

REVISING THE NARRATIVE OF EARLY U.S. PUBLIC RELATIONS HISTORY:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEPICTIONS OF PR PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONALS
IN THE POPULAR PRESS 1770-1918

by

MARCUS CAYCE MYERS

(Under the Direction of Karen Russell)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation challenges current historical narratives about early public relations practice in the United States from 1770 to 1918. Histories of U.S. PR typically argue that American public relations began with low-level press agency and rose to a professional form in twentieth century corporate America. This narrative incorrectly portrays public relations history as corporate, evolutionary and rooted in the unprofessional practices of press agency. This dissertation challenges this popular account of U.S. public relations history. More than 3,200 articles that described public relations in the American popular press from 1770 to 1918 were analyzed to create a revised narrative of PR history. Specific attention was paid to the meaning of the term public relations, propaganda, press agency, publicity agent, and publicity bureau. Analysis shows that public relations practice was used in government, politics, at the grassroots, and in corporations. This dissertation argues that U.S. public relations was not a twentieth century creation, PR history is not an evolutionary process, and that non-

corporate spheres influenced PR relations practice. From this analysis a new narrative of public relations history is presented.

INDEX WORDS: Public Relations, PR, PR history, popular press, media history

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MARCUS CAYCE MYERS

B.A., Emory University, 2004

M.A., The University of Georgia, 2006

J.D., Mercer University, 2009

LL.M., The University of Georgia, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2014

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MARCUS CAYCE MYERS

Major Professor:	Karen Russell
Committee:	Audrey Haynes Janice Hume Bryan Reber Jeffrey Springston

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2014

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Tom and Linda Myers and my fiancé Anne Carroll.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Karen Russell for her help in this dissertation. Her insights on public relations history and research were invaluable to this entire research process. I also want to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Bryan Reber, Dr. Jeffrey Springston, Dr. Janice Hume, and Dr. Audrey Haynes. Their work as committee members made this dissertation stronger both theoretically and substantively. I also want to thank the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication as well as the Broun Fund which provided financial assistance for the completion of this work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction of Topic and Theoretical Justification

This study examines the representation of early U.S. public relations in the popular press from 1770 to 1918. Early public relations historiography is rife with misperceptions, and little is known about the practice of public relations during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Part of the reason this era in PR history is unknown or misinterpreted is because of the flawed histories written about the era. These histories of public relations denigrate early PR practice, ignore its impact on modern practice, and exclude the contributions of non-corporate organizations. This analysis of the popular press' depiction of early U.S. public relations challenges the current theories of PR history and argues that early U.S. public relations was a professionalized practice, used sophisticated and ethical communications techniques, and operated in a variety of corporate and non-corporate spheres simultaneously. This challenge to current theories of PR history is important not only because it corrects an inaccurate theory of PR history, but also because it forces scholars to acknowledge a new, and more inclusive, definition of PR practice that embraces the idea that PR exists in formal and informal contexts.

Current theories of PR history should be re-examined for two reasons. First, current public relations histories often situate PR in a corporate narrative. The corporate narrative of PR is dominant both in historiography and normative PR theory, notably James Grunig and Todd Hunt's four models of public relations.¹ The four models are

particularly important to historical periodization of PR since they are often incorrectly used as an artificial time frame for PR history and depiction of early PR tactics. Even though Grunig acknowledged the four models were not historical models and did not accurately reflect the history of the field, some PR scholars still adhere to this paradigm of PR history.² Illustrating the weaknesses in this theoretical conceptualization of the field suggests new theories of early U.S. PR history.

Second, little is known about early U.S. public relations history prior to 1918. Since Scott Cutlip and Allen Center's *Effective Public Relations* and Grunig and Hunt's four models are so pervasive within PR historiography, few studies examine early PR history.³ As Meg Lamme and Karen Russell explain in their 2010 historiographical survey of PR history, little is known about public relations history prior to 1900.⁴ While histories do exist of early American PR, they are oftentimes written by those who try to place themselves prominently in the narrative (e.g. Edward Bernays)⁵ or describe the era in general terms without detailed historical documentation (e.g. Scott Cutlip).⁶ Other histories of the field provide only anecdotes of PR practice which even when taken in aggregate do not form a cohesive history of U.S. public relations.⁷ Because of this lack of research, serious historical investigation needs to be conducted to construct an overview of an accurate history of public relations as a practice.

Given these large gaps in public relations history and the dominance of corporate progressivism within PR history, this study examines early American public relations from 1770 to 1918. Even though the periodization and evolutionary development of PR seen in works by Bernays, Cutlip and Center, and Grunig and Hunt have been criticized, a more inclusive, non-Bernaysian history of early public relations practice has yet to be

written.⁸ This dissertation proposes to provide a first step in writing a more complete history of public relations by looking its portrayal in the popular press. This study approaches early U.S. public relations history from a fresh perspective not incorporating the histories of Bernays, Cutlip and Center, or Grunig and Hunt's four models.⁹ Additionally, this dissertation rejects the business narrative of PR development articulated by Marchand,¹⁰ Raucher,¹¹ and Tedlow,¹² who argue PR is the byproduct of corporate growth in the early twentieth century. Rather, this study looks at early U.S. public relations history as a relatively unknown area of scholarship. In examining this history this dissertation attempts to close the gap in early PR scholarship articulated by Lamme and Russell and to approach PR history from a neutral position rather than a corporatist, evolutionary perspective.¹³

II. Overview of U.S. Public Relations History

The first U.S. public relations history was published in Edward Bernays' 1952 book *Public Relations*.¹⁴ In *Public Relations* Bernays employed a periodization of public relations that used a linear and evolutionary narrative of PR history. Bernays argued that during the 1870s press agents emerged as the first publicity professionals and credited P.T. Barnum as the first press agent. A hallmark of press agents was the use of shameless self-promotion and outright lies to promote theater, side-shows, and circuses. By the turn of the twentieth century Bernays said corporate publicity work emerged coordinated by corporate publicity professionals, such as Ivy Lee.¹⁵

Bernays cited his own life experiences as being intertwined with the historical development of PR.¹⁶ During World War I Germany's use of communication tactics in the United States was recognized as a serious threat. As a result, the United States

formed the Committee for Public Information, known as the Creel Committee because its was led by George Creel, to promote U.S. interests in the press. Bernays was a member of the Creel Committee and cited his time there as instrumental in the formation of public relations. According to Bernays, he used his experiences on the Creel Committee to formulate his own concept of a professional public relations practitioner. After World War I, Bernays attempted to apply his new communications knowledge to propaganda for non-governmental public relations work. He claimed that the word propaganda pre-war had a neutral connotation, but that post-war it had become associated with German press manipulation. Because of these negative connotations associated with propaganda Bernays said he invented the new term “counsel on public relations” during the 1920s to refer to a new profession that did propaganda work for non-government organizations.¹⁷ According to Bernays this invention of public relations counsel created the modern field of public relations. Bernays emphasized that prior to his invention of the term “counsel on public relations” there was no such thing as a professional PR practitioner.¹⁸ He claimed all PR work done prior to the existence of “counsel on public relations” was mere publicity.¹⁹ Bernays’ definition of publicity versus public relations is important because according to him publicity work lacked the sophistication of PR. In Bernays’ 1965 autobiography, he argued that his invention of public relations moved away from the crude practices of publicity because he used psychological information to target publics.²⁰

Scott Cutlip and Allen Center used a similar historical narrative of early U.S. public relations in their second edition of *Effective Public Relations* published in 1958.²¹ Although *Effective Public Relations* did not cite Bernays’ 1952 book, it used an almost

identical historical narrative of U.S. PR history. According to Cutlip and Center, modern public relations had roots in the medieval times with the Catholic Church. Later in the American colonial era printers used persuasive pamphlets to influence colonists on political issues. Like Bernays, Cutlip and Center argued the theatrical press agent, notably P.T. Barnum, did unethical and deceptive publicity work during the late nineteenth century. Similar to Bernays' account of U.S. PR history, Cutlip and Center cited Ivy Lee as a transitional figure in creating corporate publicity that later gave way to modern public relations.

Grunig and Hunt reiterated Bernays' historical narrative in their textbook *Managing Public Relations* published in 1984.²² Grunig and Hunt discuss best practices of public relations arguing PR practice falls into four models. These models use historical events and people to define the characteristics of each model. The four models are press agency (unethical promotional PR), informational model (controlled messaging), two-way asymmetrical PR (using psychological information to communicate with publics), and, the most ethical, two-way symmetrical public relations (listening to publics and responding to their needs).²³ Although these models were later acknowledged by Grunig as not a historical periodization of PR, they do lend themselves to a linear PR narrative.²⁴ According to Grunig and Hunt press agency is exemplified by P.T. Barnum and the side-show promotions in the 1870s. Public information model is associated with Ivy Lee's early twentieth century work for corporations. Two-way asymmetrical PR is associated with Edward Bernays and his use of Freudian psychology post-World War I. Two-way symmetrical PR is described as an aspirational PR practice that should be embraced by organizations in the future.

This linear and evolutionary narrative of early U.S. PR history became reaffirmed in two historical works written by Cutlip in the 1990s. His first book *The Unseen Power* described the development of corporate public relations practice using a series of anecdotes of public relations firms from the early 1900s forward.²⁵ In his second book *Public Relations History from the 17th to the 20th Century: The Antecedents*, Cutlip discussed the early development of public relations in America focusing on a series of micro histories of people and events.²⁶ Both books are similar since they make no reference to historical method and use masters theses from the University of Wisconsin to formulate the structure of several chapters. Both books describe the emergence of PR practice as an a linear evolution in which earlier practices give way to a more sophisticated, technical, and professional public relations.

Outside of public relations scholarship, this evolutionary, linear, and corporate narrative of PR history is also prevalent. In 1968 Alan Raucher traced public relations' roots to early corporate owned public utility companies in the early 1900s.²⁷ In 1979 Richard Tedlow, a business historian, wrote a chapter on PR development entitled "Up from Press Agency" in which he described corporate public relations as evolving from the unethical practices of entertainment press agency.²⁸ In 1998 Roland Marchand, a business and advertising historian, reiterated this corporate narrative of PR practice in *Creating the Corporate Soul*.²⁹ According to Marchand public relations emerged during the twentieth century in corporations as a response to their misdeeds committed in the late nineteenth century.

Beginning in the late 1980s, Bernays's narrative of PR history became questioned by several PR historians. These scholars criticized PR history's corporate focus, lack of

inclusion of minorities and women, and use of four model periodization. Marvin Olasky criticized PR history's attachment to corporate interests arguing that emphasizing the corporate connection to PR actually proved how unethical public relations was in the nineteenth century.³⁰ In 2000, Karen Miller, now Russell, wrote a survey of public relations history that argued that PR history was dominated by corporate histories that ignored the contributions of women, grassroots organizations, and politics.³¹ Scholars including Meg Lamme and Karla Gower also reiterated this criticism citing the emphasis on a great man narrative of PR history that was too preoccupied with corporate public relations.³² Other criticisms of PR history emerged in the 2000s. In their 2010 survey of PR history Lamme and Russell criticized the use of Grunig and Hunt's four model periodization of PR history that dominated the field.³³ They also pointed out that while non-profit, grassroots, and political studies of PR history existed, none told the entire history of U.S. public relations. They concluded that as of 2010 the history of U.S. public relations was largely unknown.³⁴

After Lamme and Russell's study, Coombs and Holladay wrote in 2012 that the corporate narrative of American public relations had become too pervasive and that other histories needed to be written that included the contributions of social movements and activists to PR.³⁵ Tom Watson, a historian of European public relations, also criticizes current PR histories saying that too many follow the Grunigian four models as a periodization for PR development while ignoring other areas of PR history that are unflattering and embarrassing to the field.³⁶

Other issues in PR history emerged in the past decade. PR historians, including Tom Watson, Karla Gower, and Günter Bentele, argue PR history is too broad because any

tactic related to PR practice was classified as public relations.³⁷ As a counter to this argument Watson and Bentele argue for a demarcation between PR-like practices and actual professional public relations. Watson termed this type of early PR practice proto-PR since it is not part of professional PR. Watson argues pre-professional PR existed but not as actual public relations.³⁸ Rather these proto-PR practices were influencers or ancestors to modern professional public relations. This too presents a periodization of PR practice in which there are two distinct eras in all PR histories. This proto-PR concept has been supported by Bentele's stratification model of PR development.³⁹ This model argues that current public relations is a sum of its past with each new layer of PR building on its past.

The debate over the importance of corporate PR, the application of the four models, and the disagreement over the use of periodization in PR history has dominated the debate in public relations history for over a decade.⁴⁰ Because of this, the older Bernaysian narrative is still dominant in public relations. His work privileges the corporate view, denigrates PR's nineteenth century past, and places him as the inventor of American public relations. While historians acknowledge Bernays' narrative as incorrect and problematic, no scholarship directly contradicts Bernays' narrative of early PR history. This dissertation challenges this Bernaysian account of public relations history by providing new narrative for U.S. public relations history.

III. Public Relations Theory and History

Part of the reason why Bernays' narrative is dominant within PR history is the larger theoretical debate occurring within public relations. Beginning in the 1980s James Grunig began to work on a grand theory for public relations.⁴¹ His groundwork for this

theory is found in the four models of public relations in Grunig and Hunt's *Managing Public Relations*.⁴² Grunig and Hunt's four models follow a Bernaysian periodization of PR history since the model begins with nineteenth century press agency followed by the public information model associated with corporate publicity of the early 1900s. The model concludes with two-way asymmetrical PR exemplified by Edward Bernays who also serves as the transitional figure to the modern two-way symmetrical public relations. During the 1990s through the 2000s Grunig along with his wife Larissa Grunig and scholar David Dozier began publishing the results of their Excellence studies.⁴³ These studies argued that two-way symmetrical public relations constituted excellent public relations. In Excellence Theory, two-way symmetrical PR is said to be the most ethical and professional form of PR practice. Rather than trying to persuade audiences, two-way symmetrical PR listens to publics and responds to them honestly and openly.⁴⁴

In response to the pervasiveness of Excellence Theory other PR scholars created alternative theories of public relations practices. These new theories of PR do not attempt to be grand theories of public relations. Instead these theories provide normative suggestions for PR tactics. Contingency theory introduced by Amanda Cancel, Glenn Cameron, Lynne Sallot, and Michael Mithook provides a theory of how PR practice actually works.⁴⁵ Designed as a counter theory to Excellence, contingency argues it represents how public relations really works according to practitioners. Arguing that public relations is highly situational, contingency theory states that public relations practice must take into account various situational elements to form an effective communications response. Similar to contingency, crisis management theory introduced

by Timothy Coombs provides a matrix for crisis communication responses which are conditional on certain factors that occur within a crisis.⁴⁶

While contingency and crisis responses theories in public relations do have some prevalence in the field, Excellence Theory remains a dominant force within public relations scholarship. In their 2003 analysis of public relations publications Lynne Sallot, Lisa Lyon, Carolina Acosta-Alzuru, and Karyn Jones found that Excellence Theory was by and large the most prevalent theory cited in academic journals.⁴⁷ However, Sallot et al. noted that Excellence Theory had waned in the early 2000s and that other theories, notably crisis and contingency, emerged in greater frequency in public relations journals.

The explanatory limitations of Excellence Theory in historical studies of PR has also been acknowledged by the Grunigs. In 2003 Larissa and James Grunig stated that the four models were not designed as a historical theory of development and that they did not intend to enter into debates over public relations history.⁴⁸ Scholars outside the U.S. have also rejected Excellence Theory as a workable theory for PR. David McKie (New Zealand)⁴⁹, Jackie L'Etang (UK)⁵⁰, Watson (UK)⁵¹, and Bentele (Germany)⁵² have all written public relations histories of European countries that do not embrace four model typologies and expressly reject the idea U.S. public relations history has influenced PR development in Europe.

Despite the creation of new theories of PR practice and the recognition of Excellence Theory's limitations, the influence of the Grunigs' work is significant. Elizabeth Toth argues Excellence Theory is the most important theoretical contribution in public relations scholarship.⁵³ Carl Botan and Vincent Hazleton's 2006 book *Public Relations Theory II*, designed to be a theoretical overview of public relations, discuss Excellence

Theory extensively.⁵⁴ Given Excellence Theory's dominance in public relations scholarship and in PR history, it is important for new scholarship to move beyond this theoretical approach. This dissertation examines U.S. public relations history outside of the lens of the four models and approaches PR history with the goal of providing a historical narrative of U.S. public relations without superimposing artificially created periodization.

IV. Research Questions

The primary research question in this dissertation is: how does public relations practice in the U.S. from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries lead to the modern form of public relations practiced in post-World War I America? This research question gave rise to other secondary questions that are addressed in this study: How did the popular American press portray public relations and public relations practices from 1770 to 1918? How did the popular American press describe the term "public relations" from 1770 to 1918? How did the popular American press use and describe the term "propaganda" from 1770 to 1918? Given the role of early public relations practice and current knowledge of public relations history three more research questions emerge: How did the popular American press describe early practitioners of public relations from 1770 to 1918? How did the popular American press describe press agents and press agency from 1770 to 1918? How did the popular American press describe publicity and information bureaus from 1770 to 1918?

Examining these questions using newspaper and magazine articles provides new and different insight into the perceptions and descriptions of public relations practice. Since the goal of this dissertation is to examine early foundational history of U.S. PR,

popular press is one of the few outlets that can attempt to explain the growth of this field. Because current histories do not provide a definitive explanation of the practice and practitioners of early PR, it is necessary to begin with popular press to illustrate how this practice emerged. The year 1770 is used as a starting point since it reflects the beginning of a separate American identity that coincided with the Stamp Act Crisis. The year 1918 is an endpoint for this research because it represents the beginning of public relations as a defined field since Bernays claims to have invented “counsel on public relations” immediately after World War I.⁵⁵ However, this dissertation does not attempt to produce a timeline or periodization of PR history. Creating these types of artificial boundaries reflect more of the researcher’s own judgment than the accurate depiction of history. This dissertation attempts to disprove the current periodization and timeline of older PR histories to illustrate how public relations grew in multiple sectors simultaneously.

The primary sources used in this dissertation are publications within the popular press. There is an inherent bias in using the press as a primary source. Digital press archives are not exhaustive of all of the press of an era. These databases focus on mainstream publications and often ignore radical or women’s press. This creates primary sources that may exclude the voices of non-elites who were part of public relations history. In addition, these sources are most likely written by reporters or writers who came into contact with public relations practitioners, they may view the field through a particular professional prism and only reveal public aspects of PR work that overlooks women and minority participation. As with any primary resource, the press is not always accurate and as a primary source may contain information that is historically inaccurate or untrue. However, using these types of sources is essential for this study. Current

histories of public relations do not document the history of the field during the eighteenth to early twentieth century. By using popular press descriptions, this dissertation creates a foundational framework identifying areas of practice, professionals' names, professional organizations, and specific campaigns currently unknown in U.S. public relations history upon which more specific analyses can later build.

The popular press is also an important source for American history. As Michael Schudson notes the popular press is a reflection of the times in which history occurred. It provides insight into the zeitgeist of an era in a way that no other primary source can. While the popular press has flaws as a primary source, its historical explanatory power stems from the insight it provides into the nature and characteristics of mass culture and society.⁵⁶

This dissertation is divided into two sections. The first section is an analysis of the terminology of PR. This falls into an examination of two key terms within early public relations history. The first is the term public relations. Researching the use of this term provides insight into how the term became appropriated to mean public relations practice. Moreover, analyzing this term in a longitudinal way also demonstrates the inaccuracy of current PR narratives that place the term as a post-World War I invention. The second major term explored is propaganda. This term is included within this research because Bernays argued that propaganda was a precursor term for what is now considered public relations and other histories followed his lead.⁵⁷ Understanding the nuance of the term propaganda within this historical context is important because it further illustrates how public relations conceptually was developed.

The second section of this dissertation concerns the definitions of PR practice. These chapters explore early public relations practitioners and their practices. This chapter is subdivided into three chapters on press agency, publicity agents, and publicity/information bureaus. These topics directly address the history of the practice of PR and provide insight into history of the PR profession.

II. Primary Source Databases

This dissertation analyzed 3,248 articles from the press, including newspaper articles, trade press articles, magazine articles, scholarly journal articles, advertisements, and pamphlets to create an understanding of U.S. public relations history. The representation of public relations is examined from a keyword search of online databases. The power of this type of research is that it can provide an overview of the perceptions and practices of public relations during a long timeframe. Unlike earlier PR histories that were not written when computerized archiving was possible, the keyword search allows for a description of the field of early PR that includes popular conceptions of the field over a span of 148 years. These keyword searches began with those terms used in PR historical scholarship, particularly the work of Cutlip.⁵⁸ However, this study was careful not to superimpose twenty-first century terminology of public relations onto an earlier understanding of the field. Other terms emerged through this research such as publicity agent, information bureau, and publicity man. Databases used in this dissertation are:

- a. Accessible Archives: This is a database that examines eighteenth and nineteenth century newspapers of varying degrees of circulation. It includes smaller circulating papers from the early nineteenth century as

well as newspapers with slightly larger circulations such as the *Charleston Mercury* and *New York Herald*.

- b. America's Historical Newspapers: This is a database from 1690 to 1928 that includes newspapers in digital form. These newspapers range in circulation smaller publications to larger publications.
- c. American Periodical Series: This database contains full archived materials from magazines from 1740 to 1900. Since magazines were a popular form of reading in the nineteenth century, this database is essential to include. This database includes popular magazines with high circulations as well as smaller niche publications for professions including religious publications, trade publications, and regional magazines.
- d. Historical Newspapers Online (ProQuest): This database contains keyword searchable newspapers with hyperlink to article from the *Atlanta Constitution* (1868-1945); *Christian Science Monitor* (1908-1999); *New York Times* (1851-2009); *Wall Street Journal* (1889-1995); and *Washington Post* (1877-1996).
- e. JSTOR: This database contains keyword searchable academic articles from hundreds of disciplines. The articles date from the nineteenth century to present. Although normally used as a secondary source, this dissertation uses JSTOR articles from nineteenth century education journals.
- f. Wall Street Journal Historical Full Text: This database provides articles from the *Wall Street Journal* from 1889-1991. The articles currently in

this database can also be found in ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online.

This dissertation used this database only for the years that ProQuest did not include *Wall Street Journal* in its database.

III. Organization of Chapters and Methodology

a. Chapter Two: Historiography of U.S. Public Relations

This chapter provides the justification for investigating and presenting a new historical narrative of U.S. public relations history. An overview of current scholarship on public relations history with particular attention paid to the significance of works by Bernays, Cutlip, and Grunig and Hunt.⁵⁹ Issues concerning the misperceptions and inaccuracies of PR history are discussed, specifically arguing that current theories of public relations history are too corporate focused, support an evolutionary development of PR, and unnecessarily denigrate early PR practice.

b. Chapters Three and Four: Public Relations as a Term 1774 to 1918

This exploration of public relations as a term in the popular press sheds new light on understandings of the genesis of public relations. As mentioned, Edward Bernays claimed he invented the phrase “counsel on public relations” post-World War I to combat the negative reputation of propaganda.⁶⁰ This created a widely held misperception that Bernays invented public relations as a term. No scholar has explored the root of the term public relations in the United States. Using ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online, American Periodical Series, JSTOR, America’s Historical Newspapers, and Accessible Archives this study searched the term “public relations*.” From this search 714 articles were produced and analyzed in this dissertation. The first article was from 1774 and the last from 1918. No articles were excluded except JSTOR publications from British

journals. These remaining articles were read and categorized by theme: public relations of the individual, religion, politics, business, professional organizations, and education. Because public relations yielded so many articles, the analysis of this term was divided into two chapters. Chapter three analyzes 551 articles that focus on individuals, religion, and politics since those were mainly associated with public relations in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Chapter four examines 163 articles that discuss public relations in terms of business, professional organizations, and education. These themes were grouped together because they occur more in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This analysis of “public relations” shows there were concepts of PR as relationship management as early as the 1820s. This era also shows that the growth of public relations as a term had a strong connection with politics and later the growth of public-owned utility companies. This is counter to what public relations historiography currently states as the genesis of public relations.

c. Chapter Five: Propaganda’s Meaning in the U.S. Popular Press 1810 to 1918

Although tracing the term “propaganda” in the popular press is a large task, it is necessary for this dissertation. Bernays’s claim that public relations was coined as a phrase to combat negative stereotypes associated with the term propaganda post-World War I.⁶¹ This dissertation keyword searched the term “propaganda” in American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online. Given that an initial search of propaganda from 1770 to 1918 yielded over 50,000 articles, a sample method was used to reduce the article count to a manageable sample. This sample looked at only one month for each year between 1770 and 1918. The months were chronologically assigned to each year so all months would be represented. This produced a month-year

association as follows: 1770-January, 1771-February, 1772-March, 1773-April and so forth. To further reduce the sample size, each month's articles were organized chronologically and every fifth article was used for the sample. For instance if July 1800 had 14 articles, the fifth and tenth article for that month would be included in the sample. If a month had less than five articles, the article closest to the fifth was analyzed. This sampling method was used for both American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online. This produced a sample of 450 articles analyzed in this study. The first article appeared in 1810 and the last article was published in 1918. All 450 articles were read and categorized by the following themes: religious use of propaganda, political use of propaganda, and non-profit/civic groups' use of propaganda. These articles show propaganda was largely used in a negative context prior to World War I and was largely associated with government dissidents, socialist movements, and foreign communications. Particular attention was paid the association of the term propaganda with foreign governments and subversive movements.

d. Chapter Six: U.S. Press Agents and Press Agency 1857 to 1918

Press agency is an important term to analyze within the popular press because there are so many misconceptions about the practice of press agents. Moreover, theoretically press agency is important because scholars like Grunig and Hunt as well as Cutlip associate it exclusively with early, unethical, and crude PR practice.⁶² The term "press agent*" was used to search American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online from 1770 to 1918. An initial search for "press agent*" from 1800 to 1899 was conducted in 2010 to 2011 in American Periodical Series, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online and Wall Street Journal Historical Full Text and was included in a

study of nineteenth century press agency.⁶³ This search resulted in over 500 articles.⁶⁴ Each article from that search was used in this analysis.

In 2013 the term “press agent*” was searched from 1900 to 1918 in American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers online. All articles that mentioned “publicity agent*” American Periodical Series were used in this study. Since ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online produced over 4,000 articles from 1900 to 1918 a sample of articles from ProQuest were used for manageability. This sampling method used the same methods as the search for propaganda with each year assigned a month with every fifth article in that month used. For instance: 1900-January, 1901-February, 1902-March and so forth. Wall Street Journal Historical Full Text was not used for the years 1900 to 1918 since ProQuest included that newspaper in its database at the time the search was conducted. No articles were found for “press agent*” in the years 1770 to 1799 in either American Periodical Series or ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online.

This search of “press agent*” in American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers from 1900 to 1918 produced over 700 articles, all of which were used in this study. The overall sample from 1700 to 1918 from American Periodical Series and ProQuest for “press agent*” was 1,206 articles. The first article appeared in 1857 and the last in 1918. All articles from this final sample were used in this study. The articles were read and organized according to the following themes: general descriptions of press agents, entertainment press agents, political press agents, and business press agents. This analysis of the press agents shows that tactics used by press agents were actually related to many modern concepts of PR. Additionally, this chapter

shows how political press agents preceded and then coexisted with corporate press agency.

e. Chapter Seven: Publicity Agents 1902-1918

Current research suggests that press agents led to the creation of public relations practitioners. However, as Russell and Bishop suggest, there possibly is an intermediary profession between press agency and corporate PR counsel.⁶⁵ This intermediary was the publicity agent, sometimes referred to as publicity man or men. The “publicity agent” was a turn of the twentieth century corporate professional who made a transition from entertainment PR to corporate communications. These men serve as a hybrid example of the influence of entertainment on corporate public relations. This dissertation keyword searched “publicity agent,” “publicity man,” and “publicity men” in ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online, American Periodical Series, and American Historical Newspapers. All articles from American Periodical Series and America’s Historical Newspapers generated from “publicity agent,” “publicity man,” and “publicity men” were used in this study. Because ProQuest Historical Newspapers produced approximately 750 articles for the three search terms, a sample was used to reduce the amount of articles to a manageable size. This was accomplished by placing results of each search term in chronological order with every fifth article included for analysis.

The initial result from all databases was 137 articles for publicity agent, 129 articles for publicity man, and 58 articles for publicity men. After removing unusable articles an overall sample was reduced to a total 277 articles. All 277 articles in the sample were used and organized according to theme. The first article in this sample was published in 1902 and the last in 1918. The themes were: publicity agents’ relationship

with advertiser and newspapers, corporate publicity men, publicity agents in civic and non-profit organizations, and political publicity agents. Publicity agents show the transition between press agency and corporate public relations practice. These publicity men and agents worked in corporations and were often identified as a professional, salaried profession.

f. Chapter Eight: Publicity and Information Bureaus 1891 to 1918

A corollary of publicity agents is the publicity bureau and information bureau that appeared in the early twentieth century. Current scholarship does not address their representation in the press. This chapter contained sources from a keyword search for “information bureau” and “publicity bureau” in American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online. For the term “publicity bureau” every article from American Periodical Series was used. Since ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online produced so many articles for “publicity bureau” a sample was used. This sample ordered all of the articles in chronological order and then pulled every fifth article from each database for analysis. This produced a total of 393 articles for “publicity bureau.” For the term “information bureau” samples were taken from both American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online. In both databases the articles were chronologically ordered and every fifth article was included in the sample. This sample for “information bureau” produced a total of 246 articles from both databases. A total 601 articles were included for analysis in this chapter and organized thematically. The first article was published in 1891 and the last in 1918. This chapter examines publicity and information bureaus’ relationship to advertising as well as use in government, politics, corporations, and civic clubs. These publicity and information bureaus show that early

public relations practice had a keen awareness of public opinion and recognized the need for public support. These bureaus sought to accomplish this by reaching out to the press and public.

g. Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The final chapter revises the narrative of early PR history and discusses the theoretical implications of this revision. Specifically this chapter addresses four major implications that result from this study: the role grassroots and politics played in creation of modern PR, the inaccuracy of current histories' depiction of early PR practice, how proto versus professional PR dichotomy is historically unsupportable, and how U.S. public relations development is not evolutionary. This chapter also provides an analysis of the types of future research that should be done in light of this new understanding and periodization of U.S. public relations history. This chapter calls for more research to be conducted in early associations between advertising and public relations, a better understanding of grassroots PR, and more analysis of the influence political PR had on corporate public relations.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF U.S. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations history is subject to many misperceptions. The current history of PR states that prior to World War I a crude and unethical version of public relations known as press agency existed within entertainment. According to this history, press agency used bribery, false stories, and manipulation of the public to achieve its publicity goals. During the turn of the twentieth century businesses began to practice a more ethical form of public relations which was separate from press agency. Men like Ivy Lee used business public relations to promote large corporate interests in America. Lee invented the first press release and was one of the first PR practitioners. During World War I the Committee for Public Information (CPI), better known as the Creel Committee, created a more sophisticated technique for public relations practice that used psychological communication. After World War I Edward Bernays, a member of CPI, invented the term “counsel on public relations” and formalized public relations practice as a stand-alone profession. Bernays invented this term and new profession because he saw a need for publicity in post-war America, and because terms like propaganda had become exclusively associated with Germans during World War I.

This neat history is commonly retold in PR textbooks and has become an accepted fact in much academic research.⁶⁶ Even though this version of PR history is often told it presents many historical issues because it focuses too much on single “great” individuals, places PR as a twentieth century invention, denigrates press agency, and embraces a corporate narrative. In short this history is not only incomplete, it is simply wrong.

The impact of this incorrect PR history goes beyond historical scholarship and affects public relations research as a whole. Public relations history and theory are intertwined in a way that is unusual for a professional discipline. Specifically, the impact of history on PR theory revolves around early development of PR. The theory of public relations development directly impacts how public relations scholars define the field and profession, practice, and academic discipline. However, within PR historiography there are many divergent views of the development of public relations. Additionally many of the narratives within public relations history have an underlying PR purpose. Lamme and Russell argue that public relations historiography has a direct impact on what is considered PR practice, ethics, and strategy.⁶⁷ They argue that within public relations history there is a pattern of excluding major historical contributions to the field's development. This serves to promote an effort to "spin" PR history to serve certain personal, professional, and scholarly agendas.⁶⁸

Many histories of U.S. public relations development support the idea that public relations is an evolving, corporate, and professionalized practice shaped by seminal figures within the United States.⁶⁹ Most histories ignore non-corporate influences such as politics, entertainment and nonprofit PR; they eliminate the voice of non-privileged groups' contributions to the field, especially women; and they promote the idea that "true" public relations can only be practiced by self-identified PR professional working within the corporate sphere.⁷⁰ By the late 1990s a new public relations historical narrative emerged that reconsiders American PR development that is more inclusive of all the contributions that helped shape modern PR practice but the older narrative is still

pervasive.⁷¹ It is evident that much is left out of PR history, and that to date there remain many aspects of early American PR development that are relatively unknown to scholars.

Current historiography of public relations has several theoretical issues that inhibit a more inclusive and accurate PR history. These include: the view that there is a linear development of public relations practice the historical focus on PR's innovative "great men," the dominant narrative that PR history is corporate-based, and the idea that public relations history can be bifurcated into a proto versus professional PR categorization. All of these theoretical assumptions have the underlying issue of creating a historical narrative that public relations is a legitimate, professionalized practice that receives both recognition and importance within a capitalist, professionalized, and industrial society. Understanding these historiographical issues is essential for scholars to move forward and produce a more accurate history of U.S. public relations development and practice.

I. PR as a Linear Evolution

Scholars identify the linear development of public relations history as its most pervasive narrative.⁷² This narrative argues that PR is a continually evolving practice that increasingly has become more ethical, respected, professionalized, and technically sophisticated. However, this narrative creates many theoretical problems because it ignores large segments of important PR history.

A. Description of Linear Public Relations

The linear approach to public relations history goes back farther than the academic study of the field and can be traced to Edward Bernays. As the self-proclaimed father of modern public relations, Bernays advocated that public relations had continually evolved into modern professional practice.⁷³ According to Bernays, public relations had roots

within the early persuasive techniques of the eighteenth century American revolutionaries. However, he argued that the press agency used by entertainment troupes during the latter nineteenth century served as a crude forerunner of modern PR practice,⁷⁴ using unethical tactics, such as payoffs and bribes, for positive promotional coverage of their events. Typically associated with P.T. Barnum, press agency was viewed as a crude precursor to modern public relations practice. Rooted in entertainment, press agents were also associated with unprofessional and low-brow professional stature.

Karla Gower and later Peggy Hoy, Oliver Raaz, and Stefan Wehmeir wrote that this narrative served Bernays's goal of being a major figure within the development of public relations. In showing that public relations practice began with such lowly status, Bernays styled himself as an innovator of the field. This allowed him to inaccurately portray himself as the true creator of modern public relations.⁷⁵ His narrative was that after WWI following his experiences with the pseudo-propagandistic Committee on Public Information (CPI), better known as the Creel Committee, he implemented new forms of psychological research to professionalize the field of PR and make it more research oriented. Bernays supported his claim that he was a major figure within public relations by his claim he invented the term "counsel on public relations" soon after leaving the CPI.⁷⁶ Bernays' influence on modern concepts of public relations is so prevalent that Meg Lamme and Burton St. John found that many contemporary professional conceptions of public relations are rooted in Bernays' ideas articulated in the 1920s.⁷⁷

This narrative of linear public relations history had great influence within later scholarship on PR. Eric Goldman, a Princeton historian of American politics, wrote in 1948 (four years before Bernays published his influential book *Public Relations*) of three

major flashpoints in PR development beginning with press agency and ending with Bernays creating modern public relations practice.⁷⁸ Other scholars situated this early public relations development into a narrative of progressive evolution. In his book *Public Relations History*, Scott Cutlip, a major figure in PR education and scholarship, wrote of early public relations practice as giving way to a series of increasingly professionalized practices.⁷⁹ While acknowledging a more inclusive PR history than many scholars (Cutlip traced PR's roots to the 17th century) he continued the narrative that press agency was improved upon by later twentieth century PR practitioners. Cutlip pointed to men like Ivy Lee as a seminal transformative figure in PR development, but he also acknowledged Bernays as having a significant impact on the field. Even scholars outside of the public relations academy pointed to an evolution of PR practice.⁸⁰

This narrative gained a wider audience with the second edition of Cutlip and Center's 1958 textbook *Effective Public Relations*, a longstanding classic within undergraduate PR education.⁸¹ In fact, Hoy et al.'s evaluation of PR textbooks shows that this progressive narrative of public relations history, particularly the discussion of James Grunig and Todd Hunt's four models of public relations, was a dominant theme.⁸² Even outside of the public relations academy this progressive narrative has taken hold. Richard Tedlow wrote of professional PR's rise from press agency in his chapter "Up from Press Agency" in his book *Keeping the Corporate Image*.⁸³

Perhaps the most influential academic work advocating evolutionary PR history is James Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations.⁸⁴ While developed in a series of works their 1984 textbook *Managing Public Relations* created a framework that explains the development of public relations management by delineating a history of PR

that falls into four distinct historical categories: press agency, information model, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical.⁸⁵ These models represent particular types of PR practices. Each practice has a natural ethical and professionalized progression which leads to two-way symmetrical public relations representing the best public relations practice. This organizational model of public relations development argues that two-way symmetrical public relations is the best PR practice since it remedies the unethical and unprofessional practices found in PR history. Because the four models provide a periodization for PR history they have served as an inaccurate historical model for PR history.⁸⁶ These four models represent a rigid periodization of public relations practice that associates historical eras with seminal figures within public relations practice. Press agency in particular serves as a catch-all term for pre-twentieth century public relations. Associated with P.T. Barnum, Grunig and Hunt described it as an unprofessional and unethical PR practice that uses misinformation and payoffs to garner positive, but inaccurate, media attention. The public information model serves as the first corporate public relations practice, associated with Ivy Lee. Grunig associates this practice with an exclusively positive narrative that does not acknowledge negative aspects or actions of an organization.⁸⁷ Two-way symmetrical public relations is associated with Bernays and represents a PR practice post-WWI that incorporates research to understand publics and their perceptions. The ultimate PR practice, two-way symmetrical, represents for Grunig the pinnacle of PR practice because it bases PR practice on relationships and understanding publics without persuading them.⁸⁸ The four models are criticized by McKie and Munshi for lacking any serious historical

foundation.⁸⁹ Grunig and Grunig tacitly admit this, stating that the four model categorization was not meant to engage in a historical periodization of public relations.⁹⁰

Scholars such as Toth and Botan and Hazelton cite Excellence Theory as a major theoretical force within PR.⁹¹ Moreover Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig and Toth argue that Excellence is a truly a grand theory of PR practice that has great explanatory power.⁹² This is reflected in PR scholarship Sallot et al. found Excellence as a dominant theoretical paradigm in major public relations publications.⁹³ Nonetheless, Grunig and Hunt's four models advocate for a certain type of public relations history that is evolutionary and progressive.⁹⁴ It supports claims made by Bernays that he is the pivotal figure within PR history and advocates that within the history of public relations practice the field has become more sophisticated, professionalized, and ethical over time.⁹⁵ These models also suggest that PR history can be periodized into clear-cut eras of development. Lamme and Russell, criticize any periodization of PR history because it places artificial parameters on the history of the field and suggests an evolutionary development of the field. Four model periodization is particularly problematic because it not only uses artificial dates in PR history, but lacks any historical understanding of the type of PR practice that occurred in these periods. This type of historical narrative has major implications for other theories of public relations practice and PR historiography.

B. Linear PR's Effect on Scholarship

The narrative of progressive evolutionary public relations practice has major effects for the scholarship of PR development. The idea that public relations history became more sophisticated over time supports the idea that PR's creation followed the development of the press. This narrative places public relations within a media context,

which argues that PR is a media relations practice. Genevieve McBride explains that this type of narrative of PR development suggests an inherent inferiority for public relations practice compared to the media. This tie between journalism and public relations supports an ethical narrative that supports the idea of public relations' ethics being influenced by the increased ethical practices of journalism.⁹⁶

Linear public relations also suggests that there are certain pivotal points within PR history in which men like Bernays were harbingers of great professional change within the field. This change in the field also suggests a rigid historical framework for PR development that does not take into account cross-over between PR practices, the nuanced influence of multiple forms of PR practices, and the contribution of many unknowns within the early public relations field. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of linear public relations history is that it serves an agenda of making PR a continually better practice. Because of its focus on how PR is increasingly professionalized, it disallows narratives within PR development that show abuses or unflattering public relations practice. This excludes major historical narratives within PR history of unethical and embarrassing uses of public relations such as the use of public relations within the Nazi era, the Red Scare of the 1950s, xenophobic movements in the U.S., nationalist political movements, and as a method of psychological warfare. Inclusions of these negative PR uses are important in the development of public relations, but because they do not fit within a narrative of increased professional practice they are removed from most public relations histories. Similarly the positives of PR's early past are also excluded. Public relations' role in increased political agency, the organization of social

movements, and its usefulness in maintaining a more informed American society are rarely included in PR history.⁹⁷

Another theoretical implication of progressive public relations history is that it influences scholars' perceptions about what constitutes public relations. Using a progressive historical paradigm, practices associated with press agency, entertainment PR, and even politics are excluded from definitions of PR practice. This is reflected in scholarship of public relations which focuses on best practices within the narrow confines of Excellence Theory. Moreover, the linear evolution suggests that an important aspect of public relations practice is increased professionalization. The model is also preoccupied with a professionalized PR practice which influences such theories as Excellence Theory, contingency theory, and power relationships.⁹⁸ This ideal of professionalized and ethically optimal PR practice skews the scholarship of PR. By focusing on a linear development of the field, PR scholarship frames the field of public relations practice into a dichotomy of "good" and "bad" PR practices. These "good" practices are reflected in progressively evolved dialogic public relations while "bad" practices are represented by older, more persuasive PR communication.

II. PR as Developed by Great Men

Related to linear development of public relations practice is the role of great figures shaping the professional field. These "heroes" of public relations suggest a particularized narrative that privileges their work and contributions to PR while ignoring equally, if not more, significant contributions of lesser known individuals and groups. By focusing on these men's contribution to PR history, and subsequently the practice of PR, public relations becomes a reflection of their practices and accomplishments.

