as a *main occupation*; emergence of specialized departments; influence of mass media
Prehistory of PR (Layers 1 to 3)	
3) *Late Middle Ages, Modern era*: Organizational communication; PR tools	*Organizations* start with functional public communication
2) *Antiquity, Middle Ages*: Public communication	Communication in *public* settings (fora; agora)
1) *Human history*: Interpersonal communication	*Communication* as the earliest precondition for PR

FIGURE 1 *Stratification model for the evolutionary history of PR*

Sources: Bentele (1997, 2013a).

In Germany (Bentele, 2015; Bentele and Wehmeier, 2009), as well as in the US or UK, we could combine the most recent two layers using periodization models.

5 Concluding remarks

The functional–integrative stratification model is a proposal for the scholarly discussion of public relations historiography. From my point of view, it can give more sophisticated answers to the problem of the origin of public relations than simply adopt the position that PR had emerged 2000 years ago, a position which must contain conceptual contradictions and inconsistencies. Stratification gives more precise answers concerning the differentiation between a prehistory of public relations and a history as well as a connection to periodizing models. With this model it is no longer necessary to speak of ancient or medieval public relations, the old processes of communication must not be labelled as public relations, but can be labelled more precisely. It is no longer necessary to speak of 'public relations' as beginning with the history of humankind or in ancient times. The model can and should be discussed in relation not only to European, but also to American or Asian settings, as well in relation to different countries. It might be, that it doesn't fit at all to the situation of the Chinese communication history, but it would

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be interesting to test the model in a Chinese context, among others. If it will provide a stimulus for more internationally focused, comparative research in public relations historiography, it would have reached its desired results.

Notes

1 Because I have discussed some aspects of the following considerations also in earlier articles, the first time in Bentele (1997), later in Bentele (2013a, b), I will refer to these articles in the following sections and also directly take some passages from them.

2 L'Etang (2014, p. 657) is right of course, stating, that the collection of data as well as historical 'facts' normally go through an interpretation process by the historian. But I see two different paradigms: the first one, which is less reflexive and which is focused primarily on the collection of data, whereas this collection and systematization is more reflected in the second approach.

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3

'Where the Quiet Work is Done': Biography in Public Relations

Margot Opdycke Lamme

Abstract: *Building on the oldest biographical evidence to date, this study argues for more attention to biography in public relations history. Despite the increasingly abundant and global historical perspectives emerging in the body of knowledge, the field of public relations continues to hold to a tradition of recognizing a few who, with some exceptions, have largely crafted their own entries in the historical record. This chapter addresses 'great man' history, perspective, context and the lines between public and private – all familiar challenges to historians made perhaps even more challenging when seeking out historical actors who were not only conscious of their legacies, but also perhaps more adept than most at shaping them.*

Keywords: Barnum; Bernays; biography; 'great man' theory; history; Lee; Page; public relations

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Introduction

If public relations is grounded in relationships between and among organizations and their stakeholders, then the continued enquiry into the individuals who have influenced those relationships, who pioneered the ways in which those relationships developed and why is integral to the history of the field. In turn, understanding who those individuals were and what influenced them informs our critical appraisals of their historical significance and that of their contributions. This chapter argues for more attention to biography in public relations history because despite the increasingly abundant and global perspectives emerging in the body of knowledge, the field of public relations continues to perpetuate a historical tradition of a small group of 'founding fathers' who, with few exceptions, have had the last word on their own legacies. Without critical and rigorous analysis of the lives and times of those pioneers – and those of others about whom we've yet to learn – we risk entrenching the historical record with tradition and myth, with the very images many of them sought to craft. Building on the oldest biographical evidence to date, this study explores the roles of biography in public relations and the challenges of 'great man' history; the importance of perspective and context, especially with the current abundance of popular history; the challenges of ensuring veracity, excavating character and untangling the person from the persona; and an invitation to enhance and expand biographical research in the larger field of public relations history.

Traces

On the undulating stone walls of the Chauvet Cave in southern France, lions, horses, rhinos and bison roam and run and fight. Amid that animal life is a human handprint with a crooked little finger. Some of the animals were drawn 5,000 years apart, but that single handprint appears more than once on those walls, a 32,000-year-old declaration of purpose, of being: the artist, the hunter, the hunted, or, simply, I am here. Since its discovery in 1994, the Cave, its walls, its carpet of prehistoric animal bones and its sparkling stalagmites and stalactites have captured the imaginations of geologists, artists, archaeologists, historians and others. They have come together in collaboration and awe to contemplate and speculate and to launch a range of projects to map, track, catalogue and

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capture the Cave, its walls of life, its floors of bone and the hand. The Cave is now sealed and closely guarded to protect that world from this world and the moisture of so much human breath. Too many humans were seeking connections with who we might have been.

Words such as legacy, heritage and tradition convey active connections to a past, a way of being or doing now as a direct result of having been or done before. Not history, but a reference for order and process, for expectations and actions. Genealogy provides a vertically oriented depiction of those connections, growing from the roots, guiding a family's tree upward and outward, claiming those connections, establishing a sense of belonging and a right of inclusion. Context, however, provides, as John Tosh has said (2009, p. 35), 'lateral thinking', moving us to cast our thoughts side to side, to find the fit or at least the place in which they might reside most meaningfully within time. As we learn more about our genealogy, our family tree sprouts more branches, limbs, stems and leaves. And as we learn more about context for a historical time, that grounding we seek for our ideas, we cultivate more fertile soil, deepening our understanding and strengthening our roots.

But what happens when we have neither the tree nor the roots? What do we do when we have handprints and artefacts, evidence of having been and done, but no context, no fit, no placement within time? Or what about understanding a time but having no evidence to know whether or not there is more to know? Sir Geoffrey Elton once said that history 'is not the study of the past but the study of present traces of the past; if men have said, thought, done or suffered anything of which nothing any longer exists, those things are as though they had never been' (1967, p. 9). Were we here, then, if we are not in the historical record? Can we leave a legacy? Can we inspire beyond our own time? And what it would matter?

It always matters. 'Human beings', wrote Lytton Strachey, the biographer who emerged from the Bloomsbury group, 'are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past' (1918, p. viii). We might not be in history but we are of it. History is 'the serious process of enquiry into the past of man in society' and given the time-honoured patterns of change driven by 'few leaders and a multitude of followers', the multitudes should be counted, even if unnamed (Carr, 1961, pp. 59, 62). We are nothing, then, if not context, lending depth and breadth to our times; we are part of the root structure, not yet recorded – perhaps not ever recorded – but there, contributing to our own time, a collection

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of butterfly wings shaping our world however indirectly, informing the lateral thinking of historians simply by being, by virtue of who we are, where we are and what we do.

Character drawings

Biography, then, is an accounting of ourselves in time, and it has been embraced as a contribution to the public relations history body of knowledge, as descriptions, explanations and analyses of a being and doing in the past. Although most of these works are not attempts at 'life writing' so much as capturing some aspects of a life at work, they have offered insights into the process of biographical research and discovery, demonstrating significance and thereby enriching the contextual soil of the historical record. Notable examples include *Courtier to the Crowd* (Hiebert, 1966), the biography of Ivy Lee based on his voluminous collection of papers that Hiebert indexed for the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University, *Unseen Power* (Cutlip, 1994), a series of profiles of 20th-century practitioners, and *Public Relations History: From the 17th to the 20th Century* (Cutlip, 1995), a compact but richer study about American public relations history over the previous three centuries, grounded in the people driving those events. Three years later Neiman Fellow Larry Tye published *Father of Spin*, a biography of Edward L. Bernays, and in 2001, Noel Griese published a biography of Arthur Page. (It should be noted that Roland Marchand (1998), Karen Miller (Russell) (1999), and Jacquie L'Etang (2004) examined public relations history through institutional frames during this period, constructing a kind of organizational biography and, in L'Etang's case, a biography of a profession.) To date, though, despite the amount of time and attention we seem to devote to Page, Lee and Bernays, in particular, in marking their impact and innovations in the field, for better or worse, those mentioned here are the only book-length studies about these men. Yet, Lee and Bernays each have been called 'the father of public relations', and Page is credited with having 'laid the foundation for the field of corporate public relations' (The Arthur Page Society: About). Karen Russell finds, though, that Page's work at AT&T revealed an operational perspective that prized the actions of a company's employees over 'its paid promoters' as the key to its enduring reputation (Russell, 2014, p. 318). 'Page did not want to see public relations grow', she explains; instead, his vision

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for public relations was to counsel top management and then let that 'public relations mindset' trickle down to become integral to operations and to the employees who worked at those levels (Russell, 2014, p. 318). Such findings do not warrant a call for tearing down these and others in public relations, but they do demonstrate the need for a more expansive and demanding analysis of our own people, the ones to whom we turn for precedents, inspiration and wisdom. We do not yet know enough to conclusively confirm that the statures and legacies surrounding so few are as unshakeable and exclusive as they seem to be. They may be. But it is too soon to tell.

The Western tradition of biography is grounded in the classics, in 'strong character-drawings' that tell of triumphs in politics, war, ideas and/or influence: morality plays that seek to educate and elevate via life lessons of great men that might also happen to entertain as well (H. Lee, 2009, p. 22). According to Carl Gustavson (1955), there are two dimensions of an individual's role in history: determinism and the 'Great Man theory'. The former assumes that events would have unfolded with or without the historical actor anointed as the change agent in the historical record, whereas, in contrast, the latter uplifts individuals (usually men) to 'an almost superhuman control over the fate of their generation' (Gustavson, 1955, p. 123). One embraces the importance and influence of context surrounding a person and event, he explains, and the other highlights the power of self-determination (or lack thereof) in influencing time and, eventually, history. It is up to historians, however, not only to evaluate the short- and long-term circumstances and impact of each situation to accurately evaluate the impact of a single individual in history (Gustavson, 1955), but also to ensure that such studies do not veer into hagiography, where subjects are unequivocally celebrated for their contributions with little attention to or concern for evidence (or the search for evidence) to the contrary.

If, however, historians adhere to Edward Hallett Carr's prescription of focusing on the societies surrounding individuals as the key to historical enquiry, then any 'great man' of the past so anointed by those in the present should be understood to be first 'at once a product and an agent of the historical process, at once the representative and the creator of social forces' (1961, p. 68). Allan Nevins makes a case for the 'leader theory' in historical literature, citing Thomas Carlyle, William James and Arnold Toynbee and pointing out the ways in which American history has homed in on leaders in the arts, in business, in faith, in politics, for

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example. Nevertheless, Nevins argues, these figures are 'essentially folk-products' of a democratic society upon whom we project the ideals of the everyman and our own emotional hues (Nevins, 1975, p. 173). That is, rather than examining those factors that when shaken and stirred result in great men, biographers now also examine the ways in which their subjects affected their worlds. The result is a richer tapestry of ourselves that records the interplays of people and their effects on their place and time.

Recent biographical profiles in public relations attempt to do just that: having located their subjects in time and place, historians examine the ways in which the works of those people should be understood as a contribution to public relations history. For example, a recent volume featured studies about Ancient Rome's Claudius (Schnee, 2014), 12th-century abbess Hildegard Von Bingen (Spaulding and Dodd, 2014), Thailand's 19th-century King Rama IV (Tantivejakul, 2014) and America's 19th-century woman's editor, Sarah Josepha Hale (Pribanic-Smith, 2014). In contrast, recent book-length treatments of 20th-century public relations pioneers explore the lives and work of Sir Stephen Tallents (Anthony, 2012), Sir Basil Clarke (Evans, 2013) and Dan Edelman, written by former Edelman executive Franz Wisner (2012). Recent memoirs also populate the literature, such as those by American executive Robert Leaf (2012), Lord Tim Bell, in collaboration with Charles Vallance and David Hopper (2014) and Italian public relations pioneer and international thought leader Toni Muzi Falconi (2014). Even while some of these works read like vintage Bernays – stories of challenges and outcomes with little reflection (e.g. Bernays, 1923, 1965) – it is striking to see the parallel professional lives these men carved out. A timeline would indicate, for example, that the careers of Clarke and Tallents overlapped at different points with those of Bernays, Lee and Page. In turn, this points to a remarkably individualistic if not isolationist trend that emerges in current public relations history: people whose life's work is often presented (by themselves or by others) as if they were the first or the only one of their time – or any other time – to 'do' public relations. Additionally, as these examples also glaringly illuminate, full-length biographies in public relations history remain rooted in a 'great man' tradition, retrospectives on those acknowledged to be leaders or even icons of the field, but, and with some exceptions, with little exploration, little excavation, about who they were and how their life experiences led them to who they came to be, what they did and why.

