Activism and Public Relations: Then and Now

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*Dedicated to my Sister, Jennifer Marie DeMoor, whose love
in life and generosity in death made this possible.*

Abstract

This thesis explores public relations scholarship to analyse where activism and public relations articulate and intersect in their development or "then" over the past century in how public relations became defined as a corporate-economic model to "now" where public relations in its relationship to activism, is seen as a meaning-making process. In analysing the disparate collection of articles and text on activism in public relations scholarship the thesis (the author) begins with defining public relations, activist, activism, protest, social movements, and activist organizations; followed by activism in public relations historical development, offering an alternative and expanded historical interpretation of public relations; then activisms role in public relations theory illustrating the critical movement amongst scholars from the Modernist approach solidified in the Excellence Theory to where Postmodernism and Postcolonialism are exerting their influence; and activisms role in the development of public relations practices as a management process, a control mechanism, and a set of technical skill where activism has played a central role in the development of strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Activism's implications for the study and practice of public relations are then discussed including the challenges, omissions, and opportunities that such an investigation raises as a means of advancing contemporary public relations knowledge. This thesis supports calls for the development of a critical branch of public relations, to include public communications alongside those of organizations and state communications, for engaged scholarship, and a return to public intellectualism as public relations begins exploring not what it is, but what public relations can be.

Key Words: activism; public relations; public relations history; public relations theory; public relations practice; public relations pedagogy; activist, protest; social movements; activist organizations; critical public relations; public communication; public intellectualism

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Conceptualizing activism as outside of public relations or the enemy of public

relations misses the mark. The identities of activism and public relations are fluid,

multiple, conflicting, and at times overlapping.

Ciszek, 2015, p. 453

Introduction

Public relations as a profession, industry, and topic of academic study is in its infancy, emerging with an identity of its own as technicians, managers, consultants, educators, and scholars, often with some degree of overlap, and as Ciszek (2015) recognizes, public relations 'overlaps' many areas of our everyday life, including activism. Public relations as organizational communications, and activism as public communications need each other, and in fact, are integral parts of the two-way symmetrical communications process. Public relations as a profession began its journey a century ago, and now it is coming to fully actualize its socio-cultural role in everyday life, recognizing itself as a unique and powerful set of skills, and struggling with its own identity as one reflected in the counter process of activism.

Public relations "then" or functionalist roots has developed over the past century with a focus on serving the public relations and communications needs of a private business or state institution exclusively with scholars trying to define what public relations is within this context. The idea of activisms in public relations as slowly progressing or developing over time represents a central theme of this study beginning with "then" or public relations formation as a profession conceived by Edward Bernays (1923, 1928) as a tool for supporting organizational growth. Activism is changing that discussion and expanding the boundaries of public relations to where "now" in the most contemporary of context, public relations has begun to include a variety of previously unimagined stakeholders or publics, including those considered marginalized, subaltern, or "Other" in asking what public relations can be, and where the "study of activism

serves an important purpose in setting the groundwork for reform in public relations" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 34).

Activism is seen as a catalyst for growth in public relations as a profession, and has been linked closely to numerous developments within the industry including "the creation and development of public relations internationally" (Smith, 2005, pp. 5-6). Central to this recent increased interest in activism and public relations, is that it requires us to rebuild our understanding of both activism and public relations as well as their relationship to each other. This is expressed in the increasing evolution in scholarship over the past decade to where this study is even possible. Increasingly dialogue on the contemporary nature of public relations theory and practice is addressing the field as a social, cultural, economic, and global component of meaning-making in everyday life where "there is not a single aspect of our lives that communication work has not affected" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. vii). This has been understood for over 170 years, even before the public relations profession was conceived, beginning with Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in 1847 when he argued that the creation of a phantom public through advertising and publicity resulted in a level of social impersonality that "withers the individual passion and personal responsibility … [and] that … allows oppression to flourish" (Evans, 2000, p. 30). Since that moment, the "public relations literature has slowly progressed from understanding activists as mere organizational antagonists to public relations practitioners in their own right" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 347). Yet in spite of this distinction, activism research remains a disparate collection of articles and texts. With recent increases in public discontent with the state of global affairs, and public relations own search for meaning as a profession, it seems that the time is right to explore public relations research on activism, and public relations activists by analysing current scholarship on the key points where activism and public relations articulate and intersect as a means of advancing contemporary public relations knowledge. Public relations research on activism illustrates that "activist research methods regularly yield special insight, insider

knowledge, and experience-based understanding" (Hale, 2008, p. 21), and that "activist scholarship – like a variety of practical engagements – is part of the process of forming, testing, and improving knowledge" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xvii).

