Reconstructing the PR History Time Machine: Missing Women and People of Color in Introductory Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study offers a critical perspective on reasons for and effects of missing women and people of color across introductory public relations textbooks' history pages, leading instructors to supplement public relations history lessons with their own pedagogical materials. Viewing survey findings of public relations instructors through feminist and critical race theory (CRT) lenses yields three important recommendations for moving beyond a great *Caucasian/White* men benchmark, corporate settings, and U.S.-centric 20th century context in order to more appropriately include women and people of color in recorded public relations history.

Keywords: public relations textbooks, critical race theory, feminist theory, people of color, women

Even though Caucasian/White men continue to dominate U.S. e-suites, the public relations practice among entry- and mid-levels widely has been acknowledged as a feminized field since the 1980s (Cline, et al., 1986). Today, about 72% of public relations professionals are women (U.S. Bureau of Labor, 2019) and more than 70% of public relations students in the U.S. are women (U.S., 2018). While the number of people of color practicing public relations in the U.S. remains low, demographic shifts in the U.S. and ongoing civil rights protests in the form of the #Black Lives Matter movement increasingly demand diverse perspectives among communication professionals. People around the world in 2020 lead protest marches for justice and greater opportunities for people of color. The time is right, now, for public relations history to be examined for its representations of women and people of color.

A quick glance through pages of the most popular public relations history chapters reveals token attention to women and people of color. Doris E. Fleishman, for example, is framed simply as the "wife and business partner" of Edward Bernays as they worked together at their firm (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 91). Public relations historian Lamme (2015) argued for expansion of public relations history pages, suggesting that perhaps one reason why figures like Ivy Ledbetter Lee and Bernays have been dually crowned as 'fathers' of public relations is that they were skilled at shaping and promoting their own legacy. Instead, Lamme (2015) recommended a broader "analysis of [those] to whom we turn for precedents, inspiration and wisdom" (p. 52). Other researchers have argued for an expansion of corporate public relations history as a means to incorporate activities of certain demographic groups as well as grassroots, political, nonprofit, and educational practice sectors (e.g., Myers, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to offer a critical perspective on marginalization of women and people of color among history pages in introductory public relations textbooks. For decades, formal chronicling of

public relations has begun with the 20th century work of Caucasian/White males whose paths were steeped in contexts of capitalism, corporations, and mass media. Benchmarking this time period and corporate settings as a beginning for public relations narrowly limits the types of historical figures represented as predominantly Caucasian/White, male, New York-based, college educated, and on the higher end of socio-economic status. Even J. E. Grunig criticized traditional public relations historiography as being Caucasian/White- and male-dominated (Bentele, 2015). We use feminist and critical race theories to problematize missing women and people of color among our introductory textbooks as potentially resulting from a combination of a narrow definition of *public relations*, the traditional 20th century timeline for chronicling the beginning of professional public relations as a phenomenon of the public sphere, an inability to move beyond J. E. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four evolutionary models' progress orientation, and perhaps bias against women and people of color. We offer recommendations for remedying stasis in achieving authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in PR history telling.

Literature Review

Among recent findings of the Commission on Public Relations Education survey of public relations practitioners and educators is a proclamation that public relations history knowledge is "valuable because it provides context and a solid understanding of how public relations has evolved" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018, p. 28). Among survey respondents, 16% of practitioners who hire entry level public relations staff *strongly agree* and 32% *somewhat agree* that undergraduates' education should include "understanding the history of public relations so as to provide context and explain how public relations has evolved" (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2018, p. 30). Given that ours is a feminized field and bound by an ethics code to embrace DEI, it seems logical then that all students must be exposed

to diverse contributions to its development (Pompper, 2004) and the chronicling of history of our field. Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) promotes a goal of "working toward a more diverse profession" with a diversity and inclusion committee and other initiatives (Diversity & Inclusion, n.d.) Effects of women and underrepresented culture/ethnic/racial groups' inability to *see someone like me* employed in certain fields/industries across all job levels, or represented in books, have been widely noted and offered as critique of ways Caucasian/White management persists and is promoted as some old-fashioned benchmark "neutral one-size-fits-all" perspective (Broughton, 2019, p. 1).