A. PR History as a Story of Great Men

Most professional histories involve an early historical approach that privileges the role of great men in developing the field. Focusing on the actions and lives of few elites represents a mythmaking process which serves certain political and agenda goals, such as professionalization of the field.⁹⁹ Public relations history is no exception to this convention. However, what makes the “great man” histories of public relations so problematic is that those men selected in this narrative represent a small area of public relations practice. Including their personal histories as reflective of the entire history of PR not only supports the linear development of the field discussed above, but also limits the definition of public relations to practices that are represented by the men’s careers. Other voices within the public relations narrative are excluded, particularly those of women, and public relations as a defined field becomes recognized as a practice that is only conducted by self-identified PR practitioners. This not only skews PR history, but it limits theoretical development by forcing scholars to focus on niche areas of PR practice.

The “great man” narrative of public relations begins with the writings of Edward Bernays and his self-proclaimed creation of public relations practice. Bernays wrote many influential books on public relations practice including *Crystallizing Public Opinion* published in 1923 and *Propaganda* in 1928, and *The Engineering of Consent* in 1955.¹⁰⁰ However, Bernays’s writing went beyond public relations strategy. His later books *Public Relations* (1952) and *biography of an idea* (1965) argue that he served as the seminal figure within the development of public relations.¹⁰¹ Later works reiterate this idea. Grunig and Hunt cite Bernays as a transitional figure within public relations

practice bridging the gap between two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical public relations.¹⁰²

Other seminal figures are mentioned within the history of PR development. Ray Hiebert's biography of Ivy Lee argues that Lee helped frame modern public relations practice.¹⁰³ Specifically Lee's role in developing image restoration as a PR practice for figures such as John D. Rockefeller and his placement as high-level corporate advisor are mentioned as aspirational qualities for public relations. Cutlip and Center's textbook *Effective Public Relations* and later Cutlip's *The Unseen Power* cite Lee as a transformational figure within PR practice who professionalized the field and brought PR to the forefront of corporate practice.¹⁰⁴ This role of Lee is reiterated by Grunig and Hunt, who place Lee as the quintessential figure of information model public relations.¹⁰⁵

Other figures are portrayed in a similar "great man" narrative. John Miller wrote that Samuel Adams played a large role within early public relations practice.¹⁰⁶ Streitmatter argued that President Theodore Roosevelt was a seminal figure in the development of modern political public relations.¹⁰⁷ Bernays and later Cutlip point to Andrew Jackson's advisor Amos Kendall as a pivotal figure in developing press secretaries for presidential communication.¹⁰⁸ P.T. Barnum is portrayed as a major contributor to PR practice with Grunig and Hunt presenting him as emblematic of press agency.¹⁰⁹ Cutlip cites Barnum as the creator of many press agency tactics and credits Barnum with using press agents innovatively in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ Other figures such as the lesser known Westinghouse in-house counsel E.H. Heinrichs are profiled as important men in developing the practice of modern public relations.¹¹¹ Even when women's roles within PR are included, they too take on the "great man" (or woman) narrative. Susan Henry's

study of Doris Fleishman, Ruth Hale, and Jane Grant illustrates this same approach to PR history by including women's voices through exploring a famous PR figure's life.¹¹² However, this narrative has recently been questioned by Heather Yaxley who argues early public relations practitioners did not come from auspicious beginnings but rather fell into practice by happenstance.¹¹³ This questions the current historical narrative in which public relations creation was the deliberate brainchild of innovative men.

B. Great Man Influence on Public Relations Theory

The theoretical impact of these "great man" and sometimes "great women" narratives of public relations history is threefold. First, by pointing to seminal figures as the key developers of public relations history, scholars are ignoring the contributions of lesser-known practitioners. Moreover, by pointing to individuals as developers of PR practice, the theory ignores the nuanced development of the field. Focusing on historical figures as developers of PR ignores that reality and wrongly changes the narrative of PR history of one of complexity to one of individual power. These great men and women histories also provide an easy and false periodization of the field of PR. By focusing on a few individuals' contributions, public relations history becomes periodized by the events and personal accomplishments of these men's lives. For instance, Barnum is cited as essential to press agency. His death in 1891 roughly coincides with the narrative that PR became more corporatized and professional in late nineteenth century. In focusing on these individuals as developers of practice, PR history becomes one that reflects their lives and achievements rather than the actual growth of the field.¹¹⁴

The second theoretical issue with a great person historical narrative is that public relations development becomes an American story that is superimposed on other nations.

All of these great men and great woman of public relations were born or practiced in the United States. Their contribution to the field of public relations was largely accomplished in the United States. Therefore the public relations narrative becomes one in which PR is an American invention and practice whose model of development was exported to Western Europe and other non-Western nations. This U.S. centric focus of public relations history is problematic because it does not take into account cultural developments of public relations in other countries. As Jacquie L'Etang points out, Great Britain, culturally the most similar country to the United States, has a different and unique development of public relations practice that is unlike the one in America.¹¹⁵

This American narrative of public relations practice is tangentially reiterated in other non-historical theories of PR. Universal public relations models, such as Excellence Theory, are touted as theoretical approaches that span culture and nationality.¹¹⁶ Universal public relations theories that have normative practice suggestions are rooted in the idea that public relations is a universal practice. The idea that there is universal practice of PR is directly related to the assumption that public relations as a field is exported from the U.S. to other nations. This idea is based on the premise the U.S. invented the one and only type of public relations practice then exported that concept abroad. Having a “great man” history made of up of American practitioners allows this universalistic narrative to be created.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, a “great man” narrative of PR history places the careers and practices of these figures as a form of aspirational PR. Within the context of power relations, public relations scholarship looks to men like Lee as examples of practitioners who have a seat at the proverbial management table. Related to this

aspirational quality of these men's practices, specifically that of Bernays and Lee, is the idea that true public relations practice is corporate and professionally oriented. In looking at the individuals listed as great men of public relations, all of them were practitioners who worked on behalf of for-profit organizations. This type of narrative is replicated in other public relations theories that look at public relations as an exclusively corporate outgrowth. Scholars of these corporate approaches point to the historical record of men like Bernays and Lee as proof that PR as a profession began in the corporate sphere. As a result, many theories of PR, such as Excellence, Contingency, and power management, examine public relations almost exclusively in the environment of corporations.¹¹⁷

III. PR as Corporatist Narrative

As the "great man" narrative of PR history shows, corporate narratives are powerful within PR history. While corporate PR is a worthy field of historical and practical inquiry, it is the primary type of PR explored within academic circles. This should come as no surprise given PR history's preoccupation with exploring corporate history at the expense of other forms of public relations practice.

A. Corporate Narrative Explained

Understanding why there is a corporate narrative within PR is rooted in public relations' own preoccupation with professional legitimacy. Karen Miller, now Russell, pointed out that within public relations history the corporate narrative dominates, which severely limits the inclusion of non-corporate contributions to public relations practice.¹¹⁸ She argued that corporate narratives within public relations history excluded unprivileged historical voices, notably those of women, and ignored other forms of public relations

practice, such as social movements. According to Miller's analysis of public relations scholarship,¹¹⁹ corporate narratives within public relations historiography were rooted in corporate development histories written by Alfred Chandler and later Richard Tedlow.¹²⁰

Chandler's corporate development theories are particularly salient to those public relations scholars who wish to adhere to the linear and evolutionary development of PR.¹²¹ Writing about the development of early corporations in the late nineteenth century, Chandler argued that the mixture of communications technologies and management structures allowed corporations to emerge in the U.S.¹²² Specifically the corporate structure which introduced a militaristic line and column formation of middle management created an environment in which public relations practitioners entered the corporate sphere. Later, as Tedlow points out, public relations practices within corporate structures were important to corporate survival.¹²³ As the nineteenth century progressed into the twentieth century the relationship between consumer and corporation replaced the older, tighter bonds of consumers and artisanal businesses. Public relations allowed for a corporation to generate goodwill with individual consumers, foster growth in consumption in goods, and stave off populist attacks on corporate growth.¹²⁴ This theory has been attacked for various historical inaccuracies. Phillip Scranton points out that Chandler's assertion of the vastness of corporate growth is wildly overstated.¹²⁵ Richard John, a doctoral student of Chandler, argues that large corporations were not as stable and professional as Chandler suggests.¹²⁶ Instead of corporations being dominated by middle management, John argues market speculators controlled companies and recklessly traded them in speculative markets.¹²⁷ Richard White, a scholar of railroad development, pointed out that railroads, a seminal corporate business according to Chandler, used

communications to foster relationships with government officials instead of publics.¹²⁸

These relationships were used to facilitate favorable railroad legislation and regulation through graft, bribes, and other unethical means.¹²⁹ Business historian Alan Raucher reiterated the corporate influence in PR in his 1968 book exploring early uses of publicity of public utility companies. His argument was these public utility companies used PR to promote corporate interests within local communities that gave virtual utility monopolies to large corporations beginning in 1900.¹³⁰

Despite the critique of Chandlerian corporate development, Chandler's theories remain appealing to public relations scholars, partly because Chandler's work supports the positive evolutionary narrative of public relations, but primarily because Chandlerian theory provides legitimacy for PR. Instead of rooting itself in press agency tactics of Barnum, Chandler's theory allows public relations to point to corporate development within America as its professional genesis. This places public relations is a much more positive and powerful narrative of American economic history. It allows public relations to be a part of the larger economic narrative of American corporate power, success, and global domination. Since public relations has struggled to find its own identity and devotes much scholarly literature on justifying its own existence, this Chandlerian narrative provides a historical legitimacy to the field.¹³¹

This historical narrative of corporatist history is reflected in many major historical works of the field. Ivy Lee is associated with his work for the Rockefeller family and the Standard Oil Company.¹³² Bernays begins his own major contribution to the field with his work for cigarette companies in his famous *Torches of Freedom* for Lucky Strikes and his later involvement in public relations was closely connected to major American

corporations.¹³³ Histories of public relations including Cutlip's analysis of American PR agencies within the twentieth century present the close tie between PR and corporate America.¹³⁴ Linda Hon and Tim Coombs and Sherry Holladay recognized this corporate narrative in public relations history, arguing that corporate PR history ignores major social movement PR such as that in the Civil Rights Era. Nonetheless, public relations histories still focus on corporate PR.¹³⁵

The corporate narrative is not without critics. Marvin Olasky, who takes a libertarian view toward capitalist influence on PR history, argued that ethical legitimacy was not provided to public relations by corporate practice.¹³⁶ Instead, he argued, corporate practice and increased professionalized public relations were highly manipulative in light of other non-corporate PR practices. Roland Marchand provides a different perspective on the creation of corporate public relations.¹³⁷ According to Marchand corporations during the 1890s acted in such an offensive manner to American society that by the 1920s corporations were reviled. Corporate public relations was created to cultivate relationships between the public and corporations so companies would be seen as being socially responsible, caring, and humanized. This theme is reiterated by Stoker and Rawlins who argued publicity from the 1890s to 1930s became honed by public relations professionals who needed to use strategic publicity to assist corporations rehabilitate their image.¹³⁸ Scholars such as Linda Hon, Meg Lamme and Karen Russell present new public relations histories within the U.S. that criticize and challenge the corporate narrative by illustrating the use of public relations outside of the corporate context and outside the professionalized PR practitioner.¹³⁹ Unlike the corporate histories of PR, these narratives include social movements, personal PR, and

the voices of women. Within international circles L'Etang argued that corporate narratives of public relations practice do not apply to British development of public relations.¹⁴⁰ This further illustrates the weakness of corporate narratives of PR development, particularly in the international context.

B. Corporate Narrative Influence on PR Theory

Despite such criticisms of corporate public relations history, the idea of PR as a corporate practice still dominates scholarship. Theoretically this is extremely important to the creation and application of modern public relations theories of practice. First, non-historical theories reflect a corporate bias. Theories such as Excellence, contingency, Crisis, relationship PR, and leadership studies are almost exclusively applied to in-house public relations corporate counsel or to PR agency practice working on corporate accounts.¹⁴¹ For these theories, the organizational relationship with publics or the internal dynamic of organizations exclusively refer to corporations or agencies that have corporate clients.¹⁴²

In addition to this corporate focus on public relations, many public relations theories focus on the creation of a professionalized PR practice within a context of corporate respectability. Excellence Theory in particular calls for a more professionalized PR practice in which research, accreditation, and enforced ethical standards are used to gain respectability for the profession.¹⁴³ Likewise, Bruce Berger and Bryan Reber's analysis of public relations power (and the lack thereof) within organizations cites professionalization as a key to gaining managerial access.¹⁴⁴ All suggest that public relations as a practice needs to seek out a level of professionalization to gain legitimacy, suggesting that corporate recognition is what the field seeks and needs to gain a positive

identity. Moreover, theories such as Excellence or power relations make gaining managerial access as key to public relations practice.¹⁴⁵ This again suggests that public relations operates within a corporate context and serves corporate clients who look at managerial knowledge, business training, and corporate know-how as net positive skills to gain managerial access and position. Even within crisis communications, the Coombs's models are preoccupied with organizational accountability and strategy to gain salience with publics.¹⁴⁶ These strategies are designed to facilitate further relationships with organizations post-crisis, this again suggesting that public relations operates within a corporate paradigm and serves the needs of businesses in their customer relations.

This preoccupation with corporations in PR theory implicitly suggests that PR practice is corporate communications. Moreover, this corporate narrative limits the identification of public relations practitioners to those who are self-identified public relations men or women who work within communication departments or PR firms. This ignores the larger context in which public relations is practiced within social movements, politics, and other non-profit industries. There the identification of public relations may be more nuanced and the practitioner may wear many non-PR hats. However, since PR history predominantly focuses on corporate public relations, there is little theoretical justification for including these non-corporate practices into academic scholarship. This results in a skewed depiction of what PR actually is and suggests that there is a line between formal public relations practice and other recognizable forms of PR.¹⁴⁷ This is not to suggest all public relations literature focuses on corporate PR. In the past decade there have been studies that include non-corporate analysis of public relations in activist

organizations, non-profits, and in government.¹⁴⁸ However, while these studies do exist, the narrative of PR development is rooted in a corporate genesis.

IV. Proto vs. “Real” Public Relations

In the current literature, corporate public relations and non-corporate public relations is artificially divided into two groups—PR and proto-PR or antecedents.¹⁴⁹ This division is important because it relegates proto-PR to a secondary status within PR scholarship. It assumes that proto-PR practices are merely related to and sometimes an influence on “real” public relations practice. This causes the field of public relations research and practice to be less inclusive and more myopic in its view of what PR is and how it works within society.

A. Public Relations and Proto-Public Relations

The idea that there is a proto-public relations practice dates back to the beginnings of public relations scholarship. Essentially this argument for a proto-PR category is predicated on the idea that public relations is a stand-alone profession that is identifiable, ethically regulated, and professionally organized.¹⁵⁰ Proto-PR does not fall into this professionalized practice because it is an earlier use of communication techniques that were later incorporated into professional PR practice. The concept of proto-PR suggests that true public relations practice only began when identifiable professional practitioners emerged, again lending credence to linear evolution of the PR field and to the corporatized narrative of PR history.

Cutlip embraces the idea of proto-PR by referring to U.S. public relations from the 17th to twentieth century as antecedents to modern public relations. Günter Bentele, a scholar of German PR history, also supports the idea of proto-public relations in his

stratification model of PR development. Bentele argues have great popularity among European PR historians. Part of his absence in American literature is due to the fact that few of his publications are in English and are largely published in German or European journals. However, Bentele's arguments for PR theory and historical development are applicable to U.S. PR history. Bentele argues for the use of stratification theory to explain the evolution of public relations because it does not use clearly demarcated forms of PR. The stratification model acknowledges the contribution of older public relations practices on modern PR. Although Bentele supports the idea of a professionalized and proto public relations dichotomy, stratification model of public relations presents a more inclusive historical narrative of public relations. Used throughout natural sciences, Bentele's stratification model represents a palimpsest view of evolution in which older influences are always present despite current realities. As a formal theory stratification serves as the antithesis of four models of public relations because the historical demarcations between forms of practice are non-existent within stratification's taxonomy of PR. Bentele argues German and other European forms of public relations developed on their own as a byproduct of their own unique society. The acknowledgement of the uniqueness of each culture and country's PR development recognizes that public relations practice is closely tied with each culture and country's societal needs.

The idea of proto-public relations is present in the concept of the four models. In the four models, Grunig and Hunt deem press agency as a type of unethical predecessor of modern public relations practices.¹⁵¹ Given this paradigm, ethical public relations begins with the corporate uses of PR used by Ivy Lee. All other forms of public relations practice, such as press agency (which has roots in entertainment not corporations), serve

as illustrations as an antecedent PR.¹⁵² This means that within scholarship non-corporate public relations histories or public relations histories that pre-date the creation of corporate PR practice are deemed to be related to, but not “real” public relations. Theoretically, this has major implications because it argues for a conceptualization of PR that includes only the corporate, professionalized PR that emerged as a result of late nineteenth century corporate growth. Under this analysis, public relations is not identified by its communication practices, but instead is identified by the context in which PR is practiced.

Lamme and Russell detail many of these non-corporate types of public relations, which includes politics, nonprofit, educational, and religious public relations¹⁵³. These public relations practices lend new insight into the field of PR and eliminate periodization of the field because it ignores the interconnectivity between areas of practice. Political public relations is cited by Cutlip as an early form of PR practice, specifically in the debate over the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and early nation building within the American colonies. Cutlip also notes that nonprofit PR began in early nineteenth century charities and was present even earlier in the development of American colleges in the 17th and nineteenth centuries.¹⁵⁴ Internationally there is research that supports the idea that public relations practice can be found in medieval Europe.¹⁵⁵

All of these assertions of early public relations practices include similar themes. They are all defined by the communication techniques used (e.g. media relations, relationship management, publicity tactics) rather than the contexts in which these communications occurred. These practices also predate corporate public relations development and the nineteenth century. This suggests an older form of public relations

practice that even pre-dates press agency. Most importantly, all of these early public relations practices utilize forms of communication scholars would identify as public relations techniques. These examples of public relations even support modern scholarship of PR since these histories contain examples of relationship management, media relations, and persuasive techniques.¹⁵⁶ All of these historical examples also suggest that contingency theory would apply to many of these historical contexts since key publics were targeted in a complex and ever-changing environment.¹⁵⁷ The only thing these public relations histories lack is a self-identified PR practitioner who may have professional accreditation and who works solely on public relations communications as a full-time profession.

B. Theoretical Influences of PR and Proto-PR Dichotomy

It may seem that proto-PR verses professional PR is an academic debate that only affects the historical categorization of the field. This is not the case. The concept that there is such a thing as proto-PR directly affects how theory within public relations is constructed. By relegating so-called proto-PR to a PR-like status, scholars feel free to ignore so-called proto-PR in their positivist and normative theories of public relations. The effects of this are that public relations theory becomes more corporate focused and argues for a very restrictive view of what PR actually is. For these theories, public relations is only professional practice with self-identified PR practitioners. As a result public relations theory focuses on corporate, agency, and business related public relations practices.

This narrow focus of public relations theory means that other areas of public relations practice go unexplored. Excellence, contingency, Crisis, relationship, and management

theories all focus on the formal agency or corporate practice of PR.¹⁵⁸ The term organization and publics refers to a company and customers/activists/stockholders. Additionally the questions these theories seek to address is to explain how public relations works inside corporate environments and how practitioners can gain admission into corporate management. Even when scholars go outside of the corporate model of professionalized PR, they use these corporate constructed theories and apply them to non-corporate settings.¹⁵⁹

If this division between proto-PR and formal public relations was eliminated there would be a broader definition of PR as a field. This would yield more complex and diverse histories of the field and perhaps could generate new theoretical approaches to PR practice that examined public relations outside of corporate environments. Both positivist and normative theories would provide greater validity and predictability if they became more aware of the varying contexts public relations was practiced within. Recognizing this complexity within public relations practice could loosen the hold of larger meta-theoretical PR paradigms, such as Excellence Theory, on scholarship.

V. PR as a Nuanced Creation

Lamme and Russell argue that “simply put, no area of public relations history has been adequately researched.”¹⁶⁰ Part of the reason for this observation is that many of the unresearched areas of public relations history encounter theoretical roadblocks. Narratives that support certain viewpoints of public relations, notably linear evolution, corporatism, hero creation, and issues of professional vs. non-professional PR, serve as bulwarks to a deeper and more accurate reflection of the field. However, since public

relations history is the originator of many of these theoretical roadblocks, historical research can correct and combat these false narratives.

This engagement with public relations theory has greater implications than just history. As can be seen many of these narratives within public relations history are part of larger issues for public relations as a field. Concerns over legitimacy, professionalization, and the need for self-promotion (specifically Edward Bernays) cloud the accurate historical narrative of the field. Moreover, other subfields of public relations have followed suit in their theoretical creations. Bernays' linear evolution of PR and his description of press agents later informed Grunig and Hunt's conceptualization on the four models.¹⁶¹ Corporate narratives written by Bernays, Hiebert, and later Cutlip provide support for looking at PR exclusively from that perspective.¹⁶² The prominence of American men's impact on development of the field has created the illusion that PR is an American created export. The arbitrary concept of proto-public relations has caused a limitation on historical inquiry and produced a false periodization of the field. Since theoretical development of a field, particularly positivist paradigms, rely on historical justifications, these false narratives of public relations history have real impact in PR scholarship. These histories help define what form the practice, profession, and structure public relations takes, which, in turn, informs what research questions scholars ask.

Despite these issues within public relations scholarship, PR history is recognizing some of its theoretical issues. Lamme and Russell correctly point out that there are many gaps in PR scholarship that need to be filled.¹⁶³ Bentele argues for a stratification model similar to those use in scientific evolution to explain public relations development as a process that continually builds on its own practices.¹⁶⁴ L'Etang and McKie and Munshi

illustrate how international public relations histories need to be written without preconceived American influence.¹⁶⁵ Gower directly challenges Bernays' influences within PR historiography and argues that his concepts of the field should be reexamined.¹⁶⁶ Finally, Lamme and Russell point out that previous periodization and linear narratives of PR history, such as those in Bernays, Cutlip, and Grunig and Hunt's four models, are arbitrary and should not inform current public relations inquiry.¹⁶⁷

Theorizing of practice and the profession of public relations has the potential to be more diverse, culturally aware, and contextually sensitive if public relations history begins to correct the historical record. This dissertation provides an overview of public relations development in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. This study has theoretical significance since it directly challenges the corporatist, evolutionary, and great man narratives in PR history.

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A TERM IN SOCIETY, RELIGION, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND POLITICS 1774-1918¹⁶⁸

As a term, “public relations” has a rich history in the American lexicon. However, within public relations history there is a popular misconception that the term is purely a twentieth century invention, a misperception that can be traced to Edward Bernays’ claim he invented the term “counsel on public relations” after World War I. This has given way to a commonly held misperception that Bernays actually invented the term public relations. Because of this historical misinterpretation, today’s usage of “public relations” is taken to mean formal practice of PR or the use of specific media relations tactics to influence public opinion. Examining the term public relations from 1774 to 1918 illustrates that today’s use of the term “public relations” is closely aligned with its eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century usage. Analysis of 551 newspaper, magazine, and academic journal articles reveals several themes in the usage of public relations in religion, politics, and business. During the early nineteenth century the term “public relations” was also used in context with high-profile individuals, businesses, and interpersonal relationships. From this analysis, public relations as a term in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is associated with federal and state government, image, relationships, citizen-interaction, customer satisfaction, and reputation.

This chapter explores three categories of the use of public relations as a term from 1774 to 1918. In this chapter public relations is shown to mean official behavior of an individual, the relationship between religion and a person, and foreign and domestic

politics. While each of these categories of public relations represents something different, they all suggest that the term “public relations” is rooted in the idea of relationships, image, reputation, and public trust. Moreover, the idea of “public” is key to understanding this early usage of the term “public relations.” In these articles “public relations” has a connotation that involves society, citizenship, and group representation.

As described in Chapter 1, this chapter analyzed the term “public relations*” in American Periodical Series, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online, Accessible Archives, America’s Historical Newspapers, and JSTOR. This chapter analyzes 551 articles that show public relations’ meaning in the press as well as its use in religion, international affairs, and politics. These groups were chosen because they comprise public relations’ use during the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century. The term public relations appears in quotes when directly referencing its presence in an article.

I. Public Relations of the Individual

A. Private and Public Relations

Use of the term public relations from the eighteenth to twentieth century showed a dichotomy between private and public, particularly when used in connection with an individual. As these articles show, a person could have private relations (associated with their family) and public relations (associated with a job or official duty). While these two relations occupied different spheres of a person’s life they did influence each other and were discussed together to illustrate a person’s overall character.¹⁶⁹

While it was suggested that a person’s private and public relations reflected similar values and behaviors, some articles suggest a complete separation between the two spheres.¹⁷⁰ One article suggested that a complete separation of “public relations” from

private relations (i.e. family) was ideal because it shielded the family from criticism.¹⁷¹

William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist journalist in nineteenth century America, was complimented by one article that commented on his skill at keeping the aspects of his life separate, saying, “he never made his public relations an excuse for neglecting his family.”¹⁷² Another article from 1876 discussed “public relations” as having to strike a “balance between honor and fortune.”¹⁷³

These and other descriptions of “public relations” suggest that the term meant a type of formal integration with society for the “public good.”¹⁷⁴ Citizenship was mentioned in context with an individual’s “public relations.”¹⁷⁵ An 1814 article commented on citizenship and “public relations” asking citizens “to rise from individual to public relations...[since citizens are] members of a state, receiving protection and deriving benefits from its laws, authority, and civil regulations.”¹⁷⁶ Reflecting nineteenth century ideas of citizenship, two articles suggest that having “public relations” required a “citizen” to own land.¹⁷⁷ However, most uses of the term “public relations” in the nineteenth century popular press were tied to aspects of a person’s role in society. To have “public relations” meant someone had to be well known, concerned about the public perception of their character, and having a reputation to maintain within the community.¹⁷⁸ In obituaries, men who served in governmental capacities were described as having “public relations.”¹⁷⁹ Famous people had “public relations” including Sir Walter Scott,¹⁸⁰ Frederick the Great,¹⁸¹ General Winfield Scott,¹⁸² Daniel Webster,¹⁸³ George Washington,¹⁸⁴ President James Garfield,¹⁸⁵ General Santa Ana,¹⁸⁶ J.P. Morgan,¹⁸⁷ Lord Bacon,¹⁸⁸ Robert E. Lee,¹⁸⁹ Rudyard Kipling,¹⁹⁰ King Edward VII,¹⁹¹ and William the Conqueror.¹⁹² Public relations was also associated with men who had

high-profile professions such as ministers,¹⁹³ postal workers,¹⁹⁴ ambassadors,¹⁹⁵ attorneys,¹⁹⁶ monarchs,¹⁹⁷ judges,¹⁹⁸ professors,¹⁹⁹ physicians,²⁰⁰ sailors,²⁰¹ policemen,²⁰² town officials,²⁰³ businessmen,²⁰⁴ heroes,²⁰⁵ a banker,²⁰⁶ soldiers,²⁰⁷ a female philanthropist,²⁰⁸ and a mine owner,²⁰⁹ all had “public relations” within a community. “Public relations” was also associated with colonial families,²¹⁰ men and women,²¹¹ “mankind,”²¹² ancient Rome,²¹³ journal publications,²¹⁴ a theater troupe,²¹⁵ literature,²¹⁶ court trials,²¹⁷ medical societies,²¹⁸ towns,²¹⁹ agriculture,²²⁰ and even a blind man.²²¹ This wide association of public relations suggests that “public relations” was part of a larger idea of having contact with society and of representing oneself to the larger population.

The qualities of personal public relations were usually described in positive terms that emphasized these people’s morals, caring nature, and success based on American values. One article suggested that there was a universal standard of “public relations” that applied to strangers and friends alike with truthfulness being a quality of good “public relations.”²²² This sentiment was popularized by a widely reprinted translation of Immanuel Kant’s work which argued there is a type of universal law for “public relations.”²²³ This idea of a universal standard or law for public relations was reflected as American values. Well known people were expected to have good “public relations.”²²⁴ Reputation was key for having good “public relations.”²²⁵ This required people to follow the “golden rule,”²²⁶ avoid “dalliances,”²²⁷ be honest,²²⁸ be independent minded,²²⁹ embrace “humanity,”²³⁰ work hard,²³¹ have “honor,”²³² be “admirable,”²³³ promote peace,²³⁴ and have “personal sympathy.”²³⁵ One article even suggested “public relations” could be negatively affected by bad thoughts promoted by so-called “brain-sickly literature.”²³⁶

Bad “public relations” only appeared in four articles from this sample of popular press, but when it was it usually meant that a person was acting only in his self-interest. Two articles stand out as illustrations of this. The first article described an adventurer’s “public relations” as “selfish and unprincipled.”²³⁷ The other article suggested “intemperate” (i.e. drunkard) men cared little for their family and acted as “nuisances or ciphers.”²³⁸ Bad public relations also meant not following conventional American norms. This was evident in articles that discussed how immigrants did not follow the “public relations” norms of the United States and continued to use hyphenated ethnic identities in their “public relations.”²³⁹ However, “public relations” was not thought to be totally static. In fact, as times progressed there were articles that suggested technology²⁴⁰ and laws²⁴¹ affected what constituted acceptable “public relations.” In one article, bad politics equated with bad “public relations.” Such was the case when an 1860 article described Members of Congress as “venal in their public relations” when elected to office.²⁴² Not being a member of a community was portrayed as not having “public relations.” Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe was said to have “sustained no public relations” because of his isolation on an island.²⁴³ However, these articles suggest “public relations” were not always positive between different groups within society. Two articles during Reconstruction discussed “public relations” between whites and blacks as a general societal concern.²⁴⁴ Non-Protestant immigrants had particular problem with public relations since, as one article suggested, they made themselves stand-out negatively in their “public relations.”²⁴⁵

Political roles and civic involvement of men were discussed with “public relations.”²⁴⁶ One aspect of these political “public relations” is that idea that the

politician must answer to the larger society. An 1851 article details this saying, “the integrity of private life ought to obtain in men’s public relations, and public sentiment should as sternly hold a man accountable for the conscientious discharge of his public trusts.”²⁴⁷ “Public relations” in some articles even meant a formal relationship to political circles.²⁴⁸ Articles said that a man had “public relations” with the Democratic Party;²⁴⁹ Boss Tweed had “public relations” with Democrats in New York;²⁵⁰ and Napoleon used a secretary to arrange formal visits in his “public relations.”²⁵¹ These “public relations” also included open stances on a variety of political issues such as racism,²⁵² slavery,²⁵³ tariffs,²⁵⁴ and Republicans.²⁵⁵ Office holding was frequently mentioned in terms of “public relations” since the politician had to have contact with voters.²⁵⁶ Ordinary citizens also had “public relations,” with patriotism being a particularly important aspect.²⁵⁷

Another societal issue was the role of women. Because women held no official status within society, they were sometimes said to have no “public relations.” In fact, all of the articles in this sample that discuss a particular individual’s “public relations” discuss men. Women did not have “public relations” because they lacked the legal rights of men, specifically the right to vote.²⁵⁸ This is reflective of the norms of the nineteenth century which viewed women as being in the private sphere of domesticity. One article from 1845 commented on this legal status saying, “The public relations of wives as of slaves, are all on one side; their duty is to obey, not govern.”²⁵⁹ However, an 1848 article from *Godey’s Lady’s Book* stated that women did have a role in politics even through they were not part of “public relations.”²⁶⁰ It said, “The public relations of government are, as they should be, exclusively under the care and guidance of men; but women may do

much, very much, to promote the general harmony and happiness of the nation.”²⁶¹ *The Liberator* also argued women did have a role in “public relations” because of their important status in social structure.²⁶²

Articles in the late nineteenth century suggest that women’s “public relations” changed with the increase of their political rights.²⁶³ In 1871 one article commented on women’s “public relations,” saying “one half the world has never until now, cared to exercise its brains in behalf of public matters...women have been living half lives, caring for domestic interests, but leaving their public relations to the care of any one [sic] who would manage them.”²⁶⁴ This lack of “public relations” was portrayed as holding women back from being able to engage civically and serve in administrative duties.²⁶⁵ Women’s “public relations” in the United States was even compared to women in the “Orient” who had no “public relations” at all.²⁶⁶

In 1901 the subject of women and “public relations” was the topic of a widely publicized book *Women and the Law* which was targeted to women who wanted to understand the legal parameters of their “public relations.”²⁶⁷ The book by Columbia professor George Bayles contained a section entitled “public relations” that detailed women’s legal rights in regard to citizenship, immigrant status, the ability to practice law, spousal privilege, employment, and women’s safety.²⁶⁸ This section on “public relations” was important, according to Bayles, because it illustrated the “value of showing the political status of women in the modern state.”²⁶⁹

Individual public relations in this era represented the idea that individuals of a certain status had important roles and interactions within society. Citizenship, official duties, and societal roles play a part in determining who had “public relations” and who

did not. In this sense “public relations” was a personal representation of image, reputation, and character. While public relations was not granted to all people, notably women, these articles suggest “public relations” in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was growing to include more people which, in turn, suggest more people had a formal role to play in society.

II. Public Relations and Religion

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an individual’s “public relations” was a representation of their Christian values. These values were represented by Christian figures, such as Jesus, Abraham and even God. Ministers and clergymen were also thought to have “public relations” with society as a whole and their congregations. Similar to ministers, churches were thought to have public relations specifically in their outreach within a community. In fact, churches serve as examples of some of the first grass roots use of so-called modern PR practice since they began to form public relations committees as early as the 1890s. All of this illustrates that within the development of “public relations” as a term, religious, specifically Christian, influence helped to define the meaning of the term in the United States.

A. Christian Values and Public Relations

Within the popular press from 1820s onward, there was an association between “public relations” and Christian values. Many articles focused on how private relations and public relations require a dedication to Christian teachings, philosophy, and morals.²⁷⁰ One article from 1901 sums up this belief on the influence of Christianity in private and public relations saying, “If religion is good for anything it is good for everything. If religion is to govern a man in his public relations, it is also to control him

in his private affairs.”²⁷¹ Morality was a large part of the Christian influence in “public relations.”²⁷² However, Christian “public relations” was not universal. According to one 1888 article in *The Baptist Quarterly Review*, God gave “public relations” to men, not to women, since men represented the family unit in the eyes of God.²⁷³

“Public relations” of individuals were mentioned as part of being a productive member of society.²⁷⁴ Having good “public relations” was described in one article as having “fruitful public relations to God.”²⁷⁵ Two articles from the 1828 and one from 1856 discussed a disingenuous public relations in which people professed to be religious but in practice did not follow Christian “public relations.”²⁷⁶ This lack of Christian “public relations” was a concern in some publications. In 1850 one article detailed how “Protestantism has lost a large part of its moral force, its influence over public relations.”²⁷⁷ Famed abolitionist and religious leader Henry Ward Beecher commented in an 1862 sermon that “public relations” declined if a man were detached from certain moral influences, specifically mothers, who introduced men to religion.²⁷⁸ Other articles mentioned the difficulties between religions, such as Protestant and Catholics and even Christians and Hindus.²⁷⁹ In these discussions “public relations” were only obtainable by following Protestant teachings.

This sentiment of hostility between “public relations” of religions had a critic in President Theodore Roosevelt, who in 1906 said that it was a politician’s duty to rise above religious differences that could affect “public relations.”²⁸⁰ Addressing the questions of religious difference to an ambassador he said, “While I am President and you are Ambassador, neither of us in his public relations is to act as Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Gentile and we have to be careful not merely to do what is right but so

to carry ourselves as to show that we are doing what is right.”²⁸¹ The morality of “public relations” was present in American politics with one article discussing the “outward and public relations to Christianity” of Presidential candidates in 1856.²⁸² Political issues, such as slavery and the creation of the Thanksgiving holiday, were also discussed in terms of Christian “public relations.”²⁸³

B. Public Relations of Biblical Figures

Several religious figures were said to have “public relations.” God’s “public relations” were shown in his “order of His Kingdom.”²⁸⁴ Another article suggested “historic and public relations” were part of the larger “battleground” of the world in which “the souls of men are the kingdoms that are fought for” by God.²⁸⁵ Abraham was described in one article as having “illustrious” spiritual “public relations” as evidenced by his relationship with God.²⁸⁶ Even the lost tribes of Israel had a particular faithful “public relations” that was, according to one writer, seen only in the Anglo-Saxons in 1840s America.²⁸⁷

Jesus Christ had also had “public relations.” Christ’s public relations was evidenced by his religious teachings.²⁸⁸ In fact, Dean Sanders of Yale University said the third preaching tour of Christ “precipitated a crisis in His [Christ’s] public relations” because of the negative events that unfolded, particularly the death of John the Baptist and the questioning of Jesus’ teachings.²⁸⁹ However, the influence of Christ in public relations was mainly discussed as influencing men in their “public relations.” An article from 1836 commented that Christ’s “personal piety was found in the private, social or public relations; whether as a son, a citizen or a saint.”²⁹⁰ Public expression of one’s faith in his or her “public relations” was a testament to Christ’s influence. One article stated

that a life in which had “Christ touching all personal, social and public relations” was evidence of a good Christian.²⁹¹ Another article from 1850 argued that “complacent acquiescence” in “public relations” was not the design of Christ’s teachings.²⁹² Even politicians were suggested to have Christ’s influence in their “public relations” when making decisions for America.²⁹³

C. Public Relations of Clergy and Churches

Ministers, priests, clergymen, and lay ministers were all discussed in the religious press as having public relations. An 1845 article discussed a religion professor at Oxford having “public relations” in reforming a church.²⁹⁴ A Catholic churchman’s mission trip to Chile in 1848 was described as being part of his “public relations.”²⁹⁵ Articles suggest that ministers had “public relations” because of their status as religious leaders.²⁹⁶ One minister’s obituary in 1803 described his “public relations” as “discreet, devout, laborious and conscientious.”²⁹⁷ Other ministers were described as having “public relations” that were “earnest,”²⁹⁸ showed “attractive character,”²⁹⁹ “honorably conspicuous,”³⁰⁰ “distinguished,”³⁰¹ “derived no prejudices,”³⁰² “industrious,”³⁰³ “irreproachable,”³⁰⁴ and “guided by an enlightened sense of duty.”³⁰⁵

All of these aspects of religious “public relations” directly dealt with the role of a minister within his community.³⁰⁶ This religious duty extended beyond the “typical” clergy and even affected lay leaders and one female seminarian.³⁰⁷ The “public relations” role of a minister involved maintaining the religious and Christian values of the members of the church.³⁰⁸ In addition to this spiritual duty, a minister’s “public relations” also related to his official duties, such as performing services, Bible readings, and teaching Sunday schools.³⁰⁹ However, one article suggested ministerial “public relations” varied

according to the minister and whether he wished to engage in scholarly research.³¹⁰ In fact, the job of being a minister was referred to by some articles as his “public relations.”³¹¹ One minister’s retirement was phrased as his ending “public relations of twenty-five years.”³¹² Public relations as a term also meant that the minister had to adhere to certain religious expectations from the community. Ministerial “public relations” were defined as an “obligation,”³¹³ illustrative of godly influences,³¹⁴ requiring “diligent mental application,”³¹⁵ a willingness to “do justice and love mercy,”³¹⁶ and engaging in “pulpit duties.”³¹⁷

Public relations for ministers also required them to avoid certain temptations. An 1834 article warned Methodist ministers who allowed fabricated confessions in their churches that they may suffer the “deleterious consequences of public relations.”³¹⁸ Another article said the job of a minister’s “public relations” actually “create[d] wants” which should never be indulged.³¹⁹ Even lay ministers were required to avoid “liberty of action” in “public relations.”³²⁰ Good public relations was seen as a requirement for creating a church following. Extravagance in “public relations” was said to hurt Congregationalist churches,³²¹ while certain obscure political beliefs in “public relations” were said to drive congregations away from a Unitarian church.³²² In the 1870s two articles appeared warning that Bishops needed to be above reproach in their “public relations” because they were called on to speak about important issues in the community.³²³ Others lamented that religious “public relations” unfortunately had less of a role in political events.³²⁴

Churches were also cited as having “public relations” in varying forms as early as the 1840s. An Episcopal church was cited as having prayed for America’s “public

relations.”³²⁵ Another article suggests that “public relations” existed not only between government and church but between churches.³²⁶ One article said that even in early churches there was the practice of “public relations” and that church hierarchy between minister and congregant is determined by the “public relations” of clerical leaders.³²⁷ However, the most significant part of a Church’s public relations was in the formation of public relations committees. Hartford Theological Seminary had an active public relations committee that investigated the level of Christianity among students and college. In 1901 Hartford’s “public relations committee” met to discuss the “religious character of college students.”³²⁸ This committee also was in charge of determining the amount of Bible classes offered at its institution and Wesleyan University.³²⁹ In 1902 the “public relations committee “compiled a report on colleges’ and organizations’ religious offerings as well as the number of religious books available to students.”³³⁰ A consortium of religious schools also a “committee of public relations” who met to discuss religious training and education.³³¹ These public relations committees were not limited to religious colleges. A men’s league at a church operated a “committee on public relations” that included two former members of Congress as board members.³³²

Use of the term “public relations” in religion suggests that public relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included an obligation to the public. Describing ministers’ official roles as “public relations” suggests that accountability and organizational representation were part of the nineteenth century understanding of the term “public relations.” Moreover, the linking of morality with “public relations” suggests that within the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries public relations had a standard by which people were judged. Perhaps most importantly, the mention of public

relations committees in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggest a grassroots creation of PR practice. These early public relations groups suggest that organizations operated much the same way a PR committee would work today. They were concerned with image, organizational accountability, and meeting the publics' needs.

III. Political Public Relations

The most common use of the term public relations from 1770 to 1918 was politics, specifically international affairs. Particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries "public relations" as a term meant formal diplomatic relationships between nations. When these "public relations" broke down, as they did in the early nineteenth century, countries were seen as ending their public relations. Like individual "public relations," international "public relations" represented formal behavior that was practiced by well-known and governmentally sanctioned people.