During this, the contemporary phase public relations development, rapid advancements and an increasing complexity have affected the theoretical, practical, and pedagogical practices of public relations. The collapse of the traditional media of newspapers in favour of a growth in digital technologies, increasing influences from social media, and future implications from Artificial Intelligence (AI), are coming together to where a "perfect storm for intercultural and interethnic conflict is brewing throughout the world" (Worchel, 2005, p. 756). This new global reality is accentuated by a heightened level of fear brought about by this rapid change in "technology, immigration, and developments in communication [that] are bringing more contact between cultural groups" (Albert, 2009, p. 138). Within each of these developments, the shortcomings of public relations has been the central focus of growing inequalities amongst global citizens dominated by the free market logic of organizational and state interests for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many disenfranchised and marginalized publics that currently exist (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 195). These are the "*perennial* issues of interest to communication scholars as embodied in *contemporary* terrains" (Dutta & Harter, 2009, p. 1).

Critiques of public relations have increased over this period as well (Edwards, 2006). Karlberg (1996) criticized public relations for an "inadequate academic effort to explore the wider social implications of public relations activity" (p. 264). Dutta and Pal (2011) argued that in the public relations literature, knowledge "is created in the realm of private corporations, and in the ways in which the profit-making goals of these corporations might be served by public relations knowledge" (p. 216); and there is an "absence of much scholarship from elsewhere that offers alternative entry points into conceptualizing and talking about public relations" and what exists is dominated by scholars from the "western hemisphere" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 216). According to

Weaver (2016) public relations has become "a force of control in industrial society" (p. 44). Finally "traditional organization-centered public relations theory has lacked the heuristic power of critical approaches to adequately account for activism" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000 as cited in Curtin, 2016, p. 20).

Today, public relations scholars increasingly are calling on practitioners and academics alike to address the meaning-making process of public relations that incites activism. To achieve this benchmark, and to begin to address the question asked by Holtzhausen (2007) "What if our common history emanated from resistance to British colonialism and not from P. T. Barnum, Ivey Lee, and Edward Bernays" (p. 375), this study draws on public relations scholarship on activism by addressing activism's role in the public relations industry, and the opportunities presented by activism for public relations scholarship and practice through its history, theory, practice and pedagogy. Barnum, Lee, and Bernays represent only a fraction of possibility because of their modernist approach to public relations as "a world that can be controlled through administrative procedures, the elimination of dissension and conflict, and the blind acceptance of organizational goals and roles" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 251). However, beginning with the new millennium there has been in public relations development a "transition from a functional perspective to a cocreational one" where this "functional perspective has traditionally been concerned with business-oriented topics such as advertising, marketing, and media relations" and whereas the "cocreational perspective sees publics as cocreators of meaning and communication as what makes it possible to agree to shared meanings, interpretations, and goals. This perspective is long term in its orientation and focuses on relationships among publics and organizations" (Botan & Taylor, 2004, pp. 651-652).

In recognizing this change, I examine the points where activism and public relations intersect and where these points are in conflict, represent omissions, and the challenges presented by this line of research within public relations dominant functionalist orthodoxy. To fully

understand the points where activism and public relations intersect, four key areas are examined including defining terms in public relations and activism; activism in public relations history; activism in public relations theory; and, activism in public relations practice. Then I examine activism's implications for the study and practice of public relations including the challenges, omissions, and opportunities that such an investigation raises.

Beginning with definitions or by defining the object of this study, I provide some clarity to what is a complex topic conceived outside of the corporate centred approach that has dominated the field of public relations since it was originally conceived by Edward Bernays (1923, 1928, 1955). To understand the various distinctions being presented, it is essential to define past and present understandings of public relations alongside the various constituents that address activism: activist, protest, social movements, and activist or nongovernment organizations (NGOs) based on the existing scholarship on activism within the field of public relations. Research drawn from current public relations scholars has indicated four types of activist – internal, external, and policy activists where "within this conception we may want to distinguish bureaucratic, professional, practitioner, and consumer types of policy activist" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 34), as well as the emergence of digital activism where the Internet and various forms of social media have created greater opportunities and challenges for activism and activists.