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There are few fields in which historical actors are more conscious of their legacy, more self-conscious about how their lives might be understood, more aware of the risks of creating a vacuum, where rumours and innuendo can thrive and more capable of influencing those impressions. It is quite possible, then, that if we leave these historical actors in public relations to their own words, we will not see the truth of things but their truth of things, constructed with intention and an eye towards posterity, consciously or not. More important, we risk institutionalizing those carefully crafted public personas as bona fide contributions to the historical record.

Perspective and context

What, then, can we learn from delving into biography, into the life writing about one person that a broader historical perspective, a more rigorous enquiry into Carr's 'man and society' might not otherwise discover. Especially when, as Jacques Barzun observes (2002, p. 173), even rigorous scholarship can ultimately 'only hit the high spots of a man's life, his spectacular encounters with mankind or the universe', causing us to miss, despite our best efforts, 'the valleys where the quiet work is done'. The simple calculation of life writing, he said, is at once overwhelming and deceptively pat: 'the ratio between years and pages is always misleading' (Barzun, 2002, p, 174). To start with, biography is 'a prism of history' (Tuchman, 1981, p. 134), 'a living process' (Zinsser, 1986, p. 15), the 'art of selection, omission, and suggestive incident' to answer our questions about the past which are in turn a reflection of our present (Strouse, 1986, p. 172). It is 'a means of illuminating the times and the great forces that shape the times – particularly political power' (Caro, 1986, p. 224). Yet, biography is not a study of an individual in isolation, but 'the story of the evolution of an individual' intertwined with the lives of others (McCullough, 1986, p. 57), a life with 'political and social implications' (H. Lee, 2009, p. 63). When Amber Roessner calls for journalism historians to turn to questions surrounding 'real lived *relationships* among individuals, institutions, and cultures' (2013, p. 266; emphasis in original), she is echoing Catherine Drinker Bowen, who finds academic history bereft of 'a point of view toward life, some hint that the writer belonged to the human race and had himself experienced passion, grief or disappointment' (1959, p. 95).

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Biography is also controversial, considered by some as invasive and amateurish, designed to titillate with little regard to consequences, a status that biographer Hermione Lee traces to mid-19th-century sensibilities against 'the rise of a mass media, and the popularity of the journalistic, often scandalous, "biographie" of the living' that appealed to revelatory voyeurism (2009, p. 68). On the other hand, Marc Bloch (1941, p. 47) explains that history is the 'science of men in time'. The individual life in and of itself is not historical, so much as the life as it might be understood as a more universal truth (Collingwood, 1946). By focusing on 'the thought behind the act', historians are concerned with the societies in which individuals live, not the individuals themselves; by engaging in a 'dialogue' between past and present societies, historians can help us not only to understand the past but in doing so 'to fully understand the present' (1961, pp. 64, 69). For some, then, biography might include history, but it is not in itself history. Like 'sea-water through a stranded wreck', it is a flow of human experiences of the past necessarily framed by birth and death and life, 'not of thought but of natural process' (Collingwood, 1946, p. 304). Biography 'humanizes history' by mingling story-telling and personal details to make history more palatable, but it is the 'short view' of history by virtue of the short span of one human life compared to historical time (Nevins, 1975, pp. 174–175). Additionally, biography is not conducive to interpretation, to the exploration of ideas because of what is often the 'excessive amount of trivial detail' employed to convey the subject, the life, the character (Nevins, 1975, p. 176).

Yet Hermione Lee (2009), who counts among her own works the 1996 book, *Lives of Virginia Woolf*, recounts how Woolf's father Leslie Stephens conceived and edited the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1885, which was first published in 63 volumes in 1900, a project that continued with later editors throughout the 20th century. The reference's most recent iterations are now published online as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and it features, at this writing, 59,221 biographical entries. Additionally, *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly Journal*, published out of the Center for Biographical Research, University of Hawaii, is going into its 47th year of publication. Finally, biographers can connect via associations with global memberships that reflect the academy, the trade press, or both.

Whatever the academic arguments might be, there is no denying the insatiable hunger, academic and mainstream, for knowing not only who we are but for understanding more about who we were through books,

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articles, biopics, documentaries and museums. In the US, where history is struggling to maintain its relevance across the curricula, Hollywood has taken up the banner. The plethora of the biographical as a basis for popular culture entertainment is staggering. In one year alone, films such as 'Unbroken', 'American Sniper', 'Kill the Messenger', and 'Selma' all unabashedly dramatize stories of how real people in real times navigated particular crises. Other examples include 'The Imitation Game', 'The Theory of Everything', 'Jimi: All Is by My Side', 'Get on Up', and 'Mr. Turner'. Film subjects from the distant and recent past (some more than once) include treatments of war heroes, revolutionaries, drug lords, gangsters, politicians, heads of state, prisoners, slaves, sports figures, peace officers, artists and writers. And the list goes on. All convey an array of historical time periods and perspectives, of framing, of lenses – literally – through which the creators seek to convey their versions of these real people. And some, such as producer/director Steven Spielberg, have sought out partnerships with scholars as part of that process, such as his collaboration with Doris Kearns Goodwin that resulted in the critically acclaimed 2012 film, 'Lincoln'.

Historical actors saturate our smaller screens as well. Cued, perhaps, by American documentarian Ken Burns, who has made a career of capturing our times for us with artefacts, actors, historians and film techniques that fire the imagination while teaching us history, HBO and BBC have also tapped into historical figures and historical times to generate series such as 'Boardwalk Empire', 'Mr. Selfridge', and 'Peaky Blinders', and there are others whose fictional presentations meticulously parallel or otherwise represent real people in those times, such as the UK's worldwide megahit 'Downton Abbey' or AMC's 'Mad Men'. All are examples of ways in which film production has brought to life people, events and places about which we cannot seem to get enough, to know more, to engage with our past, to understand who we were and what we did. And, specifically, without exception, all are essentially stories about lives, about people in their own times. These shows boast, in this sense, as much ensemble biographies as ensemble casts. And for many in the audience, these images, these frames are history; they serve as the historical record. Some historians despair that such popularization dumbs down or distorts history by omission, suggestion, disproportion and fabrication. But it should be remembered that these productions are intended neither to replace history nor to represent history in ways that documentaries might. They are intended to engage audiences by employing historical

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tie-ins to ground the stories and to convey a particular point of view. Nevertheless, popular 'history' is a welcome contribution because despite its historical weaknesses, or perhaps because of them, these works spark conversations and prompt further investigations, shifting viewers from their screens to their search engines to learn more and, often, to seek out the real stories – at which point they are connecting with history. It is up to historians, then, not filmmakers, to ensure the accuracy of the historical records. As Elton suggests, 'the way to combat bad popular history is to write good popular history' (1967, p. 108).

There is a need, then, for historical perspective and context, and that often requires those who can see their subject from a distance (Pachter, 1981). Strachey is often cited as adopting such distance and thereby changing the tone of biography from hagiography to a more critically (if not sometimes downright cynical) developed narrative and appraisal. Those who are too close to their subjects can lack perspective and, sometimes, succumb to self-aggrandizement by association. Scholars often cite James Boswell as one such example in his 1791 book *Life of Johnson*, a project he began upon the death of his friend and literary great Samuel Johnson. Nevertheless close associations can also translate into insights and firsthand experiences that would otherwise go unwitnessed and unrecorded.

Hermione Lee (2009) likens biography to either resembling an autopsy or a portrait. The former suggests, she explains, a 'forensic process' that posthumously examines a subject's artefacts to reconsider what we think we know about him or her. This approach is, though, she argues, not only limited in its ability to convey insights into an internal life but it also can be a painful process for the family. On the other hand, a portrait, while more able to breathe life into a subject, 'capturing the character', the essence, of a subject, can also lend itself to hagiography on the one hand or denigration on the other (H. Lee, 2009, p. 2). Neither is necessarily helpful in accounting for change – life events, aging, shifts in ideas and ideals – yet both can be extraordinarily powerful in influencing our memories of a person or deed (H. Lee, 2009). US Army widow Libby Custer, for example, was so successful in crafting and promoting her husband's legacy that it took historians years to untangle truth from myth about the biographical and historical facts concerning Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer and, particularly, his actions leading up to his death and the deaths of US soldiers and Lakota Sioux and Cheyenne warriors in the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876 (Russell, Hume and Sichler, 2007). As an important

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aspect of context, however, the authors explain that Libby Custer's efforts also addressed a fundamental need. With no widow's pension or other means of support, she took up the pen to provide financial support for herself and Custer's family (Russell, Hume and Sichler, 2007).

In addition to posthumous deconstruction or lifelike reconstruction is a third approach that has emerged recently wherein the study is constructed around some personal connection between the subject and the presenter (e.g. the scholar's grandfather, former workplace or hometown). Ethics demand disclosure, but these confessions often emerge as punch lines to a presentation. The selfie, it seems, has extended to historical perspective: it is neither memoir, biography nor autobiography but a kind of life writing told through findings in family attics and, sometimes, evoking tears and angst in the author because of the study's personal significance. For these and other reasons, it has been said that all biography is essentially autobiography because the author's choice in subjects and angles for study essentially makes biography a field in which we actually learn as much, if not more, about the author than about the study's subject (H. Lee, 2009). The biographer, like the novelist, 'draws upon his past' (Bowen, 1959, p. 157) and lending 'artistic shape' to a work, 'to express his own vision and to communicate it to the reader, viewer, listener, or other consumer' (Tuchman, 1981, p. 134). On the other hand, biography can also inform the writer's interior life such that 'the assumptions we make and the questions we ask about other people's lives serve as tacit guides to our own' (Strouse, 1986, p. 164). Even our best work results in 'a subjective portrait of the subject from a particular angle of vision shaped as much by our own biography – our attitudes, perceptions, and feelings toward the subject – as by the raw materials themselves' (Kearns, 1981, p. 91). Tears and angst aside, scholars have long debated the role of personal interest in the broad expanse of academic research: whatever the method, the discipline, the field, we do tend to select those topics of enquiry to which we are already drawn. We focus on answering those questions of most interest to us that we seek to share with our colleagues as significant contributions to those bodies of knowledge. Biography, then, is no different.

Veracity and character

Strachey suggests that 'it is perhaps as difficult to write a good life as to live one' (1918, p. viii). The biographer is a 'specialized kind

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of historian' (Edel, 1981, p. 19), who not only collects, compiles and reports extensively on archival collections and other artefacts, but also seeks to convey the importance of story, of narrative, to develop a well-structured, well documented presentation of truth 'about real people ... and what actually happened in the life' (H. Lee, 2009, p. 6). To apply such rigorously critical method is, according to Bloch (1941, p. 90), the 'technique of truth'.

Thus, 'a veracious biography involves thorough research, and the finest hand in selection and presentation' (Nevins, 1975, p. 233). Richard Sewall (1986) suggests an approach to enquiry based on the accessibility of archives, a much easier prescription with today's databases and the many enhanced relationships between public and research libraries. Know the subject, he said; expect to conduct interviews and plan to prepare for them to enable conversation and to know when to stop for questions and elaboration. As to the world of the subject, the life and time: 'know his neighbors' (McCullough, 1986, p. 39). Understand the fundamental core of the subject. Recalling E. B. White's dictum about Henry David Thoreau ('he was a writer, is what he was'), Sewall similarly characterizes Emily Dickinson's core: 'She was a poet, is what she was' (1986, p. 85). Jean Strouse (1986, pp. 163, 181) calls for two quotations that should be in every biographer's line of sight while writing: J. Pierpont Morgan's dictum, 'There are two reasons why a man does anything. There's a good reason, and there's the real reason', and William James's observations about human character, 'I've often thought that the best way to define a man's character would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says, "This is the real me!" Capturing and conveying character is 'the single most important element in biography' (Strouse, 1986, p. 168); however, Nevins (1975) warns of the risks of caricature, of perpetuating ethos or creating a one-sided profile in the process. Agendas to otherwise uplift, Marc Pachter declares, 'truly betrays that life by robbing it of its vitality' (1981, p. 7). On the other hand, it is possible that despite clear lines of sight and insight into motivation and character uncertainty is all there is, so it is important to share that with the reader as well (Nagel, 1986).