A. Public Relations as International Affairs and Diplomacy

In this sample the United States' "public relations" was discussed in forty nine articles in this sample. According to these articles the United States has "public relations" with Great Britain,³³³ Europe,³³⁴ France,³³⁵ Colombia,³³⁶ Mexico,³³⁷ Central America,³³⁸ Brazil,³³⁹ Denmark,³⁴⁰ Spain,³⁴¹ Russia,³⁴² Japan,³⁴³ Germany,³⁴⁴ and Canada.³⁴⁵ Other articles discussed other nations' "public relations" outside of the United States context. China,³⁴⁶ Australia,³⁴⁷ Czarist Russia,³⁴⁸ Cuba,³⁴⁹ France,³⁵⁰ Germany,³⁵¹ and Britain³⁵² were all said to have "public relations" with other countries or with provinces within their own country. Other articles discussed "public relations" as political issues within an administration or how "public relations" with an international country affected U.S.

citizens,³⁵³ such as an 1825 article that said the United States needed to have “public relations” with all Spanish speaking countries.³⁵⁴ Another article suggested that nations’ “public relations” are largely affected by their citizens’ views.³⁵⁵

The use of the term “public relations” in context with U.S. international relations took on various meanings of economic interaction,³⁵⁶ peace,³⁵⁷ war,³⁵⁸ and as political issues affecting American citizens.³⁵⁹ This means that as a whole, “public relations” was a general term referencing a relationship between nations. “Public relations” could be good, bad, neutral, or even nonexistent. These “public relations” between nations also meant the relationship had an official sanctioning by the United States government in which the President was held responsible. An 1803 article from the *Republic* comments on the political overtones within international public relations. It said, “In such an event our safety demands an administration firm, clear sighted, and vigilant; prompt to determine, and vigorous to act, just in its public relations.”³⁶⁰ Another article demanded the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, to disclose “all the communications he might receive from our ministers, respecting our public relations.”³⁶¹

The control of public relations was recognized as a privilege of the President but was seen as practice governed by laws.³⁶² This caused concern in 1808 when a Member of Congress asked President Thomas Jefferson what level of control he had over foreign ministers. Concerned over the power of individuals within America’s foreign policy, the Congressman wrote, “Can a subordinate officer invade one of the highest prerogatives of government so as thereby to change the public relations of his country from peace to war?”³⁶³ The power of the President in deciding the “public relations” of the United States sometimes caused dissention in the legislature. One

speech from 1812 said:

The momentous question of war with G. Britain is decided. On this topic, so vital to your interests, the right of public debates in constituents, has been denied to your representatives. They have been called into secret session on this most interest of all your public relations.³⁶⁴

This speech suggests that “public relations,” although under the control the President, required some support from the public at large. This is reflected in another article from 1812 from a local township of Plymouth, Massachusetts who gathered to write a complaint “memorializing Congress, upon the menacing aspect of their public relations.”³⁶⁵ While political control of “public relations” existed there was recognition by some articles that external events could change “public relations” between countries. Thomas Jefferson’s 1807 address to Congress used the term “public relations” in reference to other nations’ diplomacy to explain how external world events outside of U.S. control might affect the United States economy.³⁶⁶

Public relations between countries changed over time. In 1811, an anonymous writer suggested that embargos require the United States to discuss the “proper course of action which the present portentous situation of our public relations demand.”³⁶⁷ An 1848 article stated there was a decline in Italian “public relations” abroad because of internal discord.³⁶⁸ Other articles said public relations could be improved over time. A federal report reprinted in the *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser* in 1831 said ministers from the United States could serve as liaisons between the United States and other countries, ultimately improving “public relations.” It read:

Such a provision for public ministers as would obviate these evils, and enable the minister to perform the common duties of hospitality to his countrymen and promote social intercourse between the citizens of both nations would not only elevate the character of his country but essentially improve its public relations.³⁶⁹

This suggests that within the nineteenth century, the concept of public relations of a country included relationships, preferably positive, with other nations. This is reflected in other reports where the President of the United States is said to “give a most flattering account of our public relations with all the world,”³⁷⁰ and a later presidential reply to a committee in which he says that the United States must “cultivate a spirit of liberal concession in our public relations.”³⁷¹

A nation’s “public relations” could be strained if the country did not adhere to the conventions of international diplomacy or laws. Even the “barbarian state” of Turkey had “public relations” that adhered to international convention.³⁷² However, some nations’ stances on political issues prevented public relations. Such was the case with the Confederate States of America who lacked “public relations” with Great Britain because of the CSA’s stance on slavery.³⁷³ In 1836 an article in the *New York Farmer* commented on how countries can differ in what they accept in “public relations” writing, “the public relations, however, are entirely different: the performance of a duty in one county, would justly be deemed a crime in another.”³⁷⁴

The United States’ international “public relations” was also tied to individual politicians or ministers who officially represented the United States in their public relations abroad. Articles included the public relations of individual ministers,³⁷⁵ the Secretary of State,³⁷⁶ and an ex-President of the United States.³⁷⁷ An 1831 article

suggested that foreign ministers' salaries were directly related to the level of "public relations" a country received.³⁷⁸ The article argued that the United States should give raises to foreign ministers so they could attract a higher caliber representative.³⁷⁹ Another article from 1817 mentioned that the "public relations" of a minister meant that he was subject to legal jurisdiction in the country in which he was stationed.³⁸⁰

The term public relations was also used in context with personal relationships that took on international issues. In 1803 Congressman Robert Williams discussed the economic impact of the "public relations" of engaging in war with Spain in New Orleans.³⁸¹ Former President John Tyler recognized the changed public relations between the United States and Spain, stating, "considering the public relations that at one period existed between us, I cannot bring myself to believe that you will either misconstrue my motives in addressing you or censure me for so doing."³⁸² In 1856, the *Charleston Courier* noted that the government the United States "suffers in its public relations" with Brazil because the United States Minister's communications with the United States government were too slow.³⁸³ Another article commented directly on "public relations" requiring a certain type of trust within the relationship between the countries. In 1857 the *New York Daily Times* wrote:

In the world of public relations, as in the world of private intercourse, it is true that a mood of permanent suspicion and distrust is just as fatal to any attempt at successful diplomacy between great and enlightened nations, as is a tempter of absolute incredulity to any attempt at negotiation between decent and intelligent individuals.³⁸⁴

This representation of international diplomacy as public relations shows the

term public relations is deeply rooted in the concept of formal relationships between organizations and people (in this case government and citizens). These articles show that accountability of political leaders, along with formal practices constituted the idea of public relations in early American vernacular. Additionally, international diplomacy as public relations suggests that organizations (in this case the government) had public relations in which citizens were represented by officials. The many exchanges and speeches in this section also suggest public relations had much to do with communicating with others and representing oneself in an advantageous light. These articles suggest diplomacy has much to do with the individuals who are representing the government. As such, their behavior suggests that within the eighteenth and nineteenth century there some concept that “public relations” as a function was entrusted to certain officials.

B. Domestic Policy Public Relations

In addition to international relations, public relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was associated with the official behavior of a government in domestic politics.³⁸⁵ In fact, one article suggested that the idea that government has “public relations” dates to feudal Europe.³⁸⁶ Domestic and foreign policy “public relations” were recognized as different from each other. An 1806 article from the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* comments on this: “Yet as the people have never taken the constitutional measures which were necessary to alter it, and as our public relations, both foreign and domestic, appear to require a cautious policy.”³⁸⁷ This quote is illustrative of how public relations was referenced in a domestic context. “Public relations” was always discussed in context of the United States laws or the official policies of the President’s administration. The first example of the use of “public relations” in a domestic political context appears in 1774 in

the *Essex Journal and Merimack Packet* article that discussed the interaction of the citizens of Boston and British soldiers. It said:

We find no account in the Boston papers of the affray in the place last week, between several officers and some of the inhabitants: Indeed the conduct of the former, as we are told was so detestably savage and obscene as to render a particular public relations thereof improper.³⁸⁸

Here, public relations is in the context of government behavior toward the citizens. In fact, citizens' response is tied to government domestic relations or domestic "public relations." The *Philadelphia Gazette* in 1795 cited "public relations" as the reason George Washington used the term "self-created" in a speech.³⁸⁹

The use of the term "public relations" as related to domestic issues took on a variety of subjects. One context was the United States government's "public relations" with the states.³⁹⁰ Pierce Butler said in an 1804 Philadelphia speech that he and other politicians from South Carolina generally agreed on the "public measures, public relations and private combinations" of South Carolina.³⁹¹ "Public relations" also existed between the United States government and racial groups, notably Native Americans.³⁹² A citizen in early Detroit wrote that the "public relations" between white settlers and Indians "are becoming more and more favorable to the Americans, and the time may not be distant when a majority of them will adhere to us in preference to any foreign power."³⁹³

Political parties were also part of domestic "public relations."³⁹⁴ In 1809 a letter to the "Electors of Massachusetts" the Federalist Party argued for the support of Federalist Governor Christopher Gore whose "public relations" had not changed on

the tariff issues.³⁹⁵ William Morris Meredith, a Pennsylvania politician, was said to use Federalist Party ideals in his “public relations” in the nineteenth century.³⁹⁶ The use of the term “public relations” coincided with the advocacy of political positions within parties. The New York Democratic-Republicans wrote that their “public relations” required them to make “greater sacrifice of personal feeling to promote the general good.”³⁹⁷ The Federalists also wrote that their “public relations” were deeply related to the United States’ interests.³⁹⁸

Articles from the nineteenth century also characterized public relations as a national attitude toward the United States government generally as well as specifically regarding individual rights.³⁹⁹ During the Nullification Crisis of the 1820s and 1830s, one article said “the union of this confederation is the key-stone to the whole fabric of our political and national greatness, our civil and social prosperity. Let this sentiment enter with religious solemnity into all our public relations with our country.”⁴⁰⁰ The economic concern of the United States was also termed as being part of U.S. “public relations.”⁴⁰¹ In an article in 1820, the *Kentucky Reporter* stated that economic development depended largely on whether the damaged image of the United States could be repaired by hard work within economic “public relations.” The article said:

The unsubdued [sic] energies of our citizens, the unexhausted fertility of our soil, with rigid economy in our private and public relations cannot fail in a short time, to redeem the country from its present embarrassments, and restore the golden days of its prosperity.⁴⁰²

In 1821, an article appeared about the Massachusetts citizens’ concern over the loss of Maine as part of the Compromise of 1820. The *Boston Commercial Gazette* stated that

the loss of Maine affected citizens in Massachusetts in their “welfare and public relations.”⁴⁰³ One article discussed the “demoralization” of American “public relations” when the South began secession in 1861.⁴⁰⁴ During the Civil War, public relations of the Confederacy was discussed in context with the public relations of the United States. The *Charleston Mercury* stated that “public relations” between the Confederacy and England would be difficult because the Confederacy was “a government recognizing the slavery of a part of the human race.”⁴⁰⁵ Post-Civil War relationships between the citizens of the North and South were defined as “public relations” of two distinct regions.⁴⁰⁶ Even race relations between black and white southerners was mentioned as “public relations” in a *New York Times* article about President Grant’s policy of giving clemency to members of the Ku Klux Klan.⁴⁰⁷

Domestic public relations had values assigned to them, especially when these public relations affected citizens directly. One article from *The Albany Argus* in 1820 commented on “the demoralized state of our public relations” in reference to political bribes and corrupt public policy.⁴⁰⁸ The a-political stance of the Army was noted as having “no principle in its public relations.”⁴⁰⁹ The term “public relations” was detailed in a variety of positive domestic U.S. contexts such as military schools,⁴¹⁰ legal codes,⁴¹¹ and the Vice President’s treatment of policies affecting New York State.⁴¹² However, these public relations were always discussed in the terms of what political entities, namely the larger government, could do for its citizens.

C. Politicians and their use of “Public Relations”

Many articles from the nineteenth century equated public relations with the individual behavior of politicians with each other and with their constituencies. As

early as 1803 *The Connecticut Centinel* printed a prayer for politicians that included the term “public relations.” It said, “That HE [God][sic] will be pleased to bless us in our private and public relations. That He will guide the public councils and administration of the United States.”⁴¹³ This prayer suggests that “public councils and administration” included politicians within the realm of “public relations.”⁴¹⁴ Politicians themselves, however, had their own public relations that referred to their role as a public figure and their position in crafting American policy.⁴¹⁵ However, as one article from 1874 suggested, these “public relations” could turn bad if the politician’s views were at odds with the voting public.⁴¹⁶

A reference to a politician’s “public relations” first appeared in the sample from the *Middlebury Mercury* in an 1804 obituary of a former Congressman Jeremiah Wadsworth.⁴¹⁷ Wadsworth’s obituary said:

In all the private and public relations of life, he was esteemed and respected. In this gentleman, his family have lost a tender, affectionate, and beloved relations; the poor a kind, and beneficent father; the Town its greatest benefactor; the State a most valuable citizen; and the Country one of its firmest friends, and most able, and faithful patriots.⁴¹⁸

This suggests within these political lives there was a dual sphere of interaction of politicians both public and private. However, the connection between a politician’s official public life and his private life was required to be stronger than other citizens. This is shown in an 1807 article regarding the close connection between private and public relations of a politician. It read:

Let him [the voter] be assured that his [the politician’s] private and public

relations are so closely connected, so intimately interwoven, so reciprocally dependent on each other, and so firmly dove-tailed that their security and prosperity must stand or fall together.⁴¹⁹

This role of public relations for politicians was extremely important and applied to a variety of office holders. Public relations was mentioned in context with ancient rulers,⁴²⁰ municipal leaders,⁴²¹ members of the House of Representatives,⁴²² U.S. Senators,⁴²³ state legislators,⁴²⁴ federal government appointees,⁴²⁵ judges,⁴²⁶ governors,⁴²⁷ military officers,⁴²⁸ and a former Postmaster General.⁴²⁹ Public relations as a term was mentioned most with high-profile politicians who had national and international reputations such as Mary Queen of Scots,⁴³⁰ Thomas Jefferson,⁴³¹ Andrew Jackson,⁴³² Stephen Douglas,⁴³³ John C. Calhoun,⁴³⁴ Henry Clay,⁴³⁵ William Henry Harrison,⁴³⁶ General Winfield Scott,⁴³⁷ Ulysses Grant,⁴³⁸ Rutherford Hayes,⁴³⁹ General Santa Ana,⁴⁴⁰ John Quincy Adams,⁴⁴¹ Grover Cleveland,⁴⁴² and Woodrow Wilson.⁴⁴³ These descriptions of public relations are universally positive and point out that these political officeholders' personal or private relations were distinct from their public relations. Wilson said he had no time for personal issues because of his massive duties in American "public relations."⁴⁴⁴

Public relations as associated with political figures highlights the importance of their office and the fact their office required them to have a higher level of interaction with the public.⁴⁴⁵ For instance, the remembrance of a Judge Elmendorf in the *Charleston Courier* stated that "he was held deservedly in high esteem, not less in private life than in his various public relations."⁴⁴⁶ This positive description of public relations in political life is important because it linked the office with requiring a certain

degree of public relations.⁴⁴⁷ An 1844 *Charleston Courier* article regarding a state senator is illustrative of the way “public relations” was characterized in the political sphere. It said, “In all his [state senator] public relations, he has been characterized by his integrity, and sound judgment; whilst as a private citizen, he is emphatically without reproach.”⁴⁴⁸

Having good “public relations” as a political officeholder was important in the nineteenth century.⁴⁴⁹ Descriptions of public relations included adjectives such as “sound and sensible views,”⁴⁵⁰ “beyond reproach,”⁴⁵¹ “esteemed,”⁴⁵² “respected,”⁴⁵³ “confidence,”⁴⁵⁴ “trustee,”⁴⁵⁵ “morality,”⁴⁵⁶ and “high integrity.”⁴⁵⁷ This view of a politician’s public relations was related to his qualifications as an officeholder and became the subject of political campaigns. Perhaps the most prevalent use of the term “public relations” came in Andrew Jackson’s 1828 and 1832 presidential elections. In 1828, James Madison wrote an endorsement describing the “public relations” of Jackson, stating that “The recollection of the public relations in which I stood to Gen. Jackson, while President, and the proofs given to him of the high estimation in which he was held by me.”⁴⁵⁸ This statement was reprinted throughout the 1828 campaign and again in 1832.⁴⁵⁹

Public relations was not limited to campaign speech in Jackson’s campaigns. In a congressional election, candidate Ebenezer Bradbury was subject to attacks on his “public relations” during the elections, but emerged “unscathed.”⁴⁶⁰ An 1832 article discussed how the anti-Masonic political groups accused Henry Clay of representing the Masons in his “public relations” as a member of Congress.⁴⁶¹ In 1856 *The Pittsfield Sun* reported that the attack on presidential candidate Stephen Douglas’s

“public relations” was characterized by “a venom that could scarcely be surpassed in malignity.”⁴⁶² Public relations in this context shows that public relations was portrayed as part of political life, particularly campaigning. One article from 1840 suggested previous “public relations” experience was a benefit for anyone entering the political scene because it allowed them to have “previous elevation” into public life.⁴⁶³ Another article from 1858 discussed how the press made no distinction in criticizing politicians’ “public relations” during campaigns and criticizing “their hearts, their wives, their children, and their kindred, their birth, and private misfortunes.”⁴⁶⁴

Other articles talked about “public relations” as part of the political process. Another article from 1840 suggested that politicians could only get good “public relations” after elections if they established good “public relations” before they were a candidate.⁴⁶⁵ Inexperience with “public relations” also was discussed in an 1890 *New York Times* article in which an inexperienced politician who “was a stranger to public relations” was blindsided by Republican political adversaries.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, a candidate’s “public relations” was deemed by the *New York Times* to be fair game in political debate. The *New York Times* said, “Say what you like of a man in his public relations—but let his home and family be sacred from intrusion.”⁴⁶⁷ By the turn of the twentieth century campaign finances and solicitation was viewed as part of a politician’s “public relations.”⁴⁶⁸

During the nineteenth century a politician’s public relations were tied to his official duties as an officeholder.⁴⁶⁹ In this context public relations for politicians was linked with the voting public and American citizens who were affected by these politician’s official acts and behavior. An 1853 St. Patrick’s toast to the President of

the United States is illustrative of public relations being related to official duties, specifically Pierce's recent election as President. The toast said:

Whilst the entire country sincerely sympathize with him [the President] in his recent domestic affection they hope that time may bring healing on his wings, and that in his public relations, his policy may be marked by that high sense of Constitutional justice, which has hitherto distinguished him, and which he has announced as the leading principle, which shall characterize his administration.⁴⁷⁰

Public relations as part of official duties was found in examples of federal, state, and even international political figures. The Governor of Vermont stated that his policy decisions as Governor were based upon his own "deliberate inquiry" and would "influence [him] in all [his] public relations."⁴⁷¹ One article even mentioned Prince Napoleon hiring a new secretary whose "duties are to reply to letter and applications, to arrange audiences, private or official visions, and all that affects the new pretender's public relations."⁴⁷² Public relations was not necessarily tied exclusively to an office, but also to a particular issue in which the officeholder was involved. Some of the political topics politicians were tied to included currency issues,⁴⁷³ taxation,⁴⁷⁴ Interior Department management,⁴⁷⁵ and slavery.⁴⁷⁶

Public relations was not exclusively used to describe the personal qualities of politicians and their relationships with the public. In some articles, political public relations was characterized as a formal political relationship between politicians. James Madison used "public relations" in context with interpersonal political relationships in his speech declining his nomination for President by the Democratic

Party in 1828. Madison wrote:

Not with these considerations could I fail to combine, a recollection of the public relations in which I stood to the distinguished individuals now dividing the favor of their country, and the proofs given to both of the high estimation they were held by me.⁴⁷⁷

In 1860 the *New York Times* published an article about the retirement of Senator D.L. Yulee in which Senator Yulee is quoted as saying that he is “closing the public relations which have been so long maintained between us [meaning him and a fellow Senator].⁴⁷⁸ In speeches given during Representative H. Blount’s retirement from the United States House of Representatives, several colleagues mentioned how “their public relations [with Blount] are so soon to be severed” because of his retirement.⁴⁷⁹ These formal political relationships were the subject of interest. In 1873 a book by John W. Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men*, was mentioned in the *New York Times* as a summer book. According to the *New York Times* Forney was able to gain insight into these politicians because of “the public relations of the author...have brought him into intimate contact with many of the most eminent American politicians.”⁴⁸⁰

Political relationships were also described as having difficult public relations. The strain between President Andrew Jackson and a military officer, Major Donelson, was discussed in terms of public relations. The *Vermont Gazette* said that “the public relations between the President and himself [Donelson] had ceased” because of Donelson’s disagreement with Jackson over policy.⁴⁸¹ However, political disagreements did not always mean a cessation of public relations. During the Nullification Crisis in South Carolina President Jackson and Vice President John C.

Calhoun were at political odds; however, the *Richmond Enquirer* noted this disagreement “is not to affect their public relations.”⁴⁸²

Similar to the use of public relations in international affairs, domestic politics’ public relations suggests that relationships matter. Political public relations in domestic politics required relationships between politicians, constituents, and political parties. In addition, this relationship showed there was a degree of accountability in public relations. Private life and public relations were intertwined for the politician at a higher level than the regular citizen. This is perhaps because of the status of the politicians and his responsibilities to the public. Because of this interconnectivity between private and public relations, there is a sense that politicians cared very much about their public relations since it was a form of image and reputation management. Formal duties combined with personal character combined to form the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century idea of domestic public relations.

IV. Conclusion

Exploring the popular press’ use of the term public relations shows that the meaning of the term today is closely related to its use from 1770 to 1918. Public relations as a concept has stayed very consistent since the eighteenth century emphasizing themes of relationship management, image awareness, reputational concern, public perception, and responsibility to representative groups.

The analysis of these articles presents three major historical insights. First, early use of the term public relations included the concept of reputation and public perceptions. Articles referring to individual public relations suggest that a member of society had to reach a certain status before they had public relations. This relates with

the idea that public relations as a practice is something that occurs only when there are key publics to interact with. Moreover, the idea of public relations as civic engagement suggests the idea that earlier conceptualization of public relations connotes some type of social responsibility to one's family, community, and self.

The second major insight into early use of the term "public relations" is that the term implied concern for interested groups, or publics. Religious public relations presents an important idea of constituent responsibility. Ministers' public relations to their church members also suggests a type of accountability and leadership. The image of the church was embodied by these representatives who gave legitimacy to their teachings and values by living them in their behavior. Accessibility and honesty are themes that emerge in ministerial public relations that apply to any organizational PR practiced today. This theme of good public relations also related to politicians who were concerned about their constituents. More importantly, church use of public relations committees suggest this concern about publics generated a grassroots influence in public relations development. These committees in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries operate much in the same way as modern public relations committees. They too have accountability to target groups, organized to represent certain interests, and participate in analysis of goals.

The third, and perhaps most important, insight into early use of the term public relations is that early use of the term suggests it is a practice. Politics has long been anecdotally associated with public relations because elections require politicians to communicate with voters and maintain a relationship with them once elected. However, political use of the term public relations suggests that those involved with it

used communications to build relationships. This is evidenced by the large amount of speeches, letters, and anecdotes that involve the use of political public relations.

Additionally, the practice of public relations was relegated to only a select few people such as clergy or politicians. Within the international and domestic political areas, relationship building, maintenance, and sustainability were all essential to success. In the articles discussing politicians it is evident that they had sense of self-image and public reception of their behavior. In the international context, much as in individual public relations there is the sense that there is the official public relations of a country and private personal relations. This official nature of political public relations comes in the form of communication and interaction between officials. As the articles suggest, this is a skill that ministers and politicians needed to develop and hone as a form of general public relations engagement.

Individual, religious, and political uses of public relations suggest that the term's meaning is deeply rooted in relationships. However, these categorical uses of public relations represent only half of the sample of article analyzed. Business, professional associations, and educational institutions also used the term public relations frequently during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: PUBLIC RELATIONS IN BUSINESS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND EDUCATION⁴⁸³

In public relations history business, professionals, and education are touted as areas where public relations practice first developed. However, historians examine business public relations by looking at communications techniques used by organizations rather than looking at the use of the term public relations. In looking at the term public relations in a business, professional, and educational context, a more complex history emerges that shows business public relations was closely tied with government agencies, reform laws, and the legal status of publically owned companies. That aspect of the history of public relations is absent from current historiography. Professional organizations and education also play a prominent role in the creation of the term public relations. Within the professional context public relations translated into peer enforcement of professional values. For education public relations meant building alumni contact for fundraising. Both professional organizations and education public relations are discussed tangentially within PR history. While Cutlip examined educational public relations and John Price Jones fundraising history, no study has shown how these areas of public relations practice coexisted with businesses and professional groups.⁴⁸⁴ Examining public relations in business, professional groups, and education shows many of the same themes of relationship management, image consciousness, and recognition of public that were seen in the previous chapter.

This chapter groups businesses, professional associations and education because they are all rooted in the post-Civil War era. The use of the term in all three categories show that public relations was associated with social outreach and identifiable standards within relationships. These relationships took many forms and included customers, government, students, other professionals, and the public at large. The tactics used in business, professional groups, and education utilized identifiable committees who had goals, standards of evaluation, and principles. In these samples there is evidence that within the late nineteenth century there were public relations campaigns to create awareness, fidelity, and contributions to organizations.

As described in chapter one, the articles examined in this chapter come from a keyword search of “public relations” in American Periodicals Series, ProQuest American Newspapers Online, Accessible Archives, America’s Historical Newspapers, JSTOR, resulted in 163 articles analyzed in this chapter. During the analysis of these articles the *Electric Railway Journal*, a publication produced in this sample, was frequently mentioned. Because of this the term “public relations” was keyword searched in the *Electric Railway Journal* producing six additional articles. These six articles provided such significant insight on the development of corporate public relations they were included for analysis making the total number of articles 169. The term public relations appears in quotations when directly referring to the term’s use in an article.

The connection between early public relations and business is found in the early PR histories written by Bernays. In his 1952 book *Public Relations*, Bernays credits business with bringing about modern public relations practice.⁴⁸⁵ He cites practitioner Ivy Lee, a publicity man for Standard Oil, as the seminal figure in public relations

development. Cutlip in his 1994 book *The Unseen Power* provides a detailed list of business interests represented by early public relations practitioners.⁴⁸⁶ Grunig and Hunt's four models cite the public information model, associated with businesses, as the first professionalized PR practice.⁴⁸⁷ While these business aspects of public relations are important, they do not fully appreciate how public relations became part of business practices. Moreover, as this chapter will show these early uses of PR by businesses were not entirely voluntary. Business and public relations has a relationship rooted in laws, growth of public utilities, and the growth of government oversight.

I. Public Relations and Corporations

Public relations has a long association with business. However, the use of the term public relations generally is thought to be a post-World War I creation. Public relations as a term first appears in a business context around 1875. The context in which business used the term public relations varied depending on the industry and year. This association of business and public relations first related to a businessman's interaction with the public through official duties. However, as time progressed the public relations of business meant something more complex. By the early twentieth century the term public relations included the personal character of businessmen in their public relations, legal influences on business public relations, railroad public relations, banking and insurance public relations, and public relations courses and literature written by business schools.

A. Public Relations as a Company's Image and Legal Boundaries

Early discussions of public relations and business involved the role of a businessman as a personality force within his company. In 1854, businessman Jonathan Havens, who was both a Congressman and part owner of shipping company, "enjoyed in

a high degree of confidence...in all the private as well as public relations of life.”⁴⁸⁸ Other business figures were described as being “important,”⁴⁸⁹ “progressive,”⁴⁹⁰ “enterprising,”⁴⁹¹ “respected,”⁴⁹² “prompt and faithful,”⁴⁹³ “fidelity,”⁴⁹⁴ “distinguished,”⁴⁹⁵ and “joyous, modest, unassuming, and conscientious performance” in their “public relations.”⁴⁹⁶ There was even a *Saturday Evening Post* poem about a businessman’s public relations which read, “In all his public relations he was true as steel to principle.”⁴⁹⁷

Image was a major part of the discussion of “public relations,” especially since corporations had great image crisis with the American public during the Industrial Revolution.⁴⁹⁸ While some businessmen, such as P.T. Shutze, had “public relations” in business that was informed by his Christian faith, others were described in more calculating terms.⁴⁹⁹ The public relations of businessmen involved criticisms and serious competition with others.⁵⁰⁰ This may explain why descriptions of businessmen’s public relations focused on their savvy business behavior that included being “business-like,” “cool”⁵⁰¹ while having “vigor and exuberance”⁵⁰² when dealing with the “perplexities of public relations”⁵⁰³ associated with business.

While business public relations was associated with executives and business owners, it also involved law and government regulation. In fact, in 1909 the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia defined “public relations” as “involving a trust or official duty.”⁵⁰⁴ In 1913 Northwestern University’s School of Commerce suggested that a course in “public relations” be added to their business curriculum.⁵⁰⁵ The reason behind this curriculum change was increased involvement of businesses with municipal issues and taxation. In addition, new public service utilities were the byproduct of increased

taxation of individual citizens. Because of this taxation there was perception that utilities were a public interest.⁵⁰⁶ This discussion was prevalent in many tax organizations and publications. For instance, the International Tax Association in 1909 sponsored a lecture entitled “Public Relations and taxation of Public Service Corporations” that discussed the benefits of using ad valorem taxes for public service companies.⁵⁰⁷

Other public relations issues involved corporate interaction with state agencies and governments. Eminent domain, the power of the state to seize property for public use, was a part of a corporation’s “public relations” since the state sometimes used eminent domain on behalf of business interests.⁵⁰⁸ This practice was referred to by some as “quasi-public relations” because the corporation was acting as a pseudo-state entity when soliciting the government to condemn property.⁵⁰⁹

However, this close association between government and corporation was not the typical use of term “public relations.” More often, corporate “public relations” referred to a company trying to maneuver through new state regulations. As early as 1858 an article appeared that discussed these “public relations” of corporations which were affected by the “bigotry” of state government.⁵¹⁰ Other concerns involved the state providing immunity for public service corporations in liability suits⁵¹¹ or government regulation of business “public relations” in the form of contributions to campaigns.⁵¹² In 1892 the *American Law Review* discussed “the corporation problem” focusing on internal issues of corruption of businesses and issues surrounding “the public relations and general business methods of corporations.”⁵¹³

By the turn of the twentieth century there was an increased recognition that corporations were closely tied with the interests of government.⁵¹⁴ Because of this,

companies with “public relations” began to have their legal departments discussed in the press. In 1901 a “president of a corporation with public relations” said that “it would be cheaper to obey the law” than to pay the legal department.⁵¹⁵ Another article from 1875 contained a “Statement of the Corporation Counsel” that specifically addressed the “public relations” of a plaintiff and defendant.⁵¹⁶ The role of the lawyer in corporate “public relations” was troubling for Edward Sheppard, who in 1906 wrote that attorneys must learn to sever their interests from corporate clients. Sheppard said lawyers should “make it clear to the American people that, in their public relations, they are concerned to enforce truth and publicity upon corporations and upon all who derive from our laws any sort of franchise or right.”⁵¹⁷ These portrayals of public relations coincide with Olasky who argues that the growth of public relations is linked to government contacts. According to Olasky, corporations’ public relations used government contacts to maximize regulation which eliminated competition who could not afford to comply with these new requirements. He points to this use of corporate public relations as the sinister truth of early corporate PR practice.⁵¹⁸

B. Public Relations of Railroads

The use of the term “public relations” was increasingly used with large corporate railroads in the late nineteenth century.⁵¹⁹ The association between “public relations” as a term and railroads is complex because it encompasses both official roles of railroad executives as well as the railroad’s legal status within the government.⁵²⁰ State government interaction with railroads was termed “public relations” in legal contexts in eleven articles in this sample. In fact, having “public relations” granted railroads a certain legal status that allowed them to be sued by the public and regulated by state and

federal agencies. One court case from 1875 illustrates “public relations” as a legal status when it said, “Over the railroad as a highway and in all its public relations, the state, by virtue of its general legislative power, has supervision and control.”⁵²¹ By 1887 the “public relations” of railroads served as a justification for applying the “value of service doctrine” to railroad issues.⁵²² In 1888 *The Washington Post* ran an article that recounted a speech from General Harrison, who directly addressed the legal “public relations” of railroads and the ability of the government to end a railroad strike.⁵²³ He said:

I do not doubt, either, that as those corporations are not private corporations, but are recognized by the law to which I have referred and by the uniform decisions of our courts as having public relations, we shall yet see legislation in the direction of providing some suitable tribunal of arbitration for the settlement of differences between railroad men and the companies that engage their services.⁵²⁴

Railroad “public relations” was frequently cited as a reason why certain “common carrier” laws applied to railroads which allowed for greater regulations of consumer issues and price-fixing.⁵²⁵ One article from 1892 stated that “the public relations of the railways of the State are those of a common carrier, and the legislature is empowered thereunder to determine what are the abuses, unjust discriminations, and extortions in rates in freight and passenger traffic.”⁵²⁶ The common carrier status of railroads also allowed for certain negligence lawsuits to be filed against the railroad in state courts. In 1901 the Appellate Court of Indiana held that because a railroad had “public relations” and therefore was a common carrier it was liable for any injury to a passenger.⁵²⁷ The court held:

public relations arising upon the agreement to carry, is to this effect,--that any indorsement [sic] or agreement on the back of any part of the contract of carriage which, on consideration of gratuitous or reduced rate of passage, exempts the carrier from liability for negligence is against the policy of the law and void.⁵²⁸

Railroads, of course, disagreed that having “public relations” made them liable.⁵²⁹ This, however, was not the view of the courts in the nineteenth century. In addition to increased liability, states cited railroads’ “public relations” as a justification for taking power from certain corporate commissions or developing new “public improvements.”⁵³⁰

However, this classification of having “public relations” was essential to railroad growth. According to W.W. Finley, the President of the Southern Railway Company, these “public relations” with the government were “essential” to railroad survival.⁵³¹

Railroad “public relations” not only meant state regulation of the industry; it also meant railroads’ relationships with the general public, particularly passengers. The 1894 obituary of Robert Harris, a railroad director, stated that he had a “passion for justice [that] extended to public relations of the railroad properties which he managed. He was always anxious that his railroad should do its duty to the community in which it served.”⁵³² Customer service and relationships between railroads and communities were sometimes referred to as “public relations.”⁵³³ An 1897 article stated the Interstate Commerce Commission Chairman Martin Knapp stated that “the relations between the railroads and their patrons are in the nature of public relations.”⁵³⁴ One article argued railroads had “quasi-public relations” because they were “themselves species of communities.”⁵³⁵

Developing good public relations was a concern for some railroads. A 1916 article details the problems in railroad management and finances in which “uncordial public relations” was listed as a contributing factor.⁵³⁶ Other articles showed that railroads recognized these “public relations” problems and sought to improve them.⁵³⁷ The *Wall Street Journal* in 1912 directly addressed how the railroad industry sought to improve its “public relations.”⁵³⁸ It said:

Desire to improve their public relations is manifested by the railroads in many ways, such as their co-operation with shippers, for abatement of the smoke nuisance, open discussion of rate and other changes before put into effect, establishment of sanitary departments, prompt settle of damage claims, safety organizations and so on.⁵³⁹

This attempt to improve railroad “public relations” coincides with increased organizational discussion of railroad issues. In 1902 the Economic Associations’ annual meeting included a theme of “Public Relations of Railroads” which specifically addressed the high passenger rates of rail travel.⁵⁴⁰ A 1916 article from *Electric Railway Journal* detailed how “good public relations” can only be maintained if “disaffected and disgruntled employees” were not part of the company payroll.⁵⁴¹ In the article “Every Employee a Publicity Representative” it was said that drivers of electric railroads (i.e. streetcars) needed to have good “public relations” to ensure customer satisfaction.⁵⁴² In fact, F.R. Coates, the president of Toledo Railways and Light Company, wrote an article entitled “How to Improve Public Relations,” published in the December 1916 edition of *Electric Railway Journal*, which argued that good “public relations” can be established by having the public perceive the company as trustworthy, transparent, having civic

engagement, promptly paying attention to callers, keeping promises to the public, and maintaining a good employer-employee relationship.⁵⁴³

Railroads began to create public relations committees by the 1910s. In 1911 William Morgan, counsel and Vice President of the Sheboygan Railway and Electric Company, discussed the railroad's Committee on Public Relations' annual report which detailed pending legislation discussing subway franchises.⁵⁴⁴ In 1914 two articles discussed the creation of railroad public relations committees that served to provide suggestions for improved "public relations" for the company.⁵⁴⁵ In 1914 The American Electric Railway Association adopted a "Code of Public Relations Principles" that outlined ideal behavior of the company.⁵⁴⁶ These new "principles" included a ten point code of conduct that included commitments to "safety," commitment to the "interests of the public," support for state regulation of local transportation, elimination of "short term franchises," "fair capitalization," obeying securities regulations, good wages for employees, commitment to centralized ownership, "reasonable rates," and "full and frank publicity."⁵⁴⁷ The Electric Railway Association further suggested that a "bureau of public relations" be created so these principles could be enforced. A 1914 report in the *Electric Railway Journal* entitled "How the American Association is Developing Good Public Relations" stressed that openness with the public and government is essential for good public relations.⁵⁴⁸ According to the journal, one essential function of these committees is to disseminate information about the railway system to all interested parties in public or in the government.⁵⁴⁹

According to the National Railway Association principles, publicity issues were to be handled by a separate fund used for advertising.⁵⁵⁰ In fact, this advertising

campaign for public relations appeared in the *Electric Railway Journal* during 1916.⁵⁵¹

These advertisements, which were a “first of a series of talks on Fewer Accidents and Better Public Relations,” focused on how the railroads were taking measures to stop rail accidents.⁵⁵² Another “better public relations” ad showcased how electric railway

executives were concerned with safety of a rail car going through a residential area.⁵⁵³

Another advertisement promoted “BPR” or “Better Public Relations,” which was “close to the hearts of all railway men.”⁵⁵⁴ These “better public relations” included “how to gain, and hold the confidence, yes the friendship and co-operation of the public.”⁵⁵⁵

Edwin Jones, a railroad executive, was quoted in an article entitled “Better Public Relations Supremely Important,” regarding benefits of this relationship with the public.⁵⁵⁶

He said, “every effort ought to be made by street railway managers to mold public opinion so that some of the undue burden and restrictions now imposed by law may be eliminated.”⁵⁵⁷ Another article also stressed that an electric railway’s “public relations”

helped them secure a favorable amendment to a law in Oakland and Berkeley

California.⁵⁵⁸ However, railroads were not the only corporations that understood the power of “public relations.” Beginning in the late nineteenth century public relations as a term was used for many large corporate businesses.

C. Public Relations of Banks, Insurance Companies, and Public Utilities

The use of the term “public relations” was also mentioned frequently regarding banking, insurance companies, and public utilities. In 1901 *Banker’s Magazine* reprinted a speech given by the Secretary of the Treasury Lyman Gage to the New York State Bankers’ Association entitled “The Banker in his Public Relations” which focused on bankers’ role in “public relations” of public finance.⁵⁵⁹ The “public relations” of bankers

primarily concerned the relationships between large central banks and smaller branches, the exchange of currency between U.S. and foreign banks, and the United States government's regulation of interest rates that affected bank lending.⁵⁶⁰ Securities exchange by banks was also mentioned as part of banking "public relations."⁵⁶¹ The "public relations" of securities was important since selling securities on the open market required bankers to know how stable these investments were.⁵⁶² Like railroads, banking "public relations" also involved an analysis of government control over the banking system.⁵⁶³ Perhaps because of such criticism banks began to utilize "public relations" committees.⁵⁶⁴ In 1915 the American Bankers Association created a "Department of Public Relations" which was to edit and print a banking journal, the *Journal-Bulletin*.⁵⁶⁵ This journal was to "give information on current topics of banking and currency legislation and the activity of federal reserve banks."⁵⁶⁶

Like banks and railroads, insurance companies and municipal organizations were described as having "public relations" beginning in the late nineteenth century. In 1875, 1877, and 1900, the *Central Law Journal* wrote how life insurance companies had become so important in American society that they had "public relations."⁵⁶⁷ Part of the rise of insurance's "public relations" was that life insurance had become a popular means of support for women and the children of deceased men. Insurance companies were evaluated in their public relations accounting for fairness in these policies. In 1880 Brooklyn Life Insurance Company was held out as "fair and liberal in all its public relations" to policyholders.⁵⁶⁸

Public utilities were also described as having "public relations" during the early 1900s. Public utilities' relationship with the public was fostered by government

agencies' investigations into the utilities inner workings.⁵⁶⁹ Western Union in 1910 decided to make their annual report available to shareholders because of the perception that those stockholders had a right to know the company's business.⁵⁷⁰ In 1912 the American Electric Railway Association discussed the "the new movement for the improvement of public relations" with employees and convention delegates.⁵⁷¹ This theme of public relations between public utility and community was seen again in the Electric Men's Credit Association's annual meeting in 1912.⁵⁷² Theodore Vail, the president of AT&T, commented on the relationship between utilities and the general public in a 1914 interview.⁵⁷³ Commenting of the decline of anti-trust lawsuits of public utilities he said:

The recognition of the good faith of the company in its efforts to cooperate with city, state and national regulatory bodies in the solution of questions as to rates and service is confidently growing and broadening, with a marked tendency, as a result, to between and more stable public relations.⁵⁷⁴

This good "public relations" between AT&T and the government resulted in two additional years of public financing.⁵⁷⁵

Some utilities created "public relations" committees and principles. In 1914 the American Electric Railway Association, which managed trolley cars, created a statement of what public utilities owed the general public.⁵⁷⁶ Calling for a "campaign for the utilities' principles, the article said:

Owing to many attacks which have been made on various utilities in municipalities over the country the electric railway men believe that one of the first steps in a

campaign for better public relations should be a plain statement of just what they feel is due the public from them and what duties the public owes to the utilities.⁵⁷⁷

Other articles suggest that public utility companies could use “honest publicity” to help their “question of public relations.”⁵⁷⁸ A 1916 article entitled “The Public Relations of Public Utility Companies,” argued that utilities should secure proper “public relations” by serving the needs of the public and developing relationships with government entities that can protect the company.⁵⁷⁹ According to this article “proper public relations” requires “approval of the people” and no element of public “distrust.”⁵⁸⁰

C. Public Relations Within Management and as a Profession

In the turn of the twentieth century the popular press began to mention “public relations” in context with management. This executive role within public relations was perhaps because of the direct connection “public relations” had with business regulation and taxation. One article defined “public relations” as a business’ use of “governmental restrictions, special privileges, tariff policies, taxations, etc.”⁵⁸¹ In 1900 a *New York Times* front page article discussed the Metropolitan’s public relations with stockholders and citizens whose taxes subsidized the company.⁵⁸² Larger corporations were said to have developed “public relations” as a byproduct of their growth. A 1907 article commented on this saying:

These great industries have grown past the day of competition, past the direct influence of popular sentiment, past the control of local communities, past the conscious reach of the State; and, as they have grown, they have taken with them, into the public relations which they inevitably sustain, all of the shrewd trading instincts of the smaller trader.⁵⁸³

Even a timber harvesting company was said to have “public relations” when it made the decision to aggressively remove large amounts of timber.⁵⁸⁴

Press coverage of executive responsibilities increasingly included the term “public relations” after 1900. The director of United Railways was said to have official responsibilities of “public relations and finance.”⁵⁸⁵ Another article suggested companies with “public relations” required their executives to serve on multiple time-consuming boards.⁵⁸⁶ The president of Boston and Maine Railroad said that he promised his company would “do nothing which is not in accord with the soundest principles which should govern public corporations in their public relations.”⁵⁸⁷ In fact, one *New York Times* article from 1910 suggested that businessmen understood “public relations” better than most. In an article about political graft, Thomas Woodlock, the former editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, said, “If men comprehended the morality of public relations as clearly as they do that of business relations graft in politics would be as much abhorred as theft in business.”⁵⁸⁸ This is not to say that business public relations was viewed positively. In 1912 the *Washington Post* reported that “legislation has been introduced to regulate and supervise the business of corporations, especially those having public relations.”⁵⁸⁹

Perhaps because of this increased role of regulation, articles emerge that focused on executive’s preoccupation with public relations. In 1914 the *New York Times* reported that railroad executives were “giving so much attention to public relations” that they were ignoring larger issues of running the railroad.⁵⁹⁰ A 1914 Trolley Convention reiterates this concern with public relations stating that the topic would be discussed at length at their upcoming meeting. It said:

For the past three or four years public relations has been the prime topic discussed by the executives of the various companies represented and this year will see the close study given to the question of the attitude of companies and the public toward each other culminate in a "Platform of Principles," intended to state in clear and simple language the fundamentals which the railway men believe should govern these mutual relations.⁵⁹¹

This concern with public relations is also seen in the creation of various public relations committees. In 1912 the Electric Railway Association and the Electric Railway Manufacturers' Association had a "Committee on Public Relations" to discuss common issues affecting both companies.⁵⁹² The American Electrochemical Society's "committee on public relations" advised the Secretary of War on nitrate purchases in 1916.⁵⁹³

Other jobs involving public relations began emerging in the press. This large growth of railroads led to jobs in public relations such as W.L. Stanley and his new role as "intermediary" at Seaboard Air Line Railway.⁵⁹⁴ In this new role, Stanley, a longtime employee of Seaboard, was placed "in charge of public relations and taxes."⁵⁹⁵ Positions like this began to be announced in several newspapers. Later the *Atlanta Constitution* ran another article about Stanley and his role as being in charge of Seaboard's "public relations and taxes" when he assisted in moving Seaboard's corporate offices.⁵⁹⁶ The *Electric Railway Journal* posted a "positions vacant" ad for a "large Eastern electric railway system" that needed "the services of a high grade man to handle public relations and publicity work."⁵⁹⁷ In 1917 the *Wall Street Journal* ran a "business opportunity" advertisement of publicity services by "former newspapermen, who for a number of years have successfully promoted the public relations of several of the largest corporations in

the country by publicity methods.”⁵⁹⁸ By 1918, six years before Bernays claimed to have invented the term counsel on public relations, the *New York Times* ran a help wanted ad for a “Public Relations Counsel and Publicity Director” who could perform services such as “public relations, publicity, legislation and kindred functions.”⁵⁹⁹

The increased role of public relations is also seen in literature discussing its role in business education. In 1904 Paul Elder and Company published a book “The Business Career in Its Public Relations” which was part of a lecture given at the University of California’s School of Commerce on the “Morals of Trade.”⁶⁰⁰ This book, written by Albert Shaw, Ph.D., addressed public perceptions of business and commerce, specifically the lack of consumer confidence in dishonest business practices.⁶⁰¹ Shaw suggests that public relations may become part of a stand-alone profession within business. He writes:

There will at times be prejudice and passion on the part of the public, and unfair demands will be made. We shall not see the attainment of ideal conditions in the management or the public relations of any great business corporations in our day. But the time has come when any intelligent and capable young man who chooses to enter the service of a railroad or of some other great corporation may rightly feel that he becomes part of a system whose operation is vital to the public welfare. He may further feel that there is room in such a calling for all his intelligence and for the exercise and growth of all the best sentiments of his moral nature.⁶⁰²

The University of California was not the only school focusing on public relations in the business context. At Northwestern University’s School of Commerce, Willard Hotchkiss, a professor of business, suggested that the fall 1914 business curriculum include a course on “the public relations of business” which would be taken alongside a

business apprenticeship.⁶⁰³ It was noted by Hotchkiss that the “public relations of business” course could only be taken in tandem with practical business training since “public relations” is part of the “practical problems connected with the business the student intends to enter.”⁶⁰⁴

Business use of the term public relations illustrates both the development of the term and public relations as a field. Creating new boards specifically dealing with government and customer public relations shows that businesses at the turn of the century recognized building alliances and managing relationships were essential for success. What is most important about business use of the term public relations is that its use of the terminology and practice pre-dates what many scholars think as the origins of PR, specifically Bernays’ invention of “counsel on public relations.”⁶⁰⁵ The creations of boards, principles, and campaigns illustrates that PR practice developed earlier than previously thought.