Borrowed from the organizational communication literature to better understand this mindset is the concept of homophily, explained by self-categorization theory. Homophily posits that people define themselves and others by using demographic categories (Turner & Oakes, 1986) – and the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971) suggests that people seek to reduce potential conflict in relationships by gravitating toward people similar to themselves (Sharif, 1958). Ultimately, the kinds of work environments yielded by this dynamic generally are unwelcoming of management applicants who do not fit the Caucasian/White male template. Because those who first began writing about public relations history were Caucasian/White and predominantly male, we argue that this way of thinking spilled over into the chronicling of professional public relations history as beginning in 20th century corporations and agencies who work for them according to the work of three Caucasian/White men – Ed Bernays, Ivy Lee, and P.T. Barnum. Comparatively, the number of women and people of color mentioned in formal public relations history are very few, indeed.

This review of literature unfolds in four parts, concluding with three research questions: 1) "Evolution" models, homophily, and corporations; 2) Theorizing secondary status and margins; 3) Feminist and

critical race theory lenses; and 4) Textbooks and stasis.

"Evolution" Models, Homophily, and Corporations

Early theory building in public relations scholarship and ways the profession has been defined may have inadvertently limited ways we think of public relations history in terms of who belongs and who does not. In a recent *Journal of Public Relations Education* report, DiStaso (2019) referred to history books as pinpointing public relations history's beginning in the early 20th century. The J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984) four models paradigm undergirds much of the way public relations history is told. It has been perpetuated in U.S.-based PR textbooks based on Bernays' public relations development framing which promotes his contributions (Hoy et al., 2007). For many years, U.S. public relations scholars tended to build on this standard by positioning public relations as a profession that has progressed over time and become increasingly sophisticated and ethical in the process (e.g., Gower, 2006, 2007). This linear model suggests that professional public relations techniques emerged following a period of press agentry when corporations needed to tell their side of the story following muckrakers' newspaper and magazine exposés about negative effects of industrial and commercial expansion. Lamme and Russell's (2010) monograph breaks from a "dependence on linear interpretations" (p. 281) of public relations' past by incorporating examples of persuasion techniques used in public relations over the course of 2000 years. Similarly, others have written that public relations' stages of manipulation, information, and then mutual influence/understanding have co-existed all along (e.g., Aronoff & Baskin, 1983).

Consequently, this study responds to Watson's (2014) invitation to public relations historians to be "more challenging than they are" (p. 274). So, we seek to investigate effects of published introduction to public relations textbook chapters by examining public relations instructors' perceptions of what they do to help their students learn public relations

history. McKie and Xiafra (2014) similarly advocated for examining "PR pasts" (p. 669) in contemporary ways according to environmental context, nation-centric mindsets that interplay with archival assumptions and changing media impact, as well as scale-methods-ecological inclusiveness to encourage "fashioners of PR history" (p. 672) to incorporate nations' colonial past. Because we concur with L'Etang (2014b) that the process of doing public relations history work must involve considerations of "agency, structures, power, hegemony, ideology and communicative action" (p. 659), we chose to do more than simply examine introduction to public relations texts by asking instructors to share their perceptions about using them.

Even though experts vary as to when, where, or how public relations first began, PRSA and many U.S.-based researchers have adapted to the simplicity of J. E. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models for establishing public relations development. Benchmarking of professional public relations' beginning as primarily a U.S.-based 20th century phenomenon is established in a popular public relations history book (Cutlip, 1995), public relations textbooks, and practitioners' speeches, memoirs, and obituaries (Fitch, 2016). Associating professional public relations history's beginning with the 20th century may have seemed to make sense in 1984, but as a consequence, informal aspects of public relations work taking place outside of corporations – like community building (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988) – largely have been excluded. Public relations history, according to a U.S. perspective, favors corporate contexts (L'Etang, 2014a; Miller, 2000) and this, too, has offered limited benchmarks for telling stories about public relations history. Emphasis on corporations has played out in biases against women and people of color who were not part of management decision making there. Consequently both groups have been virtually ignored in public relations history, save a few tokens. Feminist theorists and CRT scholars remind us that in the

early 1900s, most women still operated among the domestic, private sphere and people of color received little to no appreciation as leaders in business or otherwise (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tong, 2009). Both groups fall outside public relations' four evolutionary models' progress orientation and mostly have been excluded in how we tell our history. Also, attributing the U.S. with fostering the origins and development of professional public relations in the 20th century has translated to excluding non-U.S. perspectives on the history of the professional public relations field.