Modern biography, Strouse observes (1986, p. 163), 'operates at the intersections of public and private experience. It examines the ways in which character affects and is affected by social circumstance'. Therefore,

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biographers must attend to considerations regarding the 'formation of a self, and to the negotiation between interior existence and the self's public performance' (H. Lee, 2009, p. 15). Doris Kearns Goodwin and others point out the challenges in biography of untangling the public persona and public positioning from genuine sentiment among public figures. For example, in discussing his research on former US President Lyndon Johnson, biographer Robert Caro tells of how Johnson had 'tried to write his own legend for history, and he almost succeeded' had it not been for Caro's timing and his ability to connect with Johnson's contemporaries (1986, pp. 222–223). Citing biographer Justin Kaplan (and Bernays' son-in-law), Pachter explains how a subject's own framing of self is valid evidence; even if the material is not true, it nevertheless can reveal a true person within his or her own persona and insights into 'the inner fears, longings, and spirited aspirations that call it forth' (Pachter, 1981, p. 13). The biographer not only has to see and understand 'the mask' but also the 'evidence in the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask' (Edel, 1981, pp. 24–25). The fact of the falsity is one thing, Bloch (1941) warns, the motivation for it is another, if it is not otherwise an honest mistake in the historical record. The upshot, though, is that there is no one 'gospel' but versions of truths about a person 'that give narrative coherence to history and character' (Strouse, 1986, p. 167).

These kinds of considerations compel biographers to consider their subjects as layered beings: the outermost layer concerns physical self-presentation and public communication; the next concerns semi-private habits and mores, such as faith, friends and entertainment; the third is the private layer of personal relationships with others who can conspire to conceal them; and the fourth, the deepest layer, concerns 'the ultimate core of character' – what the subject is found to be made of when confronted with crisis, the discovery of which is 'the biographer's greatest triumph' (Nevins, 1975, p. 234).

Nothing could be more important in public relations history, where, with some exceptions, the thinking, the activity, the problem solving, the connections, even the failures are examined insofar as they played out in public or semi-private arenas. What we don't know about ourselves as a profession, about many of those in public relations whom we hold up as our models, our pioneers, our standards, is who they were in the quiet times, where, perhaps the real thinking took place and the real historical meaning begins.

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Untangling

Few disciplines are so challenged by the untangling of the public and private that the historical record demands. The quest for Nevins's 'ultimate core' is often confounded by omission, suggestion, disproportion and fabrication in these subjects' own carefully curated legacies. Public relations history is a rapidly growing, global field of scholarly enquiry that so far and, in the aggregate, has revealed centuries of top-down and bottom-up grassroots efforts to effect social, political, economic and cultural change, but the history of public relations – public relations as a historical factor – is not new, just not yet fully discovered or understood on its own terms or in its own times (or in ours).

Recently, a historian remarked that she was tired of history written based on what other people said. Nothing could be truer of the state of public relations history. Scholars have too long left these historical actors and others at their own words or, worse, we have relied on historical tradition to define the value of their contributions to the field without the same kind of appropriate, rigorous and critical appraisal that we demand of ourselves and others in contributions to the historical record. Such reliance on this tradition permeates the larger field of public relations despite the wealth of literature in its ever-growing body of historical knowledge. One upshot is that editors and reviewers of manuscripts and books often seem to leave unexamined and unchallenged the unceasing citing of textbooks even by seasoned scholars to source information on public relations history, thereby re-entrenching textbooks – some from more than 20 years ago – as definitive sources for research, a situation that defies academic rigour in any field.

It is still not uncommon, for example, to find in American public relations textbooks a continuum of public relations practice that is rooted with 19th-century American entertainment mogul P. T. Barnum, early 20th-century public relations counsel Ivy Ledbetter Lee and mid-20th century corporate public relations executive Arthur W. Page. Yet, as a field we have barely begun to understand their true impact. For example, a recent study reveals that among the seemingly disparate personas of P. T. Barnum, Andrew Carnegie and Ivy Lee, Barnum might actually have been the most consistent in his words and deeds (Lamme, 2014). Barnum, who has been characterized in public relations as representing the lowest rung from which the profession has since climbed to greater ethical and respectable heights, was quite clear about both his intentions

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and his actions. Humbug, he explained, promised to deliver something of value to the audience members, so they must feel that they got 'their money's worth' on their terms or they would reject the promoter and the promised enticement (1866, pp. 20–21). In this way, he said, it was the audiences, not he, who ultimately determined their entertainment. This is not to say Barnum refrained from persuading the audience to his agenda – hardly – but the massive wealth he amassed from a business built on entertainment for the masses, as well as his elections to political office in Bridgeport, Connecticut and in the state legislature, seem to indicate there was something more at work between Barnum and the public than simply hoodwinking, puffery and sleight of hand. We do not have to like him, but despite the interest in Barnum from outside our field, we still have little understanding of him from within.

In contrast to Barnum, Ivy Lee is traditionally revered in public relations history, but Lee's life and work continue to warrant more scholarly unpacking than has been conducted to date. It is of great concern, for example, that he has been found to have much in common with Carnegie, the controversial steel magnate and progressive-era captain of industry whose last 42 years coincided with Lee's first 42. Like Carnegie, Lee subscribed to principles of Social Darwinism: the fittest should be able to profit over the rest, but they owe those beneath them a ladder of opportunity that aspirants can ascend, one rung at a time. And both men declared their faith in public opinion. In 1889, Carnegie outlined these principles in 'Wealth'; in 1925, Ivy Lee published a similar position piece, based on some central ideas he had honed from 20 years of work: the essence of good policy and good public relations, he said, lies in action not words (I. Lee, 1925).

Despite both men's commitment to public opinion and social uplift, however, Carnegie and his managers at Carnegie Steel launched a deadly assault on strikers at their Homestead, Pennsylvania plant in 1892 (Nasaw, 2006), and, in 1914, Lee was retained by the Rockefellers to advocate for their interests in the deadly strikebreaking at their Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in 1914 Ludlow, Colorado (Hallahan, 2002; Hiebert, 1966), a position that catapulted Lee's career (Lamme, 2014). Yet, there is no correspondence in Ivy Lee's papers between 1913 and 1915, the very years of the Ludlow Massacre, its aftermath and Lee's transition to working for John D. Rockefeller Jr.

Later still, Lee was roundly criticized by the press for his advocacy for post-revolutionary Russia and for his connections to I. G. Farben

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(the German Dye Trust) in the years leading up to and including 1933, the year the Nazi Party assumed control of the German Reichstag, a situation that prompted US Senate hearings in 1934 (Hainsworth, 1987; Hiebert, 1966). Lee was 57 at the time and at the height of his career: attending Bible study with the Rockefellers and dinners with royals, and enduring denigration and grudging admiration in the press. But Lee died that November of a brain tumour, diagnosed just weeks before, so it is not likely that we will ever fully understand how these and other actions might ultimately have featured within the larger tapestry of what might have been a longer life, although we do have some hints about his visions for his firm and for the field (Lamme, 2014).

Whereas Lee's life was cut short, even for his time, his younger contemporary, Edward L. Bernays, outlived – as far as we know – his generation of 20th-century US public relations pioneers, dying at age 103. His longevity meant he had the last word on many advancements and insights about public relations during his professional lifetime, especially, rightly or wrongly, his own (e.g. Ewen, 1996; Tye, 1998). For example, Bernays' highly touted and historically entrenched 1929 'Torches of Freedom' parade, a publicity stunt to promote cigarette smoking among women (for client American Tobacco Company) 'overstated his success to the point of myth-making' (Murphree, 2015, n.p.). And even more to the point, Vanessa Murphree concludes, Bernays' 1965 memoirs, *Biography of an Idea*, 'has remained essentially unchallenged and treated as an objective document rather than a self-promoting text' (2015, n.p.).

Invitation to biography

Lives such as Lee's and Bernays' have been more accessible because they left more evidence in the written record, including the press, because they ensured their papers could be publicly accessed, and also, possibly, because they represent others who did similar things. As a result, with few exceptions and despite the mounting global research to the contrary, we continue to turn to and rely on for grounding and professional standards mostly white, male, and 20th-century figures whose earnest and authoritative faces captured in black and white portraits of persuasive power still peer at us from the pages of many of our textbooks. Outside of Cutlip's works, which themselves make scant mention of women in comparison to the men he profiles, the paucity of women in our life writing or even

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'work writing' literature is stunning, given the oft-repeated case that women now far outnumber men in the classroom and in the public relations field. And what of others – other women, other men, other cultures, other times? Who were they and where did they live and work? And what of their practice, their professional standards, insights, and contributions? It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a census of public relations biographies and biographical profiles, so we are all challenged to consider the number of public relations people whose lives and works have been entered into the historical record compared to, for example, the abundance of book-length studies about newspaper editors, reporters and pioneers in radio, television and film.

Additionally, and more to the point, in an age of heightened professional ethical standards, we owe it to ourselves and the historical record to develop similarly complex and critical treatments of the lives of the people who in their own ways and in their own times should be remembered for themselves and their effects on their worlds. This is not an admonishment but an invitation and an opportunity to explore so much more about who we are, where we have been and where we might be going, by understanding the breadth and depth of our very selves through biography: one by one.

Previous questions have plagued biography in relation to boundaries: what are we allowed to know, have the right to know, and when have we gone too far? Yet human-interest features and in-depth professional profiles in magazines, newspapers and books abound. And, now, in the world of social media, with smartphone cameras and video calling and streaming, there is much more out there about private lives, self-generated material as well as that generated by others, demanding us to revisit cultural and ethical standards about the essence of privacy. The bottom line is shifting from what we are allowed to know to why we should seek to know it. In that light, biography, which paves the way to knowing a historical actor, can help us understand the person's actions, contributions and philosophy in relation to public relations practice, knowledge and history. Biography is one way to break down our discipline to the fundamentals and find out who we are and have been, what we were thinking, when – and why – and which directions we took as a result (and which ones we bypassed or simply did not see).

Even with all the advances in our field, public relations history remains too neat, too packaged, too confined. Efforts to break free of models and periodization are still in a large sense working within the constructs of

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those parameters, acknowledging them by the very attempts to surmount them or to nudge them ever outward. Bloch (1941, p. 47) reminds us that historians can never truly know their own fields without understanding their periods in relation to others, in 'universal history', while Zinsser reminds us that 'telling the complete story often means dismantling the one that already exists' (1986, p. 19). Combined, we have the prescription for casting a wide net to connect with contextual meanings across time and place and to delve deeply for the meaning of a life and time. Rather than look at the profession and work backwards and inward, why not look at the people who shaped their own worlds and work forward and outward, across time and place, in light of their intention, context and anticipated outcomes? As a field, we have clung to drawing within the lines for long enough. We need to go back to finger painting, to the traces of our own history, to start with ourselves and see where we went. To follow the handprints of our profession.

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4

Where is Public Relations Historiography? Philosophy of History, Historiography and Public Relations

Jacquie L'Etang

Abstract: *This chapter considers challenges that face historical scholarship in public relations and draws on a range of theoretical perspectives from philosophy of history, historiography, historical theory, and social theory in an effort to delineate central philosophical questions and challenges relevant to public relations historians. It argues that public relations historical work can benefit from some re-positioning in terms of its historiographical imagination and that this may lead to reinterpreting public relations historical understandings of its societal roles within the context of social change.*

Keywords: activism; historical sociology macro-history; political science; propaganda; public communication; social movements; social theory; sociological history

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Philosophy of history and historiography

Problematics in the field of historical research and writing have long been a subject for debate by historians, philosophers and sociologists, for example Hegel, Croce, Popper, Collingwood, Comte, Marx and Hempel to name but a few. The 17th-century philosopher, historian and rhetorician Giambattista Vico is often credited as the thinker who initiated a strand of enquiry about the meaning of history, focused on the way that thought structures varied over time. His ideas, which included ritual and imitation and the development of human institutions, influenced a range of key thinkers including Marx, Horkheimer and Collingwood.