II. Public Relations and Professions

While businesses were developing public relations as an outreach to government and customers, professions used the concept of public relations to craft professional standards and practices. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the term “public relations” was used in context with professions, particularly the learned professions of medicine and law. While other professions also had “public relations” such as chorus girls,⁶⁰⁶ an artist,⁶⁰⁷ and a theater owner,⁶⁰⁸ medicine and law stood out because their “public relations” were viewed in terms of the relationship the profession had with the public at large. In 1907 the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* commented on the importance of professions and their “public relations” by saying, “there is no safety where one code governs the pursuit of private or professional welfare and quite another

serve to guide a man's conduct in his public relations."⁶⁰⁹ These codes of public relations within professions were extremely important to maintain professional dignity and public favor. One such profession that was preoccupied with its public relations early on was lawyers.

Legal public relations was mentioned as the most important aspect of a lawyer's job. In 1834 Professor Greenleaf stated at Harvard's commencement that the law had important role to play within "public relations."⁶¹⁰ The *Manuel of Political Ethics* published in 1875 mentioned that lawyers, because of their education and training, were called into "public relations" of politics.⁶¹¹ The *American Law Review* in 1882 ran an article entitled "Public Relations of Lawyers" which detailed a speech given at Yale Law School that discussed how lawyers' training prepared them for "public duties" and many them "the great office-holding class."⁶¹² In 1889 *The American Law Review* mentioned explicitly that the legal profession had public relations with state governments because legal practice required interaction between lawyers and the government.⁶¹³

Lawyers' public relations included being "exemplary,"⁶¹⁴ having "harmony" between public relations and private relations,⁶¹⁵ being "faithful" to friends,⁶¹⁶ and honor.⁶¹⁷ Because public relations for lawyers was linked to their professional status, lawyers could leave "public relations" after engaging in "public relations" in their careers.⁶¹⁸ Since law had a special societal status legal public relations was viewed in terms of a standard for the profession as a whole. This is evidenced in a struggle over the meaning of legal "public relations" when working for a corporation. In 1911 the front page of the *New York Times* carried an obituary of Edward M. Shepard, a lawyer who addressed the issues of "public relations" of lawyers working for railroads. He argued

that the people should be proactive in holding these professionals and corporations accountable for their actions.⁶¹⁹

The medical profession viewed themselves as similar to lawyers in developing their own ideas about public relations.⁶²⁰ In 1893 one article said that doctors should look to the bar associations' "strict etiquette and its own methods of enforcing discipline" as an example of how medical associations should work.⁶²¹ Medical associations viewed their "public relations" in terms of their role in influencing health policies, such as quarantines.⁶²² A 1901 article directly addressed this role within medical associations stating:

What have been the public relations of medical societies hitherto? Medical societies have urged the passage of quarantine bills, have led the way in creating boards of health, and have inspired and written laws that check the spread of contagious disease. They have compelled the states...to enact laws prescribing an increasingly high standard of education for men who wish to practice medicine....⁶²³

According to the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* in 1849 Medical "public relations" involves having relationships with patients.⁶²⁴ In describing medical public relations it said:

There were elements in the life of this body...which were every hour recognized, and which every day declared. These were the public relations of medicine—its connections with society, and the individual, and in what way its duties, proceeding from these relations, could be best accomplished.⁶²⁵

The public relations of doctors was covered in other medical journals from the 1860s to the 1880s.⁶²⁶ Since the medical field's "public relations" was "sufficiently important to every practicing physician" there became a movement within the medical community to form "public relations committees."⁶²⁷ Beginning in 1904, the Chicago Medical Society created a Committee on Public Relations whose main goal was to serve as a facilitator between the society and a variety of medical specializations, specifically dentistry.⁶²⁸ There were five members from dentistry and five members from traditional medicine on the committee. The committee was designed to address common concerns on the regulation of the profession or to reach out to the legislature concerning laws that affected medical practice. The reason for this outreach to dentistry was justified by the growing field of dentistry and its somewhat distant relationship with traditional medical practice. The committee stated that "it was essential to secure unit of action on all questions of public policy."⁶²⁹

Although the "public relations" of a profession in the popular press usually referred to law or medicine, other professions had "public relations." One notable profession with public relations was that of writers, specifically newspaper reporters and editors.⁶³⁰ South Carolina's *The State* commented on the "public relations" of a newspaper in 1910 stating:

As President Taft said, newspaper in any community gets a reputation for telling the truth or for telling lies, just as the individual man may win reputation for candor or deceit. The community turns the cold shoulder very soon upon the man whom it finds it can not [sic] trust in his public relations. It should, and

sometimes it does, taboo the newspaper that provides itself unregardful of veracity and destitute of consciousness....⁶³¹

Like medicine, law, and newspapers, the field of science (social and natural) stands out in the sample as having particular type of “public relations” that benefitted the needs of society. In 1884 Nathan Allen M.D. published a book *Physiology in its More Public Relations*, which details the field’s role in public health, culture, and relationships with families.⁶³² Political science was held out as having important “public relations” because it “help[s] to a better understand of the nature of man.”⁶³³ Within the larger scientific community the idea of doing work for the benefit of the public was important. In the forty-eighth Annual Meeting of the Kansas Academy of Science held in Topeka in 1916, it was decided that younger scientists needed to become involved with the field’s “public relations” with Kansas.⁶³⁴ This would allow the state to understand the importance of scientific research and education.

While the use of public relations of professions was not as frequent of that seen in business, it represents a major insight into the history of public relations as a term and practice. Professional organizations used their “public relations” to craft principles and guidelines that informed members’ conduct. In many ways this can be viewed as a type of nineteenth century version of PR codes of ethics and organizations’ principles on mutually beneficial communication. These professional organizations also demonstrate that the practice of public relations was emerging during the nineteenth century in the form of committee work. However, professional organizations were only one group using and practicing public relations in the nineteenth century. Educational institutions

were at the forefront of developing forms of outreach, image maintenance, and organizational goals.

III. Public Relations and Schools

Education in the late nineteenth century public relations was used to mean both a teacher's role in the community as well as school fundraising. Educational leaders, specifically university presidents and school headmasters, were particularly analyzed in terms of their public relations with people inside the institution and school alumni.⁶³⁵ Their roles as educational leaders required them to engage in public relations, and, in some instances, their wives were also expected to do public relations.⁶³⁶ This public relations was tied to the idea of citizenship and the role of an educational leader in a democratic society.⁶³⁷ Other articles stated that an educational leader's public relations was inextricably tied to their personal behavior, specifically Christian conviction.⁶³⁸ However, the nature of academic leadership did not mean all presidents were well-suited to the public relations their jobs required. Jonathan P. Cushing, the President of Hampden Sydney College, was noted for having a "particularly trying" time in his public relations during his presidency because of difficulties with students and faculty.⁶³⁹ As a professional, a college president was expected to have "public relations" with many other professionals. However, Alexis Caswell, a former president of Brown University, was noted for having few public relations in comparison with other educational leaders.⁶⁴⁰ One of the reasons for this lack of public relations was that he focused his time on research instead of engaging in administrative duties.⁶⁴¹

In addition to college presidents, teachers, both in universities and secondary schools, were evaluated according to their public relations, especially in context with students.⁶⁴² The tone in these articles focused on the teachers' ability to connect with

students and the larger school community. Teachers' public relations largely dealt with their impact on students. In 1847 Dr. Annan criticized medical school professors who acted "dishonorably" in their "public relations" thus creating a lack of credibility to the profession.⁶⁴³ Other teachers used their public relations to promote education,⁶⁴⁴ engage students in lectures,⁶⁴⁵ promote morality in the classroom,⁶⁴⁶ and represent their profession as learned men.⁶⁴⁷ Recognition of good "public relations" existed in the early twentieth century, with an American educational journal writing about a Japanese dean receiving the Order of the Sacred Treasure for his "public relations" as a professor at Imperial University of Tokyo.⁶⁴⁸ Educational organizations refined what the public relations of a teacher was and specifically who these public relations were with. In 1915 the Joint Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure published their findings on educator public relations in the *American Political Science Review*.⁶⁴⁹ The report argued that teachers had multiple "public relations" that included "scientific investigation," the "student body," university "trustees," university presidents, and "the community at large."⁶⁵⁰ According to the Joint Committee professors' academic freedom required them to communicate with each of these groups that conveyed the importance of their scientific work. There is also the understanding in the report that the university president and trustees were two groups commonly at odds with each other. If an academic had "public relations" with both groups they could obtain "a clearer understanding of mutual rights and duties" with the trustees and assist the president "against the trustees as that he may act as their mouthpiece in opposition to the faculty."⁶⁵¹ The larger community of the university was also essential for public relations because they served as the financial backing for the college. Communities had "a right to

expect of its institutions of learning” because of the unique role that financing, privately and publically, held for universities.⁶⁵²

Public relations within education focused on the relationships between educational institutions and agencies, private boards, and donors. These educational institutions’ public relations were recognized as something that had to be addressed by boards and committees. In fact, as early as 1835 education was mentioned as a necessary ingredient for a man’s “public relations.”⁶⁵³ In 1886 the Princeton Alumni Association created a Princeton Club which would “bring the men together more effectively than the old association, and enable them to discuss matters bearing on the policy of the college and its public relations.”⁶⁵⁴ Financing for colleges was a particular concern for Yale University in 1888. In an attempt to attract large benefactors an article in the *New Englander and Yale Review* argued that “The opened and enlarged public relations of the college, would tend to bring to their support the men that are needed [for financial support].”⁶⁵⁵ In the early 1900s there was a recognition that financial issues had changed the “public relations” of universities which now had to deal with educational agencies.⁶⁵⁶ This new accountability of “public relations” also extended into the structure of lending rules of libraries and the “new problems of public relations” that universities offer “practical” majors instead of “theoretical” ones.⁶⁵⁷

Public relations of universities also translated to local schools which recognized that they had moved beyond simply doing administrative duties and now had public accountability. In the National Education Association’s 1899 proceedings, a member of the Board of Education in Tacoma, Washington, Dr. Ella Fifield, M.D., made an address entitled “The School Board and the Public Press” that argued school board needed to

develop relationships with local press.⁶⁵⁸ The purpose of this relationship was for school boards to garner positive news stories about their educational goals. She said:

If an individual wishes to promote any enterprise in a community, he is careful not to antagonize the newspapers, but seeks rather their indorsement [sic]. He knows his success depends largely on the estimate they place upon him and the light in which they place him before the public.”⁶⁵⁹

According to Fifield, school boards needed to play an active role in providing newspapers with information regard the public relations of the school system. She commented:

I think the press is awake to the affairs of the schools...but it may be mistaken in the line of the policy it pursues to gain the desired ends. One great trouble with newspapers sometimes is that they know so much that isn't true that they may be very misleading in the direction they give to public sentiment. No doubt part of the difficulty arises from a desire for information which they are unable to get...Perhaps this might be avoided if the reporter were taken more into the confidence of the board and furnished facts to replace his fancies.⁶⁶⁰

Under this plan, school board members were to develop relationships with reporters, utilize open meetings of the school board, and provide any information needed for reporters to craft accurate stories. Fifield also mentioned that the use of a denial of a negative story by a newspaper was a problematic strategy. Rather than reacting to a negative story, school boards should work to cultivate positive stories since a “newspaper...will always have the last word, and may dissect you and your explanation with a pen wielded with experience and pointed with sarcasm.”⁶⁶¹

Educational public relations shows a growing awareness of the power of perception. The use of the term public relations within an educational context closely resembles today's definition of PR that embraces ideas of stakeholder communication.⁶⁶² These articles show not only an understanding of public relations as image management or outreach, but also show that people within education viewed public relations as a communications practice. Much like the political figures analyzed in Chapter Three, educational institutions saw their own survival and livelihood tied to public perception. This may explain why educational institutions, like business, formed public relations committees and alumni groups to assist in image maintenance. In addition, the use of the term public relations in these articles suggests that educational institutions and educators recognized there were certain segments of the public who were interested and vested in their success.

IV. Conclusion

While the public relations in society, politics, and religion shows that the term "public relations" has eighteenth century roots, the public relations of business, professional organizations, and educations show that "public relations" has organizational roots in the nineteenth century. In examining these articles four things stand out as historically significant. First, business, professional organizations, and education show that public relations committees were common in the late nineteenth century. Received public relations history, notably that of Bernays, does not recognize that public relations as an organized practice existed and was called "public relations" prior to 1918. These early public relations committees operate in a very modern way thinking about principles, outreach, and campaigns. In fact, the public relations advertising campaign put on by

Electric Railway Journal illustrates that public relations pre-1918 was well developed both as a concept, practice, and as a term.

The second historically significant conclusion is that early public relations practice utilized statements of principles. Today's PR practice uses principle statements as a method of creating a unity of message. In the late nineteenth century this seems to also be the case. These principles illustrate a type of self-awareness on the part of the organizations who used these principles. Inherent in crafting organizational guidelines is the idea that the organization needs to present a uniform image and message to the community at large. This also suggests that in crafting these statements organizations had the concept of publics in mind since these committees were frequently engaging with public concerns.

The third historical insight is that "public relations" as a term referred to a legal status of an organization. In this sense public relations required a certain degree of transparency from an organization to the community. Public relations also served as legally mandated accountability for a business that was regulated both by governments in the form of agencies and individuals in the form of lawsuits. This suggests that public relations practices of transparency, outreach, and image maintenance derived from legal requirements.⁶⁶³

Fourth public relations use within the political sphere coincides with the rise of a popular press. Since the partisan press gave way to the popular (i.e. penny) press in the 1830s there was a need for politicians and political organizations to reach out to readers. This could have been accomplished in the partisan press era by directly publishing political positions. However, since the popular press of the 1830s gave rise to the editor

and reporter as media gatekeepers political organizations and politicians had to craft messages and use relationships to get their ideas published in the press for mass consumption.⁶⁶⁴ This coincided with the creation of solidified political parties that required branding and name identification. This did not exist in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century since loose coalitions served as political organizations. However, these organizations proved ineffective and gave way to complex and structured political parties that needed a solidified message to create party image, loyalty, and membership.⁶⁶⁵

Analyzing public relations as a term in these context creates a new understanding of the modern practice. These articles show public relations is rooted in a much more complex and lengthy history than is commonly thought. In examining this use of the term public relations it becomes evident that usage of the term has undergone only minor revisions in the last century. Older usage of public relations suggests PR practice not only has roots, but actually began much earlier than present scholarship suggests.

CHAPTER 5: PROPAGANDA'S MEANING IN THE U.S. POPULAR PRESS 1810-1918

According to Edward Bernays, propaganda was the precursor to the term public relations. In his 1928 book *Propaganda* Bernays spoke about the history of the term, arguing propaganda's meaning had become corrupted by use during World War I.⁶⁶⁶ According to Bernays, propaganda as a term was related to general promotions, similar to the proselytizing of the Catholic faith by the de Propaganda Fide, a Catholic organizations established in the seventeenth century.⁶⁶⁷ In *Propaganda*, Bernays provided an etymology of the term, arguing that propaganda messaging was a necessary function of organizations that wanted to make themselves known to the public. Looking at various dictionary definitions of propaganda, Bernays concluded that propaganda was a "perfectly wholesome word, of honest parentage, and with an honorable history."⁶⁶⁸ From this analysis Bernays justified his own attempt at resurrecting propaganda as a term and advocated its use to mean the practice of promoting organizations. He called for a "new propaganda" that would use Freudian based communication practices, specifically targeted messaging, to influence American society for consumer products.⁶⁶⁹

Bernays thought that propaganda was the victim of public misperception, particularly by newspaper editors. He saw "new propaganda" as a providing the public service of informing society about important products and issues that would improve their lives.⁶⁷⁰ However, his attempt failed, and in modern usage propaganda is still largely associated with manipulative communication practices. Bernays even

acknowledged this by saying that the term, had such a pejorative connotation that he had to invent a new term “counsel on public relations.”⁶⁷¹

Bernays proudly self-identified as a “propagandist” to describe his pre-World War I public relations practice.⁶⁷² Despite Bernays’s failure to introduce propaganda as a neutral term into the popular lexicon, his history of the term did take root in public relations historiography. Cutlip and Center acknowledged propaganda’s role in public relations, but never embraced the term to the extent Bernays did. Cutlip and Center acknowledged propaganda’s history in their well-known textbook *Effective Public Relations*, stating that early use of the term referred to religious promotion in the Catholic Church.⁶⁷³

Cutlip also acknowledged the use of propaganda in his 1995 book *Public Relations History* citing the communications used in the early American colonial period as a form of propaganda.⁶⁷⁴ However, no writer other than Bernays used propaganda as a synonym for public relations. This historical account of propaganda and its relationship to the development of PR practice is incomplete. It ignores the true meaning of the term and how it was used in the U.S. prior to 1918. Examining the use of propaganda in the United States popular press in 450 articles it is evident that the negative connotations and denotations of propaganda existed as far back as the early nineteenth century. Propaganda as a term also suggested a power differential between the sender and receivers of messages. Unlike modern public relations practice that values mutually beneficial responsibility on behalf of the sender, propaganda’s definition referred to deceptive communications that were self-serving.

In this chapter propaganda as described in U.S. press coverage is explored in four distinct contexts: religions, American politics, foreign politics and movements, and non-governmental organizations. Propaganda appears in quotations in this chapter when referring directly to articles' use of the term. The American Periodical Series and American Historical Newspapers Online were the sources of the newspaper articles used in this chapter yielding over 50,000 articles, so as described in chapter 1 a sample of 450 articles were used. The first time propaganda as a term appeared in the sample was 1810 and the last was 1918. All articles were read and then organized according to topic. From this analysis multiple definitions emerged and are discussed within each topical area.

I. Religion

Propaganda shows up in over one hundred articles in this sample of the popular press during the early 1800s in a religious context. Bernays mentioned that Catholic use of propaganda showed that its origins and true meaning were respectable. He also emphasized that Catholic propaganda closely related to promotion of the religion.⁶⁷⁵ While this sample shows that the Catholic Church did use the word propaganda to mean propagation of the faith, it was not exclusively used to mean religious promotion. Rather Catholic propaganda included discussion of church power and authority over Catholics and the enforcement of orthodoxy. In addition, propaganda was not exclusively used by Catholics. Other non-Catholic usage of propaganda appears in this era frequently referring to church doctrine, missionary duties, or general religious education. These connotations of propaganda suggest propaganda in the religious context referred to a

doctrinal, enforceable, and hierarchical relationship between religious faiths and church members.

a. Catholic Use of Propaganda

Unlike the history of propaganda relayed by Bernays or Cutlip and Center, propaganda in the Catholic context usually centered on enforcement and power over individuals and groups.⁶⁷⁶ Press coverage suggested that a chain of command ensured obedience to the propaganda and strategic implementation of these rules on believers.⁶⁷⁷ This use of propaganda took on the age-old meaning of Catholic rules and regulations put forth by the Pope and other high ranking clergy in Rome. In fact, the earliest uses of the term propaganda in this sample are articles discussing Catholic doctrine in religious magazines. Most of these articles represent news coverage of the Vatican or the Pope and their creation of new “propaganda.”⁶⁷⁸ Propaganda was designed to be directly implemented at the lower levels of the church, specifically in pastoral duties of parish priests. Many of these articles focus on the powerful Propaganda Fide, a group focusing on the spreading of Catholic faith throughout the world.⁶⁷⁹ This group consisted of men who created doctrinal interpretations and practices that were then implemented within Catholicism such as priests,⁶⁸⁰ monks,⁶⁸¹ bishops,⁶⁸² and even Italian noblemen.⁶⁸³ In addition to training clerical leaders to promote “propaganda,” the Vatican also published books, pamphlets, and encyclicals that detailed church doctrines.⁶⁸⁴ Catholic publications frequently mentioned these propaganda publications and their availability from the Vatican press for laypersons and clergy.

Dissemination of Catholic propaganda was powerful because the Church served as an enforcer of these principles. Many European countries were directly affected by the

Catholic propaganda.⁶⁸⁵ Even Jewish groups were the subject of the propaganda's reach.⁶⁸⁶ This influence of propaganda over European nations is exemplified by an article about Ireland which in 1854 paid \$45,000, over \$1 million in 2014, per year to the Roman Propaganda.⁶⁸⁷

b. Non-Catholic Use of Religious Propaganda

While Catholic use of the term propaganda meant doctrinal enforcement, non-Catholic religious groups used propaganda to mean proselytizing. Articles about propaganda discussed Presbyterians,⁶⁸⁸ Methodists,⁶⁸⁹ Baptists,⁶⁹⁰ Mormons,⁶⁹¹ Seventh Day Adventists,⁶⁹² Evangelicals,⁶⁹³ and Muslims⁶⁹⁴ describing their use of “propaganda” to promote their religious beliefs. In this context propaganda is more like Bernays’ early analysis of the term because these groups used propaganda for religious recruitment.⁶⁹⁵ This non-Catholic propaganda was not referring to the enforcement of doctrinal issues but was linked to proselytizing Christ’s message.⁶⁹⁶ This is particularly true in articles where Christian “propaganda” was related to educating the public about Christ’s teachings, specifically through missionary activities.⁶⁹⁷ Individual preachers were linked to “propaganda” messaging that boosted not only their religion but also their own personal profile.⁶⁹⁸ In fact, one article mentioned that Christianity used propaganda since Christ’s crucifixion.⁶⁹⁹ Martin Luther’s success in the Protestant Reformation during the sixteenth century was also viewed as a successful use of propaganda.⁷⁰⁰

Other religious propaganda had a mixed religious-political message. Mormon propaganda was directly linked with politics. Although this propaganda was linked to spreading religious doctrine and serve as a basis for recruiting new members, there were

other political goals.⁷⁰¹ The *New York Evangelist* in 1901 commented on these other goals by arguing that Mormon propaganda had ulterior motives. It said:

Although in a vast number of district people are aware of an active Mormon propaganda carried forward in their midst, no one appears to recognize it as what it is, a part of a vast and all pervading effort at political power.⁷⁰²

Religious political power was linked to atheism which was part of an overall movement challenging religious authority.⁷⁰³ This use of propaganda is not surprising since many Protestant groups, including Methodists, Baptists and Mormons, embrace a concept of Christianity that emphasizes the proselytizing.

II. Political Use of Propaganda

During the late nineteenth century propaganda also referred to communication in a purely political context. Popular press use of propaganda referred to political entities and their core philosophies. One article dated the use of political propaganda as far back as ancient Judea⁷⁰⁴ while another said political propaganda emerged in the Florentine Renaissance.⁷⁰⁵ Bernays, Cutlip and Center acknowledged this use of political propaganda within the twentieth century.⁷⁰⁶ However, their periodization of political propaganda ignored a longer and more international use of the term.

While political propaganda had a neutral and even positive connotation, it referred to a type of obvious persuasion used to manipulate public opinion. In these articles propaganda emerged as a form of persuasion in a variety of forms⁷⁰⁷ such as poster advertising,⁷⁰⁸ plays,⁷⁰⁹ music,⁷¹⁰ movies⁷¹¹ and picketing.⁷¹²

a. American Politics and Propaganda

The use of the term propaganda in connection with American politics first emerged in the 1890s. This use of propaganda in a political context referred to communication by a political party or political campaign. “Propaganda” was used to describe the campaigns of a nativist political party,⁷¹³ a third party,⁷¹⁴ senatorial campaigns,⁷¹⁵ liberal election initiatives,⁷¹⁶ the Progressive Movement,⁷¹⁷ the Republican Party,⁷¹⁸ William Howard Taft,⁷¹⁹ William Jennings Bryan,⁷²⁰ and Woodrow Wilson.⁷²¹

Other specific initiatives were said to have propaganda that supported their implementation. These uses of propaganda included promoting conservation,⁷²² increasing rice production,⁷²³ promoting educational institutions,⁷²⁴ increasing the sense of American pride,⁷²⁵ and increasing support for military intervention in Cuba.⁷²⁶ Bills were also promoted by “propaganda” of individual lawmakers or agencies who lobbied the American people for support for their political positions.⁷²⁷ Politicians or Congress engaged in “propaganda” for a variety of laws to create municipally owned theaters,⁷²⁸ tariffs,⁷²⁹ public sublimation of private charities,⁷³⁰ farm loans,⁷³¹ increasing food supplies,⁷³² prohibition,⁷³³ the draft,⁷³⁴ metal conservation,⁷³⁵ road development,⁷³⁶ unions,⁷³⁷ Philippine intervention,⁷³⁸ treaty ratification,⁷³⁹ an accidental shooting law,⁷⁴⁰ and even a law promoting the killing of buzzards.⁷⁴¹ This use of propaganda by the U.S. government or political parties had the goal of changing public opinion.

Nowhere is the use of the term more prevalent than in U.S. war efforts, especially during World War I. During World War I the U.S. government initiated a “propaganda” effort in Argentina to increase trade with the U.S. instead of Germany.⁷⁴² In 1918 the *New York Times* described the Creel Committee, a World War I institution designed

to garner public support for the war effort, as engaging in “propaganda” when they released a film about General “Blackjack” Pershing.⁷⁴³ However, propaganda was not always supported even when it was pro-American. Former President Theodore Roosevelt disparaged the Creel Committee’s power, stating they engaged in “partisan political propaganda of the very worst type.”⁷⁴⁴

Such comments are interesting because Bernays referred to his Creel Committee work as that of a proud “propagandist.”⁷⁴⁵ This suggests that Bernays’ description of the neutrality of the term was not present even before 1918.⁷⁴⁶ In fact, many articles from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries describe political propaganda as a type of biased promotion that was used to undermine authority. Propaganda from American political groups,⁷⁴⁷ politicians,⁷⁴⁸ and even politically involved citizens⁷⁴⁹ was said to promote views that were untruthful attacks and outright lies. In a eulogy the Secretary of War even commented that “propaganda” done by the U.S. Army was actually harmful for military strategy and readiness.⁷⁵⁰ Other articles argue that propaganda should not influence the U.S. government and its political process.⁷⁵¹ Combatting propaganda was the subject of an article in *Outlook* from 1918. Commenting on propaganda’s power and the necessity for its defeat, the article said:

Like the submarine, propaganda is a weapon. Like the submarine, it must be met and defeated. And it can be defeated only by a weapon adapted to do combat with it. You can’t defeat propaganda with cannon and soldiers any more than you can beat an airplane with poison gas. For, remember, an army is only as strong as the national spirit that stands behind that army. And the one weapon to make or break national spirit is the written and the spoken word.⁷⁵²

b. Propaganda in Foreign Politics and Diplomacy

One aspect of propaganda's use ignored by Bernays or Cutlip and Center is propaganda use within foreign politics. This foreign use of propaganda shows that not only does propaganda have European origins in the Catholic Church, but that European politics were commonly associated with the term. This may explain the negative connotations of propaganda, since propaganda was equated with foreign messages that were used to manipulate political systems. The American press reported that "propaganda" was part of many countries' official press relations including India's political and religious independence,⁷⁵³ Siam's treatment of women,⁷⁵⁴ Canada's domestic sustainability,⁷⁵⁵ Germany discouraging immigration to the U.S.,⁷⁵⁶ Filipino reform movement,⁷⁵⁷ China's exclusion policies,⁷⁵⁸ a variety of political figures in Central and South America,⁷⁵⁹ and among European royalty.⁷⁶⁰ However, most coverage of political "propaganda" outside the U.S. focused on European countries. Some of the earliest use of "propaganda" in European politics involved the propaganda of French politics.⁷⁶¹ This "propaganda" was employed by royalist political groups who argued for a restoration of the Bonaparte monarchy.⁷⁶² French political party propaganda was viewed as extremely biased and containing many false allegations against the Republic.

Similarly, English propaganda was said to have a long history beginning in the early nineteenth century. According to one article from 1821, anti-monarchical "propaganda" threatened to bring down England's king.⁷⁶³ During the twentieth century, English "propaganda" was used in a variety of political contexts, specifically during war. "Propaganda" was used by the English to support food rationing,⁷⁶⁴ combatting the Kaiser,⁷⁶⁵ increasing South American trade,⁷⁶⁶ and garnering support for the Boer War.⁷⁶⁷

Domestic use of “propaganda” in England also existed with the English government using “propaganda” in their diplomatic relationships with the French,⁷⁶⁸ combatting wartime messages of Germany,⁷⁶⁹ encouraging Canadian self-governance,⁷⁷⁰ and maintaining an allied relationship with the United States.⁷⁷¹ British trade unions were said to produce “propaganda” for socialist workers to encourage them to support Great Britain against Germany in World War I.⁷⁷²

While many uses of foreign propaganda involved government initiatives, other groups used propaganda to support regional and ethnic independence. Bernays recognized that propaganda did exist to create independence for small countries. However, in his description he does not acknowledge how propaganda was used as a term to refer to revolutions. His description of the small-nation propaganda hinges on the amateur nature of their communications.⁷⁷³ However, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century this propaganda meant something more subversive and complex than Bernays’ description implies.

Discussion of anti-government propaganda is seen in articles about Ireland, the Balkans, and Russia. Irish nationalists seeking an independent Ireland were said to use “propaganda” in their poetry and literary works.⁷⁷⁴ Other groups within Ireland used “propaganda” to support maintenance of the Gaelic language,⁷⁷⁵ Sinn Fein,⁷⁷⁶ and Irish nationalism in the United States.⁷⁷⁷ Political propaganda included governments as well as ethnic-political groups who sought independence from pre-World War I empires; some of the most discussion of political propaganda outside of the United States is found in ethnic politics including Slavic and Balkan organizations who wanted independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁷⁷⁸ Their “propaganda” included education initiatives as

well as a call for political activism.⁷⁷⁹ Slavic propaganda was thought to contain not just deceptive information, but truth about their ethnic status within the empire. A *Wall Street Journal* article commented on this in 1918:

Propaganda takes so many different aspects that it is difficult to distinguish the true from the false, but the later stories of Czech and Slavic foment appear so well authenticated that they call for more than passing thought.⁷⁸⁰

References to Russian propaganda was used by socialists, revolutionaries, and anti-Czarist nationalists to support regime change. As early as the 1880s, Russian folk songs,⁷⁸¹ novels,⁷⁸² and a newspaper edited by famed author Leo Tolstoy⁷⁸³ were considered by the American press part of politically subversive propaganda. While socialist and anarchist groups created a large amount of anti-Czarist “propaganda,”⁷⁸⁴ other issues were also the subject of propaganda, including the free Poland movement,⁷⁸⁵ support for an independent Palestine,⁷⁸⁶ and clerical “propaganda” at odds with Russian law.⁷⁸⁷ Political “propaganda” was said to be feared by the Czarist Russian government as early as the 1880s.⁷⁸⁸ Beginning in the 1880s articles report that the Russian government began criminalizing “propaganda” that advocated for governmental change,⁷⁸⁹ and some people caught disseminating “propaganda” in Russia were executed.⁷⁹⁰ In 1917 when Bolsheviks gained political power in Russia a *New York Times* article reported that thousands of prisoners accused of producing “revolutionary propaganda” were released from Siberian prisons.⁷⁹¹ The danger of Russian propaganda was even recognized and feared in other countries. In 1907 the *New York Times* reported that Berlin police were arresting students involved with Russian propaganda.⁷⁹² A

Bonaparte prince refused to have his picture taken with Czar Alexander III for fear that socialist “revolutionary propaganda” would use it to spread political unrest to France.⁷⁹³

No other country’s political propaganda was discussed more in the American press than Imperial Germany’s. Of all the historical accounts of propaganda by Bernays this description of German propaganda is the most accurate.⁷⁹⁴ Press description of German “propaganda” always had a negative connotation.⁷⁹⁵ German propaganda was associated with espionage conducted by agents within in the U.S. government.⁷⁹⁶ Germany’s use of propaganda was first described as lobbying the American Congress to stay out of World War I.⁷⁹⁷ German agents used “propaganda” on various politicians to secure U.S. support for the Kaiser or, at the very least, neutrality.⁷⁹⁸ After the United States entered into World War I, many articles discussed German propaganda that attempted to influence American public opinion that the war was unwinnable.⁷⁹⁹ The United States was not alone. The U.S. press described a worldwide German propaganda strategy in which propaganda was used in Italy,⁸⁰⁰ Russia,⁸⁰¹ Spain,⁸⁰² France,⁸⁰³ Belgium,⁸⁰⁴ Switzerland,⁸⁰⁵ Turkey,⁸⁰⁶ African colonies,⁸⁰⁷ Slavic communities,⁸⁰⁸ and South America.⁸⁰⁹

In addition to challenging American wartime morale, many articles mention that German “propaganda” targeted niche groups who had historical difficulties with the U.S. government. The press noted that German “propaganda” was being distributed in Mexico to encourage a Mexican invasion of the U.S. to reclaim land lost in the Mexican-American War.⁸¹⁰ Other domestic groups, such as African-Americans⁸¹¹ and German-Americans,⁸¹² were reported to be targeted by German “propaganda” and asked to revolt against the government.⁸¹³ The German “propaganda” problem was so pervasive that the

U.S. government setup committees to directly combat the problem.⁸¹⁴ These groups were tasked with providing counter-information against German propaganda and uncovering German propaganda networks.⁸¹⁵ In addition *The Atlanta Constitution* reported that a film called “The Kaiser” was shown as “nation-wide propaganda” against Germany.⁸¹⁶ The U.S. Senate in 1918 passed a Sedition Bill to outlaw any form of “German propaganda which...was being spread throughout the country.”⁸¹⁷ The United States State Department even created a counter-propaganda in Germany to directly advocate for a republican form of government.⁸¹⁸ By the end of World War I the popular press’ description of German propaganda uniformly represented an external communications threat to public opinion. Despite *The Washington Post* stating that German “propaganda” though widespread was ultimately ineffective and changing public opinion about the war,⁸¹⁹ these articles during World War I show that among newspapers German-style “propaganda” was regularly described as a threat to American government and popular support for democracy.

c. Political Ideologies and Subversive Group Propaganda

Although Bernays claimed propaganda had positive connotations 75 articles from this sample from 1849 to 1918 associate the term “propaganda” with subversive political groups.⁸²⁰ In this sample “propaganda” was closely tied to political movements that were apart from any government. These political ideologies represented radical or subversive groups that challenged the authority of the government and even called for a new political system. Among the first political groups identified as using propaganda were pro- and anti-slavery organizations in the 1850s.⁸²¹ These early political groups’ “propaganda” was depicted as disingenuous promotion for their point of view on slavery. In fact, pro-

slavery propaganda was portrayed as a deceptive tool of the South and secessionists,⁸²² focusing on the inaccurate depictions of southern slavery and the South's intention to expand slavery into the Western territories.

According to the press pro-silver political groups in the 1890s also used “propaganda” to publicize the issues with the gold standard and the necessity of electing Progressive politicians to national office.⁸²³ However, unlike slavery, the progressive propaganda was depicted as a form of political advocacy. No article discussed how silver propaganda was dishonest or deceptive; rather it was described more like political talking points of progressives. One example of this is found in an 1891 article from *New York Times*. It said, “The silver propaganda here [in the United States] has made known the method by which it has given the impression that the whole country is for free coinage.”⁸²⁴

The press also described early twentieth century temperance and suffrage movement as using “propaganda” to promote their causes, frequently associated with public education and as a means of creating issue awareness. Temperance propaganda was associated with a public awareness campaign of the dangers of alcohol and calling for laws criminalizing liquor production and consumption.⁸²⁵ Other temperance “propaganda” opposed these new laws by directly addressing many of the criticisms pro-temperance groups espoused about alcohols and warned against the groups extreme position.⁸²⁶

Women's suffrage distributed “propaganda” by pro and anti-suffrage groups.⁸²⁷ Pro-suffrage “propaganda” ranged from distributing literature to producing staged events, specifically staged arrests.⁸²⁸ While press coverage of the suffragists did contain explicit

sexism, the coverage was not implicitly or explicitly negative. Suffrage propaganda was depicted as a political recruitment mechanism that also served to educate the public on women's issues and competence as voting citizens. Bernays's failure to mention this type of propaganda in his history of PR is a great oversight since it represents an area of propagandizing that exemplified grassroots communication and the inclusion of women.

Pacifist propaganda also began to be discussed in the early twentieth century. However, unlike temperance or suffrage, pacifism's propaganda was portrayed as a more legitimate political movement, perhaps because it was more organized and had a political dimension. Pacifist "propaganda" first emerged at the turn of the twentieth century and encouraged isolationism and the elimination of a standing army.⁸²⁹ This "propaganda" was targeted to elected officials who influenced policy in Congress and was therefore described more in terms of lobbying than direct public appeals.⁸³⁰ Pacifist or peace "propaganda" primarily used print literature and was quite vocal in its criticism of war, foreign alliances, and the draft. However, this propaganda was not without major criticism. One article from *Life* said that pacifist groups had a "lavish propaganda" budget that was financed by foreign groups.⁸³¹ Articles depicted pacifist "propaganda" as unpatriotic and a danger to government authority.⁸³² However, this propaganda was not depicted as disloyal or disaffected U.S. citizens who opposed foreign wars; it was shown as a political movement that had at least some validity.

By contrast articles depicted socialist and anarchist propaganda as a major subversive movement that targeted specific disillusioned groups, particularly workers.⁸³³ Socialist and anarchist propaganda was depicted as an issue not only for the United States but also in Russia, Germany, France, and England.⁸³⁴ Socialist propaganda was

frequently said to be distributed by agents of the socialist or anarchist groups or parties. Press coverage of this form of “propaganda” focused on the effectiveness and the salience of false messages that were printed or promoted in speeches.⁸³⁵ One frequently mentioned characteristic of socialist propaganda was its deceptiveness. Several articles focused on governmental crackdowns on socialist or anarchist propaganda agents or printing presses that were widely distributing subversive material.⁸³⁶ Unlike other social movement “propaganda,” socialism and anarchism was almost exclusively associated with danger and violence,⁸³⁷ such as a *New York Times* article from 1905, which stated that bombings were a preferred method of promoting anarchist “propaganda.”⁸³⁸ Such propaganda was described as a threat to security and to stability of the U.S. government. In addition, socialist and anarchist propaganda was associated with deception and lying to attract uneducated and disadvantaged groups who did not understand the true philosophy of the movement.

