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2 Public relations origins and evolution: A global perspective

Abstract: Public relations has ancient roots in promotional activities but is largely a communication phenomenon of the 20th century. Governments played a fundamental role in establishing communication activities in many regions and continents. These led to the formation of profession-like practices of public relations. From this base, trade associations were formed and education programmes introduced in many countries. Later, the agency sector developed and became internationalised. Although the main international influences on public relations have been from Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, distinctive national forms of public relations based on cultural, political and social influences have been evolving in the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st. In general, public relations practice has thrived in its application and employment in countries with open economies and democratic institutions where free speech is less controlled.

Keywords: antecedents; corporate communication; culture; democratization; education; government; international; professionalization; proto-public relations; religion

1 Introduction

This chapter traces the formation of public relations as a practice from its earliest indications in the ancient world through four millennia to the end of the 20th century. The many antecedents of public relations were mainly methods of promotion and disseminating information. It was not until the late 19th century that the term “public relations” was first used in the United States, although public relations-like practices (also called proto-public relations) had long been evident.

But what is public relations? This chapter doesn't propose a single definition as it will show that there has been a wide range of cultural, managerial, political and religious influences upon the formation of theories and practices. There are, however, some characteristics that shape the wide variety of forms of public relations:

- It is a planned communication and/or relationship-building activity with strategic or deliberate intent (Lamme and Russell 2016). Some definitions emphasise the management of communications (Grunig J. and Hunt 1984; Broom and Sha 2013), the management of relationships (Coombs and Holladay 2006) and the creation and maintenance of reputation (Chartered Institute of Public Relations 2012).
- It seeks to create awareness and understanding among specific groups, often referred to as “publics” or “stakeholders”, and engage their interest.

- It has the function of enabling participation in the public sphere, giving voice to organisations and institutions.
- The interest of the public should result in a mutually beneficial relationship or response, possibly as dialogue (Gutiérrez-García, Recalde, and Pinera-Camacho 2015). Thus, it is different from publicity which only seeks to disseminate messages.
- Therefore, in the nature of its operation, public relations is a two-way activity enacted through the media, which has been the gatekeeper of communication. With the rise of social media, public relations activity has increasingly become a form of direct communication, bypassing media scrutiny.
- Although the US public relations pioneer Edward L. Bernays proposed that “public relations attempts to engineer public support” (Bernays 1955: 4–5), the term “to engineer” is rejected by many as implying manipulation rather than truth-telling. Ethical communication is the bedrock of public relations.

This chapter will consider the antecedents of public relations (proto-public relations), as well as the formation and expansion of public relations in six major continental blocks – Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Middle East and Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America. It then reviews the development of public relations into a professional-style practice during the 20th century with particular reference to North America and the internationalisation of practices. The chapter concludes with a three-part reflection on the antecedents, the springboards (impetuses for expansion) and the restraints that affected public relations across the world.

2 How public relations began

When did public relations (or similar practices) begin? Suggestions include Sumerian wall-markings from 2000 BC (in modern Iraq) to the persuasive rhetoricians of Ancient Greece (400 BC) or proto-handbooks of election propaganda for candidates and the personality cults of Roman emperors. Al-Badr (2004) has claimed that a 4,000-year-old cuneiform tablet found in Iraq was similar to a “bulletin telling farmers how to grow better crops” and thus a form of promotional information. Cicero’s brother advised him on how to win over public opinion if he wanted to become consul of the Roman Consulate in his epistolary *Commentariolum Petitionis* (Comments on Elections), a precedent of election campaigns handbooks (64 BC). Julius Caesar, when consul in 59 BC, published a daily news tablet or sheet called *Acta Diurna* (Daily Gazette) that offered information to the Roman populus and showed him as an active leader. In the Christian era, Brown (2015) has proposed that St Paul the Apostle was a 1st century example of a public relations practitioner because of his influence on others, the campaign he undertook to reach out and build relationships with faith

communities and his writing and publication of “letters” (books) of the Bible. Other examples are the formation and promotion of saintly cults (Watson 2008), and the promotion of crusades by popes.

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 are applied now” (Watson 2008: 20). “They were PR-like but were not PR”, hence it was “proto-public relations” (Watson 2008). This term is based on “proto”, meaning “original” or “primitive” (OED 2005: 601), similar to the term “prototype”. In the discussion of regional and continental evolution of public relations that follows, a thematic analysis is used and not all countries are referred to.