The scope of philosophy of history is both broad and diverse, reflecting many traditions, for example the divide between European and American philosophy and the full range of paradigmatic positions, such as idealism and positivism, are reflected. Key questions addressed in the philosophy of history encompass definitional discussion as to the nature of history (the acts of agents, events, causation, time periods or characteristic phases); patterns of meaning or development; the nature of historical knowledge given that the past no longer exists; explanatory processes; representation; the relationship between past and present. Debates straddle epistemology, metaphysics and historicism and cross adjacent fields such as anthropology. Questions about the nature and purpose of history have entailed considerations of the relationship between the historian and his/her subject; the nature of historical truth-claims; the concepts of historical judgement and historical objectivity; the idea of historical laws and their implications for individual agency in relation to the notion of historical inevitability. Many of these questions have been the subject of vigorous debate; for example, history was subjected to substantial challenges from postmodern, feminist and postcolonial scholars for privileging certain groups and discourses above others.

At first sight there seems to be a considerable overlap between philosophy of history and historiography since they tread the same theoretical ground and debates. However, historiography is probably most readily distinguished by the idea of its practical application in the field of history making (as in the making of historical texts and construction of interpretations and meanings). Historiography is the field that focuses on the application of debates from the philosophy of history to the discipline of history and its practices. Historiography is therefore more

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directed towards the methodological range of conventions that operate within the discipline of history. That is not to imply that there is some single standard, but that there are some common grounds concerning methods of acquiring evidence and processes of interpretation, just as there are in other fields of scholarship. Necessarily, these discussions straddle the strategic, paradigmatic decisions that shape questions of enquiry, but also the more technical methodological issues that arise, for example, in conducting oral history interviews or oral testimony, or using institutional archives. The articulation of historical research questions demands explanations from the author of his or her rationale. Likewise, historians need to explain their paradigmatic influences, their objectives (and rationale) and make transparent any persuasive intent or interpretive lens, and lay out their technical methodology. These demands will not be surprising for public relations scholars who inhabit the qualitative paradigm but might seem demanding for those of empiricist or positivist bent.

Thus historiography encompasses philosophical, theoretical, metatheoretical, paradigmatic and methodological questions that arise in historical research and writing including the nature and purpose of history, the role of theory in history, the nature of historical explanation and the relationship between history and sociology. Historiography straddles both theoretical positioning and the hermeneutic tradition of *quellenkritik* or 'source criticism' (L'Etang, 1995, p. 10). Taken together, philosophy of history and historiography provide the canvas for public relations histories and the harsh fact is that public relations histories will only be taken seriously with the discipline if its historians engage with the fundamental philosophical questions about history, and also take seriously the demands of historical method (see L'Etang, 2008; Fitch, 2015).

Why historiography has become important to public relations

Historiographical literature in public relations remains slight, somewhat unremarkable given that historical work has been slow to take root. Early histories were North American and occasional, but nevertheless of interest since they were initially diverse in their ideological positioning (Pimlott, 1951; Hiebert, 1966; Tedlow, 1979; Smythe, 1981; Olasky, 1987;

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Cutlip, 1994, 1995; Marchand, 1998; Ewen, 1996) as recounted by Pearson (1992). Pearson classified the first four of these authors into categories: Progressive (Hiebert), Counter-progressive (Tedlow, Pimlott), New Left (Smythe) and New Right (Olasky). Interestingly, these early histories included a study of American public relations and democracy written by J. A. R. Pimlott, a distinguished British senior civil servant during a year's sabbatical (Pimlott, 1951). Pearson's critical and historiographically inflected interpretation highlighted the ideological and political aspects of historical narratives and 'the assumptions working behind contemporary discourse about public relations' 1992, p. 129) and the ways in which these contributed to 'a dominant perspective on public relations' (ibid.). These insights, however, appear to have had limited impact on the field at the time. It is also the case that there has not been any ideological mapping of public relations histories since Pearson.

The dominance of American historical literature on the rest of the field had the footprint of a Yeti due to the influence of two key textbooks (one that has run in multiple editions originally written by Cutlip and Center and later with an additional author, Broom; the other by Grunig and Hunt (1984), which were widely adopted as public relations education became globalized from the 1960s onwards and with increasing rapidity from the 1980s. These texts both privileged the interpretation of public relations as an organizational strategic management function, and promoted a singular progressivist account of public relations development in the US linked to specific characteristics that were connected together in a normative and idealistic framework (the four models) that were subsequently utilized in many studies to interpret and in some cases proscribe certain forms of communications practices. The beneficial qualities of models lie in their clarity of explanation and crispness of definition that belies their deceptive quality of apparently seamless explanation. In this particular case, the model blended developmental phases with stories of improving performance and morality and became a central plank in what became known as 'the dominant paradigm'. Furthermore in some literature contemporary behavioural principles were retrospectively applied to historical public relations. For example, in Cutlip et al. (1994) the authors did exactly that in order to argue that public relations and public opinion management is a scientific and foundational discipline without reference to any possible alternative interpretations (L'Etang, 1995, p. 21). The combination of 'the' four models and behaviourism had considerable structural force throughout the world shaping the discipline, scholarship

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and curricula. Challenges were slow to emerge and in any case critical scholarship was a limited and sporadic affair (L'Etang and Pieczka, 1996; Motion and Leitch, 1996) until the tipping point around 2011 when the socio-cultural paradigm was clearly recognizable (Edwards and Hodges, 2011; Bardhan and Weaver, 2011); European and non-US Anglophone historical scholarship was largely off the agenda until the mid-1990s (Nessman, 1995; Bentele, 1995; L'Etang, 1995; Bentele, 1997).

In the UK, historical work that included reference to public relations was also scarce and scattered across disciplines – for example, an invaluable contribution made by Grant's (1994) study of governmental public relations between the two world wars, including a focus on the major governmental public communication campaigns of the era. Grant drew on original sources that demonstrated that public relations is a focus of discussion in civil service contexts during the 1920s and 1930s in publications such as in the *Journal of Public Administration* (L'Etang, 2004). Slightly earlier, media studies academics made critically theorized contributions – for example Tunstall (1964), Curran and Seaton (1997) and, much more recently, Dinan and Miller (2007) and Miller and Dinan (2008). However, it would be fair to say that globally, public relations historical scholarship was the specialist interest of a small number of public relations academics. Only when Professor Tom Watson, from the Bournemouth University initiated a Special Issue of the *Journal of Communication Management* (2008) and then launched his annual series of International History of Public Relations Conferences (from 2010) was a groundswell of interest apparent, and its global reach realized in the book series of which this is a part.

However, if history began to grow in popularity as a subject for public relations academics, historiography remained very much a poor relation. Historical work generally did not engage with historical methodology, and was largely empirical, although some was structured around the four models. Public relations history and methods were largely unproblematized and historical methodological issues not generally a focus of much discussion. The public relations literature still awaits some philosophical 'mapping' of public relations histories and historiographies. It appears that two European scholars in particular have shown the most consistent interest in historiographical issues and their implications for the discipline, Bentele (1997, 2013) and L'Etang (1995, 2004, 2008, 2014, 2015 forthcoming). Contributions from the US include Brown (2006),

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Lamme and Russell (2010) and Vos (2011). There have also been specific considerations of historical method (L'Etang, 2008; Fitch, 2015 forthcoming). Yet now, as if this volume itself does not demonstrate a groundswell of interest, a forthcoming co-authored volume appears to be intended to establish the specialism more strongly, promising to

> Take apart existing PR history and reconstruct ways of doing it better – to widen the scope of PR by freeing its pasts, presents and futures from the effects of ideologically driven histories and methods of historiography ... An explicitly revisionist project ... deconstructs the range of existing PR history. (McKie and Xifra, 2016 forthcoming)

There are a number of reasons why historiography matters to public relations historian, much, as indicated earlier, to do with the viability and credibility of public relations histories. Without theoretical and paradigmatic positioning and articulated methodological apparatus, public relations histories will be deemed lacking by professional historians. Much published public relations historical work lacks theoretical and technical anchors or critical reflection on its philosophical and methodological stance and truth-claims.

Historiography also has the potential to open up new lines of enquiry about its practices, its thinking and its institutions in new and different ways. Historiography is a critical enterprise and public relations as a discipline has often lacked critique. Historiography's roots in rhetoric and philosophy are particularly appropriate in addressing central problems in public relations concerning argumentation, influence and the meaning and exercise of power. The early concerns of historiographers on thought styles and the history of ideas are not something that has largely concerned public relations historians to date, and yet the practices of public relations practitioners clearly play a role in mythologizing and thought structuring through discourse. Furthermore, the history of ideas in public relations remains a rather untrodden path and there is more historical work to be done on public relations' self-mythologizing and the 'public relations of public relations', not least because these aspects contribute to current understandings and meanings of public relations, including the self-understandings of public relations academics and practitioners.

Historiography has become of increasing importance because its debates in relation to public relations highlight fundamental questions about its role in society as well as issues concerning the values that underpin historical scholarship, the challenges of method, interpretation

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and analysis. Historiography matters because rather than taking for granted that public relations history would comprise a number of narrative accounts of individual practitioners, firms or cases where public relations techniques were deployed, the historiographically led scholars asked broader questions in relation to a bigger picture. They questioned some of the foundations of popular accounts and endeavoured to characterize themes and approaches within existing histories. In so doing they inadvertently began the process of paradigmatic debate within public relations historical scholarship that has implications for wider debate within the field. In some ways these emerging debates may reflect other pre-existing fractures in the discipline. The most fundamental and questions for both historians and historiographers are ontological in nature, and it is to this aspect that I now turn.

The ontology of public relations

Consistent with Edwards' (2012) analysis of the challenges that arise in determining the object of public relations research, the object of public relations historical research has likewise been an ongoing problematic (L'Etang, 2015b forthcoming). In some ways this is not surprising because it is a consequence of a field that has opaque boundaries with adjacent business disciplines and, some would argue, propaganda. As historiographical debate has emerged within public relations, it has become clear that determination of the object remains value-ridden and to some degree dichotomous. As Pearson (1992) pointed out in his historiographical analysis, structural functionalism dominated historical accounts in the period he reviewed and fitted into a management paradigm. To this day many historical accounts fall into this paradigm through organizationally or institutionally focused accounts that explore the role of public relations practitioners performing a specialized role understood as supporting organizational and management objectives and interests. Such assumptions may predispose public relations academics to frame their historical work in a particular way. They may well have shaped the research agenda so that US accounts were privileged subsequently leading to accounts that suggested that the US invented PR and then exported it globally (L'Etang, 1995, 2004, 2008).

Broadly speaking, public relations histories can be roughly divided into, first, a more limited approach that takes as the starting point agents whose

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work has been specifically described as 'public relations' (or equivalent terms in languages other than English); and second, those that embrace both wider definitions and agents engaged in public education, persuasion, rhetoric (L'Etang, 2010). The first of these categories necessarily includes histories that focus on professional bodies and professionalization. The distinction between the history of the named occupation and the broader approach which includes the 'proto-history' or 'pre-history' of earlier eras is currently an accepted understanding of public relations historiography (Bentele, 1997, 2010, 2013; L'Etang, 1995, 2004, 2008, 2014, 2015; Watson, 2014a, 2014b). These definitional choices have a wider impact on how public relations scholarship understands its scope and disciplinary boundaries and sources. While both approaches have been subjected to the overarching functional paradigm by various authors, the second option clearly lets the genie out of the bottle by linking public relations type practices to a kaleidoscopic range of activities, perspectives, interpretations and theoretical frames that open up broader societal dimensions.

It is worth making other important paradigmatic and methodological distinctions. Bentele, for example, distinguished between 'fact-based PR' that lacks 'any type of theoretical grounding' (Bentele, 2013, p. 248 cited in L'Etang, 2014) and theoretically driven accounts such as 'the' four models, yet any empirically based projects will be framed by philosophical assumptions that affect interpretation of sources and influenced by the researcher's world views (L'Etang, 2014). Bentele himself has taken a model-based historical approach in his functional–stratification framework (derived from evolutionary biology and developmental psychology) that leans on principles of social evolution of communications systems (Luhmann, 1995) with a view to their integration with structures of historical periods (L'Etang, 2014). This approach appears to be descended from Comte's positivism, and Bentele's interlocking frames appear to gridlock public relations and its historical scholarship within functionalism and progressivism (L'Etang, 2014).