III. Non-Political Groups and Propaganda

While most propaganda use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries referred to religious or political groups, a handful of articles used propaganda to mean publicizing social causes and financial groups. Of the 450 articles used in this analysis, only 21 articles fell into this category. Like the propaganda of politics and religion, this use of propaganda for clubs or financial institutions served to persuade the public and change behavior and attitudes. This use of propaganda most closely resembles what Bernays was attempting to advocate for in his 1928 book *Propaganda*.⁸³⁹ In this context propaganda had a neutral connotation of raising public awareness.⁸⁴⁰

Most propaganda used outside a political or religious context was in the financial sector.⁸⁴¹ One group that heavily used “propaganda” to promote business interests was the Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁴² Business promotion was not the only goal of financial propaganda. Wall Street banks were said to use “propaganda” to influence the stock market.⁸⁴³

Social movements outside the political sphere also used “propaganda” to promote their cause. These groups promoted a wide range of philosophical views such as transcendentalism,⁸⁴⁴ racial equality,⁸⁴⁵ scientific research,⁸⁴⁶ a universal language,⁸⁴⁷ Zionism,⁸⁴⁸ and conservation.⁸⁴⁹ In addition to these general social interests, stand-alone organizations also used propaganda for recruitment and promoting club events. These groups included the Sunshine Club,⁸⁵⁰ a merchants association,⁸⁵¹ a Jewish society,⁸⁵² a safety exposition,⁸⁵³ an educational alliance,⁸⁵⁴ an economic exposition in Paris,⁸⁵⁵ a cow protection society,⁸⁵⁶ the American Bar Association,⁸⁵⁷ the Audubon Society,⁸⁵⁸ a New York philanthropy for the theater.⁸⁵⁹ Other large social interest groups also used “propaganda” especially to promote health consciousness. This health propaganda not only focused on informing people about taking precautions with disease but also created awareness that would result in financial contributions to research.⁸⁶⁰ Individuals such as John D. Rockefeller,⁸⁶¹ an actress,⁸⁶² and debutantes.⁸⁶³ were said to use “propaganda” that promoted their political and social views.

What makes this type of propaganda different from its religious and political counterparts is the tone of the articles describing it. While religious propaganda was associated with power and political propaganda was associated with manipulative persuasion, propaganda use for financial organizations, clubs, and individuals was

associated with publicity. Aside from one article discussing the dangers of “propaganda” for colleges,⁸⁶⁴ no article presented this kind of propaganda in a negative way. This private sector use of propaganda suggests a relationship more with promotional advertising or publicity events. In addition, deception is not mentioned as a characteristic of propaganda. However, it is important to note that among all mentions of propaganda in this sample, private sector propaganda was the least discussed. This may explain why the term propaganda had limited success in Bernays’ attempt to resurrect the term in the aftermath of World War I.

IV. Conclusion

Propaganda’s role within public relations history is complex and subject to many misconceptions. Propaganda is included in public relations historiography in large part due to Edward Bernays including it in his early chronicle of PR development. Bernays’s use of propaganda is directly related to his own experiences in the Creel Committee and his attempt after World War I to resurrect the term to mean a type of sophisticated promotions practice.⁸⁶⁵ However, Bernays’s history and its subsequent acceptance by other scholars creates historical problems for the field.⁸⁶⁶ It incorrectly assumes that propaganda went from a neutral term meaning promotion to a pejorative term post-World War I that meant deceptive advocacy.

These articles from the popular press show that propaganda’s definition was largely associated with deception and subversion well before World War I. Even the earliest uses of propaganda in a Catholic context implied a power structure imposing its will on others. Unlike the term public relations, which always had an implied sense of accountability, propaganda was associated with pure advocacy. Outside of the religious

context, propaganda also is largely associated with government and politics. This too implies a power relationship between sender and receiver because politics is largely associated with self-promotional advocacy.

It is important to note that Bernays did not recognize that grassroots movements used propaganda. Social movements, political subversives, and even revolutionary advocates were associated with propaganda. Perhaps these uses of propaganda were an inconvenient aspect of Bernays's PR history. However, by excluding these uses of propaganda Bernays created a historical narrative that excludes the contributions of women, small organizations, and laypersons. Because these groups made significant use of propaganda and were largely associated with the term in the popular press, their inclusion is essential to fully understand propaganda's use and meaning in context with public relations.

This more accurate history of propaganda may explain why Bernays' attempt to reintroduce the term in the 1920s failed.⁸⁶⁷ He was using a term that had a long history of association with subversive, revolutionary, and dishonest usage. The term also was used largely to mean religious or political communication and had a limited use in the private sector. Applying it to business promotions practice appears ill-conceived since the term had never connoted socially-responsible, professional communications practice. This is compounded by the fact that the use of propaganda automatically connoted subversive persuasion. Using propaganda, which by 1918 was such an explicitly loaded term, would disallow any realization of these Freudian goals. In fact, by associating public relations with propaganda Bernays associated the field of PR with a form of communication known for its dishonesty and deception. Because of Bernays's focus on

propaganda, PR's own identity has been negatively affected since many PR histories begin by wrongly asserting that early public relations was called propaganda.

CHAPTER 6: U.S. PRESS AGENTS AND PRESS AGENCY 1857-1918

Perhaps no figure in public relations history has been so maligned and misunderstood as the press agent. For decades the press agent has been thought to be the crude, unethical predecessor to the modern public relations practitioner. Edward Bernays described the press agent as a huckster who was a shameless promoter and would say or do anything to get newspaper attention.⁸⁶⁸ This narrative is repeated by James Grunig and Todd Hunt's four models which place press agency as the first, and least ethical, form of public relations practice.⁸⁶⁹ Scott Cutlip's work also portrays the press agents as the nineteenth century equivalent of media hacks, constantly promoting themselves and their organizations through any means necessary.⁸⁷⁰ According to this interpretation of press agency, P.T. Barnum is the archetype of the press agent because his over-the-top stories and stunts were used to feed public imagination for his museum and circus. Today press agency serves as an example of bad public relations that modern PR has tried to remedy through increased professionalism and practitioner accountability. However, this depiction of press agency and press agents is flawed because it embraces only criticism and ignores the rich and complex practice of press agents.

Analysis of 1,206 articles from the popular press from 1857 to 1918 makes it clear that agency was a much more complex practice than current historiography suggests. While some press agents were maligned as being shameless promoters, others worked in well-regarded fields including politics, civic organizations, and business. Press agents also had close ties to the press, especially since many press agents were

former reporters. These articles show that press agents worked in a variety of fields, and were associated with large companies or national political campaigns. Examining this misunderstood and underexplored era in public relations history shows that press agents were more than a crude ancestor to modern PR. They are in many respects PR practitioners by another name, and derogatory portrayals are not supported by the historical record.⁸⁷¹

This chapter used keyword searched of American Periodical Series and ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online, and Wall Street Journal Historical Articles using “press agent*.” All articles were used for this analysis except ProQuest Historical Newspapers Online’s results from 1900 to 1918. Because ProQuest generated over 4,300 articles for “press agent*” from 1900 to 1918 a sample was used as described in chapter 1, and 1,206 used in this study. The first article was published in 1857 and the last in 1918. In this chapter press agent appears in quotation marks when directly referring to the term’s use in an article.

I. Descriptions of Press Agents

a. Relationship with Newspapers

According to the U.S. print press, the origins of the press agent vary, but they all involve a connection with the popular press. While some articles argued press agency began in ancient times, press agency was largely seen as a byproduct of the popular press in the nineteenth century.⁸⁷² One article from the *Christian Science Monitor* claimed press agents had a long history in Europe before coming to America. It argued that the press agent first emerged during the 1820s in Paris with publishing houses. Since advertising was expensive and unavailable to new writers, publishers used their less

gifted writers to craft news stories that were surreptitiously planted in Parisian newspapers at night during the printing process. Prolific French novelist Honoré de Balzac was credited with chronicling how these French press agents got authors free literary publicity. According to Balzac, the process stopped beginning in the mid nineteenth century with the introduction of poster advertising.⁸⁷³ Regardless if this story is the true beginning of press agency, it highlights a dominant theme in press agent history—the relationship between press agent and the press. This relationship was difficult because both parties needed each other while simultaneously disliking each others' practice. Stories from the American popular press detail this role and illustrate the complex relationship press agents had with reporters and the press.⁸⁷⁴

The first appearance of press agents in the U.S. popular press were Associated Press and General press agents who worked for these wire services. It is unclear if these press agents were perceived as agents of the Associated Press or were press agents engaged with press agency. However, despite this lack of clarity, these Associated Press agents are included in this analysis because of the volume of the articles that contained the term and because it illustrates a potential link between press agency and reporters. What is known is the Associated Press began in the mid nineteenth century prior to the American Civil War.⁸⁷⁵ Based in the northern United States the Associated Press gained prominence because of their reporting of the Civil War. The first mention of these Associated Press agents was in 1857 in the *New York Times*.⁸⁷⁶ In that article the Associated Press agent wanted a telegraph office to stay open late until 11 p.m. so the agent could receive information.⁸⁷⁷ Although the term Associated Press agent was used in two articles after 1900, it is almost exclusively a nineteenth century term.⁸⁷⁸

Associated Press agents were in direct contact with newspapers,⁸⁷⁹ with one article stating an Associated Press agent had an office inside *Minneapolis Tribune*.⁸⁸⁰ Another article told how the Associated Press agent wrote news stories that were then sold to (or sometimes stolen by) other U.S. newspapers.⁸⁸¹ The job of the Associated Press agent essentially involved writing news stories in certain towns and then disseminating this news to other papers by telegraph⁸⁸² and even by carrier pigeon.⁸⁸³ In fact, Western Union in 1880 had a “general press agent,” W.B. Somerville, who regularly transmitted news stories through the Western Union telegraph that were reprinted in newspapers across the United States.⁸⁸⁴ Associated Press and General press agents’ jobs were to write first-hand accounts of events in the states or countries in which they were stationed.⁸⁸⁵

Associated Press agents were heavily associated with political reporting.⁸⁸⁶ Some Associated Press agents worked as press agents while serving in political office, such as a Tennessee legislator.⁸⁸⁷ This political reporting was the focus of General press agents who were almost exclusively based in the American South by the *New York Times*. Their reports focused on Reconstruction. During the 1870s, thirty-six articles appear from Southern based, usually in New Orleans, general press agents who reported political news in the South.⁸⁸⁸ After 1874, when Congressional support for Reconstruction was waning, the term general press agent disappears from this sample of the popular press.

From the 1870s through the 1880s mentions of Associated Press agents increased. In fact, it appears that Associated Press agents even had some specialty organization such as the Western Associated Press Agents,⁸⁸⁹ the New York Associated Press agents,⁸⁹⁰ the American press agents,⁸⁹¹ and “southern associated press agents.”⁸⁹² This period also

saw the beginning of large amounts of criticism of Associated Press agents, specifically regarding the point of view their articles took. Although Associated Press agents wrote coverage of newsworthy events,⁸⁹³ their work was not always perceived as unbiased. Articles complained that press agents were one-sided in their reporting and had underlying sympathies such as being Democrats,⁸⁹⁴ overly Republican,⁸⁹⁵ critical of Washington D.C.,⁸⁹⁶ ignorant of the West,⁸⁹⁷ pro-Lottery,⁸⁹⁸ pro-Filipino,⁸⁹⁹ “sending out lying dispatches,”⁹⁰⁰ and “stupid.”⁹⁰¹ One article even mentioned that a Florida judge demanded a retraction of an article concerning a grand jury investigation of corrupt practices in local law enforcement written by an Associated Press agent.⁹⁰² Another complained that an Associated Press agent wrote a “belligerently” inaccurate piece about the President of the United States’ comment on public debt.⁹⁰³

Some articles suggest Associated Press agents were connected to certain businesses or organizations. An 1869 article detailed how Associated Press agents were in charge of giving out tickets to a railroad ball to other members of the press.⁹⁰⁴ Other articles speak about pro-Confederate sympathies of the Associated Press and general press agents in the South.⁹⁰⁵ Some newspapers as early as the 1870s began to criticize the biases in Associated Press agent reports and even accuse them of making up stories to boost readership.⁹⁰⁶ This is not surprising since Associated Press agent stories included heroic articles in which the press agent even played a role.⁹⁰⁷ An 1870 article commented on the perceived bias in Associated Press agent reports stating, “People are too well acquainted with Associated Press telegrams to place any reliance in them.”⁹⁰⁸

From the 1870s through World War I, the stand-alone term “press agent” emerged in hundreds of press articles. Press agent in this context referred to a representative of an

organization or a well-known person. However, in the early references to press agents in the 1870s through the 1890s, articles referred to press agents' journalistic responsibilities. From the articles in the popular press it is clear that many press agents had an ongoing relationship with reporters and newspapers. Several articles mention how a press agent formally worked as a reporter for a newspaper,⁹⁰⁹ sometimes as a former editor.⁹¹⁰ During the 1870s to the 1890s news accounts of press agents emphasized their quasi-journalistic interaction with newspapers. These roles of the press agent include disseminating information through a telegraph,⁹¹¹ providing newspapers pre-written stories sometimes called "advance slips,"⁹¹² sending letters to newspaper editors,⁹¹³ giving interviews to reporters,⁹¹⁴ releasing statements to the press,⁹¹⁵ and even serving as a witness for a newspaper during a libel suit.⁹¹⁶ These relationships between newspapers and press agents seem particularly close with press agents receiving bylines and headline credits in some newspaper articles.⁹¹⁷

Press agents were also referenced as sources in stories. One 1898 article in the *Washington Post* referenced a "Press Agents' Association" that provided war news of actress Lillian Russell becoming a military nurse.⁹¹⁸ Another example of press agents in this quasi-reporter status is seen in one 1890 event when a ship's captain forbade a group of press agents from leaving a boat for fear they would report an issue to the press concerning the boat's engine failure.⁹¹⁹ Press agents were also mentioned in context with war correspondents as people who would be covering a conflict.⁹²⁰ Some articles even complained of press agents' reporting of news saying that their work is filled with "heartless jokes and exaggerated by lying head-lines [sic]" and that "Press agents, like

vultures, scent the contest from a distance, and hasten to observe and to gloat upon the scene.”⁹²¹

Press agents were depicted positively by some newspapers with many articles focusing on press agents’ intelligence and skills with publicity.⁹²² There was tacit recognition that press agents played an important role for certain organizations. Press agents were described as “capable,”⁹²³ “corking,”⁹²⁴ “accomplished,”⁹²⁵ “industrious,”⁹²⁶ “wily,”⁹²⁷ “clever,”⁹²⁸ “modest,”⁹²⁹ “pragmatic,”⁹³⁰ “enterprising,”⁹³¹ “patriotic,” hard-working,⁹³² “capable,”⁹³³ and “wise.”⁹³⁴ It was considered prudent to listen to one’s press agent because of their expertise in publicity.⁹³⁵ Other stories about press agents portrayed them as fashionable men who were very clever at their craft.⁹³⁶ This is seen in the many fictional portrayals of press agents in late nineteenth and early twentieth century serials and poems,⁹³⁷ which suggested that press agents were essential for being famous and that people sought them out as a necessity for recognition in the popular press.⁹³⁸

Press agents were presented as omnipresent within a famous person’s or organization’s life and somewhat a necessity when a person became publically known.⁹³⁹ One man even fired his press agent because he thought the agent was not aggressive enough in his promotional tactics.⁹⁴⁰ This was tied to the idea that press agents had a special ability for publicity since they could generate public interest and support.⁹⁴¹ Press agency was equated with getting press recognition through promotions.⁹⁴² Tactics involved giveaways, specifically free tickets to events,⁹⁴³ even going as far as renaming clients.⁹⁴⁴ However, there was a distinction between advertising and press agency with advertising agents having some contempt for the tactics used by press agents.⁹⁴⁵ While

some saw press agents as an expense that was sometimes unnecessary, many people used press agents to gain notoriety.⁹⁴⁶ In fact, articles show that to save money, some people acted as their own personal or organizational press agent. However, it was generally reported that press agents were essential for making a person or organization well-known.⁹⁴⁷

Despite that, some newspapers showed disdain for press agent tactics and access to the press. An article from 1862 in the *New York Times* illustrated the press' dislike of press agent fabrication.⁹⁴⁸ The article discussed how an Associated Press agent should stop creating "sensationals" which fanned public sentiment in Chicago regarding a wartime flotilla.⁹⁴⁹ One important issue with press agents was the creation of "imaginary stories" that were placed with newspaper reporters.⁹⁵⁰ These stories were viewed by the press as over-the-top exaggerations.⁹⁵¹ One article from *Puck* in 1913 commented on this, saying that "a successful press-agent must always be an idealist, not a realist."⁹⁵² These staged events or crises took the form of an imaginary crime in which a famous person was the victim.⁹⁵³ One press agent was accused on manipulating newspapers to create a staged press-fight between William Jennings Bryan and William Howard Taft.⁹⁵⁴ Another series of articles reported how press dispatches of U.S. General Fred Funston were obviously the product of press agents who over-emphasized his heroism in the Spanish-American War.⁹⁵⁵ These stories became archetypes of press agent material with *The Washington Post* lamenting in 1899 that "the press agent ought occasionally to think of something original."⁹⁵⁶

This issue of press agent news was so pervasive many newspapers ran stories specifically stating that the stories were true and not the product of press agenting.⁹⁵⁷ An

1899 article in *The Washington Post* detailed how exaggerated and fantasy stories were part of a press agent's job. It said:

A press agent is employed to procure the insertion of notices of his attraction, prepared by him in the newspapers. His habit of misstatement tends to make it impossible for him to earn his salary. The press agent's matter is not infrequently well written and interesting, and if it could be depended upon for accuracy there would be no especial reason for its rejection by newspapers. But it never can be depended upon for accuracy....⁹⁵⁸

This repudiation of press agent stories did not mean that reporters did not print press agent pieces in their papers. One *New York Times* article from 1911 complained that the U.S. government was employing as many as eight press agents whose work was being printed verbatim by lazy newspaper editors who liked receiving the free content.⁹⁵⁹ One article equated the rise of press agency with early twentieth century yellow journalism that focused on sensationalized stories.⁹⁶⁰ However, press agents and their work were banned according to some newspapers.⁹⁶¹ The lack of truthfulness of press agents prompted *Puck* to write an allegory about a truthful press agent whose "moral" was that truth made the press agent's job difficult.⁹⁶² The popular press referred to press agents as people with "imagination"⁹⁶³ who were "fiction weaver[s],"⁹⁶⁴ "faker[s],"⁹⁶⁵ "liar[s],"⁹⁶⁶ and given work by "Satan."⁹⁶⁷ One article criticized a journalist for saying his "methods" were like a press agent and his "outlook" was like the "advertising man and the promoter."⁹⁶⁸ Another article described press agent writing as attempting to "take advantage of to exploit the traditionally gullible public."⁹⁶⁹ Even when press agent writing was used it was sometimes rewritten by journalists at newspapers.⁹⁷⁰ Because of

this negative association with press agents some stories told of how journalists and public figures avoided being associated with press agents or how they had never been “press agented.”⁹⁷¹ This negativity is reflected in one *Life* cartoon regarding shooting. Its punch line said, “If they must shoot, why not shoot press agents?”⁹⁷²

This overview of the perception and early practices of press agents shows the mixed view of the field by the press. It also demonstrates that press agency’s origins lie in relationships between the press and the press agent. Conflicting views on the value and practice of press agents are more fully examined when analyzing press agency in particular contexts such as entertainment, politics, and business. These areas of press agency illustrate the complexity and variety of perceptions the popular press had about press agents.

II. Practicing Press Agency

a. Entertainment

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries press agents were largely associated with entertainment, serving as promoter, manager, business agent, and personal representative for theaters, actresses, movies, and shows. Of all the press agents of this era, entertainment press agents are most closely associated with stunts, gimmicks, or publicity tricks. However, these press agents were professionals in the sense that their job was full time, and they even had professional organizations.

i. Press Agents for Circuses and Special Events

Much of the current history of public relations traces press agents back to circuses.⁹⁷³ Circus press agents worked to promote travelling circus shows that involved unique performances and oddities that were curiosities of the late nineteenth century.⁹⁷⁴

P.T. Barnum is mentioned in twelve articles in this sample as a press agent or engaging in press agency.⁹⁷⁵ One article from 1914 even hailed him as “the world’s greatest press agent.”⁹⁷⁶ Articles also mentioned press agents working for Barnum’s circus.⁹⁷⁷ Some press agents were so well known that articles appeared in the *New York Times* when they were recovering from illnesses.⁹⁷⁸

Current PR history points to Barnum as acting as his own press agent; no history explores the press agents working for Barnum.⁹⁷⁹ A former Barnum circus press agent, Hugh Coyle, was credited in two articles as being the first press agent in the United States.⁹⁸⁰ This is significant because PR history does not acknowledge anyone other than Barnum as the first press agent. This shows that figures other than Barnum may have started press agency. Circus press agents are prototypical of the modern understanding of press agency since they are tied to intense and creative promotion.⁹⁸¹ They used exaggeration and stunts to generate interest in their shows.⁹⁸² These tactics encapsulate the over-the-top and untruthful puffery associated with nineteenth century press agents. In fact, the nature of American circus press agents was so sophisticated that one article in 1899 stated that English people were not used to the level of American circus press agency.⁹⁸³

However, these circus press agents represent a fulltime profession and illustrate that being a press agent for circuses was a long-term position. An example of the professional nature of their job is seen in 1904 when press agents met to discuss a counterfeit ticket ring.⁹⁸⁴ Articles from the late nineteenth century show that press agents also worked for special events and smaller venues. These involved unique shows or special events such as the races at the hippodrome,⁹⁸⁵ vaudeville acts,⁹⁸⁶ Wild West

shows,⁹⁸⁷ operas,⁹⁸⁸ fairs,⁹⁸⁹ track meets,⁹⁹⁰ a medical show,⁹⁹¹ wild animal shows,⁹⁹² horse and auto shows,⁹⁹³ and a dog and pony show.⁹⁹⁴ During the turn of the twentieth century, boxing matches, particularly title fights, became entertainment events coordinated by press agents.⁹⁹⁵ Boxers, such as Jack Johnson, Jim Corbett and Bill Jefferies, had personal press agents that handled their publicity.⁹⁹⁶ Grover Hayes, a featherweight boxer at the turn of the twentieth century, had an “effective press agent” according to a newspaper because the press agent sent a sports editor a box of cigars at Christmas.⁹⁹⁷

Musical performances outside of opera became a venue where press agents were mentioned either as promoters of the event or the singers in fifteen articles in this sample.⁹⁹⁸ Musical press agents worked in a variety of venues and worked in different performance areas. Articles mentioned that chorus girls,⁹⁹⁹ singers,¹⁰⁰⁰ minstrel shows,¹⁰⁰¹ a glee club,¹⁰⁰² and small scale concerts¹⁰⁰³ had press agents who served as promoters and press representatives. Musical press agents took on other responsibilities outside of promotion including determining whether there could be beer at concerts¹⁰⁰⁴ and writing books about the music industry.¹⁰⁰⁵ There is even an article that reports that as early as 1899 in Boston there was a female musical press agent, Suzanna Adams.¹⁰⁰⁶

ii. Press Agents for Theater and Films

Beginning in the 1870s and continuing through World War I individual plays¹⁰⁰⁷ and theaters¹⁰⁰⁸ had press agents who worked to promote their businesses and specific performances. These press agents did not work for performers, but for the institutions that were financing and producing plays, specifically using their newspaper contacts to gain free publicity. Press agents also coordinated staged events as publicity events such

as sending out an actor to the boardwalk of Coney Island to impersonate Theodore Roosevelt,¹⁰⁰⁹ having women wear hats to a theater to create a fight between theatergoers,¹⁰¹⁰ and starting rumors a play had a disrobing scene.¹⁰¹¹ Another mentioned promotional tactic was giving away free tickets; free tickets became an issue for theater press agents during late 1890s because there were fake reporter requests for tickets and reporters using counterfeit tickets.¹⁰¹² To combat this counterfeit ticket use New York City press agents formed the Friars Club, now known for celebrity roasts, as a press agents' association to regulate promotional tickets.¹⁰¹³

Theater press agents' close relationships with newspapers was unsurprising since many press agents formally worked in the newspaper industry.¹⁰¹⁴ But not all were former reporters. Two articles, one from 1892 and one from 1916, discuss female theatrical press agents who were not reporters.¹⁰¹⁵ A theatrical press agent's job was to write notices and articles promoting theaters or plays to disseminate to newspapers.¹⁰¹⁶ One newspaper described this writing as "eulogistic literature in sugar-coated, tabloid form."¹⁰¹⁷ Press agents stories were called a "concoction,"¹⁰¹⁸ "fraud,"¹⁰¹⁹ "yarns,"¹⁰²⁰ "fanciful writings,"¹⁰²¹ "new swindle,"¹⁰²² "sensational,"¹⁰²³ "puff,"¹⁰²⁴ and historically ignorant.¹⁰²⁵ The iconic phrase "The greatest show on earth" was described as the "grandiloquent jargon of the press agent."¹⁰²⁶

While these theater press agents were maligned in some articles, they also were recognized as an essential piece to the promotion of a play.¹⁰²⁷ This is evident from the articles that discuss the large salaries theatrical press agents received.¹⁰²⁸ In addition, several articles tell of theatrical press agents moving into managerial positions within theaters.¹⁰²⁹ Press agents also were in charge of other non-promotional aspects of theater

including recruitment of talent,¹⁰³⁰ legal advice,¹⁰³¹ finances,¹⁰³² and serving on an entertainment committee.¹⁰³³

This is not to suggest that these theater press agents were viewed positively all of the time. A 1909 article said a theater press agent was a “conscienceless individual” who only tried “to corral the attention of the public.”¹⁰³⁴ Two articles suggest the amount of press agent publicity actually hurt theaters because it created an unrealistic expectation among audiences.¹⁰³⁵ Press agents were recognized as being clever but disingenuous in their promotions. Articles referred to theatrical press agents as “ingenious,”¹⁰³⁶ “pestiferous,”¹⁰³⁷ liars,¹⁰³⁸ “hustling,”¹⁰³⁹ gossipers,¹⁰⁴⁰ imaginative,¹⁰⁴¹ and “slick.”¹⁰⁴² A common refrain in many of the articles was press agents’ habit of exaggeration or outright lying about the plays they promoted. Press agent stunts were commonly covered by the press. However, this coverage both covered the stunt and also recognized and explicitly mentioned this “news” was a press agent stunt. In many respects this coverage of press agents was tongue-and-cheek with a tacit recognition that press agents had a flair for a spectacle.

While theater promotions dominated press agent work in the late nineteenth century, films and movie companies also began using press agents. These press agents worked on a variety of films including the “Great Train Robbery,”¹⁰⁴³ African hunting films,¹⁰⁴⁴ and a large exposition of recent films.¹⁰⁴⁵ Film press agents were not unlike their theater counterparts since their jobs also involved creating sensationalized publicity to bring in movie-goers and even assisted in recruitment for talent.¹⁰⁴⁶ A series of articles published in 1918 in *The Independent* entitled “Confessions of a Motion Picture Press Agent” detailed the life and work of press agents for films.¹⁰⁴⁷ This series showed how a

press agent in the film industry used many of his techniques not only to create interest in a new movie, but also to attract investors. *The Independent* includes conflicts with newspapers who accused press agents of unethical practices in film promotion. They also spent a large part of their time in Los Angeles with the film crew and cast, specifically famous actors and actresses. The general feel of the series was that film press agents deal with large amounts of financial issues and, even in 1918, dealt with multi-million dollar film productions.¹⁰⁴⁸

iii. Press Agents for Performers and Writers

From the late 1870s through 1918 press agents were also associated with American actors¹⁰⁴⁹ and actresses.¹⁰⁵⁰ Press agents were described in some articles as absolute necessity for a performer's success.¹⁰⁵¹ While some actors and actresses opted to be their own press agent,¹⁰⁵² most articles suggested that most performers hired press agents once they reached a certain level of fame,¹⁰⁵³ noting the press agents' ability to influence public opinion about an actor or actress.¹⁰⁵⁴ The necessity of having a press agent extended to stage actors from England and Japan.¹⁰⁵⁵ Sometimes a press agent would even represent a famous animal who appeared in a play, such as dogs and monkeys.¹⁰⁵⁶ The press agents for performers served in a dual capacity as both press liaison between the performer and the press, as well as acting as a personal assistant, or as business manager for actors and actresses in salary negotiations.¹⁰⁵⁷ Press agents also made official statements for performers, served as a buffer between the performer and the press,¹⁰⁵⁸ and promoted actors' or actresses' latest role.¹⁰⁵⁹ Their duties not only were to keep the name of the performer in the paper,¹⁰⁶⁰ but also serve as a liaison between

performers and fans such as procuring autographs or photos.¹⁰⁶¹ It was essential that press agents have press contacts. A 1904 article directly stated:

It is the duty of the press agent to know the man or men on each of these half hundred publications who can “put a piece” in his paper, and then it is his duty to see that “the piece” is printed...and the man who can furnish the best “stories” or who makes himself most popular with the dramatic editors is the one who obtains the most publicity for his theater or star.¹⁰⁶²

For press agents representing performers, getting these stories in print meant creating elaborate stunts or fabrications. For example, a female press agent smuggled an actress’s newborn through Ellis Island,¹⁰⁶³ while others concocted engagement rumors,¹⁰⁶⁴ reported an actress was a victim of theft,¹⁰⁶⁵ and detailed one actress’ dinner with the Prince of Wales.¹⁰⁶⁶ Not all of these reports were entirely self-serving. In 1907 press agents and their clients arranged a baseball game to raise money for a children’s home.¹⁰⁶⁷

In addition to actors and actresses, several articles discussed press agents who represented other artists such as playwrights, novelists, composers, painters, and poets.¹⁰⁶⁸ Press agents worked to promote a specific lecture series or new work of the author. Mark Twain,¹⁰⁶⁹ John Phillip Sousa,¹⁰⁷⁰ Charles Dickens,¹⁰⁷¹ and Lord Byron¹⁰⁷² used press agents to represent them both in their celebrity and their work. While many authors used these press agents,¹⁰⁷³ Henry James, the notable nineteenth century novelist, was said to not use a press agent because he was “intrinsically great.”¹⁰⁷⁴

Articles recognized value in using press agents to promote books. One article from 1903 described the literary press agent “as indispensable to literature as to the

stage.”¹⁰⁷⁵ Publishers also had press agents that represented their interests in a new book.¹⁰⁷⁶ Publishing press agents not only promoted the book, but created publicity around the author’s personal life.¹⁰⁷⁷ A college professor even requested a press agent to accompany him on a book tour.¹⁰⁷⁸ Publishing press agents were also recognized for their ability to promote new literary works. One article from 1909 commented that “the thousand ways by which he fools the public has raised the craft of the press agent far above the art of the dramatist.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Literary press agents dealt not only with the press but also with critics.¹⁰⁸⁰ Some articles equated literary press agents with advertising.¹⁰⁸¹ However, as in theater, these promotional campaigns were criticized as creating too great an expectation for the book which ultimately created “expectations which could not be fulfilled.”¹⁰⁸²

b. Press Agents for Minor-Celebrities, Civic Organizations, and Special Events

Press agents also worked in lower profile entertainment settings. The press recognized that certain degree of publicity was required for people, events, and organizations who wanted public recognition.¹⁰⁸³ This type of press agency represents publicity at the grassroots since the work was informal and done by group members or individuals.

Less well-known individuals hired press agents to garner public attention. These included a New York City police lieutenant accused of corruption,¹⁰⁸⁴ a faith healer who was arrested for practicing medicine without a license,¹⁰⁸⁵ a man who wanted to expose police brutality,¹⁰⁸⁶ and a Japanese jiu-jitsu fighter, Hitachiyana,¹⁰⁸⁷ who came to the U.S. to promote his style of fighting. Other lesser-known people hired press agents to promote

their specific talents or oddities that included doing public stunts.¹⁰⁸⁸ In 1906 a famous criminal on death row had a press agent.¹⁰⁸⁹ In 1913 William Morris, namesake of the famed agency, said he was the press agent for a half-man half-fish.¹⁰⁹⁰ And people who were not famous but wanted to be hired press agents to create buzz around them. One example from 1912 was a fake millionaire who used a press agent to garner press attention.¹⁰⁹¹ Although using press agents to promote a hoax did not appear to be uncommon, the use of press agents by wealthy socialites was not. Debutantes used press agents to announce their engagements and other significant life events.¹⁰⁹² Certain groups of people who were in specialized areas of interest, such as female fencer,¹⁰⁹³ baseball teams and players,¹⁰⁹⁴ basketball teams,¹⁰⁹⁵ a golf tournament,¹⁰⁹⁶ and a spiritual guide,¹⁰⁹⁷ had press agent representation.

Although some churches publically stated they were not using press agents,¹⁰⁹⁸ many religious organizations did hire them to get coverage in newspapers.¹⁰⁹⁹ In 1885 an article in *Puck* joked that a “theological press-agent was hired” to “mingle with the parishioners and learn their temper” to increase church attendance.¹¹⁰⁰ Mormon press agents were said to be keeping information out of the press about Brigham Young’s leaving Salt Lake City in 1871.¹¹⁰¹ Press agents were not limited to churches. The Reverend Tom Dixon, a charismatic preacher in New York City, had a personal press agent in 1896.¹¹⁰² One report from 1890 even claimed that the Jesuits had a press agent who allegedly gained public support against an education bill in Congress.¹¹⁰³

Large organizations that put on special events employed press agents to ensure attendance and financial support. The Chicago World’s Fair held in 1893 had a press agent on the World’s Fair Committee.¹¹⁰⁴ The Omaha YMCA had a press agent in 1894

who informed the press about the organization's leadership.¹¹⁰⁵ In 1894 the *New York Times* discussed a scientific press agent for the American Association for the Advancement of Science.¹¹⁰⁶ Other clubs such as the New Orleans Olympic Club,¹¹⁰⁷ a veteran's association,¹¹⁰⁸ gun clubs,¹¹⁰⁹ a YMCA,¹¹¹⁰ the Ku Klux Klan,¹¹¹¹ a Cincinnati law firm,¹¹¹² an auto club,¹¹¹³ the Chamber of Commerce,¹¹¹⁴ an explorer's clubs,¹¹¹⁵ a labor union,¹¹¹⁶ military programs,¹¹¹⁷ the Daughters of the American Revolution¹¹¹⁸ had press agents that represented their viewpoints in the press and in many cases acted as recruiters. Specific events also were said to have press agents, including large scale events such as the Tennessee Centennial,¹¹¹⁹ the Pan-American Exposition,¹¹²⁰ the Panama-Pacific Exposition,¹¹²¹ and St. Louis World's Fair.¹¹²²

Press agents were also portrayed as a public lobbyist for political and social causes,¹¹²³ including agriculture,¹¹²⁴ land developments,¹¹²⁵ medical information,¹¹²⁶ new dances,¹¹²⁷ sea exploration,¹¹²⁸ the temperance movement,¹¹²⁹ and gambling.¹¹³⁰ The national suffragist movement employed a female press agent who did not take her husband's last name.¹¹³¹ A group of Western governors were accompanied to a meeting in New York City by their press agents.¹¹³² A school hired a female press agent, who was also an alumna, to promote teachers' education.¹¹³³ In the early 1900s there was a discussion in the press about universities hiring a press agents to promote their institutions.¹¹³⁴ Even a group of single women in South Dakota hired a press agent in 1905 to recruit single men to come to the area and marry them.¹¹³⁵

Such press agents were not necessarily formally employed. Many organizations or people acted as their own press agent without hiring professionals.¹¹³⁶ However, while many clubs' press agents were unpaid, many organizations did hire professional press

agents. The Brooklyn Roller Skating rink was sued in 1878 by a press agent who claimed the rink did not pay him \$50 per week as promised in his contract.¹¹³⁷

Entertainment press agents represent many of the popular perceptions of press agency. However, theatrical, entertainer, and small events press agents show a level of sophistication in their practice that is not currently recognized in public relations historiography. They used their relationships with newspapers and reporters to garner positive press attention. In addition, entertainment press agents worked in administrative roles within management and sometimes were managers. As the succeeding sections will show, the tactics and strategies used by entertainment press agents were implemented in a variety of fields including politics and business. Their contribution to the development of modern public relations practice is significant because they show recognition of relationship management, effective writing, and managerial expertise.

c. Politics

Political press agency took many forms in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It encapsulated domestic politics, political campaigns, politicians' image, and foreign affairs. In 1918 one article even suggested that for a democracy to thrive it needed press agents.¹¹³⁸ However, the most likely reason press agency was used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the recognition by political forces that public opinion could be influenced and swayed by the press.¹¹³⁹ In a 1912 article an anonymous "press secretary" commented on the power of creating public opinion, stating that crafting public opinion required organizations to recognize the salient issues of a community.¹¹⁴⁰ This was thought to be especially true when an organization was trying

to accomplish “national-wide movements” about which a diversity of attitudes existed.¹¹⁴¹

i. Press Agency in U.S. Government and Political Parties

Press agency, although present, was denied to exist within American political circles in three articles. This claim was meant to emphasize the authenticity of those involved with political organizations. Some articles stated that political issues such as Zionism and U.S. ambassadors were proud not to use press agency of any kind.¹¹⁴² In fact, one article suggested press agency was inappropriate for political issues, specifically war.¹¹⁴³ Despite these claims of the lack of press agency in the U.S. government, other articles point out press agents and agency existed to a large degree in U.S. politics. In 1897, *The Washington Post* stated that a “press agent” worked for the U.S. government to improve U.S.-Mexican relations.¹¹⁴⁴ According to the press the gold and silver debates that prompted the Progressive Movement in the 1890s involved press agents,¹¹⁴⁵ as did the U.S. military, both to promote military honors and to navigate Washington political circles.¹¹⁴⁶ In 1906 *The Washington Post* ran a story about the U.S. hiring a press agent for the Panama Canal whose salary was \$10,000 a year (over \$250,000 in 2014). Woodrow Wilson reportedly used a press agent before and during World War I to influence American sentiment.¹¹⁴⁷ Post-war press agents continued to be used for the Paris Committee,¹¹⁴⁸ Hoover Food Relief,¹¹⁴⁹ and varying divisions of the War department.¹¹⁵⁰

Press agents were also found in domestic politics. The U.S. Forestry Service,¹¹⁵¹ the Bureau of Mines,¹¹⁵² and the Isthmian Canal Commission¹¹⁵³ used press agents to represent their organizations’ position to the public and to the press. The National Park

Service hired an official press agent whose job was to seek “publicity” and be “supervisor of publications.”¹¹⁵⁴ States and cities such as Dallas,¹¹⁵⁵ Washington D.C.,¹¹⁵⁶ Coney Island,¹¹⁵⁷ Indiana,¹¹⁵⁸ New Mexico,¹¹⁵⁹ Florida,¹¹⁶⁰ and Alabama¹¹⁶¹ hired press agents to attract visitors and promote their businesses. The State of Michigan hired a woman, Nellie Revell, as its press agent in 1909.¹¹⁶² Her job was to “write [accounts of] state and county fairs as one way to advertise Michigan’s resources.”¹¹⁶³ In fact, the use of press agents by the U.S. government was so widespread it was criticized in 1918. An editorial in *Outlook* said that the press agent work done by all of the government agencies in Washington, D.C. produced so much duplicative information that it cost taxpayers too much money.¹¹⁶⁴

While official government press agents were widely used, political parties used them for specific campaigns. Referred to in one article as a “graceful campaign liar,” the party press agent was used by both Democrats and Republicans.¹¹⁶⁵ An 1899 article in *The Washington Post* said that the Democratic National Committee hired a press agent “who is expected to boss the Democratic editors of the country and furnish them with ready-made politics.”¹¹⁶⁶ Democratic press agents “distributed pamphlets” at the National Committee advocating for certain candidates for nomination.¹¹⁶⁷ During 1899 the Democratic Party had an issue with its press agent, P.J. Devlin, who engaged in a campaign that offended certain members of the party.¹¹⁶⁸ In 1899 the Democratic National Committee members had a movement to terminate Devlin and went so far as to advocate for “the abolishment of the press bureau.”¹¹⁶⁹ Republicans also had press agents with Jules Guthridge hired as the “Eastern press agent of the Republican National Committee” during the presidential campaign of 1896.¹¹⁷⁰ His job was to manage all of

the campaign material printed in Washington D.C. and send it to New York City.¹¹⁷¹

Local parties had press agents including the Portland, Oregon Republican Party which had a press agent as early as 1880.¹¹⁷² Less popular political movements such as the Anti-Saloon League¹¹⁷³ and the “radical Socialist movement” had press agents.¹¹⁷⁴ Even local elections used press agents. The 1890s coverage of New York City’s municipal elections mentioned press agents who worked for specific candidates from Tammany Hall.¹¹⁷⁵

Political press agents were tied to specific campaigns. An article credited General Benjamin Butler with hiring the first campaign press agent for his failed 1884 presidential bid.¹¹⁷⁶ Butler’s decision to hire a press agent was reportedly because of his connection with circus owner James Bailey. The article recounted their meeting:

General Butler originated the employment and coined the term of press agent at political headquarters...During his campaign for the presidency on the labor ticket he noticed that the representatives of the newspapers gave but little attention to the labor ticket headquarters....Bailey, the circus man, who was friend of General Butler, took some interest in his campaign, and General Butler spoke to him of the neglect of the newspapers. “Do as we Do [sic],” replied Bailey, “and hire men to take your stuff to the papers—we call them press agents, though you can call them anything else.”¹¹⁷⁷

Although Butler lost his election, the idea of using press agents in political campaigns continued through the late nineteenth century. They came from the traditional background of newspapers and theater, or were relatives and former assistants of politicians.¹¹⁷⁸ These press agents released statements by the politicians,¹¹⁷⁹ distributed

campaign “dispatches,”¹¹⁸⁰ and did general promotion work.¹¹⁸¹ One Senator even benefitted from actress Ethel Barrymore’s press agent’s announcement that Barrymore cooked him a dinner.¹¹⁸²

There was recognition that not having a press agent was a liability since there was limited press coverage of a candidate.¹¹⁸³ Hiring a press agent for a presidential campaign was expensive. In 1908 Lewis Chanler, a Democrat running for president, was sued by his press agent, William F. Clark, for \$20,000.¹¹⁸⁴ Clark’s complaint for breach of contract detailed what his campaign responsibilities were; he was to:

write articles concerning the defendant [Chanler], procure appropriate pictures and cartoons and obtain interviews with prominent politicians and cause the same to be widely published throughout the United States in newspapers of wide circulation and influence...[Clark] rendered the defendant the services requires of him under said agreement and, by means of a news bureau, created public sentiment in many sections of the United States favorable to defendant’s aforesaid scheme.¹¹⁸⁵

Chanler’s defense was that he already paid Clark \$15,000, more than \$350,000 in 2014, and that his debt was paid in full.¹¹⁸⁶ Later, press agent George Engelman brought a similar suit against Chanler for \$10,000.¹¹⁸⁷ Clark lost the suit in 1910 when the court jury found that Chandler did not owe him any further payment for his failed presidential bid.¹¹⁸⁸

Theodore Roosevelt also had press agents for political campaigns. Lyman Abbott, an editor of *Outlook*, was hired as a campaign press agent for Roosevelt during his bids for the presidency.¹¹⁸⁹ Roscoe Conkling Mitchell, a former press agent for an

explorer, was made press agent of the National Roosevelt Committee in 1912.¹¹⁹⁰ Grover Cleveland had a press agent who coordinated a fishing party in 1894.¹¹⁹¹ The press noted that William McKinley had numerous press agents that followed him on campaign tours around the U.S.¹¹⁹² *The Washington Post* reported that “when it comes to press agents and tom-tom beaters the McKinley boom is practically without opposition.”¹¹⁹³ William Howard Taft reportedly hired a press agent in his failed 1912 reelection campaign to combat the publicity that Roosevelt received.¹¹⁹⁴ Woodrow Wilson was also said to be a good personal press agent,¹¹⁹⁵ but he also employed press agents to work on his campaigns.¹¹⁹⁶ Other political figures also had press agents such as socialist Eugene Debs,¹¹⁹⁷ Democratic presidential nominee Alton Parker,¹¹⁹⁸ a mayor,¹¹⁹⁹ governors,¹²⁰⁰ senators,¹²⁰¹ the Speaker of the U.S. House,¹²⁰² and congressmen.¹²⁰³ Not all politicians had press agents. Justice Hughes, who was hailed as needing no press agent for his ill-fated presidential bid in 1916.¹²⁰⁴

Political press agents were a stand-alone profession that existed after elections. In fact, political press agents were described as a unique area of practice with some people being born to the job because of their political connections.¹²⁰⁵ Some politicians had press agents who worked for them while in office. There were even instances in which the politician were said to act as their own press agents. Such was the case with Progressive and Democrat William Jennings Bryan who was considered an excellent press agent.¹²⁰⁶ Bryan did have a press agent, Willis J. Abbot, who worked with him on his failed presidential bids.¹²⁰⁷ However, Bryan’s abilities with the press may have generated a rumor in 1896 that claimed he was leaving politics to become a theatrical press agent.¹²⁰⁸ Bryan vehemently denied these charges that he was becoming a press

agent.¹²⁰⁹ However, the plausibility of his job as press agent made sense to some Americans. One magazine said:

The story about his [Bryan] having applied last January for a job as theatrical press agent was very widely credited at first, because it corresponded with the idea that thousands of Eastern voters had of the bent of his mind. He seems versatile, fluent, and of a superlative assurance. It will be interesting to see whether he will be able to turn the advertising he has had to profitable account.¹²¹⁰

Theodore Roosevelt was similarly said to have press agent abilities. Articles commented on Roosevelt's ability for self-promotion through his military, hunting, and political exploits.¹²¹¹ *Puck* in 1915 even commented that Roosevelt's abilities as a press agent were so good that he "easily saves ten thousand dollars a year by being his own press-agent."¹²¹² Roosevelt's exploits in Cuba,¹²¹³ hunting,¹²¹⁴ and even his attendance at a snake fight¹²¹⁵ were promoted by his press agents.

ii. Foreign Conflict, Revolutions, and Diplomacy

The use of press agents was not limited to U.S. politics. They were tied to political figures or political causes outside the United States in fourteen articles in this sample. The Sultan of Turkey,¹²¹⁶ the President of Guatemala,¹²¹⁷ President of Nicaragua,¹²¹⁸ the Tsar,¹²¹⁹ the King of Sweden,¹²²⁰ a Balkan dictator,¹²²¹ the Austrian Crown Prince,¹²²² Prime Minister Lloyd George,¹²²³ and a laundry list of European nobility¹²²⁴ all used press agents. The British royal family was said to have a press agent,¹²²⁵ a claim one article denied.¹²²⁶ Press agents for world leaders were usually involved in promoting their popularity among the people or with highlighting their lifestyles, similar to press agents for actors and actresses.