2.1 Asia

Around the world there were other antecedents of public relations. In China, activities can be traced for thousands of years occurring mainly at state level “with the intention of the ruler or the emperor to establish a credible reputation among his people, or to maintain a harmonious relationship with different sectors of society” (Hung-Bae-secke and Chen 2014: 24). These occurred in three forms: collections of folklore and culture such as folk songs, lobbying between rival states in order to avoid war and prevent attacks, and diplomacy to open trade links such as the Silk Road across Asia. Chinese, Taiwanese and Vietnamese researchers point to Confucianism as an ancient and enduring influence on proto-public relations and modern practices. Keeping promises and valuing reputation, an emphasis on interpersonal relationships and “relational harmony”, being firm on principles and ethics yet flexible on strategy and the importance of propriety led to the formation of proto-public relations based on *guanxi* (personal connections), which has both positive and negative aspects. It is also found in Vietnam as *quan hệ*, which also means “personal network” (Van 2014: 148). Confucianism emphasises “the importance of public opinion” (Wu and Lai 2014: 115) and has given a strong cultural base to modern public relations in East Asia. Proto-public relations in Thailand evolved through royal institutions from the 13th century onwards and was expressed in Buddhist religious beliefs and supported the nation’s unity (Tantivejakul and Manmin 2011). King Rama IV, Chulalongkorn, in the late 19th century “used royal gazettes, printed materials, royal photographs and the release of information to the press” to provide clear evidence “of PR type activity to support national governance and imperialism avoidance” (Tantivejakul 2014: 130).

Although western forms of public relations are practised in Japan, it developed a culturally different form called *kouhou* which originally mean to “widely notify” (Yamamura, Ikari, and Kenmochi 2014: 64). The term first appeared in a leading newspaper and denoted an advertisement or announcement. In the Meiji restoration starting in 1867, older social and political structures were broken down during modernization although a more democratic society did not evolve. The “public did not exist,

only the emperor's subjects did" (Yamamura, Ikari, and Kenmochi 2014: 64). However, the government formed news agencies to supply information to the rapidly expanding number of newspapers and "press agencies were the first organizations to systematically engage in the publicity business" (Yamamura, Ikari, and Kenmochi 2014: 64).

India, a British colony from the 18th century to 1947, has a proto-public relations history that goes back to the reign of King Ashoka (272–232 BC) whose edicts and inscriptions on rocks and pillars "were imperial communications to the subjects of his vast empire" (Vil'Anilam 2014: 35). During subsequent eras, rulers communicated with society through formal meetings at the emperor's court (Darbar), where representations were made and decisions given. In the first phase of India's communication history, until 1858, which Reddi (1999) calls a "propaganda" era, there was communication from the British-owned East India Company, and the first, short-lived newspaper was started in Calcutta in 1780. It was followed by the "publicity and information" era until independence. This period included the formation of the governmental Central Publicity Board during World War I, India's first organisational communication operation (Bardhan and Patwardhan 2004) and the development of public relations activities undertaken by Indian Railways.

2.2 Australia and New Zealand

Australia and New Zealand, both British colonies until the start of the 20th century, also saw government communication as the preparatory stage for public relations. In Australia, "Government attempts to inform, convince and persuade the widely spread population relied on and exploited PR strategies more than any single entity private enterprise could hope to achieve" (Sheehan 2014: 11). Promotional activities undertaken by the colonies that made up 19th century Australia attracted immigrants to new settlements and miners to the mid-century gold rush, as well as lobbying the colonial master in London about independence and trade issues. In New Zealand, the colony's promoters sought immigrants and investors, and positioned a future separated from Australia as an independent dominion of the British Empire. Galloway (2014: 14) comments that 19th century New Zealand "began to develop some skill in the press agency then beginning to emerge in the United States" and that strategic publicity took place as early as the London Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Vienna International Exposition of 1873.

2.3 Middle East and Africa

In the Arab world, before technology accelerated the speed of communication, traditional gathering points such as the mosque and the *majlis* or *diwaniyya*, a public gathering place for men, were both formal and informal channels for the dissemi-

nation and discussion of news (Badran 2014). Antecedents have been tracked back 1,400 years to the era of the prophet Mohammed when the new religion began to be disseminated among the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula (Abdelhay-Altamimi 2014). Poetry was important in this culture and the poet “was considered to be the press secretary of the tribe, attacking the tribe’s enemies, praising its accomplishments and strengthening the fighter’s morale” (Fakhri, Alsheekley, and Zalzal 1980: 34). It is a tradition that is “alive and well” in the modern Arabian Gulf region (Badran 2014: 8). The practice of public relations, prior to the arrival of Western agencies and corporate communication departments, was limited to a protocol role of organising events and taking care of visitors (Abdelhay-Altamimi 2014; Badran 2014).