Alternately, the public relations five-stage development model offers space for qualifying public relations' development in terms of *foundations*, expansion, institutionalization, maturation, and professionalization (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001, p. 321). This model avoids framing public relations in terms of anyone's idea of progress. For the purpose of this study, Vasquez and Taylor's (2001) *foundations* framework has much to offer in rebuilding the public relations history time machine because it promotes a limitless timescape for incorporating elements of relationship and community building in the U.S. and beyond prior to the 20th century and supports non-Western efforts to chronicle public relations history by avoiding an impulse to steep the story in Western contexts. Outside the U.S., public relations phenomena have been examined in pre- and Christian biblical times (Sriramesh et al., 1999), in late-19th century Germany (Bentele, 2015), and other contexts. Developing nations such as Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe's emerging democracies continue to experience the foundations stage (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001). Considering Vasquez and Taylor's (2001) five-stage development framework, as well as focusing on public relations' community building function prior to the 20th century (Pompper, 2021) sets the tone for including other precursors to professional public relations practice that *have* involved the work of women and people of color.

Theorizing Secondary Status and Margins

Stereotyping effects offer an incomplete view of change agency and leadership in the public relations history story as communicated in our textbooks. When groups of people are relegated to society's margins (hooks, 1990), their lived experiences are obscured. Social identity intersectionality (gender and ethnicity/race) -role stereotypes are deeply embedded in U.S. culture. To better understand stereotyping effects, enjoining feminist and critical race theories – as part of public relations' postmodern turn (Holtzhausen, 2013) – promotes critique of too few people of color and women in the telling of public relations history. Back in the 1970s, feminist scholars problematized causes and implications of women's secondary status by recovering women's history (Byerly, 2018) for a deeper understanding of historical events. Digging into history to investigate power discrepancies also is a cornerstone of the social identity intersectionality approach of CRT (Crenshaw, 1991), which has become part of the public relations body of knowledge (Pompper, 2005). Yet, too little DEI research in public relations has examined homophily's historical roots, and so this current study responds to a call to "grow public relations history" (Lamme et al., 2009, p. 156).

If stakeholders, practitioners, and students are largely female and we live in a multicultural world, it is logical that textbooks' public relations history must give greater attention to people of color and women beyond the token one or two currently mentioned. Too few representations of DEI among public relations history pages translate to public relations practitioners often having an incomplete background in their chosen occupation's actual history. After all, we humans have a *need* to belong as part of a community in relationships with others, according to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of human needs model.

Feminist and Critical Race Theory (CRT) Lenses

Lenses of feminist and critical race theories undergird this study

of U.S.-based PR instructors' perceptions of introductory public relations textbooks' history chapters. CRT builds on insights of radical feminism to identify socio-racial hierarchies and redress historical wrongs to make society better (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Like CRT, feminist theory is increasingly diverse and flexible when conjoined with other theory streams as it invites re-examinations and rewriting of historical narratives. At their heart, both CRT and feminist theory are designed to expose oppression, propose solutions for eliminating it, and to contribute to social justice (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Tong, 2009).