Thus defining public relations is a pre-requisite for determining the object of public relations historical research and fundamentally affects paradigmatic positioning in relation to management functionalism or societal communicative phenomenon. While at one time I argued that 'the history of public relations is fundamentally about the source and processes of institutional and social change instigated by the articulation (communication) of ideas and arguments' (L'Etang, 1995, p. 14), now I would extend this to see it as more of a dynamic interaction with public

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relations activities emerging at historical points of emerging change, transformation and contestation clustering around public policy formation, public issue, global shifts, institutional change and development (L'Etang, 2011, p. 224), an approach influenced by theories of historical sociology, sociological history and, most recently, social theory. These have shaped my understanding that all facts are value or theory-laden and that historical research requires its practitioners to expose their assumptions and strategies of enquiry in relation to meta-theories of history and social theory in order to explain and justify their empirical approaches. This is not an argument to privilege applied theoretical framework approaches, however, because inductive research that starts with oral testimonies, memories and archive research is a perfectly reasonable strategy; my point is simply that the values that underpin all historical work should be laid bare.

Public communication and public relations

The catholic approach to the scope of public relations history opens up a broad rhetorical canvas of human communication activities designed to influence including the architectural, the monumental, the performative and dramaturgical and this positions public relations history and historiography within public communication. While some might see this claim as disciplinary appropriation or even imperialism, it can be seen more positively as a creative opening to reinterpret public relations type work. Re-positioning public relations as part of public communication connects it to a wide range of historical practices including propaganda, which has famously been seen as PR's 'dark side'. The discomfort over the relationship between public relations and propaganda (of which I shall say more shortly) has led to some curious discrepancies in some key sources. For example, Cutlip claimed, on the one hand, that publicists and press agents are 'a breed apart' from public relations (Cutlip, 1994, p. 2), yet elsewhere he argued,

> Propagandist, press agent, public information officer, public relations or public affairs official, political campaign specialist, lobbyist – whatever their title, their aim is the same: to influence public behaviour. (Cutlip, 1994, p. xi)

The role of propaganda in the PR story has been contentious and thus subject to various ideological and sometimes contradictory interpretations. Studiously avoided or glossed over by some authors (though see

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Moloney, 2000, 2006), propaganda has often been the elephant at the PR cocktail party (L'Etang, 2010). Indeed, Russell famously suggested that it was time for 'PR to embrace the embarrassing' (Russell, 2010). In the PR canon propaganda seems to be largely attributed to a few dictators and 'spin doctors' – but rarely to civilians. Yet one might consider internal communications, in which power is a major issue, to be a form of propaganda or organizational cultism. Little historical work has been done to explore practitioner belief systems, ideologies, the social role of public relations and its conceptual links to propaganda in various cultures and contexts. If part of public relations work is to engage community, common purpose, emotional connections, conversion or 'buy-in' to organizational mission and vision then that links PR very clearly not only to conceptions of propaganda but also to spirituality, evangelism and religion, aspects which are under-explored but which would clearly play out differently in various cultural contexts. In short, the role of the non-rational, superstition and faith are topics that have not been given so much attention in PR history to date (though see Brown, 2003; Fawkes, 2014).

Efforts to maintain a distinction between public relations and propaganda based on essentialist definitions of truth versus lies are not only simplistic and unsubtle but also unconvincing, failing to allow for interpretation and discursive positioning. Public relations planning models bear a striking resemblance to those developed for propaganda and psychological operations – and in fact some of these were developed by renowned US communications academics (notably Katz). Historical evidence in some cultures shows that some individuals worked for government propaganda and in civilian/consumerist public relations. Yet levels of discomfort with the term 'propaganda' are such that it is rarely analyzed as a concept either from essentialist or discursive perspectives (Moloney, 2000, 2006; L'Etang, 2008).

Of crucial importance in considering definitions of propaganda is that all such definitions are shaped by political and cultural context – and dominant historical accounts may have originated by the victors of military/ideological conflicts even though they are presented as definitive 'taken-for-granted' versions. For example, although a wide variety of 'pre-history' narratives are available, they can be quite selective so common US examples are nationalistic performing values of national identity, such as the American War of Independence or the Boston Tea Party. However, troubling events during the Cold War including

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the activities of the US demagogue Joe McCarthy are not mentioned despite their important role in the history of information management and censorship. The history of public relations perhaps is missing a chapter on its 'Newspeak' to use the Orwellian term, once propaganda, then public relations, then public and corporate affairs, followed by strategic communications, communication management, sustainability and engagement – all discourses worthy of deeper critical analysis.

Understanding public relations activities as public communications arising from, and contributing to, socio-cultural, political and economic change (L'Etang, 2014) raises interesting questions about the relationship between public relations and activism. If public relations is understood as being linked to interventions and change mechanisms, then the role of public relations in dynamic societal exchanges has implications for public relations history and historiographers. Elsewhere (L'Etang, 2015a, b) and following Edwards' use of Appadurai (1996), I have drawn on process sociology to situate public relations history within social theory and political science, drawing on the work of Touraine (2000, 2007) to understand public relations located in the problematics of social change and as conflict rather than consensus. In this way I re-position public relations history as both part of social transformation and as a tool to construct historical understandings and historicity (L'Etang, 2015a, b). In so doing I eliminate what I regard as an artificial divide between work done by activists and work done by public relations practitioners, locating both within multi-discursive contexts and power struggles (L'Etang, 2015a, b). This re-location and re-orientation of public relations and its histories is linked to a notion of public relations histories and historiographies as mobile meanings and understandings centred on public communication in change processes and power dynamics that are very different to the archaeological sedimentation metaphors employed by Bentele.

Reflections

This chapter has reviewed some of the main themes in the public relations historiographical literature and highlighted the scope for new perspectives and paradigms by locating public relations in historical spaces focused on conflict and change interpreted through the lens of socio-historical theories. On this account, public relations history and historiography is a living process of interpretation and meaning-making,

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incorporating ideologies, power-plays, narrative explanation, disjunctures and aporia. Sources are partial and their survival often a matter of chance or politics; history can never be seamless and historiography supplies the philosophical and methodological challenges that humble the academic seeking to understand public relations spaces and places that no longer exist.

The inter-play between public relations history and historiographical concerns ensures processes of challenge and self-critique that expose values and assumptions that colour historical and historiographical discourses. Those tackling historical work may focus on 'them' without acknowledging the authorial fallacy. Readers might forget that histories are as much about the authors as those who are the focus of study.

Many of those who have worked as public relations academics have had ambitions to make the discipline 'scientific' and that has driven a particular type of thinking and approach to research. Initial engagements with history were instrumental, designed to support a particular disciplinary politics. Subsequently, there has been a kind of naive discovery phase followed by realization that communication practices were contingent on the political, economic and social contexts of different cultures. Important archives have been recovered. This has been both productive and fascinating. However, the challenge remains that historical work is not an objective collation of biographical, prosopographical, institutional data but a value-driven interpretive argument and analysis from a particular view arising from philosophical positioning. Most historical work currently undertaken in public relations does not engage with historiographical issues in relation to the strategic level of the enquiry; the technical methodological level of source analysis; the subject position of the researcher. And until such time that these aspects and their discursive nature are fully acknowledged by all public relations researchers, we will not have a public relations historiography.

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5

Historiography (and Theory) of Public Relations History

Stefan Wehmeier

Abstract: *This chapter* introduces general concepts *of historiography and in the historiography of public relations. Thereby it touches questions of theoretization and the philosophy of history. The chapter starts with an overview of historiographical approaches to PR history. It then unfolds important stages and developments in general historiography. Here it differentiates mainly between positivist approaches and postmodern approaches. After this overview of general concepts of 'making' history it develops a perspective that opts for a reflective and constructivist approach that is based on the Neue Annalistik (New Annalistic), a theory of history introduced by Lucian Hölscher (2003).*

Keywords: Annales-School; Hölscher; historiography; history of public relations; New Annalistic; public relations

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Brief overview of (recent) approaches to PR historiography

The term 'historiography' has a double meaning (Simon, 1996): First, it can be used to describe the writing of history (critical analysis of sources and the combination of particular accounts into a story); second, historiography is a concept analyzing the theory and history of historical writing. In this chapter I'll use the term mostly in its second meaning. Historians – in contrast to early analysts who simply noted dates and accounts – usually not only try to tell a story of events, but also provide the reader with an explanation why something had happened. In doing so, historians interpret the accounts and classify their significance. Many historians are not interested in theoretical reflections of history; they simply want to tell their story that is based on the sources they found in archives or elsewhere. However, reflections about how to write history and how to theorize the process of finding and analyzing sources seem to be very important for an academic domain questioning the existing body of knowledge.

Compared to the existence of the academic domain of public relations, the call for a reflective writing of public relations history that does not simply follow common PR historiographies coming from the United States (Cutlip, 1994, 1995, Bernays, 1956; Grunig and Hunt, 1984) is not young. In 1995 Jacquie L'Etang argued for such a historiography (L'Etang, 1995; cf L'Etang, 2014) and, in 1997, the anthology edited by Peter Szyszka (1997a) published many articles reflecting thoughtfully on PR history (see, for instance, Bentele, 1997; Fröhlich, 1997; Szyszka, 1997b). They were not the first, reflecting on the historiography of public relations (Olasky, 1987; Pearson, 1990, 1992), but they developed pathways for a systematic restart. However, it took some time for colleagues to follow that call. Robert Brown was one of them with his non-mainstream reflections on the rise of public relations and the origins of the concept of symmetry (2003a, 2003b, 2006).

Inspired by these reflective approaches to public relations history, the present author (together with Oliver Raaz and partly with Peggy Hoy) in a series of articles about comparisons of public relations historiography argued for a theory-driven approach to public relations history and for a comparative historical research (Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier, 2007; Wehmeier, Raaz and Hoy, 2009; Raaz and Wehmeier, 2011a, 2011b). For the authors the main argument for such an approach to history was to gain more reflection and explanatory power. Having said this, the authors

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were in no way convinced that, by the use of theories and comparison, it would be possible to find *the* truth about the past. Instead, they followed the line of a narrative and discursive construction of (historical) reality. Others continued and deepened these thoughts about context, abstraction and the writing of PR history.

L'Etang (2008) criticized the writing of PR history as biased because its focus is mostly on American corporations. She opts for an approach that reflects the authors' assumptions and values. Such an approach could not only contextualize the historic material, but also the process of writing history. Lamme and Russell (2010) followed that argument. They argued that the conception of a linear and progressive construction of public relations should be replaced by '... a broad, long-term view of the development and institutionalization of persuasive organizational communication strategies and techniques' (Lamme and Russell, 2010, p. 281). Thereby they open the analysis of public relations history to a time before the industrialization and to other contexts such as the political and sociocultural sphere.

For Vos (2011), this shift towards other contexts of historical research means also a shift in the logic of historical explanation. In his review of public relations histories, Vos differentiates between a functionalist logic of historical explanation, an institutional logic and a cultural logic. He argues that these logics follow different methodologies and theoretical perspectives. By differentiating, for instance, functionalist from cultural logics it is possible to contrast a strategic and instrumentalist development of public relations techniques from a perspective that might describe the circumstances that influenced the development of such tools which indicate that some PR techniques can be seen as a by-product of general development in societies or could simply be a result of unintended consequences.

Just recently Jordi Xifra has co-authored two articles on PR historiography which develop this reflective approach further. Together with David McKie (McKie and Xifra, 2014) he discussed three historiographic challenges: global and social diversification, questions of scale, method and ecological inclusiveness and the question of what (public relations) history is for. Together with Maria-Rosa Collell, he unfolds a perspective inspired by Jacques Le Goff who was himself inspired by the ideas of the Annales Movement. Xifra and Collell claim that based on a history of '... mentality and longue durée ... a nonlinear approach to the history of public relations will help to extend its time scale back to the beginnings of civilization' (Xifra and Collell, 2014, p. 715) – this would bulldoze the demarcation

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between so-called antecedents of PR or Proto-PR and modern or professional PR (a point that is briefly discussed later in this chapter).

This brief overview demonstrates that there is obviously a need for a re-writing or at least a re-conceptualization of public relations history. In order to contribute to this, the following section tries to systematize approaches to historiography in general.