In colonial Africa of the 19th and early 20th century, proto-public relations was in the form of governmental information, often supporting the formation of newspapers in British colonies in Eastern and Southern Africa (Kiambi 2014; Natifu 2014) and Nigeria in West Africa (Ibraheem 2014). Kiambi has found evidence of a Colonial Office information methodology that may have been applied in African, Asian and Caribbean colonies in the early to mid-20th century.

2.4 Latin America

In Latin America, public relations dates from the mid-20th century onwards, and shows the influence of corporate communication from US-owned companies, although a distinctive Latin American model of public relations was to evolve in the second half of the century. Only in Argentina, a Spanish colony until 1810, is there clear evidence of publicity-type activities during the 19th century in support of the nascent nation and its ambition to attract investment from Europe. These included newspapers promoting political groups and the national interest, and a diplomatic lobbying campaign (Carbone and Montaner 2014).

Before World War II, the Ford and General Motors car companies played an important role in Argentina and some other continental markets through their introduction of US-style communication and promotional methods. Public relations commenced in Brazil during 1914 when a Canadian-owned tramway company in Sao Paulo set up a public relations department, but progress was very slow until the 1950s. In Central America, corporate public relations activity supported the Panama Canal in 1914. In Colombia, Mexico and Peru, public relations was gradually introduced as a professional communication practice from the 1950s onwards, aided by US influences.

In the 1950s, Latin American nations and communicators saw the opportunities offered by governmental and corporate communication and formed one of the first regional public relations associations (FIARP), which launched the Inter-American Public Relations Conference. This regular event did much to share knowledge and aid the formation and sustaining of professional association and higher education

courses in public relations. Brazil, in a unique step, licenced public relations practitioners in a 1968 law.

By the late 20th century, Latin America had developed a regional form of public relations, which was reported by Molleda (2000) as the “Latin American School of Public Relations”. Moving away from corporatist, pragmatic approaches, it offered public relations as a social role where the practitioner is a “change agent or conscience of the organization” (Molleda 2001: 513) rather than a promoter for the employer or client organisation.

Public relations’ expansion in the continent was aided by reduced statism and economic planning, and the move from military dictatorships to more open economies and plural polities. From the 1980s, public relations practice, professionalisation and education began to thrive. There appeared to be a correlation in the profession’s development between increased democracy and more open economies across the continent.

2.5 Europe

The European antecedents are subject to considerable debate. Some scholars (Boshnakova 2014; Lawniczak 2005, 2014) consider that public relations in Eastern Europe and Russia arose only after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet bloc, a result of new democratic politics. Others, however, have identified proto-public relations activity in preceding decades and centuries, including among former Soviet bloc nations such as Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia (Hejlová 2014; Bentele 2015; Szondi 2014; Rogojinaru 2014; Verčič 2014).

In Western Europe, Germany’s public relations history was the best developed, with evidence of organised strategic communication in the 18th century. Early proto-public relations activity can be traced to writers employed “as publicists and as state employees in the 1790s” and Karl Varnhagen von Ense, a “full time ‘press officer’ [was] hired by the Prussian Chancellor von Hardenberg during the Vienna Congress (1814–1815)”, which sought to solve boundary issues arising from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (Bentele 2015: 48–49). In 1841, a central bureau of newspapers was started in Prussia, with a succeeding *Literarisches Kabinett* or *Büro* (Literary Cabinet or Bureau) continuing until 1920. “Official” newspapers were established and government-friendly newspapers given financial support. “Economic and technical progress also shaped PR’s development” (Bentele 2015: 50). Coal mining and steel manufacturing were the basis of heavy industry; electronics and chemicals were innovative sectors. Krupp (steel), Siemens and AEG (electronics) and BASF, Bayer, Hoechst and Agfa (chemicals) were seeking national and international markets and set up the beginnings of systematic, planned corporate and marketing public relations. In 1867, a full-time “Literat” (man of letters) was appointed as the manager of

Krupp's corporate communications, followed in 1870 by a corporate press department which monitored coverage of the company in newspapers and prepared articles and brochures to promote Krupp and its products (Wolbring 2000). Other German companies also developed press relations operations. In much the rest of Western Europe, there is little evidence of proto-public relations or planned publicity and press relations that can be compared with the German experience.

Although the United Kingdom had well-organised practices for informational communications in colonies, this was not evident in the four home nations until after World War I. There were notable exceptions such as the Marconi Company, which issued news releases in 1910 about trans-Atlantic telegraph services. In the Netherlands, there was a long tradition of *voorlichting* (a literal translation of “Enlightenment”) in which people were given information so they could participate in societal discussions. *Voorlichters* travelled around spreading news about health, farming, education and politics (Ruler and Cotton 2015). In Norway, socially radical policies were promoted by *potetprest* (potato priests of the Lutheran church) in public information campaigns in the mid-late 18th century aimed at alleviating poverty through the planting of potatoes. The priests used lectures, handbooks and their enthusiasm in these planned activities.