While not consciously undergirding their work with CRT or feminist theory, several public relations researchers have critiqued a "great man" history of public relations. For example, opposed to dethroning figures like Lee and Bernays, Lamme (2015) instead recommended using their example to "demonstrate the need for a more expansive and demanding analysis of [those] to whom we turn for precedents, inspiration and wisdom" (p. 52). Her critique is rooted in Gustavson's (1955) synopsis of a person's historical role according to either determinism (events would have occurred even without the *great person*) or "Great Man theory" (usually, the *great person* is a man who is uplifted to superhero status) – and the scholar's role in untangling the two (p. 123). According to Lamme (2015), unless we critique the words and context of a *great person*, we risk "institutionalizing those carefully crafted public personas as bona fide contributions to the historical record" (p. 54). When feminist historians of the late 19th and early 20th century periods found that women were largely absent from history books, they engaged in new research that continues to impact ways we think of gender and intersections with other social identity dimensions, such as ethnicity/race. Similar outcomes resulted with researchers of ethnicity/race in public relations pointing out a dearth of attention to people of color in theory building (e.g., Hon, 1995; Pompper, 2005) and public relations textbooks (Kern-Foxworth, 1990).

Textbooks and Stasis

Many public relations researchers have reflected on the historiography of public relations (e.g., Fitch & L'Etang, 2020; McKie & Xifra, 2014; Olasky, 1987; Pearson, 1992; Szyszka, 1997) and perhaps the best way to investigate how public relations history is told is to examine our textbooks. We've known for some time that public relations historical accounts of women's achievements and contributions of people of color are woefully inadequate (e.g., Lamme, 2015; Waymer & Dyson, 2011). While we have witnessed opening of the Museum of Public Relations in New York City, and experienced conference presentations amplifying the contributions of women and people of color that sometimes result in peer-reviewed journal articles, public relations history in our textbooks has failed to expand beyond a *great White/Caucasian man* benchmark.

Generations of college students rely on learning about the past from textbooks – which viewed through feminist theory and CRT lenses – suggest embedded shortcomings. It is not unusual to find "narrowness and inadequacies" among historical narratives (Morrissey, 1992, p. 134) with conventional college textbooks' history coming "close to ignoring women entirely" (Riley, 1994, p. xii). Cutlip, Center, and Broom's popular *Effective Public Relations*, now in its 11th edition, is a bestseller on Amazon.com, with a slight title change to Cutlip & Center's *Effective Public Relations* and now authored by Glen M. Broom and Bey-Ling Sha (2013). This textbook is on PRSA's Accredited Public Relations exam "shortlist" for exam study resources, https://www.praccreditation. org/resources/recommended-texts/index.html (B-L Sha, personal communication, October 28, 2019). Broom and Sha's (2013) chapter devoted to public relations history has changed little over the years and now briefly mentions 20th century achievements of Doris E. Fleischman and Betsy Plank. A scan of the book's index for *women* lists only two, both from the 18th century – a Caucasian/White woman who published

anti-British plays and poems and an African-American woman author and former slave. Cutlip's (1995) public relations history book liberally covers contributions made by a series of Caucasian/White men, including Amos Kendall, a member of U.S. President Andrew Jackson's kitchen cabinet, and several other political leaders and supporters.

Altogether, public relations history seems to have two fathers and a cautionary-tale male publicist, but noticeably absent from recorded public relations history telling are detailed stories about women and people of color. Rather, Caucasian/White males Lee and Bernays long have been attributed with founding U.S. public relations practice early in the 20th century for their ability to aid corporations. P. T. Barnum has been a poster person for press agentry or "craft public relations," which is considered less excellent than the two-way symmetrical model of practice (J. E. Grunig & L. A. Grunig, 1992, p. 312). Lee (1877-1934) is said to have invented the public relations profession when he opened a consultancy in 1904. Hiebert's (1966/2017) biography of the "father of public relations" explained how Lee provided opinion leaders with Standard Oil's perspective following exposés of muckraking Progressive Era journalists like Ida Tarbell whose investigative journalism eventually led to the breakup of Standard Oil's monopoly. The other oft-credited father of PR is Bernays (1891-1995), whom it is said invented the public relations profession in the 1920s. When Ewen (1996) wrote his "social history of public relations," (p. 5), he interviewed 104-year-old Bernays, whom Life magazine listed in 1990 among 100 most influential Americans of the twentieth century. Bernays is credited with writing the first book on public relations (DiStaso, 2019) and teaching the first public relations class in 1923 (Broom & Sha, 2013).