Press agents were also used by countries outside the United States to promote certain political perceptions. In 1916 New York University professor W.R. Auginbaugh gave a lecture on how South American press agents were spreading rumors about U.S. trade issues.¹²²⁷ Japan, which was preoccupied with Western-style modernizing under the Meiji and Taishō Emperors, frequently used press agents to illustrate the nation's technological and political advancements.¹²²⁸ Chinese Nationalist revolutionaries had press agents who advocated the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty.¹²²⁹ Other nations used press agents to air grievances during the political conflicts in the Balkans,¹²³⁰ British issues with Boers,¹²³¹ and political conflicts within Spain.¹²³² Political groups including the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee¹²³³ and Portuguese Royalists¹²³⁴ were said to have press agents. Countries were supposed to benefit by press agents,¹²³⁵ with one article claiming Switzerland should hire a press agent to promote its "national pride."¹²³⁶ One newspaper even suggested the Russian government needed to hire a press agent since it had "abolished news censorship."¹²³⁷

The articles discussing the foreign use of press agents mainly focused on wartime. One notable use of press agents occurred in the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910 and lasted for more than a decade.¹²³⁸ Francisco Madero, the leader of the rebellion, used press agents frequently to support his ideas about overthrowing the Mexican political régime.¹²³⁹ Pancho Villa, a supporter of Medero, was also said to have press agents who promoted his exploits against the landed Mexican gentry.¹²⁴⁰ Diaz, the president of Mexico, had press agents, but his attempts at press agency were thought to be less effective.¹²⁴¹

Nineteen articles in this sample discussed, and criticized, the use of foreign press agents of the German Kaiser from the 1890s through World War I.¹²⁴² The first article about German press agents was in 1897 which told how the secret police used press agents to regulate newspaper content.¹²⁴³ During 1913 the German embassy employed a press agent in Washington D.C.¹²⁴⁴ Even German academics were said to be employed as press agents during World War I.¹²⁴⁵ German press agents were present in the United States and abroad to influence public opinion in favor of the Kaiser.¹²⁴⁶ One article mentions that the Kaiser sent a press agent to the U.S. to convince the American people that their diplomatic ties were stronger with Germany than with Great Britain.¹²⁴⁷ This tactic was used elsewhere in the world with press agents allegedly being part of a German spy system.¹²⁴⁸ The Kaiser also used press agents to foster support for his war effort and the inevitability of his victory. American papers were highly critical of his use of press agents and equated these tactics with lying and deception. However, apparently the feeling was mutual with one German press agent complaining in 1915 about the American press' negative attitude toward the Kaiser.¹²⁴⁹

Political press agents show a remarkable similarity with their entertainment counterparts. Tactics included crafting news stories, releasing information, and developing press contacts to advocate for their candidate or party. What is more significant about these political press agents was their recognition that public opinion was important to their cause. In fact, the one dominant theme in all political press agency is the recognition that public opinion was both important and something that could be changed through media exposure.

d. Business

From the 1890s through 1918 U.S. businesses had press agents who represented their interests and image. Business press agents operated like their theatrical and political counterparts, except their image was not automatically associated with deception. Rather, these press agents were viewed as part of the growing corporate structure of the United States.¹²⁵⁰ The popular press' representation of business press agents in the nineteenth century was neutral if not positive, especially when describing the pay and status these new positions had within an organization.

The first mention of business press agents appeared in the 1890s and referred to a variety of businesses. Railroads,¹²⁵¹ an electric company,¹²⁵² and a steamship company¹²⁵³ were some of the first companies said to have press agents as early as the 1870s. Other companies followed suit during the 1890s and early 1900s including a beer manufacture,¹²⁵⁴ casinos,¹²⁵⁵ AT&T,¹²⁵⁶ a sand company,¹²⁵⁷ transit companies,¹²⁵⁸ automobile companies,¹²⁵⁹ resorts and hotels,¹²⁶⁰ the London Tube,¹²⁶¹ a food manufacture,¹²⁶² and stockyards.¹²⁶³

One illustration of the corporate press agent is the career of Remsen Crawford, an Atlanta corporate press agent for the Plant Railway and Steamship System in the 1890s. Crawford's new press agent job was to help the railroad expand in its Tampa Bay, Florida project.¹²⁶⁴ Crawford was a protégé of journalist Henry W. Grady and later worked as an editor of the *Athens Banner* and journalist for the *Atlanta Constitution* after graduating from the University of Georgia in 1889.¹²⁶⁵ While at the *Atlanta Constitution* he was railroad editor and assistant city editor. As a new press agent for the Plant System he was supposed to maintain contacts with various publications including *Frank Leslie's*

Weekly.¹²⁶⁶ Crawford's background in journalism was particularly important for his new job. The *Atlanta Constitution* commented on this saying, "In his new position he [Crawford] will utilize those gifts which have brought him to the front and caused the production of his pen to be sought after by some of the leading periodicals of the country."¹²⁶⁷ The *Atlanta Constitution* was happy with Crawford's new job, and even said that it appreciated his writing style when he sent them "articles that are written in attractive newspaper style."¹²⁶⁸ Crawford's new job as a press agent was portrayed as a good career move with the *Atlanta Constitution* reprinting *Augusta Chronicle* and *Americus Times-Recorder* articles that congratulated him on his new career.¹²⁶⁹ Crawford's time with the Plant Company was covered in the *Atlanta Constitution* as was his absence in the press community.¹²⁷⁰ Crawford eventually was promoted by the Plant System to be head of the "general advertising department."¹²⁷¹

Despite this praise for Remsen Crawford, during the first decade of the 1900s corporate press agency began to be sharply criticized in the press and described as means of manipulation on market forces. Large corporations were particularly targeted as using press agents to skirt government regulation and cut down on competition.¹²⁷² One illustration is the Standard Oil Company. During the early 1900s John D. Rockefeller's company hired a press agent, former newspaper reporter J.C. Clarke, who not only represented the company in the press but Rockefeller personally.¹²⁷³ For instance Clarke ended an interview between a *New York Times* reporter and Rockefeller when the reporter began questioning him about his influence over politicians.¹²⁷⁴ In fact, as early as 1901 the *Christian Observer* reported that the Standard Oil Company employed multiple press agents who they sent out to various drilling sites to communicate with

reporters.¹²⁷⁵ According to the *Christian Observer*, the Standard Oil Company used these press agent interviews to influence the coverage of the drilling site in hopes that the oil prices would increase as a result of this coverage. J.B. Cranfill, the owner of the San Jacinto Oil Company, accused Standard Oil Company's press agents of giving misinformation to reporters about his new gusher so that news coverage of the field would be negative and investors would be harder to find.¹²⁷⁶ Like Clarke, these other press agents had a press background, with one press agent, H.C. Foger, having been a theater critic and Shakespearian scholar.¹²⁷⁷ Standard Oil continued to use press agents during the early 1900s including using a press agent to write news stories concerning a government fine that would affect their stock prices.¹²⁷⁸

Articles about financial institutions' use of press agents began in 1900.¹²⁷⁹ This was apparently a lucrative job with the cost of one bank's press agent services totaling \$500 (over \$10,000 in 2014).¹²⁸⁰ J.P Morgan was said to have an unofficial press agent, George W. Perkins, whose job was to keep reporters away from the financier.¹²⁸¹ Other Wall Street organizations also had press agents whose job it was to communicate between a company's management and shareholders.¹²⁸² For example in 1906 there was a conflict between minority shareholders and management in which a press agent had to serve as a go-between. The *New York Times* reported:

The world of the Wall Street press agent is reaching depths of subtlety hitherto unsounded. Very recently, in a heated controversy between the management of a corporation and its minority shareholder, one press agent went so far as to issue for his principals a statement which on causal reading might have been supposed to come from the other side.¹²⁸³

Financial press agents were portrayed as manipulative and concerned with creating maximized profits by influencing “public opinion” of a corporation.¹²⁸⁴ This included press agents working for banks whose jobs were to influence U.S. federal bank regulators.¹²⁸⁵ In one article this type of undue corporate influence was criticized:

In recent years the managers of many corporations of various kinds have awakened to the desirability of popular friendliness for their companies and sought to mold public opinion nearer to their desires by the employment of “press agents,” some of whom have attempted to fill the newspapers of the country with “tainted news” about the corporations they serve.¹²⁸⁶

Scandal was also part of financial press agency with Cecil Leslie, a press agent for the brokerage firm the Franklin Syndicate, being indicted for defrauding investors of tens of thousands of dollars.¹²⁸⁷ Leslie operated as a press agent for the Franklin Syndicate and its owner William J. Miller.¹²⁸⁸ Both men absconded with investors’ money and remained in hiding from the police for weeks.¹²⁸⁹

This sort of negative publicity caused corporations to rename their press agents “publicity agents” in the early 1900s.¹²⁹⁰ A 1912 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* said that press agents were people who engaged in negative publicity measures that eroded public confidence. The article said that while businesses needed press agents, the term had such a negative connotation a new word “publicity agent” was invented to mean corporate press agent work. The article said, “The press agent’s activities are not always approved in the business world. And yet the business world needs more and more some representative who will deal with what is abashed about them.”¹²⁹¹ These publicity agents were “open and above-board” former reporters who worked in creating press

attention.¹²⁹² Other euphemisms for press agents and their press agent department emerged, such as “business department.”¹²⁹³ One article pointed out that new terms did not necessarily equate with new practices. It said, “The term ‘new business department,’ as understood and applied by many banks and most newspaper men, is camouflage. In most cases it is merely a polite way of referring to the publicity department, or, in more vulgar terms, to the press agent.”¹²⁹⁴

Business press agency shows the transition between press agent and the modern public relations practitioner. Because of the negative connotations that press agents received in the early twentieth century, business press agents changed their name to publicity agents. However, this episode in press agency demonstrates that what changed was not a practice but a nomenclature. Business press agency shows that the skills and tactics of the nineteenth century press agents were not limited to low-brow entertainment. The recognition that customers, shareholders, and the market were important is evidence of the sophistication and importance of press agency in the business world prior to 1900.

III. Conclusion

Examining press agency in the popular press shows how complex and varied the practice of press agency was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, demonstrating that current understandings of the field are largely inaccurate because they do not include recognition of press agents outside nineteenth century entertainment, particularly circuses. From these articles it is evident that being a press agent was more than just a promotional job it was a stand-alone profession that used press contacts and communication techniques such as providing the press with advance sheets, staging

events, and utilizing press contacts to influence news stories to maximize coverage and awareness for their clients.

Popular coverage of press agents shows three aspects of press agency currently not mentioned in public relations historiography. First, press agents worked in a cross-sections of fields including business. For many public relations scholars, press agents are thought to be only associated with entertainment. This is probably because P.T. Barnum is thought of as the first press agent (or at least the most famous). However, this analysis of the popular press shows that press agents in politics and business were commonplace and used many of the same techniques of entertainment press agents. These multiple types of press agents also show there was fluidity in the practice of press agency. While entertainment press agents were some of the first identified “press agents,” they made the transition between theater to politics and business. Recognizing that press agency was practiced in multiple arenas forces scholars to reconsider what a press agency really was and how press agents relate to modern PR practitioners.

Second is the relationship press agents had with the media. Early press agents were associated with newspapers and wrote for them. Associated and General press agents also demonstrate that most likely press agency was born out of the newspaper industry. This is evidenced by the amount of press agents who worked in the newspaper industry prior to transitioning into press agency. This transition was also not solely portrayed as “selling out” one’s journalistic credentials. As the career of men like Remsen Crawford shows, leaving a newspaper to become a press agent was not viewed as a bad career move. In fact, these articles suggest that many press agents made significantly more money compared to their newspaper counterparts.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, these articles show press agency was not a profession totally reviled in its time. The tone of these articles toward press agents is similar to that of public relations practitioners today. While some press agents were criticized (as all professions are), many press agents were depicted as essential to promotion for entertainment, politics, and business. These men and women were depicted as having a recognized job. This is illustrated not only by identifying a person as a press agent, but also by the fact press agents had their own professional associations, such as the Friars Club. However, negative associations with press agents do occur in this sample of newspaper coverage toward the turn of the century. This suggests that during the early twentieth century press agency and press agents were viewed in more pejorative terms than their late nineteenth century counterparts. This potentially explains why the term press agent begins to wane in non-entertainment organizations during the 1910s, particularly in business. While these organizations certainly needed promotion having identified press agents created some connotative problem. This may be one reason there is the rise of alternative forms of nomenclature for press agent-esque positions.

All of this coverage of press agents shows something new and theoretically important. While modern public relations tries to distance itself from press agent tactics and approaches to publicity, it seems obvious that modern PR is the descendent of press agency. This is not a negative thing. Press agents used a sophisticated understanding about media relationships to effectuate publicity for their clients. Their writing, media contacts, and relationship with organizations illustrate that their approach to publicity is not unlike some aspects of modern PR practice. While press agency received some

negative press coverage, press agency was not considered entirely unprofessional.

Instead the idea that media can be used for publicity purposes, the need for media contacts, and the use of writing and disseminated organizational information encapsulates much of the responsibilities and practice of press agents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER 7: PUBLICITY AGENTS 1902-1918

The historical transition between press agency and the modern day public relations practitioner is virtually unknown in PR historiography. Bernays and Cutlip argued that early public relations practice became more professionalized as corporations gained a prominent role within American society.¹²⁹⁵ Cutlip, and Bernays to a lesser extent, pointed to figures such as Ivy Lee as the first modern public relations practitioner.¹²⁹⁶ However, what precipitated men like Lee's rise and what caused him to be identified as something more than a press agent is unknown. Russell and Bishop point to Theodore Roosevelt's call for corporate publicity as one of the harbingers for corporate public relations.¹²⁹⁷ Scholars like Chandler and Tedlow argue that early public relations practice grew out of the corporate world.¹²⁹⁸ Tedlow particularly argues that corporate public relations grew out of corporate necessity.¹²⁹⁹ According to Tedlow's theory businesses needed better publicity because of the publics' hostility toward their wealth and greed.¹³⁰⁰ Marchand builds on Tedlow's ideas pointing out that corporations used public relations to improve the tarnished images they created in the 1890s.¹³⁰¹ According to Marchand, corporations' legal status as individuals created the need for corporations to have and demonstrate feelings of empathy, support, and caring toward the public. This was accomplished through corporate communications.¹³⁰² Alan Raucher pointed to the publicity of public utility companies as creating modern public relations. Raucher argued that corporate public relations pre-dated World War I and Bernays.¹³⁰³ As one might expect Bernays did not support Raucher's view, commenting that Raucher was promoting

a non-evolutionary narrative of PR history that ignored Bernays' creation of modern public relations practice.¹³⁰⁴

The problem with the current history of corporate PR growth is that histories either focus, like Bernays and Cutlip, on a few great men as harbingers of change, or, like Marchand and Tedlow, on the decades of the 1920s and 1930s.¹³⁰⁵ The creation of corporate image through communications practices is almost unexplored during the first two decades of the twentieth century. This examination of the popular press from 1770 to 1918 attempts to remedy this by exploring the terms publicity man, publicity men, and publicity agent to see what type of connotations these professional identifiers had. This analysis shows that Marchand and Tedlow are largely right in asserting public relations was used to create image for corporations but that their work places the beginning of corporate public relations too late in the twentieth century.¹³⁰⁶ However, this analysis also shows that fields outside of corporations used publicity agents and men to do promotions in politics, civic organizations, and entertainment. Exploring the term publicity men and agent illustrates how the field of public relations transformed from press agency (largely associated with the nineteenth century) to modern PR practice. As Russell and Bishop concluded, there was a transformational period in PR history in the early twentieth century where press agents give way to a more corporate-focused, professionalized PR practice.¹³⁰⁷ The publicity agent represents this change. This analysis shows that publicity agents and men participated in a stand-alone, salaried profession with professional associations and standards. Perhaps most importantly for public relations history, the rise of the publicity agent shows the initial connection and

eventual split between advertising and public relations is previously unknown event in PR historiography.

In this era of PR history publicity agents are intertwined with the characteristics of the progressive era.¹³⁰⁸ The hallmarks of this era in American history include greater amount of muckraking journalism that questioned authority and businesses.¹³⁰⁹ The early twentieth century in the U.S. also included a higher rate of media consumption and the proliferation of newspapers. Political values also changed during this era with political rhetoric criticizing the excesses of capitalism, the plight of workers, and the lack of rights for women.¹³¹⁰

In this chapter 277 articles were examined from the popular press drawn from digital newspaper and magazine databases: American Periodical Series (APS), Historical Newspapers Online (ProQuest), and America's Historical Newspapers. Each database was keyword searched for "publicity agent*," "publicity man," and "publicity men." For the term "publicity man" all articles were used from America's Historical Newspapers, and APS. For "publicity men" all articles were used from American's Historical Newspapers and APS. For the term "publicity agent*" all articles were used from American's Historical Newspapers and APS. For "publicity agent*," "publicity man," and "publicity men" every fifth article was examined from ProQuest to reduce the size to a manageable sample. The first article in this sample was published in 1902 and the last in 1918. Publicity agent, publicity men, and publicity man appear in quotations when they are directly used in an article.

I. Corporate Publicity Agents

Tedlow and Marchand argue corporate publicity men were essential to making and maintaining corporate image.¹³¹¹ As Marchand argues, the corporation of the late nineteenth century ignored image to its detriment. Although Marchand points to the 1920s and 1930s as the apex of corporate image making, this analysis shows that the publicity agents of the 1900s and 1910s were quite adept in their corporate image construction. This places the corporate public relations history earlier than Bernays, Marchand or Tedlow would suggest and also illustrates professionalization of public relations practice was impacted by these corporate uses of publicity agents.¹³¹²

Marchand's argument that corporations fell woefully short in communicating with the public has support in the popular press of the early twentieth century.¹³¹³ In 1906 *American Magazine* told how disasters, such as a mining catastrophe, alienated the public because of the perceived indifference of Coal Trust.¹³¹⁴ In fact the article's subtitle sums up the transition of corporate attitudes about the public and press. It read "How the Trusts, after Years of Silence, now speak through authorized and acknowledged Press Agents."¹³¹⁵ The article said that in the nineteenth century corporations did not try to engage with the press at all in a meaningful way and instead attempted to gain positive news coverage with bribes. However, despite Marchand's claims that corporations improved their communication practices to garner public support, one *New York Times* article argued the real reason behind this increased corporate communication was the federal government.¹³¹⁶ In a 1908 article the *New York Times* described Theodore Roosevelt as the "Chief Publicity Agent" for all American corporations because he forced them to disclose certain information.¹³¹⁷ According to the *New York Times*, Roosevelt's

publicizing of corporate wealth actually created public awareness that corporate stocks are a good investment. Therefore, stockholding by middle class Americans increased.¹³¹⁸

Tension between newspapers and corporations led to the beginning of the corporate “publicity man” in the first decades of the 1900s.¹³¹⁹ According to a 1912 account by the *Christian Science Monitor*, “publicity agents” replaced the old “press agent” system because press agent had become a pejorative term. The article said:

At the present time in the United States there is a concerted movement on the part of newspaper publishers and editors to bar out press agent’s secrets, no matter how entertaining...Now the publicity man with a business concern is open and above board. Upon that depends the whole value of his work. He writes little himself—perhaps nothing at all. But he is usually an experienced newspaper man.¹³²⁰

The publicity man according to the *Christian Science Monitor* served an important purpose for newspapers. When a reporter needed financial advice that was very specific to a situation, he needed to talk to someone of “authority” within a corporation.¹³²¹ This person “of authority” was the corporate publicity agent.¹³²² These agents worked for a variety of companies including public service corporations, railroads, and banks. They pitched news stories to overworked reporters, dealt with local politics, and managed crises such as a railroad “wreck.”¹³²³ Publicity agents even went to specific towns to convince local government to approve new business ventures.¹³²⁴ However, this publicity strategy by corporations was not always done well. A 1916 article from *The Washington Post* lamented that “publicity managers” of car manufacturers were “thoroughly incapable of furnishing to various publicity mediums the kind of news which

will eventually reach the press” because of their insistence on using hyperbolic “explosion of rhetoric.”¹³²⁵

Still “publicity men” were portrayed in the press as capable of “whooping it up for some particular business.”¹³²⁶ In fact corporate publicity men and agents were identified as working for specific companies, apparently in-house.¹³²⁷ Many different corporations used “publicity agents,” “publicity men,” “publicity managers,” or a “publicity man” to promote their business interests within the popular press. These businesses included Western Union,¹³²⁸ Mutual Life Insurance,¹³²⁹ Southern Bell,¹³³⁰ Aetna National Bank,¹³³¹ Georgia Railway and Power Co.,¹³³² AT&T,¹³³³ Buick,¹³³⁴ John Deere,¹³³⁵ Reo Motor Car,¹³³⁶ DuPont,¹³³⁷ and Henry Ford personally.¹³³⁸ A variety of lesser-known businesses also retained publicity agents to work for them including an art dealer,¹³³⁹ an electric board,¹³⁴⁰ a gas company,¹³⁴¹ small automobile companies,¹³⁴² supply distributors,¹³⁴³ hotels,¹³⁴⁴ publishing houses,¹³⁴⁵ a drainage company,¹³⁴⁶ and manufacturers.¹³⁴⁷ Local organizations, specifically Chambers of Commerce, solicited businesses to local communities through the use of a “publicity agent.”¹³⁴⁸

Banking used publicity agents in the early twentieth century.¹³⁴⁹ In the early 1900s banks began promoting savings accounts, loans, and encouraging new depositors, so many banks began to actively use publicity to increase customers and entice large depositors. This type of publicity was considered a form of free advertising. These banking “publicity men” were part of the Financial Advertisers Association, a nationwide organization dedicated to increasing awareness of bank services.¹³⁵⁰ Banks even engaged in “campaign[s]” for specific banking causes, such as increasing awareness of savings plans offered by local banks.¹³⁵¹

Some of these banking “publicity men” came from newspaper backgrounds, such as, former reporter J.F. Donellan, publicity man for the Fidelity Trust Company in Kansas City.¹³⁵² However, these banking publicity men also came from banking and finance backgrounds, such as Fred Ellsworth, who in 1916 was described as “one of the best known banking publicity men in the country.”¹³⁵³ In 1916 *Bankers’ Magazine* suggested that a good “publicity man” for a bank must “be a student of both banking and people in order to be able to get a point of contact with the public and tell it the things it wants to know about banking.”¹³⁵⁴ In fact, customer service was a concern for banking publicity men. An article from *Bankers’ Magazine* from 1908 discussed the futility of bank advertising if customer service was bad.¹³⁵⁵ This article specifically criticized bank policies of having tellers decide who had to show identification when making deposits. Of particular concern were rude tellers who would discourage large depositors from opening accounts with a bank because tellers and other bank personnel failed to know them personally.¹³⁵⁶

Financial publicity men were not limited to banking. Specific financial exchanges, such as the Corn Exchange, employed “publicity men” to create awareness of corn markets during World War I.¹³⁵⁷ Wall Street investment houses also had publicity men or publicity agents that represented various organizations. The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) had a “publicity agent,” W.C. Van Antwerp, as early as 1914.¹³⁵⁸ Antwerp was paid an annual salary of \$25,000, over \$560,000 in 2014, to represent the stock exchange. In 1914 Antwerp was criticized for his zealous work on behalf of the NYSE when he made an inflammatory speech about the Interstate Commerce

Commission [ICC] and its regulations of stocks.¹³⁵⁹ Ironically the ICC in 1917 was headed by a former “publicity man” for Woodrow Wilson.¹³⁶⁰

Like financial institutions, railroads also made great use of publicity men and agents. By 1918 railroad use of publicity agents was ubiquitous.¹³⁶¹ These agents were hired to understand the public and create a better image for railroad companies. In one instance the Santa Fe Railway used its “publicity agents” to ride a special train across the country “to get in touch with the public.”¹³⁶² However, other accounts said railroad publicity agents were using their persuasion skills and press contacts to keep the railroads from becoming nationalized.¹³⁶³ Samuel Spencer, the president of the Southern Railroad, was hired by Wall Street to influence public opinion on federal railroad regulation.¹³⁶⁴ This campaign against regulation was criticized by *McClure’s Magazine*, which in 1906 wrote an article about how railroads were using publicity tactics to influence newspapers accounts of regulation, accusing them of bribing newspaper reporters for favorable coverage. *McClure’s* reporter Ray Stannard Baker, a famous muckraking journalist, wrote about this accusation of bribery and criticized the mercenary nature of publicity firms. Baker said:

Now, I have no evidence that this particular firm of publicity agents had any “corruption fund” or that they paid editors to support the railroad cause.

Moreover, I do not believe, knowing something of the character of the men, that they have done it in any instance. Their position was this: they owned a publicity machine—a highly intelligent one. They sold its services to the railroads and thereafter they sent out railroad arguments just as they would have sent out baking-powder arguments if they had been employed by a baking-powder

company—without wasting a moment’s thought apparently as to what effect their action might have upon the public welfare.¹³⁶⁵

McClure’s concluded that publicity agents place individuals and institutions who are less wealthy than large corporations at a distinct disadvantage. Its view was that corporations, as Marchand suggests, can use publicity to create positive public sentiment because they can afford the best publicity men.¹³⁶⁶

Publicity agents or publicity men not only conducted promotions for businesses but also represented them in disputes with labor especially Ivy Lee.¹³⁶⁷ Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American Federation of Labor accused corporate “publicity agents” of partnering with lawyers to suppress the American labor movement.¹³⁶⁸ In fact, it was the relationship between corporations and labor that gave rise to one of the most celebrated publicity agents of the early twentieth century—Ivy Lee. In this sample of American popular press Lee was mentioned in eight articles. His association with labor was part of his work for John D. Rockefeller and the famous Colorado Fuel and Iron Company strike from 1913 to 1914.¹³⁶⁹ The *New York Times* portrayed Lee’s role in the strike as a spokesman for Rockefeller with Lee making statements to the press on behalf of Rockefeller and his corporation.¹³⁷⁰ These articles portrayed Lee and his work in a positive light and commented directly on Lee’s professionalism.¹³⁷¹ Despite press frustration with Rockefeller’s unwillingness to speak to them directly, Lee was portrayed positively. One article in the *Christian Science Monitor* from 1915 said that it was a widely held belief that Lee was “one of the most honorable advocates of clean and decent publicity in America.”¹³⁷² Even Lee’s associates, such as his brother, J. Wideman Lee, Jr., was said to have great “ability” as a “publicity agent” because of his time spent with

his brother.¹³⁷³ Ivy Lee was portrayed as an innovator in the field of corporate publicity even within his own lifetime. In 1906 *The American Magazine* wrote that Lee used his skills as a former *New York Times* reporter to give information to newspapers that was exactly what they wanted.¹³⁷⁴ The Colorado coal strike was credited with making Lee aware of the ethical responsibilities within publicity. *The American Magazine* reported that Lee said his work for corporations was not done by “a secret press bureau” and that “all our [his publicity] work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. This is not an advertising agency; if you think any of our matter ought to go to your business office, do not use it. Our matter is accurate.”¹³⁷⁵

Lee was not the only person credited with creating the corporate publicity agent, but other agents were also corporate publicity men. Robert E. Livingston, the “publicity agent” for the Consolidated Gas Company, was credited with using tenacious publicity tactics to secure the end of oil lighting.¹³⁷⁶ When faced with government investigations regarding the safety of gas, Consolidated Gas:

employed a semi-secret agent who was paid for a few weeks’ work as much as a first-class reporter could earn in a year, on the theory that he could influence the reports of the hearing and obtain the publication of “statement” from day to day in contradiction of the evidence wrung from unwilling witnesses.¹³⁷⁷

Other men were hired by large corporations too, such as J.I.C. Clarke, a former newspaper editor, who was paid \$20,000 per year in 1906, more than \$500,000 in 2014, to represent Standard Oil.¹³⁷⁸ H.I Smith, a former Washington reporter for the *New York World*, joined Equitable Life Assurance Society as their “publicity agent.”¹³⁷⁹ In 1907 the *New York Times* carried a story of publicity firm of Wychoff, Church & Partridge who

gave a retirement party for well-known automobile “publicity agent” Tom Moore.¹³⁸⁰

However, *The Christian Magazine* was dubious about the new phenomenon of corporate “publicity agents” being hired to speak with the press. They said:

The new plan has not been in effect long enough to enable one to foresee its real meaning. At present it is simply interesting. Much depends upon whether it results in disclosing all the facts in which the public has a right to be concerned, or whether it results merely in obtaining for the corporations greater publicity for such facts as are directly favorable to them.¹³⁸¹

II. Publicity Agents’ Relationship to Advertising and Newspapers

Current narrative of public relations history ignores the early relationship between PR and advertising.¹³⁸² Marchand suggests that at least in the corporate sphere of goodwill by the 1920s advertising played a role in creating and preserving corporate image.¹³⁸³ However, no scholar has examined when advertising and public relations became recognized as distinct forms of communication. Additionally, no PR histories examine the relationship between the two forms of communication and how early practice of PR and advertising interacted (if at all) with each other. Popular press coverage from the early twentieth century suggests PR and advertising did have a close, yet tense relationship. By the early twentieth century the fields of PR (then referred to as publicity) and advertising became distinct forms of practice that were separated by technique and professional identity.

Publicity men and agents’ relationship with advertising is complex. In many articles publicity men and publicity agents are portrayed as being part of advertising.¹³⁸⁴ Want ads for “publicity agents” or “publicity men” used the word advertising as part of the job

description.¹³⁸⁵ Some articles even advertised publicity services that would help create “the public’s ‘good will.’”¹³⁸⁶ “Publicity men” were part of advertising efforts to clean-up advertising content and reduce deception.¹³⁸⁷ One “publicity agent” for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce suggested creating a new law in which false advertising was illegal and violators could be punished with a fine and jail time.¹³⁸⁸ This closeness of advertising and publicity agents is evidenced by the association and inclusion of publicity agents within professional advertising organizations,¹³⁸⁹ such as the Pilgrim Publicity Association was professional organization for “publicity men.”¹³⁹⁰ It held an annual meeting across the United States and in Canada, instituted a petition to change trademark law, and held associational special events.¹³⁹¹ However, in 1914 the Pilgrim Publicity Association (whose members did only publicity, not direct advertising) was asked to be part of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World.¹³⁹²

Despite this connection between advertising and publicity, there was a distinction between the two forms of communication. A 1913 article from *The Christian Science Monitor* details how “publicity men” were to create corporate goodwill. It said:

One of the gratifying developments in the relations between the public and large corporations is the growth of a better understanding between the two. Time was—and not many years since—when the people looked upon these large business concerns with distrust and suspicion.¹³⁹³

This new relationship between the public and businesses was forged by “publicity men” who “are kept to inform the public of matters which need explication.”¹³⁹⁴ This attitude was reiterated in other articles that described publicity as a form of sales. Articles described “publicity men” as salesmen,¹³⁹⁵ involved in customer relations,¹³⁹⁶ and even

the “first lieutenant for a winning sales campaign.”¹³⁹⁷ This was important to businesses, so much so that in 1915 the University of Wisconsin during a meeting of the Associated Advertising Club (started in 1904) wanted to have advertising courses added to its business program since it was an essential part of all modern business success.¹³⁹⁸

This division between publicity work compared with advertising may account for the animosity toward publicity in some advertising circles. Some criticism of publicity, particularly general publicity, stemmed from its perceived ineffectiveness.¹³⁹⁹ Other criticisms were harsher. In 1910 an article in *The Bookman* discussed the advertising industry’s negative opinion of publicity. Speaking about publicity agencies the article said:

Two or three agencies make a specialty of press agent work. When, for example a certain brand of champagne is used at a notable dinner they try to get it in the papers. It is claimed that the publicity given to the Singer Building and to the Lusitania was all carefully worked through an agency.¹⁴⁰⁰

Later the article equated publicity with press agency and noted how advertisers lost money to free publicity work. It said:

This masquerade advertising is not particularly in favour with the more serious circles of the profession. It would, they say, be more dignified for Yale University to attempt to secure more patronage through open advertising media than through press agent work. But naturally the whole policy of indirect advertising is looked upon with reproachful eyes by advertising men, as it diverts great sums annually into other channels.¹⁴⁰¹

This animosity toward publicity agents was not limited to advertisers. Some newspaper reporters were sharply critical of publicity agents and publicity men. The American press recognized that publicity men did play a role in creating a story such as giving interviews,¹⁴⁰² with one article suggesting small country editors acted as a “publicity agent” for the community.¹⁴⁰³ Another article recognized that the content released by “publicity agents” could with some editing be “worthy of a place in the paper.”¹⁴⁰⁴ However, other articles portrayed publicity men as planting stories and influencing the content of newspapers by taking advantage of unsuspecting reporters.¹⁴⁰⁵ In 1912 one “publicity agent” was so incensed he was accused of supplying “tainted news” that he sued *Colliers’ Magazine* but lost.¹⁴⁰⁶ There was so much a concern over publicity agents that one reporter said he was afraid to interview an eyewitness for a story because he thought the person was a “publicity man.”¹⁴⁰⁷ By 1912 this concern over the power of publicity agents in the press was so great a Committee on Free Publicity was established by the Newspaper Publishers’ Association to determine how much publicity work got into the newspaper.¹⁴⁰⁸ The goal of this commission was described by the *New York Times*:

What the publishers want to prevent is matter which is advertising pure and simple getting to the columns of their papers in the guise of news. It deceives the reader who is entitled to know an “ad” when he sees one and it cheats the publisher who is entitled to his advertising rates at so much per line.¹⁴⁰⁹

The article said that publicity agents were commonplace in theater, politics and finance. Commenting on the power and money associated with these publicity men, the *New York Times* said:

But it is in Wall Street that the press agent has attained his highest most influential position. The publicity man employed by Standard Oil is reported to get \$20,000 a year and there are only four officers in the Consolidated Gas Company who get salaries greater than that received by its publicity man.¹⁴¹⁰

This closeness of early advertising and publicity challenges the popular idea that public relations was totally distinct from advertising. In fact, the current convergence of public relations and advertising seems to be taking advertising and PR back to their historical roots. This animosity between advertisers and publicity also illustrates why PR is branded as unethical in many communication circles. Reduced advertising revenues raised the ire of advertisers and reporters alike against publicity men. Calling publicity agents' tactics unprofessional served an underlying financial need. Perhaps advertisers and newspaper staffs thought that labelling publicity as something outside the ethical norms of communication would limit the financial impact publicity agents had on advertising profits.

III. Civic Organizations, Entertainment Publicity Agents

In this sample fifty-six articles mentioned civic organization and entertainment publicity agents. Unlike press agents, civic organizations were not mentioned in the press as using publicity agents or publicity men on a regular basis. Civic organizations that did have publicity men or agents tended to be larger and more developed. Truly grassroots organizations such as churches, local interest groups, and local social movements did not show up in this sample as having publicity agents or men. Perhaps this is because these terms were reserved for salaried people who did publicity as full-

time jobs or because publicity agents was a term more closely associated with business and large organizations.

Some larger non-profit organizations did have publicity men or agents. The Christian Scientists, a large well-organized religious movement, were noted for their use of publicity agents.¹⁴¹¹ Other large denominations such as the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Catholic Church used a “publicity agent” to provide updates on church events.¹⁴¹² Other local civic organizations also had publicity men or agents; these included a Michigan based tuberculosis society,¹⁴¹³ benevolent church societies in New York,¹⁴¹⁴ the Child Conference at Clark University,¹⁴¹⁵ the National Institute of Efficiency,¹⁴¹⁶ the New Hampshire Corn Exhibition,¹⁴¹⁷ the National League of Women’s Service,¹⁴¹⁸ the Elks Club,¹⁴¹⁹ the Savannah Auto Club,¹⁴²⁰ the Hearst Civic Alliance,¹⁴²¹ the Pan American Exposition,¹⁴²² a statewide food conference,¹⁴²³ large shooting expositions,¹⁴²⁴ the Girls Patriotic League,¹⁴²⁵ and the National Security League.¹⁴²⁶ These organizations show that publicity agents or men for civic or non-profit organizations still were linked to larger organizations and not small grassroots movements or clubs. Only one article mentioned a non-salaried person acting as a “publicity agent,” and then it was a woman married to a famous man.¹⁴²⁷

Educational organizations also used publicity men and bureaus. The Quakers utilized a “publicity agent” to protest military education in New York State.¹⁴²⁸ Other organizations within universities such as the debate team at George Washington University,¹⁴²⁹ the drama club at the University of Georgia,¹⁴³⁰ and a jiu-jitsu group at the University of Southern California all had a student acting as “publicity agent.”¹⁴³¹ In 1913 the “publicity agent” for the student committee at Emory University challenged the

Board of Trustees over inter-collegiate athletics and threatened to bring a diagraph to the meeting to record the trustees' conversation.¹⁴³² Interestingly the "publicity agent" came from a newspaper family (they owned the *The Greensboro-Herald*), was editor in chief of *The Emory Weekly*, and took a journalism class where he helped edit the *Atlanta Constitution*.¹⁴³³

Entertainment venues and performances also used publicity men and agents. However, compared with the use of "press agents," the use of the terms publicity agent or men within entertainment is quite small.¹⁴³⁴ Often these theater or special performances used publicity agents to provide general promotions to the events. These events included a movie,¹⁴³⁵ the circus,¹⁴³⁶ a balloonist's exhibition,¹⁴³⁷ a musical,¹⁴³⁸ and a fair.¹⁴³⁹ Having a "publicity agent" was also deemed by *The Washington Post* a necessity if a person wanted any level of fame.¹⁴⁴⁰ This is reflected in the sample concerning actors and actresses. Some "publicity agent[s]" were also associated with doing publicity for certain performers.¹⁴⁴¹ However, in one situation the world's richest woman's son (who wanted to have a career as a race car driver) refused to deny reports he hired a "publicity agent" to "write him up."¹⁴⁴² Unlike entertainment press agents who had a formal professional recognition, "publicity agents" or "publicity man" was usually a catch-all term for people who promoted a specific play or event. Nowhere in this sample is there a suggestion that entertainment publicity agents constituted a formal professional group, nor is there any evidence in this sample that entertainment publicity men were even seen as related to their counterparts in the corporate world.