Positivist historiography

a. Leopold von Ranke and the Historismus (Historism)

The academic discipline of history is based on the conception of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), a German historian born in today's centre of Germany, Thuringia. At his time Ranke was dissatisfied with the speculative historiography influenced by philosophers such as Hegel. Ranke applied the scientific method to historiography: based upon the critical study of sources which means to eliminate distortions of reality by critically examining the external and internal trustworthiness of a source he believed in finding the true historical past, Ranke wanted to find out 'what really had happened' (Mommsen, 1988; Vierhaus, 1977). In order to do so, Ranke followed four methodological rules. The first one is characterized by sticking to objectivity instead of judging the past through moral statements. The second implicitly follows the first and means to present the facts instead of theorizing about history, because abstractions and conceptualizations bare speculative elements. For Ranke, historiographic truth is found through an objective analysis of sources; for him, facts are more important than concepts. As Ranke claims that the historian works on particular pieces of reality the third rule is that the goal is not to find general or universal explanations but explanations for the events analyzed. By saying this he rejects all perspectives that aim at a totality of historical processes. The fourth rule is a primacy of politics – other aspects of society such as economy or culture were framed politically. Although Ranke himself believed in god's spirit and a hidden order behind all historical facts (Gil, 2009), he insisted in the mere presentation of facts as *the* historic goal and method.

b. Socioeconomic and structuralist perspectives

The anti-theoretical and politics-biased perspective of historicism still has a lot of influence in German historiography. In other countries, for

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example France, historiography moved on in the 1920s and 1930s of the 20th century. Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre founded the Annales-School (Burke, 1991) which first distanced itself from the primacy of politics and opened the field for questions of economy, sociology and culture. Second, it turned from the historical analysis of individuals to the analysis of processes. One of the most prominent outcomes of the Annales-School is the focus on structures, cycles and longue durée. For instance, Fernand Braudel's work on the Mediterranean world of the 16th century (1966/72) combined geo-historic basics, socioeconomic cycles and political and military events in order to unfold a bigger picture. The use of statistical data in historical analyzes made it possible to work interdisciplinary and to cooperate with sociologists and economists. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Annales-School moved on and integrated the history of mentality and the history of anthropology as qualitative and cultural conceptualizations of historiography.

Struggling with its role in the two world wars, German historiography only slowly followed these developments. Labelled as 'Strukturgeschichte' (structural history) in the 1950s and 1960s, this approach combined historical analysis with socioeconomic perspectives. Although inspired by the Annales-School and using quantitative data as well as interdisciplinary knowledge, representatives of Strukturgeschichte defended fact-presenting historism while combining it with socioeconomic dimensions (Conze, 1957; Schieder, 1965). Wehler's 'Historische Sozialwissenschaft' (social science history – 1973) that evolved in the 1970s tried to go further. Historische Sozialwissenschaft uses interdisciplinary knowledge and theories deriving from sociology and economy (partly Marxist, partly Weberian) in order to explain historical structure. In doing so the concept is close to historical sociology which derives from sociology and is discussed as a concept for PR historiography by L'Etang (2014).

Historische Sozialwissenschaft argued that history is mostly not made by strategic actions of individuals, but by the unintended consequences of strategic action. The consequences are result of interfering social processes that were neither anticipated nor understood by the actor (a person, an organization, a nation). It is the existence of unintended outcomes that moved historiography at least partly away from the conception of Ranke. The unintended outcomes were by no means explainable through the lens of an actor-based historiography that aimed at explaining individual intentions and actions. Here, theories of universal history came into

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play. Wehler (1973, 1980) was convinced that by using theories historical analysis has much to gain: Above all he underlined that through theorization academic discourse gets more rationality. Furthermore, premises and methods become more transparent to the scientific community, and causal as well as functional connections can be identified more easily. According to the Historische Sozialwissenschaft, in particular, complex processes such as industrialization consisting of political (rise of the bourgeoisie, democratic developments), technological (new technologies), social (urbanization) and public (mass mediatziation) dimensions can be understood better by working interdisciplinary and theory-oriented (Schumacher, 2009, p. 572). Wehler (1980) argued that historic developments can rarely be reduced to consequences of actions of a single person, but are driven by a plurality of interacting and contradicting impulses. However, as Evans (1979) in a review of the German Historische Sozialwissenschaft remarks, the approach is limited insofar as, for instance, theories are mainly used for building categories and not for building causal connections: 'Thus [the historians] do not discuss whether theories can be used; they argue rather about their Operationalisierbarkeit ("operationalizability"). Underneath the jargon, however, positivism lives on' (Evans, 1979, p. 369).

Postmodern and post-structuralist historiography

While both approaches presented above share the idea of finding and presenting an objective historical truth, the postmodern approach to history rejects such an idea. There are (at least) three streams of postmodernism that are related to historiography: narrativity (the linguistic turn), discourse and constructivism.

a. Narrativity

Until today the 'linguistic turn' (Rorty, 1967) did not much influence the domain of academic public relations. Public relations is about (strategic) organizational communication processes but within the field most scholars look at preconditions of communication or outcomes of communication. Rare exceptions exist which analyze the communicative construction of relationships (Catellani, 2012) or try to develop a narrative and postmodern perspective (Holtzhausen, 2012; Mickey 1997). Historical reflections that are inspired by the linguistic view

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of constructing relationships are missing completely. However, the linguistic turn that opened up philosophy in the 1920s for an approach looking at the language-driven construction of reality did reach the field of history in the early 1970s when Hayden C. White (1973) published *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Followed by many journal articles (e.g. White, 1980) and the books *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (1978) and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (1987), White unfolded a perspective solely looking at the narrative construction of history. According to White, historians by nature have to present their accounts in a narrative order. Further on, he argued that the facts and events historians write about do not have a meaning by themselves and that it is the context that leads to certain interpretations of the fact. For White, history is a narrative form of embedding facts in contexts and contexts in other contexts. It is then the historian, bound to his specific time and socialization, who connects accounts and brings meaning into the flow of facts. This perspective, as plausible it is, was a threat for most historians (and philosophers of history) that followed positivist empiricism in tracking and explaining historical reality through facts, events, epochs and general patterns and structures (e.g. Golog, 1974; Mandelbaum, 1974; Struever, 1974). Postmodernism with all its ambiguity and contingency knocked at the door of traditional historiography:

> That narrative has ... been imposed from a particular and necessarily limited and partial perspective. There can be no pretense about one over-arching story assumed to emanate from a single privileged center; there can be no more claims to occupy an external Archimedean point or independently existing foundation from which a narrator can seemingly narrate 'from nowhere.' Whatever attempts may be made to objectify, depersonalize, and distance, or to avoid the appearance of personal intrusions, it is not possible to hope that the truth about, history has been, or ever could be, attained and re-presented – or even to believe that that is a meaningful goal. (Southgate, 2009, p. 541)

In his analysis of historical works, White had identified at least four modes of tropologic–fictional presentation of history: the romantic story which uses metaphors, the comedy which uses metonymy, the tragedy, which uses synecdoche and the satire which uses irony. It is these tropes that bring order into the facts and let the accounts be arranged in a set of meanings that would not exist without the idea of tropes. White does not negate the reality of historical facts, but he argues that the reality

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does not have narrative coherence: each history is then a piece of literature that uses past events to tell a story. For White, a reality exists ontologically, but epistemically the reality can only be expressed by language and through language a new reality is created (Goertz, 2001). In this perspective narration is not only a mode of presentation but an explanation of historical reality: Discourse about the past cannot be performed realistically, but metaphorically (Danto, 2007; Rohbeck, 2008).

Ankersmit (1983) followed that path and differentiated between two modes of historical knowledge: the first mode is called 'narrative realism' and is linked to the modernist historiography which is represented by, for instance, the socioeconomic historiography with its search for structures and general patterns. To use a picture one could say that the historian can be compared to an observer who sits in a helicopter overseeing all the historical material and then narrating the past on the basis of single accounts while being convinced that he or she presents the factual reality. The second mode is inspired by the linguistic turn and is called 'narrative idealism'. Here, the historian does not have a helicopter to overlook the historical landscape. Instead he or she is part of the landscape, digging in the dirt for artefacts and constructing the history through interpreting bits and pieces. This interpretation does not refer to a reality behind the text; the text is just a possible version of historical reality (Ankersmit, 1994). Consequently, Ankersmit sees historical referentiality represented through historical research. For Ankersmit research – for instance, searching and finding single historical accounts – leads to knowledge, whereas historical narrative (combining accounts, embedding them in a context, interpreting) leads to insight. This mixture of narrative realism and narrative idealism is somewhat unclear, because Ankersmit is not able to show how historical research can be done value-free and objectively. Besides this (and other) inconsistencies in the epistemic body of the narrative approach to history, the approach itself deconstructs the monistic view of history that believes in discovering and telling *the* story as it has *really* happened. Instead it leads to a historical pluralism which can be best expressed by using a quote from White (1986, p. 486):

> ... whatever gestures are made in the direction of an appeal to factual evidence or the reality of the events dealt with ... the explanation provided thereby admits of no assessment as to its veracity or objectivity by criteria that might be considered 'scientific'. To be sure, this does not mean that a narrative (or story) account of any given phenomenon has no truth-value; but it does mean ... that historical accounts cast in the form of a narrative

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> may be as various as the modes of emplotment which literary critics have identified as constituting the different principles for structuring narratives in general.

The so-called New Historicism (which is not a concept that can be linked to the German Historism) goes even further as it argues that literature (fictive stories) does have the same (epistemological) status as historical stories (fictional stories) based on non-fictive sources. As this line of research stems from literary science and art history, it is not so much interested in the narrative construction of history, but in the narrative construction of identities (Greenblatt, 1990; Veeser, 1989). Therefore it plays just a minor role in the discourse of historiography.

b. Discourse

In line with the ideas stemming from the linguistic turn, but not so much inspired by them, Michel Foucault has laid out a path to constructing the present through historical discourse. Foucault goes beyond the ideas of narrative and linguistic text-boundedness in so far as he claims that discourse is more than text: each discourse is shaped by power relations and these power relations define how the text can be written and understood. In Foucaultian terms, discourse represents text and the terms of the text. These terms or regiments of power (questions of what can be said and questions of how things can be said) are the central object of the historical work of Foucault. Contrary to many postmodernists inspired by the linguistic turn, Foucault thereby connects discourse to context.

Foucault's way of writing history can be divided in two parts: the early writings can be summarized as 'Archaeology' (main work Foucault, 1972/1969) and the later writings, termed 'Genealogy' (main works Foucault, 1977/1975, 1978/1976). 'Archaeology wants to show structural order, structural differences and the discontinuities that mark off the present from its past Genealogy seeks instead to show "descent" and "emergence" and how the contingencies of these processes continue to shape the present' (Garland, 2014, p. 369). The Archaeology is partly close to the French Annales-School with its focus on uncovering the structures in discourse that have become influential for social life. In line with the Annales-School, Foucault tries to show how deeply interwoven into social structure human beings are. According to both, a single human being would not be able to change social structure; it is born into the terms of discourse in its time. However, Foucault is often characterized

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as a post-structuralist as he was interested in carving out the plurality of structures/discourses and their temporality (Goertz, 2001; Baberowski, 2013). He tried to show that history does not follow any kind of laws or a clear and single path as the Marxist historiography had outlined. Instead it is set together by different discourses at different times without something that can objectively be characterized as progress (Foucault, 1977/1975). Foucault does not focus (and does not believe in) a 'histoire totale' that lays out one big picture of history, but he focuses on the tensions, fractions and transformations of discourse material. Discourse is also the driving force in discovering the Genealogy in which Foucault wants to reveal the origins of a present event or structure. He analyzes the history of an account in order to relate its past to its present.