According to a number of researchers, public relations textbooks are due for updating in this postmodern period. The traditional linear advancement model promotes a "PR progress myth" (Duffy, 2000, p.

312) as a line that connects a progression of persuasion tools throughout Antiquity, then leaps ahead to Lee's advocating for John D. Rockefeller Jr. when dealing with striking coal miners in 1914. Such bookends leave a significant time gap in between and offer a limited, modernist, U.S.-centric history of public relations. Alternately, a postmodern pedagogy – as advocated for by feminist and critical race theorists – might see public relations history as a series of stories told from different perspectives by adding "previously muffled voices and heretofore unseen viewpoints" (Duffy, 2000, p. 313). Around the world, many public relations textbooks offer a limited view of public relations history embedded with U.S.-centric examples (Fitch, 2016). In Europe, this perspective on public relations history merely echoes U.S. corporate and government communication activities (L'Etang, 2008; McKie & Munshi, 2007). As *Journal of Public Relations Research* editor in 2004, Linda Hon told an audience of Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) members during the annual convention in Toronto that overall, too little research was emerging on public relations history. Still later, Lamme and Russell (2010) argued for a "broad, long-term view" to a time before industrialization and to additional contexts such as "the political and sociocultural sphere" (p. 281).

Stasis in public relations history telling in textbooks suggests reluctance to move beyond honoring of Caucasian/White men who enabled professionalization of the field and defaulting with U.S.-centric reverence for 20th century industrial capitalism and emergence of mass media which were managed and run by Caucasian/White men. We fail to break with the past and make our present day more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Gower (2006) suggested at least a decade ago that public relations research was "at a crossroads" and we must explore new options while "questioning our knowledge base" (pp. 177, 178). Kern-Foxworth (1990) also identified the problem 30 years ago, calling for change, and

then Duffy (2000) followed up; public relations textbooks continually must evolve as relevant pedagogical tools given their socializing role and power in shaping viewpoints about people and issues (Van Dijk, 1989). Upon on this foundation, we posed the following questions:

RQ1: Which textbooks do U.S.-based PR instructors use for the basic Introduction to Public Relations course?

RQ2: What are U.S.-based PR instructors' perceptions of PR textbooks' history chapter?

RQ3: Which (if any) materials are used in addition to the textbook's history chapter to teach students about public relations history? Why?

Method

Perceptions of college instructors who develop and use pedagogical materials are important to ensure the best learning experience for today's students who are tomorrow's communication practitioners. We used an online survey research method to collect data to respond to research questions. The survey link was sent to the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). A total of 70 respondents completed the online questionnaire, for a response rate of 3%. Comparisons of response rates with traditional paper and online surveys yield mixed results. Online survey response rates for external audiences can be as low as 2% (Survey data collection, n.d.), so the convenience of online techniques can be a tradeoff (Nulty, 2008).

A questionnaire consisting of 13 probes was tested with 15 colleagues working at universities other than our own and feedback was used to improve clarity and completeness. See Appendix A. Institutional Review Board processes were followed at our university and approval was granted. On the instrument, a screener question determined potential respondents' eligibility: Are you teaching or have taught a basic Introduction to Public Relations course? Eight questions followed, inviting

respondents to: 1) quantify years' experience teaching an Introduction to Public Relations course, 2) identify the primary Introduction to Public Relations course textbook used, 3) identify any required reading of the textbook's history chapter, 4 & 5) indicate degrees of satisfaction with the textbook's history chapter attention to contributions made by women and people of color, 6) identify any supplemental materials used to teach public relations history and 7) offer an explanation of why. A follow-up open-ended question enabled respondents to 8) write in "anything else you'd like to tell us about use of your textbook's history chapter(s) in educating your students about the history of public relations." Then, two questions probed respondents' gender and age ("only as you feel comfortable"). The final three questions probed whether respondents taught at a public or private university, in the U.S. or not in the U.S., and number of years teaching public relations. In all, seven probes were closed-ended (not counting the screener question determining survey participation) and six probes included open-ended components. Qualtrics was used to disseminate the instrument during December 2019-January 2020. Three reminder email messages were sent to inspire participation.