2.6 North America

The antecedents of public relations differed in North America. In the United States, they were evident in the 19th century in a wide range of activities. The term “public relations” was used in a variety of meanings and circumstances (Myers 2017). In Canada, public relations evolved from governmental practices (Thurlow 2017; Lee, Likely, and Valin 2017). Although it has been almost traditional to ascribe the formation of public relations as a consequence of press agency and publicity for circuses in the second half of the 19th century, recent scholarship (Lamme and Russell 2010; Lamme 2015; Lamme et al. 2017) has shown that it was practised in fields as diverse as railways, religious organisations and travelling entertainment. The hucksterish image of early publicity was shaped by press agents who earned their living by selling stories about clients to newspapers, while publicists sought media coverage for their clients through the creation of events and promotional actions. By the turn of the 20th century, the first agencies were being established, but their methods had been shaped by earlier practitioners.

Canada's experience was very different. It was a British colony until 1867 and its communication practices “focused on public policy and government administration” (Thurlow 2017: 41). Programmes up to the 1930s were aimed at nation-building and included campaigns from agriculture and immigration departments. Emms (1995: 27) comments that Canada lacked the “flamboyant publicists, controversial big business promoters and high-profile PR counsellors” that could be found in their southern neighbour.

3 Expansion

In general, public relations was a 20th century phenomenon. During the first half of the century, its expansion was primarily in the United States with some disrupted progress in Germany. The United Kingdom's engagement with public relations commenced after World War I, but expanded more rapidly from 1945 onwards, as did that in much of Western Europe and other regions of the world outside of Eastern Europe. In Asia, Thailand established governmental communications in the 1930s but other nations in that continent and in Africa developed public relations structures after independence, which mainly came in the 1960s. The People's Republic of China was closed by its Communist government from 1949 until 1979, after which public relations practice was gradually introduced as the economy reopened. The advance of public relations in Latin America was varied as many countries were under forms of military government, often until the mid-1980s.

3.1 United States

The predominant models of public relations practices were developed in the United States from the final decades of the 19th century onwards. Although most countries have national approaches to public relations, there are "International PR" models of practice in general and specialist areas used by transnational corporations and international organisations that have derived from US practice.

The mostly widely imitated US innovation was the agency for communication activities. Cutlip (1994) names the Publicity Bureau of Boston, started by three former newspaper reporters as a "general press agent business" in 1900, as the first of this type. It lasted for only 12 years but represented universities and American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T). It was followed in 1902 by a New York agency set up by another newspaperman, William Wolf Smith, whose agency was a "publicity business" aimed at assisting corporations counter press attacks and regulatory legislation. The third agency, Parker & Lee, which followed in 1904, is especially notable as one founder was the newspaperman Ivy L. Lee who became the first high-profile public relations adviser and a major influence on US practice until his early death in 1934. Lee's partner was George Parker, who had served as President Grover Cleveland's press agent in his three presidential campaigns. Apart from Parker, all founders of the pioneer agencies came from newspapers. This set the style of practice as media relations for publicity purposes. Ivy Lee became an adviser to the Pennsylvania Railroad and the magnate John D. Rockefeller. Lee set out the argument for companies to put their cases to the public: "If you go to the people and get the people to agree with you, you can be sure that ultimately legislatures, commissions and everybody else must give way in your favor" (Cutlip 1991). Although Lee is portrayed as a public relations pioneer, he favoured the term "publicity", as evidenced in his 1925 book, *Publicity: Some of the*

Things It Is and Is Not. He did not promote a clear, organized vision of public relations, but believed in the benefits of keeping the press informed about organisations and letting the editors decide what information was to be published (Morse 1906; Hiebert 1966: 48).

The agency business grew gradually. It was not until after World War I, in 1919, that the earliest active promoter of “public relations” as a term and a communications practice set up in business. This was Edward L. Bernays who, with his soon-to-be wife Doris Fleischman, started their agency in New York. Bernays’ importance is more related to his capacity for personal publicity and his prolific writing in books such as *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), *Propaganda* (1928) and *The Engineering of Consent* (1955), and less for his leadership in public relations in the 1920s and 1930s, when he was seen by peers as a relentless self-promoter. On starting his business, Bernays titled it Edward L. Bernays, Counsel on Public Relations, thus presenting the concept of “public relations counsel” as a higher professional skill and calling than those of “publicist” or “press agent”. As a close relative of his double uncle Sigmund Freud, he engaged with developments in psychology and sociology, as well as with academic developments such as the study of public opinion. What was an art for Lee, was promoted as a science by Bernays. His importance, which rose amongst US practitioners from the 1950s until his death at 103 in 1995, was in promoting public relations as being more than the negotiation of coverage in the media, but still a persuasive communication activity on behalf of clients.