By using discourse analysis Foucault not only points at text (signs) but also at immaterial and material terms that let certain practices and institutions emerge through discourse over time. Discursive practice is an ensemble of anonymous, historic rules that define the reality of claims in a given socioeconomic, geographic or linguistic epoch (Foucault, 1972/1969). Foucault is convinced that there is no such thing as a free discourse. Each epoch and each discourse is structured by powerful people who have an interest in embedding discursive mechanisms allowing to minimize the risk of a change in social power relations (Foucault, 1970/1966): 'By this discursive practice turns into social practice' (Goertz, 2001, p. 77). It is this link between discourse practice and social practice that binds Foucault to usual historical practice aiming at the referentiality of something existing beyond discourse. Foucault is interested in ontology of the present through presenting a discontinuous, fragile, discursive and variable past:

> ... Foucault does not write a history of madness, sickness, crime or sex, but a history of how it ever came to be taken for granted, in a whole range of contexts, that abnormalities are kinds of mental disease, that sickness is only the dysfunction of an individual anatomy, that there exist criminal personality-types it is best to lock up, or that there is something called sex residing inside each of us as a dangerous truth that must be exposed. ... One might say he offers an historical answer to the philosophical question as to how such things are 'constituted'. (Rajchman, 1983, p. 8)

c. Constructivism

Both narrativity and discourse have clearly shown that the idea of presenting *the* historic truth is impossible to hold. Both concepts also

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pave the way for a constructivist perspective of history which is spelled out in detail (and complexity) by Gebhard Rusch in 1987. Rusch (1987) describes the 'making of' history as a complex process involving theories and assumptions about the world of experience, notions of the past and ideological and normative assumptions. These conditions are building blocks in the system of stories that is constructed by the historian and they are (at least implicitly) projected to the past that is analyzed by the historian. Facts and events do play a role, but they cannot be simply reported, they are constructed, they come to life through the historian as an inventor of a history.

Ten years later, one of the leading constructivists, the cybernetician Heinz von Foerster (HvF) was interviewed by Albert Müller (AM) and Karl H. Müller to talk about constructivism and history. The introducing sequence of the interview perfectly represents the general scepticism of constructivism towards an objective and thereby realist representation of (historical) reality (von Foerster, 1997, p. 129):

> AM: We want to begin like this: Besides sociology history is the last discipline that sticks to the concept of objectivity. In history objectivity still plays a major role. ... HvF: Your assertion is that history is based on objectivity? AM: History is one of the academic disciplines that still believe in objectivity. HvF: What? Is this really true? AM: Yes. HvF: Did that develop over time or did historians believed that ever since? AM: ... In modern historiography it was Ranke who triggered the interest in objectivity when he said that he wanted to show, how it has really been. ... Isn't this well-known half sentence not a big fallacy? HvF: I tell you a story. Once I was invited to speak at a school for young journalists. This school had a slogan saying: 'Say it, as it is!' I have read that and in my speech I asserted: 'It is, as you say.' And therefore you have to be careful what to tell, because the only thing we have is what we say. How it was, is gone forever. Not repeatable. Not reconstructable. It is gone. The only method to believe what and how something has been, is to say it. It is as you say – not: tell it as it is. If one would listen to the people saying how it was, it would exist as many versions of history as people exist. Each account has to pass the filter of language, the filter of perception and the filter of culture. All these filters formulate what a person believes or knows or has seen.

In a constructivist perspective, history is not an aggregation of facts but a permanently contested terrain: a version of history is told, then someone critiques that version, tells a different version of the same account and so on. According to von Foerster, factual accounts of history are permanently contested through doubts. By articulating the doubts a different version comes into play and in von Foerster's words, history

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begins to roll and is going to be different and different and different. A constructivist perspective of history is then an evolutionary perspective that unfolds the dynamics of history (and it is a misinterpretation of L'Etang (2014) to frame evolutionary theory as a theory of progress as evolution always also means the dying out of species, plants, languages, dialects, ideas and so on – see the discussion below). Different to realist conceptions of history, there is no approximation to historical truth over time but coexistence of different versions – even if some versions die over time and new come into play.

Neue Annalistik (New Annalistic)

The postmodern intervention in traditional historiography has made visible (again) that history is much more connected to interpretation than to explanation. Explanations in a strong scientific sense have to be rivals, fighting about the one true reality that is to discover. Interpretations, by contrast, compete for the best traceability and plausibility of arguments, but it is clear that there will always be other interpretations of how past events can be framed. White argues that the same events can be told in various true stories. For the postmodern mind, this variety is inevitable: without a master narrative that is widely accepted there is no thing that is able to bind stories together as episodes in a big play called 'the reality'.

In *Neue Annalistik – Umrisse einer Theorie der Geschichte* [New Annals – Outline of a Theory of History], Lucian Hölscher (2003) points out that the postmodern intervention not only brings historical pluralism but also a revitalization of events (Annales): events gain importance through rivalling stories – stories come and go, they are temporal, the event stays. Hölscher unfolds his ideas in six dimensions. Wherever possible, I am going to relate these dimensions to examples of public relations history.

1. History and event

Each (non-fictive) historic event is an element of many if not (potentially) infinite and possible contradictory stories. Historical meaning then itself is ambiguous and is not inscribed in the facts but only provisionally true. 'Real past events cannot be subject of a steady historic definition of meaning' (Hölscher, 2003, p. 59). Hölscher argues that in the annalistic view the multitude of historical meanings that can be connected to a single event lead to a reversal of the relationship of story and event: The

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event lasts while the stories and meanings connected to it vary over time and partly pass away.

One example in PR history is the story about the role of Edward Bernays as a pioneer of public relations in the United States of America. Obviously there is no such thing as *the* story, but different and conflicting stories about his role. Early and/or seminal writings such as the textbook of Cutlip and Center (1957 and subsequent editions) and the textbook of Grunig and Hunt (1984) obviously (citation analysis was not able to prove that, but the content strongly indicates it, (Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier, 2007)) took Bernays' idea of a mutual understanding of different publics and organizations as the main goal and best practice of public relations. Grunig and Hunt even presented Bernays as the example for a two-way approach (asymmetric as well as symmetric). Many textbooks (and thereby the education in universities) followed that historic perspective. On the other hand, critical voices came up, connecting Bernays to ideas of mass manipulation based on his own writings and campaigns (Ewen, 1996; Tye, 1998). As Bernays' publications (1923, 1928) were based, for instance, on the works of Ellul and Lippman, the connection between an elitist conception of democratic society and the manipulation of masses becomes obvious. Even in later works such as *The Engineering of Consent* (1947), this manipulative frame can still be found. However, just recently, this critical perspective was challenged again (St John and Lamme, 2011) by the argument that Bernays' understanding of the goal and the method of persuasion changed over time from a manipulative to a pro-social communication practice. Based on the writings of Bernays during the 1920s, the authors try to demonstrate that he used the technique of propaganda not just for promoting goods, but as a pro-social technique that helps societies to progress:

> Bernays argued that because the complexity of modern life inevitably tied each person's well-being to a congruent and evolving economic order, businesses propagandized to add to the 'economic stability of their own communities' and contribute 'to the happiness of the people generally' (Bernays, 1929, p. 147). Society advanced because progenitors of new ideas could visualize how the private benefit of their offerings would coincide with the interests of various groups. (St John and Lamme 2011, p. 231)

However, this evaluation of Bernays' 'evolution' (St John and Lamme, 2011, p. 224) based on his writings in the late 1920s can be confronted with other sources, such as an interview with Bernays' own daughter Ann. After the 1920s, the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected as

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President of the United States. In order to stabilize the American economy he invented the New Deal which was instantaneously fought by big business. The Worlds' Fair in 1936 was one of the moments, when big business tried to show how capable it was to strike back and to manage and imaginate the American life. Bernays was an adviser to this Fair and to General Motors which was one of the driving corporate forces of the event. Ann Bernays (Curtis, 2002) described the role of her father in the battle of big business:

> To my father the World's Fair was an opportunity to keep the status quo – that is, capitalism in a democracy, democracy in capitalism. That linkage, that marriage. ... He did that by manipulating people ....

Ann Bernays described this manipulation as tapping 'into their [the people's] deepest desires or their deepest fears and to use that for your own purposes'.

To cite Heinz von Foerster again: History rolls and is different, different and different. The facts (publications, campaigns) remain, but the stories differ and might pass away.

2. The historic event as an empty concept

Hölscher tries to deepen the first characteristic of the New Annalistic: According to him, the historic event is a hybrid of reality and fiction. Without being embedded in historical contexts no historical meaning can be inscribed. And the process of inscription is a process of historic construction by which fictional elements (story-telling) are applied to the event. However, the event is the unvarying element and point of reference of many stories and by this the only element that indicates that there is a reality behind the stories. The event itself then is empty insofar as its meaning is attributed by different persons differently afterwards. Moreover, the meaning of an event unfolds the moment the event happens to contemporary observers. Contemporaries then attribute future expectations to the event. However, future generations might attribute different meanings than contemporaries to the event. For instance, the event of the French Revolution in 1789 has produced expectations of liberation and freedom within the contemporaries, whereas only a few years later the historic experience was also filled with the reign of Jacobin terror. This emptiness of the historic event indicates that there is no metaphysical conception of history, no god-made plan or the prescribed way the nature goes. Instead it is the people

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who make history step by step in permanently relating past events to future actions.

Again an example of the professional life of Edward L. Bernays can be presented here. In 1929 (Easter Sunday, 31 March) Bernays created an event, the 'Torches of Freedom' parade: He organized young women who were publicly holding and puffing cigarettes and invited reporters to cover that event. Before that, smoking publicly was a taboo for women in United States. Bernays broke that taboo and from that moment onwards the selling of cigarettes to women rose significantly. Edward Bernays' client was the American Tobacco Company. The meaning ascribed to this event changed over time. As Hölscher describes, the meaning of the event unfolds immediately to contemporary observers. Newspapers reported that a 'group of girls puff at cigarettes as a gesture of "freedom" ' (Curtis, 2002). The meaning of the event for contemporaries then is obviously the expectation that in the future, smoking for women in public will no longer be a taboo, but an act of liberation. Did that meaning change over time? No, and Yes. Just recently St John and Lamme (2011) followed that story line: they characterize this event as one of the examples of Bernays' pro-social ideology of propaganda insofar as Bernays' interest was to match a client's desire (selling more cigarettes to women) with the desire of woman for independence and freedom. However, this interpretation is debatable for many reasons. First, the authors use Bernays' view of the event, written in 1965 in *Biography of an Idea*, 36 years after the event had occurred. Reflective historic reasoning has at least to ask how trustworthy memoires can be. Second, in an interview (Curtis, 2002), Bernays recalled that the CEO of the American Tobacco Company said to him that he loses half the market if woman were not allowed to smoke in public and asked what Bernays could do about it. Bernays told that for a fee he got advice from one of the leading US psychoanalysts, A. A. Brill, telling him how he could connect unconscious desires to the idea of women smoking in public. Having this in mind, a historic interpretation could also claim that the pro-social ideology (liberating women) was simply used in order to satisfy the needs of a corporation. Still, the event had pro-social effects, but that is only a side effect of the intention to increase profits. Other PR historians, such as Ewen (1996) have highlighted the manipulative and big business-oriented character of the parade. The event itself is empty: it is the contemporary observer who fills it first, and it is the historian who fills it afterwards (similarly or differently).

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3. The change of conceptions of history

Based on the first two dimensions Hölscher developed a model of historic change. Whereas traditional conceptions of historic change focus on the change of objects, the New Annalistic looks at the change of conceptions of history that reflects the different meanings that are attributed to an event over time. It is the categories then that come into play: democratization, for instance, was seen by many contemporaries in early stages of European democratic development as decay, whereas in the eyes of most Europeans today it is a taken-for-granted political concept. The role of the historian in the New Annalistic is twofold: First, he or she is a time traveller picking up historical bits and pieces. Second, the historian is a contemporary who is looking back from the distance of the present watching the concepts of history passing by, but interpreting them not in the sense of a progressive development but as a series of cross-fades. According to Hölscher, the changing perceptions of historical events should be analyzed through the look at their cross-fades and mutual interdependence. Obviously inspired by Foucault's Archeology, Hölscher describes historical stories as different layers lying over the same facts/events. The richness of the event and its meaning in different times can only be seen through a longitudinal analysis going down to the material essence on which all stories are based. Whereas traditional historiography would argue that historical research over time strives to come closer to the truth, the New Annalistic would simply say that the different evolving meanings in different times should be related to each other in order to see the event in the light of its historicity.