Once the Qualtrics link closed, data were subjected to frequency tabulations and an Excel spreadsheet was used to catalog open-ended responses according to patterns among respondents' perceptions. Finally, we examined all results through feminist and CRT lenses so that we might offer responses to research questions with recommendations to instructors of public relations classes and textbook authors in the context of interpreting respondents' perceptions as they shed light on oppression by proposing solutions for eliminating it and, overall, contributing to social justice. This study was designed to respond to an overall need to genuinely achieve authentic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in public relations history telling.

Findings

Research participants (*n* = 70) were 34 men (49%) and 16 women (23%), 18 preferred not to self identify, and 2 identified as "other." Regarding age, 21% (*n* = 15) of participants were in their 30s, 17% (*n* = 12) were in their 40s, 16% (*n* = 11) were in their 50s, 11% (*n* = 8) were their 60s, and 7% (*n* = 5) were 70+. About half (56%, *n* = 39) reported working in a public college/university and 37% (*n* = 26) in a private college/university. Most participants (71%, *n* = 58) reported working at a U.S. college/university and 12 (29%) reported working at a non-U.S. college/university. Length of time teaching public relations courses was: 17% (*n* = 12) have taught 20+ years, 26% (*n* = 18) have taught 10-19 years, and 21% (= 15) have taught 5-9 years.

Respondents who reported teaching a basic introduction to public relations course said they had taught the course: more than 5 times (53%), more than once (33%), and once (14%).

RQ1: Which textbooks do U.S.-based PR instructors use for the basic introduction to public relations course?

Findings suggest that participants assign introductory public relations textbooks from a primary pool of nine books (see Table 1). Seventy percent of participants indicated they ask students to read the history chapter of the assigned textbook and 4% indicated the book they assign does not include a history chapter.

RQ2: What are U.S.-based PR instructors' perceptions of PR textbooks' history chapter?

Many participants indicated degrees of dissatisfaction with public relations textbooks' history chapters because they focus mainly on "old white men" in their influences on development of the public relations profession. Participants emphasized that they supplement readings with some other textbooks' history chapter and other readings to introduce their students to women and people of color who contributed to the growth of

the public relations field. Regarding satisfaction levels with their adopted textbook's history chapter, most participants' reaction was a neutral degree of satisfaction in providing their students with a complete understanding of contributions by women to the development of public relations ($M =$ 3.33, $SD = 1.21$). In addition, most participants indicated a low level of satisfaction with their adopted textbook's history chapter in providing students with a complete understanding of contributions by people of color to the development of public relations ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.30$).

RQ3: Which (if any) materials are used in addition to the textbook's history chapter to teach students about public relations history? Why?

Sixty three (90%) survey participants indicated that they supplement their assigned textbook's history chapter with other materials such as journal articles, additional books and book chapters, videos and TV series shows, PRSA resources, Institute of Public Relations materials, the Museum of Public Relations website link, and other industry-related websites when they cover public relations history. Thirty eight (54%) participants indicated that for public relations history lessons, they feel compelled to move beyond the textbook they've assigned to show specific examples of practice and messaging media, to expand traditional foci, and to add perspectives beyond that of a U.S.-centric telling of public relations history.

Discussion & Conclusion

We have much to learn about roles women and people of color played in development of professional public relations because public relations history has not been a welcoming space for them. Both feminist theory and CRT have aided public relations researchers in reversing negative exclusion trends and both proved helpful in this current study designed to examine public relations instructors' perceptions of introductory textbooks' as part of goals to expose oppression, propose solutions for eliminating it, and to contribute to social justice. Positioning

work of Caucasian/White males as the starting point for public relations' professionalization – and failure to incorporate contributions of women and people of color to the development of our field – has grave implications. For years, public relations history-studying scholars have emphasized that lack of information about public relations-like engagement in the early 20th century (and even earlier) has contributed to incomplete stories about our history (e.g., Gower, 2006; L'Etang, 2014a, 2014b; Pompper, 2021). This limitation partly explains the dearth of information about contributions by women and people of color, but we argue that no longer should we be satisfied with this as a rationale for not tackling this concern. Further, more research is needed to fully investigate if/how development of the field long ago led to marginalization of women and people of color in the field.