Public relations and publicity work grew through the 1920s until slowed by the Great Depression. It was a contested area. Tedlow (1979) found that media owners loathed press agents and publicists and called them “space grabbers” because they obtained coverage in newspapers for clients without the need to buy advertisements. They were also recruiting journalists to do their work, a practice that still continues.

3.2 Other countries – after World War I

In Europe, public relations and publicity activity expanded in Germany and the United Kingdom after World War I. In Germany, it was well developed in industry, national government and, especially, local and regional government. This came to a halt in 1933 when the Nazis came to power (Bentele 2015). The most important developments in the United Kingdom were the formation of the “first public relations agency”, Editorial Services Ltd, by Basil Clarke in 1924 (Evans 2013). Clarke used the term “industrial propaganda”, especially in relation to communication with employees. Propaganda, prior to its blackening in the Nazi era, was widely used in government and industry as a synonym for informational communication and awareness-creating publicity. Stephen Tallents, another British pioneer in the establishment of public relations, led the work of the Empire Marketing Board to develop trade and business among nations, dominions and colonies of the British Empire. He later went on to advise the

BBC and government departments and was the founding president of the Institute of Public Relations in 1948 (Anthony 2012). In France, a group of US professionals tried to set up a public relations company in 1924. They attempted to organize conferences about the discipline but did not draw big audiences. Apart from this failed North American attempt, several French companies, such as Renault and Péciney, developed initiatives to manage relationships with their publics before World War II (Rodríguez-Salcedo 2012: 349).

Other countries that introduced public relations included Australia, whose first self-styled public relations adviser was George Fitzpatrick in 1929 (Gleeson 2012). Many of its state governments had information and publicity departments by 1930. In Thailand, the government set up a Publicity Division in 1933, modelled on German practices, to provide information to the public. It has since evolved into the Government Public Relations Department (GPRD) and now plays a major role in managing government communication and relations with media industries (Tantivejakul 2014).

3.3 World War II

During World War II, all combatants had established propaganda and information operations. In the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Information was the mainstay of internal propaganda and public information campaigns. It continued as the Central Office of Information for decades until its closure in 2011. L'Etang (2004: 59) notes that “by the end of the Second World War, the British State had invested heavily in a variety of propaganda activities to support political, economic, and diplomatic objectives.”

In the United States, the armed forces had public relations staff who were trained to accompany units into war zones, as well as to keep domestic audiences informed. Many veterans who had spent the war in military public relations units drove the expansion of public relations in the US and internationally in the following decades. The main propaganda organisations in the United States were the Office of War Information (OWI), which focused on disseminating information worldwide, and the War Advertising Council, which produced public service announcements. Both provided platforms for public relations and publicity employment, although as Lee (2015) found, employment in government departments dropped rapidly as the war ended.

In Germany, a previously diverse media sector was forced to follow National Socialist doctrines after 1933 with information centralized under the Reich Ministry of Public Information and Propaganda headed by Propaganda Minister Goebbels. “Needless to say, the entire system of public communication gained a propagandist character” (Bentele 2015: 52). By the beginning of the war in the Pacific in 1941, Japan had an established information division in its Cabinet office and the “propaganda machine was in place” (Yamamura, Ikari, and Kenmochi 2014: 65).

3.4 1945 onwards

After the end of World War II in 1945, the expansion of public relations gathered pace, especially in North America and Western Europe. Eastern Europe, which was under Soviet control, and China, which would come under Communist Party rule in 1949, were extensive, highly populated exceptions. Asia, Africa and Latin America would follow later.

In Western Europe, American influence was at its height in the nations that had been affected by the wartime conflict. US funding of the European Recovery Program (the “Marshall Plan”) encouraged the democratisation of politics, open economies and the reconstruction of infrastructure. In some countries, communicators travelled to the United States and were briefed on public relations and promotional activity. Belgium, which had pre-war experience of propaganda and promotional activity from industries in its colonies, sent economic missions to the United States “which led to the propagation of PR in different parts of Belgium” (Ruler and Cotton 2015: 92). These visits noted that successful companies nurtured their relationships with publics through communication that had human dimensions. Germany, France, Greece, the Netherlands and Italy also benefited from Marshall Plan linkages. German public relations historian Günter Bentele refers to the period from 1945 to 1958 as “New beginning and upswing” (Bentele 2015: 47).