An example from PR history might be the concept of a progressive development of public relations departing at a stage of one-way communication that was not trustworthy and ending at a stage of mutual understanding and communicative symmetry. This historical conception can be traced back to the works of Bernays and to early and/or influential textbooks (Cutlip and Center, 1957 onward; Grunig and Hunt, 1984). For many academic teachers today this conception is taken for granted, as an overview of textbooks has shown (Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier, 2007). Besides textbook-knowledge, however, this historical conception was contested (e.g. L'Etang and Pieczka, 1996; Brown, 2003a, b, 2006). Most authors criticized that the idea of mutual understanding and symmetry is undermined by a hegemonic concept that let organizations (and not the interplay between organizations and publics) define how mutual understanding could be achieved. By looking at the use of mutual

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understanding in the so-called theory of excellence in public relations (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002), this critique is understandable. The authors operationalize mutual understanding by asking high-ranked members of the organization whether they think that their organization is communicating two-way with publics or not. The perspective of publics judging the communicative action of the organization seems to be irrelevant. If the concept of symmetry itself is flawed then the conception of a progressivist development of public relations over time cannot hold. The historical model of a progressivist evolution of public relations then is just one layer in the archaeology of public relations and other conceptions of the development of public relations which are more sceptical towards the idea of a progressive development represent another layer. To the PR historian it is important to be aware of these changing conceptions when re-examining the underlying events.

4. The historical standpoint of the historian

By respecting the possible change of meaning related to a single event over time, the New Annalistic rejects the common primacy of contemporary historic narratives over past historic narratives. In particular, the Historische Sozialwissenschaft with its focus on present experiences, models and theories (mostly deriving from sociology) argued for a historiography that looks at historic events through the lens of present explanatory schemes. Thereby, scientific relevance and social topicality would be achieved and past historic interpretations were labelled as inferior. In contrast, the historiography of the New Annalistic does not judge the progress of historical explanation, but wants to uncover the range and claim of validity of past conceptions of history and its influence on the historians and other people who believed in them.

5. Deep structures of the historical space

Hölscher argues that it is important to look at the construction of continuities or ruptures in time and space. European historians, he claims, were mostly interested in declaring the bourgeois revolutions between the 17th and 19th centuries as the most important epochal threshold in human history. Thereby they shortened historical time and space to one region and to only a few centuries. Other epochs such as the Middle Ages were not seen as being connected to the bourgeois revolutions but were framed as foreign, strange or simply different. The look at

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discontinuities and disconnectedness was justified through the meaning of the democratic development for the modern society the historians lived in. The same disconnectedness applied to other world regions (Africa, Asia), even to colonies (in order to delineate the own culture and society) and to questions of gender (women in history) and race. The benefit of classic periodizations, for instance, is that through the periodization a differentiated look at history is possible insofar, as it is necessary to name new developments that have the quality to represent new historical period or stage. The disadvantage, however, is the risk of losing the connections between epochs by systematically downplaying the continuities.

In public relations historiography, we find different leverage points to discuss issues of time and space. The first issue is the question of periodization and model building in PR historiography. L'Etang (2014), for instances, criticizes Bentele's call for a model-based historiography of public relations by the argument (following Vos, 2011) that models follow the logic of functional explanation and thereby tend to emphasize linearity and progression in history. However, as Hoy, Raaz and Wehmeier (2007) (with reference to the Historische Sozialwissenschaft) have pointed out, the model-based historiography is in particular looking at disruptures and the emergence of new developments in order to demarcate one stage or period from another. Linearity is not the focus of a reflective model-based theory. Bentele's evolutionist model of public relations history can't also automatically be linked to a progressivist conception of public relations because evolution theory (in biology and in sociology) is in itself not a progressivist approach but, as Brown (2003) and Giesen and Schmid (1975) argue for the discipline of sociology, an approach that looks at differentiation, progression and regression. One of the central assumptions of evolution theory is that 'adaptation has to be constructed as a mechanism of selection that can also fail. ... [Evolutionary theory] describes each form of structural change ...' (Giesen and Schmid, 1975, p. 74). I would reverse the argument of L'Etang and say, that although model-based historiography is a desirable approach due to its inherent tendency of reflection and abstraction, it overlooks the possible continuities and downplays aspects of time and space. How is that? Current PR historiography argues that public relations as a practice we know it came up in the middle of the 19th century (Bentele, 1997, Watson, 2014, Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Processes of industrialization, democratization, urbanization and mass mediatization and the development of modern

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organizations were circumstances letting public relations evolve. Earlier communication processes that were similar to 'modern' public relations are called 'public relations like activities' (Bentele) or 'Proto-PR' (Watson) within this research tradition. Thereby PR historians reduce the dimension of the historical time (of public relations) to one and a half centuries. The argument Watson uses for drawing a line between Proto-PR and public relations is the strategic intention of the communicator:

> There are numerous examples given which range from Sumerian walls displays, Greek rhetors, Roman emperors, early saints, crusades, and so on. ... These examples are not public relations, because they were not 'seen as strategically planned activity in medieval times and ... did not use the framing of language and accumulated best practice that is applied now' .... They were PR-like but were not PR. (Watson, 2014, 875f.)

On the one hand, Watson looks through the glasses of a contemporary definition of PR practice, saying that PR means to use framing and best practices in a strategic way. On the other, Watson (2008) argues that these practices were not seen as strategically planned in medieval times, which means that he looks at the meaning of this communication practice in the light of contemporary observers. Although Watson and Bentele (in line with others such as Grunig and Hunt) see continuities in the development of public relations, they draw a distinction between similar practices before and after the middle of the 19th century in order to sharpen the image of what modern PR is. Others, such as Brown (2003), Croft, Hartland and Skinner (2008), Lamme and Russell (2010) and Xifra and Collell (2014) argue differently insofar as they do not look for organizational communication practices but for communication in broader sociocultural contexts. By embedding persuasive communication in a sociocultural and/or political context they are able to argue that public relations was practiced in medieval times and in different societal settings. They widen time and space for PR historians and they emphasize continuities without claiming that continuity also means linearity or progress.

In Germany, leading practitioners (in particular Albert Oeckl) after 1945 were interested in cutting down the time span of public relations in order to disconnect the practice of public relations from practices of persuasive communication in the Third Reich. According to Oeckl, public relations was an American invention that came to Germany after World War II. However, Oeckl knew that German public relations practices could be traced back to earlier origins, but he played that down in order to cover his own role in persuasive communication in the Third Reich

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(Mattke, 2006). For German public relations, Albert Oeckl was more or less similarly influential as Bernays was for the US. Together with Carl Hundhausen, who brought ideas from his professional work in the US to Germany, he created the image of public relations (Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Insdustrielle Publizität) as a more or less new practice for German organizations after 1945 (Hundhausen, 1951, 1957, 1969; Oeckl, 1987, 1989, 1993). This image, created mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, changed when public relations became an academic domain and scholars such as Günter Bentele (1997), Michael Kunczik (1997) and Tobias Liebert (2003) started to investigate German PR history more systematically. Most of them broadened the time span to the industrialization; only Michael Kunczik (1997) did not demarcate 'modern' public relations from something similar before industrialization. Instead, he argued that, for instance, the Fugger merchant family in the 16th century practiced public relations quite similar to the modern understanding as they developed a strategic information network, used written documents that were published in order to influence the public and provided housing for poor inhabitants in Augsburg (their headquarter), the so-called Fuggerei, which can be seen as one of the first corporate social responsibility activities.

The attempt to say that public relations is a practice that originated in the US is also an example of the disconnection from other regions. For political and professional reasons Oeckl and Hundhausen obviously thankfully adopted the common assumption of many American scholars that public relations emerged in the United States. US scholars, it can be assumed, on the other hand, were simply not familiar with the sources and stories of public communication in other countries. Through the perpetuation of textbooks and the academic leadership in public relations this picture diffused throughout the world. Other world regions were not in focus. It is the evolving academic interest in public relations in other countries that led to doubts to this view. First, scholars interested in PR history in Germany (such as, Bentele, Szyszka, Kunczik and Wischermann) and England (such as, L'Etang, Edwards, Watson) doubted this view or simply provided readers with stories about public relations practices that started as early as the ones in the US; now other European countries are trying to unfold their PR history (Rodríguez-Salcedo, 2008; Theofilou and Watson, 2014; Fasce and Muzi Falconi, 2011). Furthermore, countries from other continents are tracing their PR history (the present anthologies edited by Tom Watson are representing this ambition) and it gets obvious that some countries have a slightly different tradition in communication

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processes that the Western world calls public relations. Other countries, however, are indeed influenced and inspired by the American model of public relations. Noteworthy are also critical postcolonial approaches that look at practices and origins in their countries (Curtin and Gaither, 2012; Dutta, 2009). In particular the discourse-inspired postcolonial studies allow for a broader conception of public relations as their critique of the US imperialism (even in the field of ideas) leads to an examination of different practices in ex-colonies and by this opens the view for power struggles in and between discourses. Their critical impetus unfolds other layers of public relations history that enrich the general understanding of public communication and the historic role of public relations in it.

6. Historism and New Annalistik

Instead of arguing (like in Historismus *and* in Historische Sozialwissenschaft) that a true history of something can be discovered by professional work of historians that interpret and/or explain the historic fact in the light of the contemporary, the New Annalistic tries to follow a multipolar path: it looks at the difference between historic perspectives of a past future (a future relative to the analyzed event) and the contemporary past (a past relative to the contemporary observer). When trying to analyze how events were perceived in the past and what future perspectives contemporaries of the event associated with them and how these events are framed today, the event is not biased by a primacy of the present but comes to life in the discourse of past and present interpretations. Thereby, the New Annalistic tries to enrich the historic discussion by unfolding the plurality of meanings attributed to single event or chains of events over time. For Hölscher, there is no unified concept of history, no metaphysical order in the historic development. Instead, the different and sometimes contradictory narratives overlap. As a result, a temporal texture and network is established that consists of tight and loose links. In this picture, hubs represent the historic events and threads represent the narratives and the conceptions of history around them. Not all hubs are connected; it is the historian who interrelates hubs through the narrative.

Conclusion

For academic disciplines such as medicine, the interest in historical questions is taken for granted as they have chairs for medical history.

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For public relations, as a small and young academic domain, we have to ask whether a history of the practice should be made in order to provide the profession with legitimacy or to simply find out how many and how different stories about the history of a widely used communication practice can be told in order to get a picture of the phenomenon. Research inspired by the idea of finding sources and stories that provide the profession with legitimacy would more or less necessarily lead to a progressivist conception of public relations, developing from propaganda to mutual understanding. Instead, if the historian is conceptualized like a bricoleur or a tinkerer, then the outcome of his or her work is not an intentionally designed product of academic work, because '... a tinkerer ... does not know exactly what he is going to produce but uses whatever he finds around him ... to produce some kind of workable object' (Jacob, 1977, p. 1163). In contrast with engineers, Jacob argues (in relation to any kind of scientific work), tinkerers manage with odds and ends. This picture seems to match the work of historians far better as they never know upfront what they will find and how they can contextualize and narrate their findings.

Within the past years the interest not only in the history of PR but also in its historiography has increased significantly. That testifies the maturation process of the academic domain. While most of the PR histories are written in a fact-oriented and positivist style, the historiography turns out to be rather reflective with its orientation towards historical sociology, non-linear approaches and theorizing. Instead of believing in a historical truth that can be found by collecting trustworthy historical sources, reflective historiography tells stories about ways to construct a historic picture consisting of events and their multipolar and multilayered narratives that should be seen as discourse. Each of the narrations represents a somewhat contingent construction of history. That doesn't mean that history deals with the fictive world, but it is fictional as it tells stories about how something could have been according to specific sources. For public relations historiography (and history) there is now hope that a reflected, open-minded approach emerges, being able to integrate even contradictory stories about the same event. If this hope becomes reality, then we can say the same about public relations historiography as Southgate says about historiography in general:

> Within historiography, too, there has been increasing acceptance of alternative modes of presentation. Monologic narratives 'from nowhere' – those single voiced statements from a seemingly privileged location that guarantees

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> the authoritative status of supposedly 'objective' and truthful representations – have been supplemented by more explicitly subjective accounts, in which authors have openly confessed their own positions and prejudices. Dialogue and poetic forms of historiography have been accepted as better suited to historiographies that recognize the force of competing allegiances, including the claims of feeling and emotion; and personal autobiographical accounts have been successfully interwoven with more public national historiographies'. (Southgate, 2009, p. 546)

All German quotes are translated by the author.

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