While this study could not possibly include all historical references, many of the articles and texts cited do provide references that address the different components that make up the whole of activism and public relations. Without this pathway to further research and the depth of understanding that both activism and public relations practice, its industry, and scholarship provide, I believe both will remain marginalized and singularly focused as business communications exclusively. To fully understand the past conception of public relations, and one that includes activism as proposed by contemporary scholars, these "complexities need to be situated within the context of imperial centres, and the present and historical moments" (Dutta &

Pal, 2011, p. 199). To achieve this I examine the history of public relations through the work of contemporary public relations scholars in drawing a meaningful diction between the pre- and post-Excellence Theory periods of public relations development. More distinctly, the pre-naming period before public relations was known as public relations is excluded from this study to focus on its formalized development as a profession over what I have identified as three distinct periods: the first wave of public relations professional development occurring from 1900-1939; the second wave from 1940-1999; and the current, contemporary, or third wave of public relations development beginning at the turn of the millennium or 2000-to present day where scholarship has begun to move from questioning what public relations is to what it can be.

From this chronology of public relations development, a number of theoretical approaches are isolated and explored in keeping with the theme of then and now, illustrating the growing complexity that scholars and practitioners grapple with while demonstrating the equal opportunities that expanding theoretical and applied research on activism can have for the public relations field and practitioners' ability to communicate effectively in contemporary society. Here "the clashing of new ideas with the old is good aerobics for our intellectual system" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 15), and where "practitioners often have knowledge and perspectives that challenge the ways academic researchers think about issues. This can be an important spur to intellectual innovation" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xxiii). This is my objective.

From the metatheories of Marxism, Modernism and the Excellence Theory, to Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in relation to public relations and activism, these theories form a greater understanding of how public relations communications impact "Others", and how activist groups "fundamentally seek to change the structures of inequity and oppression that create and sustain the margins" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 219). Here public relations "theoretical, metatheoretical, and methodological work" demonstrates the unique characteristics of public

relations where "the focus [is] on meaning-making as it evolves, changes, resists, adapts, and is sustained in conversation, [and] mediated communication" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. viii).

Public relations practice, and practitioners, are then examined in relation to their key intersections with activism, including an exploration of the challenges and opportunities presented for practitioners and scholars alike. Within this review there is an understanding that "public relations in Canada is a well-developed occupation" (Likely, 2009, p. 671) and that "when members of activist publics join activist groups, they contribute to the constraints on organizational autonomy that create a public relations problem and bring about the need for a public relations program" (Grunig, 1989, p. 3). However, it also illustrates that "one of the most serious dangers in public relations communication is the illusion of having achieved it when in fact there has been no communication at all" (Marston, 1963, p. 249), and as such activism and a "reflection on successes, failures, and unexpected consequences of social action has been a vital source of new understanding" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xiii). Scholarship on activism and public relations reveals three central components of the functionalist dominant corporate–economic model of public relations as a management process, a control mechanism, and a set of technical skills where activism has played a central role in the development of strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. The rise of digital activism has also revealed a number of current and impending threats to public relations practices including the development of social media departments apart from public relations and the impending advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies applied to the public relations function.

To help drive this research forward a number of topics are discussed comprising of areas that have received little attention in the dominant public relations scholarship and that suggest some causes of activism. Opportunities for further research including calls for the development of a critical branch of public relations, a call to include public communications alongside those of organizational and state communications, and a call for engaged scholarship and a return to public

intellectualism are also explored. Critical public relations, public communications, and engaged scholarship each provide a bridging opportunity between public relations theory, practice, and scholarship, and activism and an activist public.

Understanding what drives an individual to speak up, what issues initiate a communication response, how we address the concerns raised by activists, and in the power that public relations tools and processes have in representing different publics will be critical components in public relations ongoing professional development. These points can have a positive influence on public relations practitioners to initiate pro-active social change, create policy changes that are more inclusive, and re-invigorate public relations research by opening new avenues for academics and educators because "without realistic ideals we would still be bemired in the slave industry, feudalism, and accepting without reflecting" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 6). Increasingly, scholars have taken up the cause, linking the study of activism to the advancement of critical public relations, public communications, and engaged scholarship however, in my research I found no comprehensive evidence discussing this relationship at this time.