In Greece, the exposure to American advertising agencies and public relations practices in the tourism market in the early 1950s was the springboard for the formation of early agencies (Theofilou 2015). In Italy, the United States Information Service (USIS) was very active in recruiting Italian staff, producing films and documents, offering exchange visits to its homeland, and assisting the Christian Democracy party (DC) to combat the influence of the Communist Party (Muzi Falconi, and Venturozzo 2015). Portugal and Spain, which were non-combatants in World War II and ruled by military dictatorships since the 1930s, were not part of the Marshall Plan funding and programmes. Development of their national public relations sectors would be delayed until the mid-1970s when both dictatorships broke down (Rodríguez-Salcedo and Watson 2017). Spain started its public relations sector during the final 15 years of the Franco regime but it was not until democracy returned in the mid-1970s that it gained momentum (Rodríguez-Salcedo 2015; Rodríguez-Salcedo and Xifra 2015). Portugal shrugged off the Salazar regime at the same time, but took a decade longer than its Iberian neighbour to develop a national public relations sector (Santos 2016).

3.4.1 Emergence of professional associations

Other aspects in the post-war expansion of public relations were the formation of professional associations and the introduction of university-level education. Although the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was formed in 1947, it had antecedent

organisations that dated to 1936 (National Association of Accredited Publicity Directors). In the United Kingdom, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) was launched in 1948 with the assistance of a trade union, the National Association of Local Government Officers. Other national bodies were formed around the same time: Australia (1949), Belgium (1953), Denmark (1950), Finland (1947), France (1949), Germany (1958), Greece (1960), Netherlands (1946), New Zealand (1954), Norway (1949), Spain (1961) and Sweden (1950). France had two associations in the early 1950s and they merged in 1955 (Rodríguez-Salcedo 2012: 351). It was the same with Italy, with three associations in the late 1950s which merged into a single organisation in 1970.

In 1955, after several years of talks, the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) was launched in London and, for around 15 years, became the crossroads for international discourse. Although IPRA was composed of individual senior practitioners, it played a leadership role in defining aspects of public relations practice such as codes of conduct and ethics, early planning of public relations education and training and seeking recognition for public relations as a profession. IPRA was important from 1955 to 1970 in promoting public relations through its congresses and publications and by bringing practitioners together. From some of these connections, networks of agencies were built, some being acquired by the US agencies as they extended their offices and resources around the world. Also in Europe, the Confédération Européenne des Relations Publique (CERP) was formed through the initiative of Lucien Matrat of France in 1959. Matrat was its first president and also a prominent member of IPRA. CERP's Research and Education wing later became the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) in 2000. IPRA continues as an organisation, although its role of international coordination and leadership has been taken over by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management.

3.4.2 Education

The education and training of practitioners was seen as a vital element in building the skills base of public relations and defining it as a professional activity. Although the first public relations course was offered at the University of Illinois in 1920, it was not until the late 1940s that the new professional associations actively started to discuss education. In the United States, Boston University established the first degree programme in 1947, although around ten courses were offered at other universities. The first Canadian university PR course was taught at McGill University in 1948, but the first university degree was not offered until 1977 by Mount Saint Vincent University (Wright 2011). For at least two decades, the United States was the leading provider of university-level studies, mainly in second- and third-tier establishments.

The professional associations had education and training as a priority. Sir Stephen Tallents said in his 1949 IPRA presidential address that members' "first function (...) was to educate themselves" (L'Etang 2004: 188). IPR drew up its first draft syllabus in

1954, although many senior members were dubious about the value of education. Sam Black, later an honorary professor of public relations and an internationally recognised educator, dismissed education as a requirement for practice: “It is not necessary to have had any specialised training to have a good public relations outlook. So much depends on common-sense and good taste” (L’Etang 2004: 190). He was to change his stance because he was one of the most widely travelled public relations educators and trainers, the author of several books and leader of some of IPRA’s policy-making on university-level education.

IPRA took the lead in shaping international approaches to education. Its Gold Paper No. 2, *Public Relations Education Worldwide*, published in 1976, was primarily researched and written by the German public relations leader, Albert Oeckl. Unlike later Gold Papers, it proposed that public relations topics should be part of a general humanities degree. It was followed by three other Gold Papers in the succeeding 20 years (1982, 1990, 1997), all of them used by universities and national associations to prepare degree programmes and accreditation processes. Examples include Denmark, Russia, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. The Gold Papers increasingly focused education and training on skills for public relations practice, rather than a rounded syllabus. This is a tension that has long existed between practitioner organisation and universities around the world.