IV. Political Uses of Publicity Agents

Like civic or non-profit groups, political use of publicity agents or publicity men was less common compared with business appearing in only forty six articles in this sample. However, politics did make use of publicity agents in political movements, campaigns, lobbying, and in local government. Perhaps nowhere was the use of “publicity men” or “publicity agents” more prevalent than in the coverage of World War I preparation.¹⁴⁴³ This often took the form of promoting liberty bonds¹⁴⁴⁴ or specific food rationing programs to assist with overseas troops and aid.¹⁴⁴⁵ However, during World War I federal government publicity agents and publicity men were associated with censorship of the press. The Committee on Public Information, better known as the Creel Committee, was considered a group of publicity agents who worked to suppress news stories during the war.¹⁴⁴⁶ Even though some of the committee’s members did not come from press backgrounds, such as historian Guy Stanton Ford, the group used publicity tactics to disseminate favorable articles about the war, its successes, and the importance of fighting Germany.¹⁴⁴⁷ In fact, during the Peace Conference in Paris, President Wilson was accompanied by many “publicity agents” from the United States.¹⁴⁴⁸

Publicity agents were not limited to official government work. In the early twentieth century publicity agents were associated with lobbying. *The Washington Post* commented on the power of the Washington “publicity agent” and how he changed lobbying forever. It said:

The old-fashioned lobbyist went out when the publicity agent came in. Practically all the lobbying done now is conducted by press agents, working away from Washington. The new method is not to bribe statesmen, but to create a public

sentiment in their districts which will impel or compel them to vote this way or that.

Whatever Washington may have been in the roaring fifties, there is no cleaner capital on earth now than this one.¹⁴⁴⁹

Still, lobbying by publicity agent was not viewed favorably by all. Certain national federal agencies, such as the National Guard, denied using a “publicity agent” to do any lobbying at all.¹⁴⁵⁰ Lobbying at the local level was considered acceptable and common within the popular press. Eleven articles in this sample directly discuss the use of paid “publicity men” or “publicity agents” to promote local towns to attract businesses, events or residents.¹⁴⁵¹ These included a movement to move Georgia’s capital to Macon,¹⁴⁵² a movement to clean-up Chicago,¹⁴⁵³ attempting to attract visitors to Coney Island,¹⁴⁵⁴ and attempting to attract residents to Union City, Georgia.¹⁴⁵⁵

Political campaigns also used publicity men and agent to promote candidates for office. These publicity agents worked for a variety of politicians and political parties.¹⁴⁵⁶ This was not perceived as a new phenomenon by *The North American Review* who claimed Thomas Jefferson was a “publicity agent” for national ownership of the Mississippi River.¹⁴⁵⁷ As early as 1878 *The American Socialist* mentioned that “publicity men” were being used in U.S. presidential campaigns.¹⁴⁵⁸ It was mentioned publicity agents were necessary for any electoral success at the national, state, or local level.¹⁴⁵⁹ The necessity of “publicity” was so great that *Puck* joked that George Washington’s farewell address was probably written by a “publicity man” for “munitions people.”¹⁴⁶⁰ One article mentioned the use of a “publicity purveyor” for the Republicans in the Bronx.¹⁴⁶¹ A young New York state-senator, Franklin D. Roosevelt, used a “publicity agent” to aid in a legislative “insurgent movement” against a potential Democratic

nominee for the U.S. Senate.¹⁴⁶² The use of these publicity agents was particularly pronounced during the 1912 presidential campaign when incumbent President Taft faced two challengers for his reelection.¹⁴⁶³ Taft is specifically mentioned as a political candidate who was forced into hiring a “publicity man” because the nature of political campaigning demanded that publicity be taken seriously.¹⁴⁶⁴

Publicity agents and men were not exclusive to the United States. Articles also discussed how foreign leaders used publicity to promote themselves and their countries. The “publicity agent” was said to promote Chinese interests in Manchuria,¹⁴⁶⁵ and politicians in Canada,¹⁴⁶⁶ as well as publicize the victories of Mexican revolutionaries,¹⁴⁶⁷ and create better relations between the U.S. and Japan.¹⁴⁶⁸ The Japanese used a Japanese born, American educated “publicity agent” who held a Ph.D. and trained with Washington politicians to do publicity for them during their early occupation of Korea.¹⁴⁶⁹ Six articles in this sample discuss the use of “publicity agents” in Germany during World War I.¹⁴⁷⁰ German “publicity agents” and “publicity men” were extensively used to promote Germany’s interests in America, lobby politicians prior to America’s entry into the war, and to convince the American people of the inevitability of Germany’s victory.¹⁴⁷¹

V. Conclusion

This chapter presents many important historical facts about public relations development. First, the popular press’ coverage of corporate public relations supports Marchand’s claims about the corporate need for identity management.¹⁴⁷² It is apparent from these articles corporate publicity men or agents were employed to create goodwill toward businesses and corporations in the early twentieth century. These articles also

support Marchand's claim that the poor public perception of corporations in the late nineteenth century was the reason that twentieth century businesses began to engage in communications with the public.¹⁴⁷³ However, departing from Marchand's focus on the 1920s and 1920s as the harbinger of corporate publicity, this examination of the press argues that it occurred as early as 1902. The difference between Marchand's exploration of corporate publicity in the 1920s and corporate publicity in the 1900s is the level of communication technique. According to Marchand, by the 1920s corporations had refined their ability to persuade public opinion while these popular press articles show corporate publicity work in its infancy.¹⁴⁷⁴

Second, these press articles support the idea that press agents are one and the same as publicity agents. Bernays, Cutlip, and Tedlow who suggest that the modern PR practitioner evolved from the press agent were wrong.¹⁴⁷⁵ Rather, these articles suggest that publicity agents were the same as press agents, representing a change in nomenclature rather than a change in practice. The tactics and strategies used by publicity agents, their relationships with newspapers, and the fact that it was commonplace for publicity agents to be former newspaper reporters are all similarities between publicity agents and press agents. Since press agents had become the target of negative portrayals by the press during the early 1900s the term publicity agent was invented to carry on in the press agent's work under another name.

These articles also demonstrate an interesting relationship between public relations and advertising. Early publicity (i.e. public relations) was viewed as a derivative of advertising. As these articles show this relationship was so close publicity agents and men were considered a type of advertising. However, the popular press suggests that as

publicity agents and advertising men grew into more distinct fields and firms this close relationship between the two groups ended. This is most likely due to the competition for revenue and the idea publicity agents actually stole revenue from advertisers and newspapers alike through their surreptitiously planted stories. This provides great insight into why public relations as a field has a tense relationship with advertising and newspapers and why PR is so heavily criticized as unethical. The criticism heaped upon publicity men and agents coincides with the recognition their work actually competes with advertising profits and space which costs both advertisers and newspapers alike.

The publicity agent also presents an important point for PR historiography. In exploring terms such as public relations, propaganda, press agent, and publicity bureau there is a distinct narrative that states each practice began with government and then later adopted by business. However, for the publicity agent the practice begins in business, and publicity agents were created by business because of the negative connotations associated with press agency. However, without this context of the relationship between the press agent and the publicity agent the true relationship between press agency in corporations cannot be understood. Bernays and Cutlip really look to this era of the publicity agent as the beginning of public relations practice.¹⁴⁷⁶ This is why PR history focuses on the corporate, deemphasizes the grassroots, and views other iterations of PR practice in government and non-profits as derivatives from corporate practice. If a scholar only looks at the era of publicity agents from 1902 to 1918, this narrative would appear true. However, taking historically broader view it becomes clear that the publicity agent is in fact the derivative of government, non-profit, political, and grassroots publicity as described in the terms press agency, publicity bureaus, and public relations.

CHAPTER 8: PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION BUREAUS 1891-1918

The publicity and information bureaus are an important part of public relations history and identity because they represent the departmentalization of PR within organizations. They symbolize the professionalization of the field and link its practice to the legitimate, moneyed corporate world. Despite this perceived importance, relatively little is known about these bureaus. PR historians mention a firm called the Publicity Bureau as a moment of change for public relations; Cutlip argued they coincided with the creation of modern PR practice.¹⁴⁷⁷ He traced their origins to Boston in 1900 where the Publicity Bureau he argued operated as the first PR firm.¹⁴⁷⁸ However, Cutlip did not explore publicity bureaus outside of the context of this large Boston firm. In his history of PR, Edward Bernays ignored the publicity bureau altogether and equated early PR development to George Creel's Committee for Public Information that operated during World War I (an organization where Bernays worked).¹⁴⁷⁹ However, Bernays characterized the years of 1900 to 1919 as a harbinger for the development of modern PR practice because corporations began the ethos "The public be informed."¹⁴⁸⁰ James Grunig and Todd Hunt reiterate this narrative that the publicity bureau led to the creation of a more professionalized PR practice. Grunig and Hunt argued other organizations, such as the government, followed suit by investing in publicity, although on a much smaller scale.¹⁴⁸¹ This narrative of the publicity bureau and the growth of corporate PR has significant theoretical influence for the field because by accepting this historical narrative public relations development is equated with corporate practice. It suggests

corporations created PR departments and that modern public relations is a derivative of early corporate innovations in communications.

Having a stand-alone bureau suggests that PR was moving forward to be a more serious, recognized, and professionalized practice. By placing this development within the corporation PR scholars serve an underlying need of professionalized legitimacy within public relations. However, this sample it shows that publicity and information bureaus were not a corporate invention. In fact, the histories written by Bernays, Cutlip, Tedlow, Marchand, Raucher, and Grunig and Hunt ignore the true growth of the publicity bureau and simply ignore the information bureau altogether.

This study of the publicity and information bureaus in the U.S. popular press shows that public relations was developing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a variety of sectors. These sectors included the government, politics, business, and non-profit sphere. Unlike Grunig and Hunt's suggestion that business influenced these other spheres, these articles show publicity and information bureaus were used simultaneously in multiple areas, with government playing a dominant role in developing and implementing publicity and information bureaus. These articles also suggest that these bureaus were linked closely with both press needs and public outreach. Concern over public opinion, media relations, and message strategy dominated the work of these bureaus in all spheres. From this analysis it is evident that publicity and information bureaus serve an even more important role in the development of PR practice because they were used in multiple organizations and utilize communication practices that recognize the importance of publics, opinion leaders, and goodwill.

In this chapter 601 articles were analyzed from the digital archives in Historical Newspapers Online and the American Periodical Series from 1770 to 1918. The first appearance of either term from these databases was 1891 and the last was 1918. The search terms “publicity bureau” and “information bureau” were used for each database. For the term “publicity bureau” every article from the American Periodical Series and every fifth article from Historical Newspaper Online was used. For the term “information bureau” every fifth article was analyzed from both American Periodical Series and Historical Newspapers Online. These terms were interchangeably used in all sectors during the period from 1891 to 1918 except in a business context. In this chapter, information and publicity bureau appears in quotes when the term is being directly quoted from an article. Every article used in this chapter contained at least one of the search terms.

I. Relationship Between Publicity and Information Bureaus’ and the Press

The development of publicity and information bureaus is linked directly to the popular press which illustrates how public relations practice emerged from and in response to press practices in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. William Kittle in an article from 1909 suggested publicity and information bureaus were an outgrowth of wire services. According to Kittle’s inaccurate account, wire services prior to 1900 were highly individualistic and corrupted by biases of their parent companies who owned them. Kittle alleged the Associated Press (AP) began in 1900 as a unified wire service to combat this corruption and provide unbiased news coverage. However, in response governments, businesses, and public service utility companies used publicity and information bureaus to coordinate direct and surreptitious advertising in papers with wire

subscriptions. According to Kittle, this created new issues for wire services since they had to sell stories that were both marketable to papers and non-offensive to these powerful advertisers. In addition to direct advertising, publicity and information bureaus began to act like reporter wire services that provided legitimate news stories. Railroads, in particular, used this fake wire service strategy, going as far as having regional publicity bureaus that provided content to local papers.

As publicity and information bureau news increased, the AP changed its approach to news coverage: often AP wire stories coverage of certain issues took on a more palatable tone that appeased readers and advertisers. This influence of publicity and information bureaus was viewed in some circles as a corrupting influence on journalism and on public awareness. In fact, in 1905 the U.S. Congress convened the Armstrong Committee to investigate insurance companies and their use of bureaus to influence press coverage. This influence of information and publicity bureaus was the subject of harsh reactions from many groups. *The Bookman*, a conservative pro-business magazine, ran an article on the influence of the “publicity bureau” in 1906 entitled “Tainted News as Seen in the Making.”¹⁴⁸² In this article the “publicity bureau” as described as a “machine” that produced “opinion-to-order” news to editors who need copy.¹⁴⁸³ *The Bookman* described the process:

Hence the publicity man provides news or he creates a literary interest. With this he baits his hook. The amount of concealment necessary to assure an easy passage for this instrument down the editorial gullet depends upon the state of the editor’s mind as regulated by the attitude of the public with reference to the cause for which the publicity man proposes to win acceptance.¹⁴⁸⁴

One article from 1909 claimed that every “publicity bureau” had a card index of all editors that contained their “weak spots.”¹⁴⁸⁵ *The Arena*, a left-leaning and anti-corporation publication, accused the mainstream press of being corrupted by corporate influence, particularly corporate organizations that operated public utilities. It said all positive press coverage of these organizations constituted “black journalism” and was the direct result of corporate manipulation through advertising and through the Boston-based Publicity Bureau.¹⁴⁸⁶ In fact, *The Arena* accused the Publicity Bureau, the New York-based Press Service Company, and the Washington D.C.-based National New Service of being “publicity bureau[s]” that engaged in deceptive news practiced on behalf of corporate clients.¹⁴⁸⁷ The influence of these large publicity bureaus was not limited to the public-at-large. Rather “publicity bureau” literature was targeted to decision-makers, particularly those in political office.¹⁴⁸⁸ *The Arena* accused these publicity bureaus of being the enemy of “reform,” used to influence members of Congress to look favorably on pro-business legislation.¹⁴⁸⁹

Other articles described the publicity bureau as a hired gun that would represent organizations and individuals. *Bankers’ Magazine* described the increasingly popular “publicity bureau” in 1909 stating:

One very striking evidence of the victory of publicity lies in the mushroom growth of the “publicity bureaus.” These are private organizations formed for personal pecuniary profit. They take contracts from corporations, from societies of all kinds and from individuals of every degree to act as intermediaries between them and the press. Their object is to meet reporters who seek information regarding the affairs of their clients, to send authoritative statements to the newspapers when those clients

seek to communicate for their own purposes with the public. Five years ago [1902] there were two of these, whereas to-day one could not count them on the fingers of both hands. Moreover, they are all doing well and making money.¹⁴⁹⁰

The growth of publicity bureaus was a theme in other articles. Articles joked that a snake¹⁴⁹¹ and the forest¹⁴⁹² had “publicity bureau[s]” to advance their interests in nature. Three articles in this sample associated lying and exaggeration with having retained a “publicity bureau.”¹⁴⁹³

Negativity about publicity and information bureaus was not total, however. Beginning in the late 1890s, “information bureau[s]” were divisions of newspapers that provided information to readers.¹⁴⁹⁴ This information contained in these “information bureau” ranged from sports scores to job openings and even updates about recently published articles.¹⁴⁹⁵ Other articles spoke about how publicity bureaus operated as advertisers for organizations.¹⁴⁹⁶ However, it was not lost on the popular press that information and publicity bureaus were advocates of a stance. One article in 1907 said that a “publicity bureau” leaves “no stone unturned to protect and advance their interests.”¹⁴⁹⁷

II. Government Use of Publicity and Information Bureaus

A. Publicity and Information Bureaus in the Federal Government

The U.S. federal government regularly utilized publicity and information bureaus during the early twentieth century. However, the role the government played in developing these bureaus is ignored, and largely unknown, in public relations historiography. The role of the government in developing these bureaus is significant because it demonstrates an early awareness of public accountability and uses

communication practices to foster goodwill between an organization and publics. While current public relations literature rarely recognizes the role of the government in creating PR practice, these articles show that the U.S. government's growth of federal agencies was a major influence of the creation of a professionalized PR practice.

The heyday for federal government publicity and information bureaus was 1910 to 1918. Federal agencies or federally-backed organizations such as Congress,¹⁴⁹⁸ the Treasury Department,¹⁴⁹⁹ Department of Agriculture,¹⁵⁰⁰ the U.S. Forest Service,¹⁵⁰¹ Department of Health,¹⁵⁰² Department of Commerce and Labor,¹⁵⁰³ national forests,¹⁵⁰⁴ immigration services at Ellis Island,¹⁵⁰⁵ U.S. customs,¹⁵⁰⁶ the American Red Cross,¹⁵⁰⁷ the U.S. Export Association,¹⁵⁰⁸ the Interstate Commerce Commission,¹⁵⁰⁹ the Post Office,¹⁵¹⁰ and veterans associations¹⁵¹¹ all used a "publicity bureau" or "information bureau" to promote their organizations and their political issues. Sometimes the bureaus within the federal government were issue-specific. The Department of Commerce and Labor created its "information bureau" as a warehouse of corporate information for the public to ensure fair labor and business practices were being upheld in the business community.¹⁵¹² The Department of Agriculture created an "information bureau" that suggested how people should use pigeons as a potential food source.¹⁵¹³ These federal publicity bureaus operated differently than those in business or in non-profit sectors because they were associated with political issues that went beyond generating public awareness. Government publicity bureaus also operated in a pseudo-lobbying capacity since they were organized to influence and create public policy.

One of the biggest issues handled by information and publicity bureaus in the federal government was wartime initiatives. Sometimes these bureaus operated as a type of

social services agency that brought together soldiers and their families. The U.S. government set up an “information” bureau in several locations in the U.S. and abroad.¹⁵¹⁴ Rather than operating in a purely publicity capacity, they often served as a liaison between soldiers and their families,¹⁵¹⁵ sometimes handling soldier mail.¹⁵¹⁶

However, information and publicity bureaus also advanced the causes of war and had a direct relationship with the press. In 1897, maps of China and Japan were released by the Military Information Bureau to the public and press.¹⁵¹⁷ A year later Col. A.L. Wagner, Chief of the Military Information Bureau of the War Department, issued a map of Cuba for release during the Spanish-American War.¹⁵¹⁸ These information and press bureaus served an information gathering and intelligence capacity.¹⁵¹⁹ Other “publicity bureau[s]” were used for promotional purposes such as soldier recruitment,¹⁵²⁰ buying war bonds,¹⁵²¹ and publicizing military exploits of various military divisions.¹⁵²²

The use of publicity and information bureaus during wartime was controversial. The Creel Committee, also known as the Committee on Public Information (CPI), was the subject of 11 in-depth articles in this sample. Often referred to as a publicity and information bureau, these articles not only detailed the CPI’s responsibilities, but also contained sharp criticisms of their tactics and general purpose. The CPI is a well-known institution within public relations history because Edward Bernays and other famous public relations practitioners including Carl Byoir and social reformer Vira Whitehouse worked on the committee during World War I and attempted to apply the persuasion skills they learned there to a more general public relations practice.¹⁵²³ Bernays credited the CPI with influencing him to create psychographic approaches to public relations. From the articles in this sample this power of psychology, persuasion, and press

censorship were recognized as part of the CPI's mission.¹⁵²⁴ In some instances the CPI served as a media analyst issuing official statements about the accuracy of news reports.¹⁵²⁵

However, articles about Creel and CPI from this sample are largely negative. The CPI was described as a "bureau of censorship" that had cabinet level responsibilities and access to President Wilson.¹⁵²⁶ Other articles argue CPI "publicity bureau...imitated the bad example of its counterpart in Germany" equating Creel and CPI with suppression of freedom of the press.¹⁵²⁷ Creel himself was the subject of many criticisms, with articles commenting on his inappropriate comments about the Justice Department,¹⁵²⁸ trying to censor newspaper editors,¹⁵²⁹ and costing the government too much money.¹⁵³⁰ When CPI closed in 1918 it not only had offices in Washington D.C., but also had foreign bureaus and was printing an official news bulletin.¹⁵³¹ Despite this criticism of CPI, the federal government's use of publicity and information bureaus was replicated at state and local levels. However, their use of publicity and information bureaus differed since they focused more on promotions than on influencing public opinion.

B. State and Municipal use of Publicity and Information Bureaus

Similar to the federal government, state and municipal governments used publicity and information bureaus. However, unlike their federal counterparts these state and municipal publicity and information bureaus did not involve political issues so much as promotional materials. These bureaus attempted to increase business investments, travel and tourism, or utilization of state resources by providing and promoting their states.¹⁵³² In addition to promotional events, these publicity and information bureaus served civic

needs including recruiting teachers for local schools,¹⁵³³ finding jobs for unemployed citizens,¹⁵³⁴ and finding government land for sale.¹⁵³⁵

Municipal governments' "publicity bureau[s]" also began to be mentioned in articles and advertisements during the 1910s. These bureaus almost exclusively served to promote visitors to these cities and highlighted city attractions for tourists.¹⁵³⁶ Individual publicity bureaus for cities and municipalities went beyond providing information to tourists and actually created literature and events for prospective tourists. Atlantic City's publicity bureau hosted a baby parade,¹⁵³⁷ Atlanta and Washington D.C.'s individual publicity bureaus created a Chamber of Commerce publication to attract businesses,¹⁵³⁸ New York City's information bureau provided complaint room for borough residents,¹⁵³⁹ and Washington D.C.'s publicity bureau also launched a campaign to create a cleaner city.¹⁵⁴⁰ Portland and Boston hired full-time directors of their "publicity bureau[s]" to do "advertising" for the city.¹⁵⁴¹ Other municipalities such as Atlantic City,¹⁵⁴² Manhattan,¹⁵⁴³ Michigan,¹⁵⁴⁴ and the New York court system had permanent information and publicity bureaus.¹⁵⁴⁵

Some municipal and state information and publicity bureaus took on a police function. One article from 1917 in the *Central Law Journal* criticized this, stating that "publicity bureaus" actually corrupted state court systems and inhibited a defendant from receiving a fair trial.¹⁵⁴⁶ However, these bureaus were structured to serve as both community outreach and as something like an early twentieth century informant hotline. The Governor of West Virginia supported the creation of a "bureau of information" to serve as a "secret service" of the state gathering information about potential criminals.¹⁵⁴⁷ New York set up an "information bureau" to investigate the amounts of peonage, or

servitude based on paying off a debt, that was illegally occurring in the state.¹⁵⁴⁸ Police departments in large metropolitan cities, such as New York, had “information bureau[s]” where citizens could report crimes and reporters could get information about newsworthy cases.¹⁵⁴⁹

C. Publicity and Information Bureaus Sponsored By Foreign Governments

The U.S. press also mentioned the foreign governments had publicity and information bureaus. Great Britain had a publicity and information bureau throughout World War I that gave status updates about troops, battle plans, and set up forums where American soldiers could communicate with their families.¹⁵⁵⁰ However, the *New York Times* stated in one 1914 article that Great Britain’s “publicity bureau” paled in comparison to that of Germany.¹⁵⁵¹ German “information bureau[s]” were depicted as institutions designed to manipulate the foreign press so Germany could garner support during World War I.¹⁵⁵² Two articles reported that “information bureaus” were instrumental in Germany’s attempt to create language schools in South America that would foster support for German colonization.¹⁵⁵³

Other countries used publicity and information bureaus in the United States to influence public policy and to reach out to immigrants. Russian “information bureau[s]” were widely reported at the end of World War I. These bureaus provided information about normalizing relations with the U.S. and helped find Russian émigrés work.¹⁵⁵⁴ Cuba had a “publicity bureau” stationed in Washington D.C. to help it promote its interests in sugar exports and guarantee its government’s stability.¹⁵⁵⁵ Other countries maintained “publicity bureau[s]” and “informational bureau[s]” including France,¹⁵⁵⁶ Italy,¹⁵⁵⁷ Mexico,¹⁵⁵⁸ Australia,¹⁵⁵⁹ and Panama.¹⁵⁶⁰

These information and publicity bureaus are significant because they directly interacted with the public, even going as far to create special events. Much like modern day concepts of public relations, publicity and information bureaus within the government also approached their communications with a sense of social responsibility. Providing good information, coordinating events attended by the public, and disseminating relevant information to key audiences shows that government publicity and information bureaus engaged in a communications practice that mirror the values of modern relationship management theories of PR.

III. Political Use of Publicity and Information Bureaus

In addition to government, political figures and parties in the U.S. used publicity and information bureaus to promote political and electoral agendas. It is within the political sphere that publicity and information bureaus appear to be the most sophisticated in structure, messaging, and practice. While PR history generally acknowledges the role of politics in the development of public relations, historical literature ignores the influence political PR had on the structure of PR practice. Political information and publicity bureaus show that modern public relations structure was heavily influenced by politics because political bureaus used a variety of modern communication strategies such as media management and direct outreach to target publics.

U.S. campaigns and parties had “publicity bureau[s]” as early as 1899.¹⁵⁶¹ However, unlike the governmental bureaus, political parties were more likely to use the term publicity bureau instead of information bureau. Articles showed both the Democratic National Committee¹⁵⁶² and the Republican National Committee¹⁵⁶³ had “publicity bureau[s]” as part of their structure during the first decade of the twentieth century. One

article shows these bureaus were not inexpensive. In 1908 the Democratic National Committee spent \$88,899, more than \$2.3 million in 2014, on a “publicity bureau.”¹⁵⁶⁴

National political campaigns such as Woodrow Wilson,¹⁵⁶⁵ presidential candidate Judge Alton Parker,¹⁵⁶⁶ presidential candidates Charles Evans Hughes¹⁵⁶⁷ and Judge George Gray,¹⁵⁶⁸ Justice Charles Evans Hughes,¹⁵⁶⁹ William Howard Taft,¹⁵⁷⁰ and Theodore Roosevelt¹⁵⁷¹ all employed publicity or information bureaus to do campaign outreach. Even lesser known politicians such as Gifford Pinchot, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service who was fired by President Taft in 1910, had a campaign “publicity bureau” that represented his views in the press during an ensuing scandal.¹⁵⁷² Smaller groups of interested voters such as the League of Voters,¹⁵⁷³ the Progressive Party,¹⁵⁷⁴ and socialists¹⁵⁷⁵ maintained bureaus. Sometimes they were created for the sole purpose of a political cause such as temperance,¹⁵⁷⁶ women’s suffrage,¹⁵⁷⁷ labor unions,¹⁵⁷⁸ banking reform,¹⁵⁷⁹ and workers compensation rights.¹⁵⁸⁰ The popularity of these political publicity bureaus was so prevalent that William Randolph Hearst had his own “publicity bureau” that verified statements made by other candidates’ campaigns bureaus.¹⁵⁸¹ This use of publicity and information bureaus was not limited to the U.S. During the Mexican Revolution Pancho Villa and other rebels used a “publicity” and “information” bureau to communicate their movements and successes to the American press.¹⁵⁸²

The 1912 presidential election is illustrative of the power and cost of publicity and information bureaus. *McClure’s Magazine* discussed the power of publicity and information bureaus in American politics in the article “Manufacturing Public Opinion: The New Art of Making Presidents by Press Bureau.”¹⁵⁸³ According to *McClure’s* the

real invention of publicity and information bureaus in politics came in the 1912 presidential campaign. The difference in this election year was that “publicity bureau[s]” disseminated news stories directly to papers, and sent direct mailings of pamphlets and campaign literature to registered voters became the norm. Republican Senator Robert La Follette was credited with creating the first modern publicity campaign by utilizing direct mailings to register voters using his franking privileges (the right of members of Congress to mail items without paid postage). According to *McClure’s*, La Follette took publicity seriously and decided that he would not run for president unless he could have at least \$75,000, more than \$1.8 million in 2014, in cash on hand. La Follette utilized his “publicity campaign” to include mailings to newspaper editors and published in his own liberal Republican weekly in the West. However, La Follette was soon eclipsed by Theodore Roosevelt and by progressive Republicans.¹⁵⁸⁴

Roosevelt’s publicity capabilities were widely acknowledged in 1912. After much urging by progressives in his party Roosevelt established a presidential publicity bureau only after he secured \$100,000, more than \$2.4 million in 2014. These bureaus utilized a three-prong publicity plan that targeted national newspapers, local weeklies, and direct mail to voters. Roosevelt used a publicity bureau in Washington to provide news directly to reporters. *McClure’s* described the bureau and its practices:

These bulletins, in appearance like typewritten manuscript, were dealt out to the Washington correspondents. Each morning and afternoon the newspaper men, hunting singly or in squads, according to their habit, came to Davis’ office, took their copy, and asked their questions. And so the big dailies were provided for.¹⁵⁸⁵

Local papers also wanted this campaign-produced news. McClure's said that editors directly asked for the material and even demanded bribes from campaign officials to re-print the material verbatim. The primary in North Dakota between Roosevelt and La Follette contained so much direct mailings that post offices were inundated with left-over pamphlets farmers refused to pick from the post office.

According to *McClure's* 1912 also saw the rise of "publicity bureau[s]" by William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson. Taft's half-brother owned a newspaper in Cincinnati and utilized reporters from that paper as publicity advisors. Despite this advantage, Taft did not want a "publicity bureau" and created one only out of necessity in light of Roosevelt's publicity machine. *McClure's* said Taft was ill-equipped for the publicity requirements during the 1912 election because "preference primaries" rather than party bosses influenced who would be the party's nominee.¹⁵⁸⁶ Because of this, candidate publicity created by a "publicity bureau" was a requirement for electoral success.

McClure's explained that Woodrow Wilson's campaign accepted this new political reality and embraced the publicity bureau as a campaign necessity. Wilson's advisors took advantage of afternoon and evening newspapers' printing times and disseminated news reports of the campaign to coincide with desired paper editions. Wilson's campaign advisors changed Wilson's own communication strategies to suit newspaper coverage. Campaign workers made Wilson stop giving extemporaneous remarks, which was Wilson's preference, and give written speeches that could then be disseminated to the press ahead of time. *McClure's* detailed the process of providing pre-released campaign literature to the press writing:

In a bureau of three rooms, with a dozen people, the Wilson news was fed out to Washington newspaper correspondents and a list of papers every day, on mimeograph sheets. Some seven hundred of these mimeograph stories were sent out every day; and every week, from Washington and New York, to six thousand weekly papers as sent a small eight page sheet to clip from.¹⁵⁸⁷

However, Wilson's publicity manager, William F. McCombs, a lawyer and former administrator for the Princeton alumni association, made a critical mistake with Wilson's publicity bureau. In 1912 Democrats were divided between eastern conservatives and western liberals. McCombs, a Wall Street lawyer, sent western papers news clips about Wilson from a Wall Street address. This created western backlash against Wilson and provided lesser-known regional politicians, such as Oscar Underwood from Alabama and Champ Clark from Missouri, with the opportunity to challenge Wilson for the nomination.¹⁵⁸⁸ Despite this fumbling by Wilson's campaign, his publicity bureau was heralded as a campaign innovator.

However, *McClure's* was critical of bureaus' influence over the campaign process. By the end of the presidential campaign of 1912, *McClure's* reported candidates spent over \$1 million each, over \$24.4 million in 2014. The article concluded by predicting this massive amount of money used for campaign publicity meant that Congress would most likely pass laws in 1913 to place caps on campaign expenditures.

IV. Commercial Use of Publicity and Information Bureaus

Scholarship on PR history identifies the firm The Publicity Bureau as the first professionalized PR practice.¹⁵⁸⁹ However, analyzing the popular press from 1891 to 1918 shows that the use of publicity and information bureaus were similar to that found

in government and politics. In fact, compared with the political bureaus established in 1912, corporate information and publicity bureaus seem crude and less professional. Unlike government, politics, and non-profits there was a difference between publicity and information bureaus. During this era publicity bureaus dealt more directly with the press while information bureaus dealt with customers. However, some organizations used the terms interchangeably to mean organization or product advertising.

Advertising was a dominant context for bureaus in this sample. In this analysis of 601 articles, 93 mentioned either a “publicity bureau”¹⁵⁹⁰ or “information bureau”¹⁵⁹¹ in advertisements for parks, hotels, camping sites, or beaches. These advertisements used “information” or “publicity” bureaus as a means to communicate with potential tourists. All of these bureaus served as a contact center and were listed by address. Other uses of the “publicity” and “information” bureau mirrored these tourist venues. Railroads and steamboats articles and advertisements also used “information” bureaus to communicate with passengers. In this context these bureaus served as a type of customer service for passengers.¹⁵⁹² However, railroads had “publicity” bureaus that dealt exclusively with political or business issues in the press. Part of the job of these “publicity bureau[s]” was dealing with wage issues and labor strikes¹⁵⁹³ as well as government investigations into the companies.¹⁵⁹⁴ Real estate advertisements also mentioned “information bureau[s]” as a type of listing service where potential buyers could contact agents or builders.¹⁵⁹⁵

Working for a corporate “publicity bureau” was considered a good job. Charles Emerson Cook, a Harvard graduate living in New York City, was praised in his wedding announcement for working in a “general publicity bureau” where he put to use his experience in “newspaper and advertising work.”¹⁵⁹⁶ There also seemed to be fluidity in

working for a publicity bureau. In 1909 the *Wall Street Journal* announced Ivy Lee was leaving the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to work for Harris, Winthrop and Company, a banking organization in Europe.¹⁵⁹⁷ This suggests that the skills used in these bureaus were transferable, an idea supported by other articles about bureaus.

Advertising was a continual theme in “information bureau” responsibilities. Unlike a publicity bureau which dealt with the press and sought publicity, within the business sector publicity and information bureaus were different. Information bureaus dealt more with customers, retailers, or concerned citizens.¹⁵⁹⁸ Large and small companies including Packard,¹⁵⁹⁹ Western Union,¹⁶⁰⁰ auto trade associations,¹⁶⁰¹ medicine companies,¹⁶⁰² Lipton tea,¹⁶⁰³ and a variety of bankers¹⁶⁰⁴ utilized “information bureaus” to have direct contact with potential customers and users of their products.

Financial institutions also utilized publicity and information bureaus beginning in the early 1900s. Their use of the term publicity and information bureau was interchangeable. These bureaus were used to alleviate investor concerns in foreign markets.¹⁶⁰⁵ They also served as a type of official unit that provided investment information to those people investing in stocks. One organization even advertised itself as an “information bureau” that provided “insider” market information.¹⁶⁰⁶

Manufacturers used these bureaus as a form of advertising for their products as seen in the information bureaus of tile companies¹⁶⁰⁷ and The New England Shoe & Leather Association.¹⁶⁰⁸ Other corporations used their “publicity bureau” as a means to garner support in the press for their businesses or executives. J.D. Rockefeller had a personal “publicity bureau” that represented him during a dispute with the Mayor of San Francisco in 1906.¹⁶⁰⁹ Coal mine owners issued a statement during a union strike through their

“publicity bureau” that tried to alleviate concerns in New York about rising coal prices.¹⁶¹⁰ Other publicity bureaus were directly involved in lobbying Congress for pro-business laws. E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. had its “publicity bureau” issue a statement in 1916 that directly criticized President Wilson’s “revenue bill.”¹⁶¹¹ Du Pont’s “publicity bureau” contacted the *New York Times* directly over crises such as a fire in one of their factories.¹⁶¹² Other businesses followed suit in having a “publicity bureau” that directly promoted the business and represented it in the press. Mutual Insurance,¹⁶¹³ a patent medicine company,¹⁶¹⁴ a fashion company,¹⁶¹⁵ trusts,¹⁶¹⁶ chambers of commerce,¹⁶¹⁷ a company that raised sturgeon,¹⁶¹⁸ the International Mercantile Marine Company,¹⁶¹⁹ and a junior board of trade¹⁶²⁰ established “publicity bureau[s]” that were in operation from 1905 onward. The responsibilities of these corporate publicity bureaus is illustrated in the Interstate Cotton Seed Association who created a “publicity bureau” in 1905.¹⁶²¹ Their view of a “publicity bureau” was summed up in an article in *The Atlanta Constitution*:

A publicity bureau should not only be an information and advertising bureau but an educational one. It should have representatives not only in foreign markets where cottonseed products are now sold, but should investigate others where these products might be sold. Conditions in these markets should be studied and regularly reported and the information published for the benefit of the members of the association.¹⁶²² Once the association created its “publicity bureau” it seems that public education was an important part of the bureau’s job.¹⁶²³

As in government and politics, these corporate bureaus have a sense of public awareness. However, what is interesting about this sample is that these bureaus were

more closely related to advertising, than media relations. This suggests that PR history's predominant narrative that corporate interests created modern public relations is not accurate: the publicity sought was not a dialogue between consumer and organization or a relationship between organization and the media. Rather, these organizations' used publicity and information bureaus as a form of product and company promotion devoid of relationship management and interchange between an organization and its key publics. Knowing this characteristic of corporate publicity and information bureaus suggests that the true root of modern public relations practices lies in non-corporate sphere, notably the government.

V. Non-Profit Use of Publicity and Information Bureaus

Early non-profit, civic organizations are often ignored perhaps in part because grassroots public relations is often viewed as being influenced by corporate practices. Unlike corporations, these organizations utilized public relations practice at the grassroots. Non-profit publicity and information bureaus were used as a form of early promotion or advertisement. While political and commercial bureaus focused on persuasive messaging, non-profit publicity bureaus focused more on outreach to potential members, attendees, or supporters of events.

Civic organizations, which were becoming increasingly popular in the late nineteenth century, regularly had publicity bureaus.¹⁶²⁴ These bureaus oftentimes served niche clubs such as a canning club,¹⁶²⁵ social fraternities,¹⁶²⁶ an architecture association,¹⁶²⁷ an astronomy club,¹⁶²⁸ the Daughters of the American Revolution,¹⁶²⁹ the National Pin Money League,¹⁶³⁰ a Confederate veterans association,¹⁶³¹ sporting clubs,¹⁶³² a bicycle club,¹⁶³³ a baseball club,¹⁶³⁴ a stamp collectors club,¹⁶³⁵ a developers association,¹⁶³⁶ a

social service league,¹⁶³⁷ a commercial banking club,¹⁶³⁸ veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic,¹⁶³⁹ lawyers representing amputees,¹⁶⁴⁰ agricultural groups,¹⁶⁴¹ and a horticultural society.¹⁶⁴²

Other special interest groups had “information bureau[s]” that provided special information to the public such as the car information,¹⁶⁴³ healthcare suggestions,¹⁶⁴⁴ and women’s issues.¹⁶⁴⁵ Expositions, fairs, and coordinated public events used publicity and information bureaus to publicize the events and to provide information to attendees.¹⁶⁴⁶ These publicity bureaus were used at staged events including boxing matches,¹⁶⁴⁷ theater shows,¹⁶⁴⁸ races,¹⁶⁴⁹ cattle show,¹⁶⁵⁰ a shooting exposition,¹⁶⁵¹ a Grand Army of the Republic exposition,¹⁶⁵² Pan-American Exposition,¹⁶⁵³ the World’s Fair,¹⁶⁵⁴ and a memorial service for those who died on the Titanic.¹⁶⁵⁵

As early as 1891, well before governmental, political, and corporate use of publicity and information bureaus, churches and individual preachers used “publicity” and “information” bureaus to promote their services and special events.¹⁶⁵⁶ The early use of these bureaus by churches is significant because it suggests these other spheres may have borrowed the practice of bureaus from grassroots organizations. Examples of these church “publicity” and “information” bureaus include a Methodist Convention,¹⁶⁵⁷ evangelical church services,¹⁶⁵⁸ a Presbyterian food drive,¹⁶⁵⁹ and a church-run temperance meeting.¹⁶⁶⁰

Members of the Church of Christ, Scientists, also known as Christian Scientists, were noted for their use of a “publicity bureau” in major U.S. cities, such as Boston and New York, which provided literature about their religious movement.¹⁶⁶¹ Jewish immigrants also set up “information” and “publicity” bureaus to provide recent immigrants with

community contacts and help find them jobs.¹⁶⁶² Similar to religious institutions, libraries and museums used both “information bureau[s]” and “publicity bureau[s]” to provide both information about resources and for increasing visitors.¹⁶⁶³ Schools advertised for applications and enrollment stating that potential students could contact their “information bureau” for the application procedures.¹⁶⁶⁴

Grassroots public relations is largely ignored by scholars because it is difficult to access historical data. In addition, public relations at the grassroots does not support a corporate narrative of PR development. However, to argue modern public relations practice is a derivative of local, civic organization makes theoretical sense.

VI. Conclusion

It is difficult to engage with what public relations literature says about the publicity and information bureau since little scholarship exists on either term. However, analysis of the popular press from 1891 to 1918 shows something significant about the development of public relations as a practice. Cutlip used the creation of the Boston-based Publicity Bureau as the starting point of public relations practice.¹⁶⁶⁵ As Lamme and Russell point out, this historical genesis is a rather arbitrary date.¹⁶⁶⁶ Equally problematic is Cutlip’s focus on the Publicity Bureau’s corporate identity because it suggests the beginning of modern public relations practice emerges because corporate interests were represented by the Publicity Bureau. It is important for PR historiography to recognize that not only did publicity and information bureaus emerge in different contexts but emerged simultaneously in government, politics, business, and at the grassroots. This analysis shows that the so-called professionalization of public relations largely resulted from both a top-down and bottom-up development. Politics, government,

and grassroots influences in public relations development are largely ignored in preference for a corporate narrative. Interestingly the government's publicity and information bureaus were more respected than their business counterparts. This too illustrates that rooting early public relations practice in corporations is not only inaccurate, but fails to provide the professional legitimacy modern PR seeks through this narrative.

This analysis of publicity and information bureaus also forces public relations scholars to acknowledge the non-corporate influence of the field. Bernays and Cutlip recognized that precursors to professional PR practice included government and politics, but government and politics played a direct role in early professional PR practice. These governmental and political uses of publicity and information bureaus shows that government not only served as a PR precursor, but was an active part of early PR practice. Histories that claim Edward Bernays served as a major transitory force within PR seems questionable in light of this new historical evidence.¹⁶⁶⁷ A more accurate transitional force in PR is the emergence of a widespread government bureaucracy during the early twentieth century. The analysis of the popular press from the 1900s shows it is the emergence of these agencies that bring about the rise of publicity and information bureaus and the recognition of the power of public opinion.