Since both CRT and feminist theory are designed to expose oppression and propose solutions for eliminating it, we directly asked research participants their satisfaction levels with their assigned textbook's history chapter(s) in providing students with a complete understanding of contributions by women and ethnic/racial minorities to the development of public relations. This can help us to indicate degrees to which women and people of color are missing across introductory public relations textbooks' history pages and to offer solutions for improving undergraduate education about DEI in the development of public relations. Incorporating women's and people of color's achievements in our history could encourage other disciplines to cite our research and provide role models for our students. Survey results reported in the 2017 Commission on Public Relations Report (DiStaso, 2019) may tell us that public relations history is an important curriculum component, but instructors who participated in our survey suggest they are not completely satisfied with the scope of the history chapters in the most popular public relations textbooks. This means they feel compelled to supplement the textbooks with

additional pedagogical materials. Public relations curricula have been criticized for coming up short in developing students as a pipeline for future practitioners. According to some researchers, students need better research skills and analyses for "a more historical and historiographical understanding of public relations" (Fitch & L'Etang, 2020, p. 703). Our critical analysis suggests that we must do better and we offer these recommendations moving forward:

1. Consider adopting the five-stage public relations development framework (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001), which avoids homophily and ethnocentrism that can be a result of power dynamics associated with thinking of public relations history as a "progression."

2. Open the public relations history lens beyond the 20th century with its over-emphasis on capitalism, formal organizations, and mass media by also considering public relations' community building function (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988). Stories from the 20th century tend to amplify public sphere voices while squelching voices of women in the private sphere and people of color everywhere.

3. Revise current accounts of public relations history in introductory texts to include a greater number of important contributions made by women, people of color, and other heretofore marginalized groups to avoid potential perception that authors and book publishers do not consider inclusive public relations history to be an important facet of public relations curricula.

The purpose of this study was not to simply criticize research and writing that has led to documenting important milestones in our profession. Rather, we suggest that temptation throughout the 20th century to benchmark the launch of professional public relations with any century other than that present one – with an over-emphasis on Caucasian/White male achievements and economic underpinnings – was too strong to resist. Perhaps this explains survey participants'

reluctance to move beyond a "neutral" degree of satisfaction with their textbook's history chapter, for fear of offending colleagues or betrayal of what *they* also had been taught in college. The J. E. Grunig and Hunt (1984) four models set up public relations history as a progression – an evolutionary march from early-20th century press-agentry developed in tandem with mass media and profit-centered industry – toward ethical, professional practice. By contrast, Vasquez and Taylor's (2001) five-stage framework for considering professional public relations' development in terms of foundations, expansion, institutionalization, maturation, and professionalization, promotes a more inclusive timescape for incorporating heretofore marginalized voices of people of color and women, as well as global perspectives on public relations history. This model offers greater flexibility than the four evolutionary models given that the stages are not mutually exclusive, may be applied in any socio-political context, and sets the tone for defining public relations in the 21st century by avoiding ethnocentrism as an outcome of power dynamics.

Another way to address our field's history shortcomings and to better understand our present is to look at "why public relations developed in the first place" (Gower, 2006, p. 181). Also, we must ask: Is it appropriate to talk about the work of public relations before the term itself was formally introduced? L'Etang (2008) opined that it is appropriate, adding that doing so is necessary for contextualizing the public relations concept, locating it as a human communication practice, and offering a means for connecting public relations to "more richly textured understandings of the discipline" (p. 329).