The adoption of public relations degree studies did not follow a continental or regional pattern. Early introductions, after the United States, were Japan (1951), Belgium (1957), Taiwan (1963), Thailand (1965), Turkey (1965), Spain (1968), Egypt (early 1970s), Mexico (1976), Australia (mid-1970s) and Saudi Arabia (1976). Much of Europe, both Eastern and Western, launched courses in the 1980s and 1990s. In many countries, public relations courses had been taught within other degree programmes or at diploma level for one or two decades. The introduction in Eastern Europe came from 1991 onwards, following the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The United Kingdom, which had started discussing education and training in 1948, waited 40 years before the first degrees commenced; first, a master’s programme at Stirling University in 1988, followed in 1989 by bachelor’s programmes at three universities.

3.4.3 International public relations

Western Europe became the target for American corporations as economies revived in the 1950s and 1960s. This impetus gave a platform for the establishment of international arms of major public relations agencies and for multinational corporations’ corporate communication departments. The first agencies to expand from the United States were Hill & Knowlton, Burson-Marsteller and Barnet & Reef. Hill & Knowlton was established before World War II in Cleveland and then New York. Burson-Marsteller was set up in 1953 and Barnet & Reef, which no longer exists, started in 1959. The agencies began by linking with partners or associates in the new markets and

later acquiring either the partner agency or another business. This enabled them to support American clients as they expanded into new territories and grow the agencies' businesses (Rodríguez-Salcedo and Gómez-Baceiredo 2017). This development and the corporate communication expansion also led to the use of common public relations and publicity approaches that could be planned and monitored from a central position. The outcome was that American models of public relations became known as "International PR", with ubiquitous practices attempted in many countries of greatly varying culture, politics and societies. They have been very successful, as shown by their decades of operation, but not in all countries. In Thailand, for example, international agencies have come and gone. Often, they tried to impose an international model of PR to satisfy clients, but failed to gain desired results because they did not appreciate Thailand's Buddhist values and relationship culture (Tantivejakul 2014).

4 Worldwide growth

During the 1970s, momentum built for the worldwide expansion of public relations practices. Already, the early international agency networks were in place, corporate public relations departments were growing as governments and multinational corporations sought to expand their influence, and the technology for faster communications, such as telephone, satellite communication and television, was evolving. News media were also expanding. In many Western countries, newspapers could be printed and distributed from several cities; television news was less reliant on film and able to access satellite-distributed material. All these developments sped up the news gathering and dissemination processes (Gorman and McLean 2009) and increased pressure on organisations to respond quickly. It was also the decade in the United States and Germany in which theoretical research began to flourish. James Grunig, a noted academic theorist, led the way in the United States by positioning public relations as a management function. His definition of public relations as "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics" (Grunig J. and Hunt 1984: 4) is the most commonly cited. Other academics began to undertake research, and the first academic journal, *Public Relations Review*, was established by Professor Ray Hiebert in 1975. For much of the next 20 years, American research and theorisation would dominate public relations, until the academic base became much more international.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, public relations was mainly focused on media relations. This was a reflection of the journalistic background of many entrants and the expectation of employers in companies and governments that media coverage was beneficial. Media relations remains a major part of PR practice today. This type of public relations would change as graduates who had studied public relations

and related communication topics increasingly entered agencies and organisations from 1990s onwards.

5 1990s

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the former Eastern Bloc, public relations began to flourish in these countries. For some, this development was wholly new as it arose from the introduction of democratic governments, while others interpreted the rapid growth of public relations as the continuation of practices from the former socialist countries. They argued that many former governmental communications and propaganda people left their old jobs and became PR entrepreneurs using many of the same techniques and contacts.

In the 1990s, Europe led the PR world in two areas. The first was the formation of the International Communications Consultants Association (ICCO) which brought the world's PR trade bodies together, and the second was the interpretation of the quality assurance (QA) movement into the public relations field. In addition to ICCO, the professional bodies developed the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, which launched in 2002. In this decade, there was rapid expansion of public relations in consultancies, government and corporations. An important springboard was the privatisation of governmental entities in many countries, fuelling further internationalisation of agencies and corporate communication operations as companies moved rapidly into new markets through acquisition. Another sector to emerge strongly was public relations for non-profit organisations, such as charities and social organisations.

A second springboard was the introduction of specialist public relations for technology companies ("tech PR") from the mid-1990s onwards. This brought new types of expertise and communication methods such as email and the early Internet, which were used by practitioners and organisations as communication and promotional tools. The Web 1.0 period was the beginning of the biggest transformation of public relations practices and strategies since the end of World War II. Until then, technology change was relatively slow, with facsimile (fax) machines only recently replacing telex and post. With Web 1.0, the pace of change accelerated.