This use of publicity and information bureaus in government, politics, business, and civic organizations also shows that public relations development was not evolutionary. Rather, this analysis support the idea that public relations as a practice emerged from many sources (corporate and non-corporate alike) in tandem. Because of this simultaneous emergence of public relations practice shows the inaccuracy in using PR

typologies, such as the four models, as a historical timeline for U.S. public relations history.¹⁶⁶⁸ Since professional practice emerged at a time when press agency still existed and operated in multiple fields demarking public relations into compartmentalized stages of practice is historically unjustifiable. Additionally, the fact this type of professional PR practice emerged simultaneously in different fields suggests evolutionary narratives of the development of PR is also inaccurate. From these articles it becomes apparent that PR development in the U.S. followed a non-linear and multifaceted development in which fields borrowed communications objectives, skills, and implementation from each other.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion from this analysis is the role the grassroots plays in PR formation. Information and publicity bureaus in civic organizations, specifically churches, show that modern public relations practice must have been influenced by the groups. Press coverage of grassroots information and publicity bureaus show they pre-date all other uses of bureaus. Interestingly these organizations, although local, still had interactions with the press as evidenced by this sample. Their contribution to public relations development is perhaps the most significant, not only because they were the first to utilize these communication practices, but also because their communication values reflect modern PR ethics

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

The current narrative in PR scholarship incorrectly depicts early U.S. public relations history. The first recorded history of public relations can be traced to Edward Bernays' *Public Relations* written in 1952.¹⁶⁶⁹ In *Public Relations*, Bernays tells the story of public relations in the U.S from his personal perspective. No historical sources are cited. Rather, Bernays uses his own memory and the anecdotal history of the field as historical truth. Compounding this problematic narrative is that Bernays also places himself as the harbinger of professionalization of PR. This Bernaysian narrative is picked up again in Cutlip and Center's 1958 second edition of *Effective Public Relations*.¹⁶⁷⁰ Cutlip and Center reiterate many of the historical flashpoints of PR history, mainly focusing on great men (including Bernays) as transitional figures within the profession. Cutlip repeats this problematic historical approach of focusing on great men or organizations in his two books *The Unseen Power* and *Public Relations History from the 17th to twentieth Century*.¹⁶⁷¹ While Cutlip created a more complex PR history than that found in Bernays' or his own textbook, he still wrote a historical narrative largely based on anecdotal events that focuses mainly on PR elites and University of Wisconsin masters theses that focused on narrow topics within PR history.

Other writers of PR history such as Tedlow and Marchand took a more scholarly approach with PR history.¹⁶⁷² However, these histories also have problems. Tedlow and Marchand are not historians of PR practice, but are business historians who focused on corporate communication. Tedlow privileges the corporation as the true change agent for

professional PR.¹⁶⁷³ Marchand reiterates this corporatist narrative, arguing that businesses created more sophisticated and professionalized PR to improve their corporate image.¹⁶⁷⁴ This, of course, coincides with a common view of public relations as a corporate invention that was shaped and refined by the needs of American business. This corporate narrative not only excludes non-corporate influences on PR, but creates a timeline that ignores early PR practice. Both Tedlow and Marchand point to the decades of the 1920s and 1930s as the time when public relations came into its own professionally and strategically,¹⁶⁷⁵ supporting Bernays' assertion that he created modern PR practice after World War I.¹⁶⁷⁶

This historical narrative of the corporate, twentieth century based, and ever-improving PR practice presents major historical gaps. First, this narrative ignores non-corporate influences in PR from civic organizations, religious groups, government and politics. Second, this twentieth century focused PR history places the starting point of U.S. public relations somewhere in the late 1910s or early 1920s (which is actually the midpoint of U.S. PR's history). Third, current history excludes the practice and experiences of the typical PR practitioner who did not have the fame, money, and notoriety of their high profile peers. Fourth, a PR history organized by client or organization forces public relations history to be compartmentalized by narrowly focused micro-histories. This creates a PR historiography that ignores the influences, collaborations, and intersection of PR work done for corporate, government, political, and grassroots organizations. It also presents a historically unsupported separation between public relations and other forms of mass communication, notably advertising

and journalism. Fifth, modern PR history tells a false story of public relations' genesis, which has led the field to view itself as needing to overcompensate for its past misdeeds.

The current PR history has impact outside of historical circles. These inaccurate historical theories of PR have spawned normative theories of practice. Excellence Theory is perhaps the best example of how PR history impacts current non-historical scholarship.¹⁶⁷⁷ Predicated on four models of PR, Excellence Theory promotes the idea that PR needs to be better than its past iterations.¹⁶⁷⁸ While Grunig and Grunig acknowledge their four model approach is not meant to be a historical periodization of PR history, it nonetheless uses historical justifications for its typology.¹⁶⁷⁹ This leads to an incorrect use of the four models as a historical periodization of development. Implicit in the four models is that past PR was crude, unethical, and perhaps does not even qualify as PR at all. What this creates, even if unintentionally, is a reaffirmation that PR history is something to be ashamed of and remedied by current practice. Because of this denigration of PR's past, many current scholars have a hyper-focus on perceived PR transgressions including propaganda, audience manipulation, and deception. All of this translates into a scholarly public relations that is in continual self-assessment of its current standards comparing them always to their perceived past transgressions.

Knowing these issues with PR history, some scholars have tried to examine public relations histories in different contexts.¹⁶⁸⁰ However, these studies tell PR history from a series of vignettes of practice. While important, those types of histories cannot in aggregate form an overview of U.S. public relations history. This is why Lamme and Russell make the claim that no current history of public relations has been "adequately researched."¹⁶⁸¹ While scholars articulate doubts of the accuracy of Bernaysian historical

theories and criticize the historical inaccuracy of Grunig and Hunt's four models, until now no history challenged current U.S. PR historiography by providing an alternative historical narrative.¹⁶⁸²

This dissertation's analysis of press coverage allows development of a new narrative of early U.S. PR history. This new PR narrative begins in the mid 1770s when public relations as a term represented formal relationships between countries. Public relations between nations meant countries had state-sanctioned diplomatic relationships. This type of public relations was carried out by presidential administrations as well as diplomatic figures such as ambassadors. The meaning of public relations by the early 1800s began to also include political relationships between politicians, branches of the U.S. government, and politicians and their constituencies. Public relations in this political context could be good or bad depending on the perception of these relationships. A politician's public relations referred to his reputation, character, and prominence. By the 1820s and 1830s political public relations gave rise to the concept of a politician not only *having* public relations but *doing* public relations. The press at this time suggests that public relations became something politicians did to maintain good relationships with their constituencies.

By the mid nineteenth century having public relations became something beyond political and international relations. Public relations was something citizens had because of their participation with the government. Citizens exercised their public relations through behavior such as voting in elections. Women, immigrants, slaves, and Native Americans were not perceived as having public relations during this era because they did not have citizen status and could not vote. Women in particular were outside of public

relations because within the nineteenth century their appropriate role was in the private sphere of the home.

Meanwhile having and doing political public relations expanded to include public utility companies. These companies operated in a quasi-governmental role since they served at the pleasure of local municipal governments. By the 1880s state law mandated these public utility companies had public relations as a legal status. This meant that laws forced these companies to have transparency and accountability to the local governments that allowed them to operate in their communities. By the early twentieth century public utility companies recognized public relations as something beyond an official legal status. Public relations began to be equated with customer service and public perception of a company.

Public relations as a professional practice began in the United States during the 1870s. Press agents were the first public relations professionals: they were a stand-alone profession, had professional organizations, and used press contacts to generate positive publicity for organizations. This goes beyond mere publicity since these professionals were using relationship management between their organizations and the press, were concerned with long-term image management, and attempted to shape public opinion using communication techniques. Because press agents were used in entertainment, business, and politics simultaneously it is difficult to pinpoint which field first used the press agent. However, press depictions of press agents first emerged in politics where political campaign experts used their relationship with the press to shape media portrayals of candidates. Entertainment and business groups that wanted to generate publicity for their organizations also employed this strategy. During the late nineteenth century press

agents became an organized profession with professional associations. By the 1890s corporate press agents, who were usually former reporters, also became common. Press agent jobs became desirable in many circles, so much so that taking a press agent position was viewed as a lucrative career.

While press agency was in growth, the government, politicians, civic organizations, and corporations also used information and publicity bureaus to communicate with the press. These bureaus began in the early 1890s in civic organizations, particularly churches, to highlight special events and services. Government agencies also began to use these bureaus during the late 1890s to provide information to citizens as well as providing official commentary to the press. Political campaigns also used these bureaus to release information about candidates. The presidential election of 1912 became a flashpoint for these bureaus because all three candidates (Wilson, Taft, and Roosevelt) used publicity and information bureaus to promote their campaigns through direct contact with the press. Corporations finally adopted publicity and information bureaus in the mid-1910s as a service for reporters who needed official responses from corporations. Some in the press criticized corporate information and publicity bureaus because they were perceived to be corporate mouthpieces. Despite such criticism, information and publicity bureaus increased in number during the 1910s. They were often portrayed in the press as a necessary function of corporations which needed official spokesmen who could communicate with reporters.

By the early twentieth century press agents were commonplace in corporations. However, by the 1910s the term press agent fell out of fashion. By the early 1900s press agents were viewed as engaging in purely promotional activities that were frequently

disingenuous, so the term “publicity agent” was invented to replace “press agent.” These publicity agents did the same work as press agents; the only change was nomenclature. Publicity agents were usually associated with business and were sometimes viewed as specializing in unpaid advertising. According to press coverage corporate publicity agents or publicity men began in the banking industry, which was trying to increase bank depositors by promoting new services such as savings accounts. Publicity agents grew from representing only banking to representing railroads, manufacturers, and even individual industrialists, such as J.D. Rockefeller.

Like press agents, publicity agents had developed a recognized profession. During the 1910s publicity agents had their own professional organizations, but were also part of advertising organizations as well. By the mid 1910s publicity agents had firms in major cities that specialized in unpaid advertising. The success of these firms led to an eventual split between advertising and public relations because publicity agents’ unpaid advertising took money away from paid advertising firms. Newspapers also began to criticize publicity agents because they perceived free publicity as a corrupting force on journalism as well as a means for corporations to not pay for advertising.

Public relations grew significantly during World War I because there was recognition of the power of the media’s ability to persuade people. This is evidenced by the concern for German publicity agents who used propaganda (a term associated with foreign and subversive communications since the nineteenth century) to promote a pro-German view in the United States. The U.S. government responded by creating the Creel Committee which utilized censorship, publicity, and targeted messaging to promote pro-U.S. sentiments in the popular press. World War I had a dramatic impact on public

relations history because it marked the first time the power of publicity and the press were recognized by the government and the media. This recognition of the power of publicity led to a post-war boom in public relations work.

This new and more comprehensive narrative of public relations not only highlights the validity of current criticisms of early PR narratives, but proves that previous narratives are inaccurate and in some instances wrong. The historiographic implications of this new narrative show that periodization of PR development, especially using the four models, uses arbitrary and historically unjustifiable demarcations within PR history. This new narrative also illustrates the inaccuracy of Bernays' first public relations history and shows that he did not invent public relations. Earlier histories of public relations not only focused too much on corporate influence, but wrote the narrative of PR history that focused on particular events or people. Because of this early PR histories cannot show a total narrative of the field in the United States. Having a more complete narrative of public relations history illustrates that current scholarship of PR history has a misplaced focus on corporate influence, place the beginnings of U.S. PR too late in the twentieth century, and give too much credence to Bernays' role in the development of PR.

This new narrative of early U.S. public relations in the press coverage presents not only a more inclusive history of U.S. public relations, but also new historical insights into early public relations: politics and grassroots made a major contribution to PR, early PR practice valued professionalism and ethics, early PR is not a form of proto-public relations practice, and PR in the U.S. was not progressively evolutionary but rather mirrored values currently articulated in practice.

I. Grassroots and Politics Made a Significant Contribution to Public Relations

The current history of PR privileges the experience of the corporation.¹⁶⁸³ Doing public relations practice is characterized as an invention of corporate communications. The result of this affects scholarly and practical definitions which argue public relations is a practice that is exclusively tied to business interests. Lamme and Russell's survey of PR historiography prior to 1900 shows that the dominant theme in current public relations history is the corporate narrative.¹⁶⁸⁴ This is not to say that earlier histories of public relations discount the political and non-corporate PR. However, these histories place non-corporate practice either as crude predecessor of modern PR or as a practice that used techniques that were created by business PR. Both accounts are equally problematic for PR history. By characterizing non-corporate PR as a crude ancestor of modern practice, scholars are minimizing the influence of these forms of PR. In characterizing non-corporate PR as influenced by corporate PR, public relations scholars privilege the corporate narrative of history. Neither approach creates an accurate history of U.S. public relations.

This study of the characterization of public relations practice and profession in the popular press shows that non-corporate PR not only preceded corporate practice but most likely influenced it. Government public relations played a very important role in creating modern U.S. public relations. Nineteenth and twentieth century federal and state agencies developed publicity and information bureaus to provide citizens important information. Government agencies also used press agents in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to promote and gain public support for initiatives, laws, and even war. The federal government even created the connotation that "public relations" as a term

meant formalized diplomatic relationships between nations. This governmental role within public relations also appears with public relations being designated as a legal status for public utility companies. This suggests that public relations is linked to a formal legal status created by legislatures that directly affected an organization's requirements for public engagement.

Like government, politics played an essential role in public relations. Looking at political parties, campaigns, and constituent relations shows a form of sophisticated PR that would comport with modern definitions of the field. Political public relations created some of the first stand-alone public relations professionals in the form of campaign press agents. More importantly, political public relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth century shows that campaign press agents and publicity bureaus recognized the importance of communicating with people whose modern-day labels are strategic publics, stakeholders, and media contacts. Political public relations also demonstrates an early concern with newspapers and reporters. It comes as no surprise that just like modern PR practitioners, many political press agents came from journalistic backgrounds, coordinated special events, and managed campaigns for maximized press coverage.

Grassroots use of public relations also was prevalent in press characterizations. Not only was it prevalent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it preceded all other forms of PR. Because grassroots PR did not use paid press agents, press bureaus, or publicity agents, it is often overlooked in PR history. However, grassroots use of public relations is important since it shows that small community organizations used communication to recruit new members, promote their organizations' services, and dialog with their members.

Governmental, political, and grassroots public relations are significant because they shows that PR was practiced and recognized as important well before corporations adopted its use. It also demonstrates that early non-corporate U.S. public relations was concerned with persuasion, image management, and relationship maintenance. This narrative is consistent with public relations history in other countries such as Great Britain¹⁶⁸⁵ and Germany.¹⁶⁸⁶ Since non-corporate PR had such a complex and sophisticated understanding of the power of communications, it is highly likely that corporate uses of PR emerged as a result of these non-corporate practices.

II. Early PR Represents a Professional and Sophisticated Communications Practice

Bernays and Cutlip argued that early public relations practice was largely dominated by the unethical press agent.¹⁶⁸⁷ In fact the terms press agent and press agency have become pejorative terms used to describe low-brow, unethical, and highly manipulative public relations practice. Even the non-historical four models of PR which seek to provide only a typology of PR practice use the historical term “press agent” to denote the lowest and most debased form of PR.¹⁶⁸⁸ Because of these persistent narratives within public relations scholarship, early public relations is oftentimes defined by its shortcomings.

Despite this popular narrative, press agents, publicity men, press bureaus, and public relations were all terms that had positive associations. This is not to say there was no criticism of public relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; there was clear criticism of public relations. However, this is to be expected since public relations work, like all professions, has both good and bad practitioners. Within these articles the criticism was far outweighed by the positive comments of the field. Nowhere is this

more prevalent than in the discussions of the high salaries of press agents, the descriptions of the hardworking campaign agent, or the usefulness of government publicity and information bureaus. Grassroots public relations work was almost never criticized, and business publicity was only criticized when it crossed commonly held ethical boundaries. All of this shows that public relations was not a debased and devalued profession. In fact, the sharpest criticism of public relations came at the end of this study when publicity agents began taking money away from newspapers and advertisers. This criticism suggests that the real problem with early PR practice was not that it was unethical, but that it was too successful.

Propaganda is also directly related to this misperception of the unethical nature of early PR. Bernays introduced the term propaganda into the historical narrative of public relations.¹⁶⁸⁹ Some PR scholars do not know what to do with this unwanted PR predecessor most often associated with repressive, manipulative, and undemocratic communications. However, the real difficulty with the terms like “propaganda” is that it barely belongs in the historical narrative of PR. As the popular press shows, propaganda was rarely invoked as a term meaning public relations. No article suggests there is a major connection between propaganda activities and press agents, publicity agents, or information bureaus. Propaganda from its initial use in the late nineteenth century almost always meant something negative in U.S. media. Its only connection to public relations is that people used the term to attack and criticize communications practices that fell outside of the public’s expectations. Bernays’ own use and experience with the term must have been different than the popular usage.¹⁶⁹⁰ However, this study cannot speak to that. What is clear is Bernays’ use and conception of propaganda was outside of the

normal usage in the popular press. Perhaps this is why he struggled and failed to resurrect the term in the 1920s.¹⁶⁹¹ This examination of the popular press shows that modern public relations is the great inheritor of a rich and valued communications practice. This history means PR did not come from embarrassing roots, but instead is built on traditions of competent and ethical communicators.

III. Distinctions Between Proto and Professional PR are Arbitrary and Ill-Conceived

Some public relations historians argue there is a distinction between eras of public relations.¹⁶⁹² Proto-public relations is a term ascribed to the primitive ancestor of public relations. This is seen in Cutlip and Center's chapter on early public relations "From 1900 On—The Real Beginnings."¹⁶⁹³ Proto-PR is crude, largely non-professional, and unaware of how to harness the power of communications for maximized success.

However, looking at the portrayal of public relations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this proto versus professional public relations becomes an increasingly difficult dichotomy to justify.

Proto public relations advocates claim the professionalization of public relations begins when the field is recognized as a stand-alone profession that has expectations for practice and has professional organizations.¹⁶⁹⁴ In this view public relations as a profession begins with the business community of the early twentieth century. This accounts for why corporate public relations is pointed to (although unjustifiably) as the genesis of modern PR. However, the concept of proto PR also suffers from the same problematic over inclusiveness it seeks to correct. If anything prior to professional PR is proto-PR then proto-PR begins as the origins of human communication. However, even if one were to accept proto PR the argument that U.S. press agents were proto-PR

practitioners is historically unjustifiable because within the popular press all of the elements of professionalism are present. Press agents were a recognized stand-alone profession, had expectations for good practice, and had recognized professional organizations. Given this reality using Watson's definition of proto versus professional PR the press agent is an actual PR practitioner.¹⁶⁹⁵

This information about early PR presents the inevitable question of when public relations emerged. Some scholars, such as the proto-PR advocates, point to the emergence of a profession as the beginning of PR.¹⁶⁹⁶ Other scholars argue PR is a communications practice that emerges as an inherent part of all communication and civilization.¹⁶⁹⁷ These views are either overly narrow or unnecessarily broad. This study shows U.S. public relations as a practice emerged during the 1820s when there was the recognition that one had to do public relations to maintain image and reputation. This places the genesis of American public relations squarely in the realm of politics. Early political figures recognized they had to do public relations to maintain relationships with constituents, colleagues, and foreign governments.

Public relations under this definition does not require there to be an actual stand-alone profession. In fact, to make a recognized profession the sole requirement to constitute PR is not only historically inaccurate, but it engages in historical presentism. Early public relations is defined by its recognition of the need to build relationships through communication with strategic publics. This suggests that for public relations to exist there must be some societal prerequisites. While those requirements are beyond the scope of this study, it is conceivable that one requirement would be that an active and engaged public had to exist. Another element is the need for organizations, such as

political parties, to speak through a gatekeeper intermediary to convey their message to the public. For the U.S., this public emerged when political engagement increased, a popular press emerged, and politicians faced electoral accountability.

IV. Public Relations History is Not Evolutionary

U.S. PR histories written by Bernays, Cutlip, and Tedlow follow an evolutionary trajectory.¹⁶⁹⁸ This is seen in subheadings like “Up from Press Agency,” which suggests modern public relations evolved from lower, crude forms of practice. Under this theory primordial public relations gave way to the more evolved (i.e. more professional) public relations practice of today. Characterizing public relations as evolutionary creates theoretical problems. Some PR history scholars are highly critical of the evolutionary narrative of PR because it supports an evolutionary PR history, lends credence to Bernays’ assertion he was the father of PR, and provides historical legitimacy to the controversial four models.¹⁶⁹⁹ Scholars also argue evolutionary PR supports the historical misperception that corporations created public relations practice.¹⁷⁰⁰ This provides for the dominance of business theories within PR scholarship and supports the inherent Chandlerian paradigm that is dominant within PR historiography.¹⁷⁰¹

This analysis of the press shows that U.S. public relations is not evolutionary. An evolutionary narrative suggesting that PR has some lesser evolved, crude ancestor inherently engages in presentist views because it superimposes modern norms of PR practice onto the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like any profession, public relations of the nineteenth century used the communications tools available at that time. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries media meant only print, communications techniques used only direct contact, letters, or telegrams, and professional organizations

were very small compared with the twenty first century. This does not mean this form of public relations was lower on the evolutionary chain. Instead this represents public relations practice during the historical reality of its time. From this study it is evident that public relations growth in American occurred in response to certain external factors such as democratic inclusion, technology, industrialization, and urbanization. In addition to these external factors, internal forces within organizations such as market economy, political realities, and group dynamics also created particularized versions of PR practice.

Many of the core tenets of modern PR practice were used by public relations practitioners during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early uses of the term public relations suggest that maintaining diplomatic, constituent, interpersonal, and professional relationships were an important part of being a well-known figure. This early use of public relations as a term implies that image, relationship, and media management were part of any public figure's life. Press agency shows that as early as the 1870s there was a recognition that the press influenced public opinion, organizational credibility was important, and relationships with reporters helped create positive perceptions of organizations and individuals. Publicity and information bureaus illustrate that during the early twentieth century government, politicians, corporations, and civic organizations recognized that outreach, relationship maintenance, and direct communication with the press and public were necessary conditions for creating trust, fidelity, and goodwill for organizations. All of these factors show that modern concepts of public relations as relationship management, image maintenance, and strategic communications with the media are not modern at all but rooted in the early period of U.S. public relations.

V. Suggestions for Future Research

In their 2010 survey of historical PR literature Lamme and Russell state that currently there is no accurate history of U.S. public relations.¹⁷⁰² This study attempts to fill the scholarly gap in PR historiography by providing a more accurate narrative of early U.S. PR practice. However, like most historical studies this analysis of public relations in the popular press raises as many new questions as it answers. Using the popular press as the sole primary source for this study was necessary since no accurate narrative for U.S. PR had been established. This dissertation does not attempt to present a timeline or periodization of PR history. Such devices are historically problematic because they superimpose the researcher's own judgments as arbitrary demarcations of history. The goal of this dissertation is to show current timelines or periodizations of PR history are inaccurate given that public relations grew in tandem across many different fields simultaneously. However, future research should make use of archival resources outside of the popular press to explore the uses and work of early practitioners, campaigns, businesses, civic organizations, and publicity firms.

Four major areas for future research that emerge from this study are the early relationship between advertising and public relations, grassroots organizations' PR, government PR, and international influence of U.S. public relations. The joint history of advertising and public relations has been completely ignored by all public relations histories. Scholarly research has affirmed the widely held belief that the two forms of communication though related are distinct. New issues of convergence make this old separation arbitrary. Historical research can provide new insights on their early relationship and coexistence. Future research should examine the relationship of

professional organizations for publicity men, such as the Pilgrim Publicity Men, who worked with advertising organizations. This would have theoretical significance for both fields since it would present new definitions of public relations and advertising that went beyond characteristics such as paid versus unpaid placement, branding, and for-profit versus non-profit work that currently differentiates the two fields.

Grassroots organizations also present a ripe area for PR history. Unlike their political and corporate counterparts grassroots and civic public relations is often overlooked. When grassroots PR is addressed it is usually described as emulating corporate uses of PR. This suggests a top-down dissemination of PR practice. However, as this study of the popular press shows this top-down model is only partly inaccurate. Public relations practiced by non-salaried individuals for small organizations emerged before any political or corporate PR. This suggests that corporate public relations may have been influenced by these grassroots civic organizations. Further research should be done on the actual practice of grassroots public relations and how these organizations interacted with the press. Future research should focus on local churches, civic clubs, and organizations for recent immigrants used publicity and information bureaus to promote their interests. A more detailed understanding of these early civic/grassroots public relations can shed light on how much influence these organizations had on PR in the corporate and political sphere.

Like grassroots organizations, the government played a prevalent role in early public relations. More research can be done on individual campaigns that used public relations tactics. Particular attention should be paid to PR's role in the 1912 presidential campaign since the popular press coverage of that election suggests it was a watershed moment for

modern PR. The lives and work of individual political PR practitioners such as Gifford Pinchot, Jules Guthridge, and Willis Abbot, and Lewis Chanler should also be studied. The pervasiveness of political PR also suggests that corporate use of public relations was influenced by these government and political PR.

Another area that should be researched is the influence public relations from foreign nations had on the United States. Since the first use of the term “public relations” was during the colonial era, there should be historical research on how British use of the term “public relations” influenced American usage. Additionally, this dissertation shows that the popular press was well-aware of German uses of propaganda, publicity, and press agents. Because of this future research should investigate what impact German use of public relations influenced U.S. PR development.

These new areas of research should go beyond press sources in their analysis of public relations history. This dissertation serves as an overview of many historical topics that scholars can concentrate on with greater depth. It is intentionally broad because it represents the first step in creating a new and accurate public relations history that incorporates this new historical narrative. Individuals, organizations, and historical events can be explored using archival research that would provide a richness and depth the popular press cannot provide. Scholars should use this new historical narrative of PR presented in the popular press and cast off the inaccurate historical theories of PR history that ignore the interactivity between various corporate and non-corporate groups, denigrate press agency, marginalize the influence of politics and government, and apply a great man narrative of PR history. This new and more accurate periodization of U.S. history acknowledges the varied influencers of PR history, recognizes the influence early

professionals had on modern practice, and shows the true history of U.S. public relations is not an evolution but a maturation. All of these historical theories provides a new framework in which a more inclusive and accurate PR history can be written.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ James Grunig and Todd Hunt, *Managing Public Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 22.

² Larissa Grunig and James Grunig, "Public Relations in the United States: A generation of maturation." In *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, research and practice*, eds. K Sriamesh and D. Verčič (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 337.

³ Scott Cutlip and Allen Center, *Effective Public Relations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1958), 16-46; Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁴ Margot Lamme and Karen Russell, "Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations Development," *Journalism and Communication Monographs* (2010): 281-262, 356.

⁵ Edward Bernays, *biography of an idea: memoirs of public relations counsel Edward L. Bernays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 155-208.

⁶ Scott Cutlip, *The Unseen Power* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994); Scott Cutlip, *Public Relations History from the 17th to the twentieth Century* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).

⁷ Linda Childers Hon, "'To Redeem the Soul of America:,' Public Relations and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 9 (1997): 163-212; Karen Miller, "U.S. Public Relations History: Knowledge and Limitations,"

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⁷ Lamme and Russell, "Removing the Spin," 356

⁷ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 17-77; Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 13-43.

⁸ Edward Bernays, *Public Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952) 17-115; Cutlip and Center, *Effective Public Relations*, 16-46; Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1998), 7-48.

¹¹ Alan Raucher, *Public Relations and Business* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 1-15.

¹² Richard S. Tedlow, "Preface Up From Press Agency," in *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business 1900-1959*, ed. Richard S. Tedlow (Greenwich: Jai Press, 1979).

¹³ Lamme & Russell, "Removing the Spin," 281-362; Karla Gower, "U.S. Corporate Public Relations in the Progressive Era," *Journal of Communication Management* 12 (2008): 305-318; W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry Holladay, Privileging an activist vs. a corporate view of public relations history in the U.S., *Public Relations Review* 38 (2012): 347-353.

¹⁴ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 27-115.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bernays, *Public Relations*; Bernays, *biography of an idea*.

¹⁷ Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Bernays, *biography of an idea*.

²¹ Cutlip and Center, *Effective Public Relations*.

²² Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

²³ Ibid.

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- ²⁴ Larissa Grunig and James Grunig, "Public Relations in the United States: A generation of maturation." In *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, research and practice*, eds. K Sriamesh and D. Verčič (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 337.
- ²⁵ Cutlip, *The Unseen Power*.
- ²⁶ Cutlip, *Public Relations History*.
- ²⁷ Raucher, *Public Relations and Business*, 47-64.
- ²⁸ Tedlow, "Up From Press Agency."
- ²⁹ Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 7-48.
- ³⁰ Marvin Olasky, "Retrospective: Bernays' Doctrine of Public Opinion," *Public Relations Review* 10 (1984): 3-12; Marvin Olasky, *Corporate Public Relations: A New Historical Perspective* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987), 7-32.
- ³¹ Karen Miller, "U.S. Public Relations History: Knowledge and Limitations," *Communication Yearbook* 23 (2000): 381-420.
- ³² Lamme, "The 'public sentiment building society'," 123-132; Lamme, "Tapping into War," 63-91.; Lamme, "Alcoholic dogs and glory for all," 138-159; Gower, "U.S. Corporate Public Relations in the Progressive Era," 305-318.
- ³³ Lamme and Russell, "Removing the Spin."
- ³⁴ Lamme and Russell, "Removing the Spin," 356.
- ³⁵ Coombs and Holladay, "Privileging an activist vs. a corporate view of public relations history in the U.S.," 347-353.
- ³⁶ Tom Watson, "A (very brief) history of PR." *Communication Director*, Jan 2011.
<http://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/historyofpr/files/2010/03/Tom-Watson-2012-Very->

brief-history-of-PR-CommDir.pdf (accessed February 13, 2014); Watson, T., "Let's Get Dangerous: A Review of Current Public Relations Historical Scholarship," International History of Public Relations Research Conference, Bournemouth, UK, June 24-25, 2013, 3.

³⁷ Watson, "A (very brief) history of PR"; Watson, "Let's Get Dangerous"; Gower, "U.S. Corporate Public Relations in the Progressive Era," 305-318; Günter Bentele, "Is a General (and Global) PR-Historiography Possible?: Questions Problems," (presentation Annual Convention International History of Public Relations, Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK, July 4, 2010); Günter Bentele and Peter Grazyna-Maria, "Public relations in the German Democratic Republic and the New Federal German States," in *International Public Relations: A Comparative Analyses*, ed. Hugh Bulbertson and Ni Chen (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 349-350; Günter Bentele, Manfred Piwingerd, and Gregor Schöbon (eds.), *Handbuch Kommunikationsmanagement: Strategien, Wissen, Lösungen* ([Handbook of Communication Management: Strategies Knowledge Solutions] (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 2001).

³⁸ Watson, "A (very brief) history of PR"; Watson, "Let's Get Dangerous."

³⁹ Bentele, "Is a General (and Global) PR-Historiography Possible?: Questions Problems."

⁴⁰ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁴¹ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*; James Grunig and Larissa Grunig, "Toward a Theory of the Public Relations Behavior of Organizations: Review of a Program of Research," *Public Relations Review* 15 (1989): 27-66.

⁴² Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁴³ Grunig and Grunig, "Toward a Theory of the Public Relations Behavior of Organizations," 27-66. David Dozier, James Grunig and Larissa Grunig, *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995); Grunig and Grunig, "Public Relations in the United States: A generation of maturation." 337.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Amanda Cancel, Glenn Cameron, Lynne Sallot, and Michael Mithook, "It Depends: A Contingency Theory of Accommodation in Public Relations," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 9 (1997): 31-63

⁴⁶ Timothy W. Coombs, "Choosing the Right Words: The Development of Guidelines for the Selections of the 'Appropriate' Crisis Response Strategies," *Management Communication Quarterly* 8 (1995): 447-476; Timothy Coombs, "Protecting Organization Reputations During a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory," *Corporate Reputation Review* 10 (2007): 163-176.

⁴⁷ Lynne Sallot, Lisa Lyon, Carolina Acosta-Alzuru, and Karyn Ortega Jones, "From Aardvark to Zebra: a New Millennium Analysis of Theory Development in Public Relations Academic Journals," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 15 (2003): 27-90

⁴⁸ Grunig and Grunig, "Public Relations in the United States," 337.

⁴⁹ David McKie and Devashish Munshi, *Reconfiguring Public Relations* (London: Routledge, 2007), 122-123.

⁵⁰ Jacquie L'Etang, *Public Relations in Britain* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 2004).

⁵¹ Watson, "A (very brief) history of PR"; Watson, "Let's Get Dangerous."

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⁵³ Elizabeth Toth, *The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the Next Generation* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007).

⁵⁴ Carl H. Botan and Vincent Hazelton, *Public Relations Theory II* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

⁵⁵ Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287.

⁵⁶ Michael Schudson, "Toward a Troubleshooting Manual for Journalism History," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (1997): 463-476.

⁵⁷ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 95, 97, 106, 291.

⁵⁸ Cutlip, *The Unseen Power*; Cutlip, *Public Relations History*.

⁵⁹ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 27-115; Cutlip, *The Unseen Power*; Cutlip, *Public Relations History*; Grunig and Hunt, *Effective Public Relations*, 13-47.

⁶⁰ Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287-291.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Cutlip, *Public Relations History*, 175-180; Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 27-30.

⁶³ Karen Russell and Cayce Myers, "The Misunderstood Nineteenth Century Press

Agent,” (Paper Presented at Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication annual conference, Washington D.C., August 2013).

⁶⁴ This sample was done in 2011-2012 as part of a study on nineteenth century press agent paper presented in 2013 AEJMC. At that time Wall Street Journal was not included in ProQuest’s database. Since late 2013 the *Wall Street Journal* is part of ProQuest’s database. Because of this the Wall Street Journal Historical Articles database was only used once in this study.

⁶⁵ Russell and Bishop, “Understanding Ivy Lee,” 99-100.

CHAPTER 2

⁶⁶ Karen Miller, “U.S. Public Relations History: Knowledge and Limitations,” *Communication Yearbook* 23 (2000): 381-420; Hoy, R, Raaz, O., & Wehmeier, S., “From facts to stories or from stories to facts? Analyzing public relations history in public relations textbooks” *Public Relations Review*, 33 (2007): 191-200.

⁶⁷ Meg Lamme & Karen Miller Russell, “Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations History” *Journalism and Communication Monographs* (2010): 281-362, 282.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Edward Bernays, *biography of idea: memoirs of public relations counsel of Edward L. Bernays* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965); James Grunig and Todd Hunt, *Managing public relations* (New York: Holdt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984).

⁷⁰ Karla Gower, “U.S. Corporate Public Relations in the Progressive Era,” *Journal of Communication Management* 12 (2008): 305-318, 307-308; Lamme and Russell, “Removing the Spin,” 285. An exception to this is recent scholarship done by Brenna

Greer. Brenna Greer, "Selling Liberia: Moss H. Kendrix the Liberian Centennial Commission and the Post-World War II Trade in Black Progress," *Enterprise & Society* 14, (2013): 303-236.

⁷¹ Scott Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations*, (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1994); Scott Cutlip, *Public Relations History: From the 17th to the twentieth Century. The Antecedents* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1995); Linda Childers Hon, "'To Redeem the Soul of America: Public Relations and the Civil Rights Movement,'" *Journal of Public Relations Research* 9 (1997): 163-212; Miller, "U.S. Public Relations History: Knowledge and Limitations," 381-420; Meg Opdyche Lamme, "The 'public sentiment building society': The Anti-Saloon League of America, 1895-1910," *Journalism History* 9 (2003): 123-132; Meg Opdyche Lamme, "Tapping into War: Leveraging World War I in the Drive for a Dry Nation," *American Journalism* 21 (2004): 63-91.; Jacquie L'Etang, *Public Relations in Britain* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 2004); Meg Opdyche Lamme, "Alcoholic dogs and glory for all," *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 21 (2007): 138-159; Karla Gower, "U.S. Corporate Public Relations in the Progressive Era," 305-318; Tom Watson, "Creating the Cult of a Saint: Communication Strategies in the 10th Century England," *Public Relations Review* 34 (2008): 19-24; Karen Miller Russell and Carl O. Bishop. "Understanding Ivy Lee: Newspaper and Magazine Coverage of Publicity and Press Agency, 1865-1904." *Public Relations Review* 35 (2009): 91-101; Lamme and Russell, 2010.; Lamme & Russell, "Removing the Spin," 281-362; Ronald R. Rogers, "The Press and Public Relations Through the Lens of Periodicals: 1890-1930," *Public Relations Review* (2010): 50-55;

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⁷³ Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287-298; Edward Bernays, *Public Relations* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 17-125.

⁷⁴ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 27-34.

⁷⁵ Gower, "U.S. Corporate Public Relations," 306; Hoy et al., "From facts to stories or from stories to facts?," 195-196.

⁷⁶ Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287.

⁷⁷ Meg Lamme and Burton St. John, "The evolution of an idea: Charting the early public relations ideology of Edward L. Bernays," *Journal of Communication Management* 15 (2011): 223-235.

⁷⁸ Eric Goldman, *Two way Street: The Emergence of the Public Relations Counsel* (Boston: Bellman Publishing, 1948).

⁷⁹ Cutlip, *Public Relations History*, 1-33.

⁸⁰ Richard S. Tedlow, "Preface Up From Press Agency," in *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business 1900-1959*, ed. Richard S. Tedlow (Greenwich: Jai Press, 1979); Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and the Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: The University of California Press 1998).

⁸¹ Scott Cutlip and Allen H. Center, *Effective Public Relations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1958), 16-29.

⁸² Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*; Hoy et al., “From facts to stories or from stories to facts?”

⁸³ Tedlow, “Preface Up From Press Agency.”

⁸⁴ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22; James Grunig, “Furnishing the Edifice: Ongoing Research on public relations as a strategic management function,” *Journal of Public Relations Research* 18 (2006): 151-176, 156

⁸⁵ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁸⁶ James Grunig and Larissa Grunig, “Toward a Theory of the Public Relations Behavior of Organizations: Review of a Program of Research,” *Public Relations Review* 15 (1989): 27-66.

⁸⁷ Grunig, “Furnishing the edifice.”

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ David McKie and Devashish Munshi, *Reconfiguring Public Relations* (London: Routledge, 2007), 122-123.

⁹⁰ Larissa Grunig and James Grunig, “Public Relations in the United States: A generation of maturation.” In *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, research and practice*, eds. K Sriamesh and D. Verčič (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 337.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Toth, *The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the Next Generation* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum

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⁹⁴ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22.

⁹⁵ Bernays, *biography of idea*, 287.

⁹⁶ Genevieve McBride, "Ethical Thought in Public Relations History: Seeking a Relevant Perspective," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 4 (1989): 4-20, 13-17.

⁹⁷ Genevieve McBride, *On Wisconsin Women: Working for Their Rights from Settlement to Suffrage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993) 203, 219-220, 234-235.

⁹⁸ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, Grunig and Grunig, "Toward a Theory of Public Relations Behavior of Organizations"; Botan and Hazelton, *Public Relations Theory II*; Amanda Cancel, Glenn Cameron, Lynne Sallot, and Michael Mithook, "It Depends: A Contingency Theory of Accommodation in Public Relations," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 9 (1997): 31-63; Dozier, et al., *Manager's Guide to Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*; Timothy Coombs,

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⁹⁹ Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 214-239, 230-232; Janice Hume, “Memory Matters: The Evolution of Scholarship in Collective Memory and Mass Communication,” *The Review of Communication* 10 (2010): 181-196, 185-186.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York: Liveright, 1923); Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Liveright, 1928); Edward Bernays, *The Engineering of Consent* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955). These books are important for the development of the reputation of Bernays as a self-styled father of public relations practice. However, it is important to note that in Bernays’ 1965 autobiography, *biography of an idea*, he states that he invented the term counsel on public relations immediately after World War I. However, as these titles indicate propaganda was still being used by Bernays in the 1920s which calls into question some of Bernays’ assertions of his influence in creating the public relations term. Moreover, these early public relations works by Bernays also stand as an example of the early preoccupation of psychographic research within crafting public opinion. Bernays’ relationship to his uncle’s, Sigmund Freud, work is apparent in each of these volumes as is his belief that public relations practice can benefit from the use of Freudian psychology in its message management. These practices coincide with Grunigian concepts of one-way asymmetrical communication which has become regarded as unethical by many current public relations practitioners and scholars because of its subliminal impact on publics.

¹⁰¹ Bernays, *Public Relations*, 79; Bernays, *biography of an idea*, 287.

¹⁰² Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 22; Grunig and Grunig, "Toward a Theory of Public Relations Behavior of Organizations."

¹⁰³ Ray Hiebert, *Courtier to the Crowd: The Story of Ivy Lee and the Development of Public Relations* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1966).

¹⁰⁴ Cutlip and Center, *Effective Public Relations* 34-35; Cutlip, *The Unseen Power*, 37-72. It is interesting to note that the first edition of Cutlip and Center's *Effective Public Relations* published in 1952 did not contain the historical timeline of PR history found in their second edition published in 1958. Although it is not possible to say that Cutlip and Center were influenced by Bernays' 1952 book *Public Relations*, it is evident that the two books use a similar historical narrative of PR's history. While not colleagues, Cutlip, Center and Bernays were certainly contemporaries in the 1950s and 1960s public relations community. Cutlip and Center would almost have certainly been aware of Bernays' 1952 book *Public Relations* and may have been directly influenced by its historical analysis of PR.

¹⁰⁵ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 31-37.

¹⁰⁶ John Miller, *Sam Adams, Pioneer in Propaganda* (Boston: Brown Little, 1936).

¹⁰⁷ Rodger Streitmatter, "Theodore Roosevelt: Public Relations Pioneer," *American Journalism* 7 (1990): 96-113.

¹⁰⁸ Bernays, *biography of an idea*; Cutlip, *Public Relations History*, 68-87. Amos Kendall is widely regarded as formulating the role of the White House Press Secretary. A member of Jackson's informal Kitchen Cabinet, Kendall is cited as one of the first political public relations experts in the U.S. He was instrumental in Jackson's

presidential campaigns and his high levels of support in public opinion. It is interesting to note that this form of public relations practice by Kendall coincided with the penny press.

¹⁰⁹ Grunig and Hunt, *Managing Public Relations*, 28-30. Barnum serves a pivotal role within the four models because he is the figure that symbolizes press agency. Barnum also serves as a historical marker between the unethical practices of press agency and the more professionalized information model of PR.

¹¹⁰ Cutlip, *Public Relations History*, 171-174. Barnum is a pivotal figure within public relations historiography because his death seems to coincide with the corporate invention of PR. For PR scholars Barnum represents many of what is considered to be the worst and most unethical aspects of public relations practice. Because of this his approach to public relations is considered a form of pre or proto-PR. Inherent in this analysis is the idea that public relations as a practice only comes into being in the late nineteenth Century corporate sphere because all earlier uses of PR were unprofessional and unethical Barnum-esque press agency. This leads to a narrow conceptualization of public relations history which excludes earlier non-corporate forms of PR practice which arguably influenced corporate communication practices.

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corporate narratives predominate the genesis of PR. Moreover, this preoccupation with a corporatist view has translated into the pervasive idea that public relations must be corporate. Under this perverse understanding of public relations theory and practice all non-corporate public relations practices are either corporate derivatives or even worse proto-PR practices that lack the ethics and sophistication of corporate communications.

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CHAPTER 3

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CHAPTER 4

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CHAPTER 6

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CHAPTER 7

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CHAPTER 8

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