Interest in public relations history has been growing. In the 1950s, practitioners' perspectives filled textbooks with profiles and "uncritical accounts" (Fitch & L'Etang, 2017, p. 118). Since 2009, attention to public relations history has escalated as Tom Watson (2013) launched an annual "International History of PR Conference" at the University of

Bournemouth. Furthermore, Watson created new publication opportunities in the 2010s with special history-themed issues of *Public Relations Review* and *Journal of Public Relations Research*. His efforts have inspired "the professionalization of PR historical work" (Fitch & L'Etang, 2017, p. 119). After examining research presented at the public relations history conferences and elsewhere, Bentele (2013) offered a simple taxonomy to organize public relations history directions: 1) national public relations histories, 2) historical development of organizations, and 3) meta -theoretical or -methodological approaches to public relations historiography. We propose an additional direction: Use feminist and critical race theory lenses to amplify public relations history's stories without relying exclusively on the 20th century time stamp. Given that PRSA lists textbooks as part of the public relations body of knowledge and that PRSA endorses a responsibility to embrace DEI, it is logical to conclude that public relations' textbook history chapters should offer broader views on who is included as making history and who contributed to development of this field of practice.

Writing public relations history is not without theoretical and methodological challenges. We suspect that many instructors, generally speaking, supplement PR textbook chapters beyond the history chapter, to tailor learning experiences for their students. Recognizing both the opportunities and the limitations of historical paradigms and methods must be acknowledged. Similarly, limitations of the current exploratory study include non-generalizability of findings and a U.S.-centric focus. Our study focused on PR history in the U.S., but further inquiry is necessary to examine the need for (and current pedagogical materials' ability to meet this need for) attention to international PR history beyond colonial and U.S.-centric impact and approaches for maximum cultural diversity. Future studies could include mixing methods such as a formal content analysis of public relations textbooks' history chapters, interviews with

textbook authors, and another survey with a larger and international sample. Instructors who participated in the current study may consider textbooks merely as a starting point for developing lectures and course materials on their own. Future researchers of public relations' history chapter may consider adding an additional method such as formal content analysis to scrutinize historical accounts among the top textbooks, especially comparing eras framed and identifying gaps. Doing so would build upon these survey findings of public relations instructors' perceptions and strengthen our argument urging for a more diverse telling of public relations history to better accommodate students. We hope that findings of this critical perspective on public relations textbooks used to teach introductory courses may be used to correct egregious oversights in public relations history telling.

A dearth of DEI among public relations historical scholarship sets the tone for a lack of diversity in public relations textbooks, but this is no excuse for avoiding the hard work of attending to DEI in public relations pedagogical materials. We recognize that most public relations textbook authors are not historians and that they rely upon the literature. Russell and Lamme (2016) grappled with outlining criteria for who should and who should not be included in public relations history stories. We encourage maximum attention to DEI to ensure stories and contributions better represent our history. So, we urge colleagues to reconstruct the public relations history time machine by considering lived experiences of women and people of color who have contributed to what we now consider to be professional public relations. For example, we support theory building work that builds upon projects such as Denise Hill's "Hidden Figures in Public Relations History" podcast (Finneman, 2016). Also, Kern-Foxworth's critique of stereotypical representations of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben in corporate messaging (1994) and lack of ethnic inclusion in public relations textbooks (1990) has grown new relevance since

emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and corporations' changes
to their brand logos. We endorse including Vardeman and colleagues'
(2019) analysis of social movements as each movement has played out on
a global stage. Also, important contributions of Ofield Dukes, a prominent
Washington, D.C., organizer for the Black Public Relations Society have
yet to be fully explored in textbooks' telling of public relations history, as
well as the community building work of U.S. westward movement women
of the 19th century, and activism of The Reverend Barbara Harris, a
Philadelphia African-American practitioner-activist who began her career
at the public relations firm of another African-American practitioner,
Joseph Varney Baker, and became its president in 1958.

Even though educators who participated in the annual
undergraduate public relations education survey rated PR history
knowledge/skills/abilities more highly than practitioners (DiStaso, 2019),
we hope that public relations practitioners, too, might concur that limited
perspectives on our history could short change students who are working
to build confidence, strategic management and leadership skills, and an
inclusive outlook required for ethical public relations practice. Public
relations has been qualified as a "small and young academic domain" that
benefits from being made even more legitimate by virtue of its "different
stories about the history of a widely used communication practice"
(Wehmeier, 2015, p. 106).

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