In Latin America, the ending of several military governments and controlled economies led to greater democracy in politics and open markets, which in turn fostered communication such as public relations, political communication and advertising. Watson (2015: 14) notes that, after restraints were eased, "PR grew in all forms, as did education and training." In the Middle East and Africa, a relatively liberal period allowed the expansion of public relations, especially as the media environment became much more open and international. In Israel, the period since 1995 has been a "golden age" for public relations (Magen 2014: 53).

Although the bursting of the dotcom bubble around 2001 slowed the growth of public relations, it was only temporary as employment continued to expand. For example, in 2004, it was estimated that 45,000 people worked in PR in the UK. By 2011, it had risen to about 60,000. Similar growth has been experienced in many countries. For example, the annual *European Communication Monitor* survey is sent to more than 30,000 mid-to-senior level corporate communicators in 43 countries.

6 Summary

In a study of the public relations histories of more than 70 countries, Watson (2015) analysed them using three aspects: the antecedents of modern public relations, the factors that aided the expansion of these practices (springboards), and the restraints that slowed growth.

- *Antecedents*: There were three common forms: early corporate communications (e. g. Krupp in Germany, railways in the United States); governmental information and propaganda methods, especially in British colonies and former colonies; and cultural influences linked to dominant religions (Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam) in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.
- *Springboards*: Watson (2015: 12) identified a sequence of influences that frequently assisted the expansion of public relations: *Governmental PR* → *Corporate communication* → *Formation of a Professional Association* → *Education at universities and colleges* → *Establishment of Agencies*. There were exceptions, especially in the focus on nation-building and politicised communication in post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa, but this sequence was seen in many more countries. In post-World War II Western Europe and in Eastern Europe after 1989, there was strong influence from American models of practice, but these have been modified into national forms of public relations.
- *Restraints*: Since the middle of the 20th century, public relations has not expanded at a uniform rate, even in adjacent countries, for economic and political reasons. Among the historic reasons were closed or statist economies, one-party and military governments that stifled free expression and the media and thus the emergence of public relations. Propaganda was dominant in some countries (notably Eastern Europe) until democratic politics was allowed. And elsewhere public relations was practised as a protocol activity to support rulers and not to foster dialogue (Middle East).

Overall, public relations has expanded as a practice mostly in democratic environments in which there is an open economy. There are exceptions but these are mainly, as in the case of Spain in the 1960s, when the controlling regime was beginning to ease controls on the media and politics to improve economic conditions. By the second

decade of the 21st century, public relations had become a major communication practice around the world. The very small beginnings, such as Krupp in Germany and the first US PR agency business in 1900, have led to widespread employment, extensive use of practices and increasing research and education. It has come a long way from circuses, regional steam railways and telephone companies publicising their activities to a very limited range of print media, particularly in an era of social media.

7 Future directions for public relations history

The history of public relations has established a sound base over the past decade. Research and scholarship now need to develop in four directions (Watson 2016), away from a comfortable defence of current theory and historical practices.

The first direction is that more effort is needed for outreach and connection with other areas of media and communication history. Some media historians regard public relations as being inherently unethical and manipulative of public opinion. Public relations historians need to be more involved in this debate and respond to the challenges and orthodoxies of media historians. Leaving public relations at the margins of communication and media history is to overlook the richness of the field and the insights into social and political history that it offers.

The second task is that the historiography (the way in which history is interpreted) of public relations needs to engage with major theoretical debates, such as postmodernism, postcolonialism, discourse, new annalistic and other approaches. Postcolonial approaches to the history of public relations in nations and regions that have been decolonized after World War II have already shown new, rich and alternative interpretations in Southeast Asia and Africa. For students and researchers, there are many other opportunities for new interpretations to be applied.

A third direction is for public relations historians to challenge the legends of public relations that exist in so many older texts that have relied overly on tales of “great men” who supposedly shaped the field but were mostly self-publicists undertaking activities established in the generation before them. Not only were “great women” (and women in general) overlooked but the vast extent of proto-public relations has been ignored. It is time for public relations historians to become “dangerous” (Watson 2014) and not only reject the legends but also suggest new research methodologies.

Fourth, more historical research is needed on the people who have populated public relations work, moving away from easy reference points such as “great men” and self-publicisers. These “big names” didn’t do all the work, make judgements, agonize over ethics, establish professional bodies, and undertake teaching and research. These productive activities were undertaken by the great mass of people who have worked in public relations, publicity and communication by organizations over the last century and before. Oral history research, the development of archives and the

adoption of new historiographic approaches offer real opportunities for new understanding of workplace roles and the expansion of public relations around the world.

Overall, the future of the history of public relations will be shaped in two ways: by historians who move away from the current inward focus and on to more challenging approaches; and by greater inclusion of history in the public relations curriculum, especially at undergraduate level.

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