The goal of this study of public relations history, theory, and practice is to situate past and current public relations research on activism and to spark further research towards the ongoing development of public relations as profession and field of study, and in doing so, begin to answer Dutta's (2009) question: "Where are the voices of activists in the public relations literature?" (p. 293). For the last 25 years, since Grunig's (1992) introduction of the Excellence Theory, the question has been about what public relations is, and today through engaging with activism the question is increasingly, what can public relations be?

Activism and Public Relations: Defining Terms

Public relations is a field of endeavour or domain with multiple theories and practices where domain can be understood as a "field of knowledge embraced by a particular community of scholars" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 4). Defining the various components that distinguish both public relations and activism is therefore a critical first step in establishing this relationship within public relations. The public relations industry and its practitioners, scholars and academics, as well as activism and its subcategories of activist, protest, social movements and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) cover the scope of this research. Identification is a critical component of this research, where by definition, "*identification* means living within the terms of a certain discourse" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 132) and in this way the public relations practitioner identifies with the dominant discourse. As Sommerfeldt (2013) argues "a common problem in activist research is defining what, exactly, constitutes an activist group" (p. 356), adding that "there is a difference between a mere supporter … and a dues-paying, volunteering member" (p. 361). However, these definitions alone are not adequate but serve to illustrate the need for clarity in the language used by practitioners when describing the object of their communications and as such, greater clarity is required in defining the object of this study to understand the individuals and processes being addressed, beginning with the profession of public relations.

Public Relations

Having identified public relations and activism as the object of this study, our next step is to define what is meant by *Public Relations*. Public relations is currently considered a profession or practice with practitioners traditionally seen as managers, technicians, or consultants; it is also a commercial industry ranging from boutique to international public relations organizations, and has member associations located in democratic societies globally. It is also a field of academic study with a range of programs, diplomas, and degrees. The current challenge is that multiple scholars have provided multiple definitions in the field of public relations practice and scholarship.

Practitioners also reflect this multiplicity, and when asked to define their roles, "different and meaningful role interpretations emerge" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 148).

When it comes to the practice of and practitioners of public relations, Pieczka (2002) defined public relations expertise as "a body of practical knowledge which makes it possible for public relations practice to exist. *Practice* is to be understood both as what an individual public relations worker does and, perhaps more emphatically, as tasks and techniques shared by the occupational group" (p. 302). Public relations then "is both a professional practice and a subfield of communication with its own research and theory base … having developed an identifiable theory in only about the last 25 years" (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 645). This identifiable theory is known today as the Excellence Theory of public relations that began to take shape in the arguments of J. E. Grunig and T. Hunt (1984). Within the Excellence Model J. E. Grunig (1992) identified the four models of public relations as press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and the two-way symmetrical model "where research is used for uncovering points of agreement and where the goal is open dialogue and honest exchanges in an effort to resolve conflict and reach a compromise" (Guiniven, 2002, pp. 395-396). As Morris and Goldsworthy (2008) state, "PR is about persuading people to act (or not act) in particular ways" (p. 100).

The limitations of these models created in the first and second wave of public relations development, and the way in which they have been applied in the real world has drawn criticisms with Karlberg (1996) recognizing that "public relations was understood as a patronizing activity through which organizational wisdom legitimately shaped public thoughts, values, and behaviors" (p. 266). Karlberg (1996) recognized at the time of his writing that "public relations is primarily an instrument of commerce, and secondarily an instrument of state" and that both of these premises "continue to relegate citizens and public interest groups to the periphery of public relations research" (p. 271). Here "the economic rationalist assumes that there is no such thing as a public or common interest. There are only private interests and privately-orientated choices" (Yeatman,

1998, p. 25). In this respect, public relations practitioners "working to further interests of powerful companies, orientated around maximising profits, market share and influence, have confidently been able to approach media outlets to adopt their narratives over others" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 2). The result, as Ferre (1993) points out is a public relations comparable to "the legal profession" where "public relations practitioners have a right and responsibility to defend their client's point of view before the court of public opinion as much as attorneys have a right and obligation to defend their client's actions before a court of law" (p. 60). This presentation of public relations is what I refer to as the dominant corporate-economic model perpetuated by the public relations industry on behalf of powerful corporate owners that has constrained individual community interests in today's economic, cultural, and social spheres.

To explain how the field of public relations arrived at this point, Hallam (2013) draws on a distinction first made by Cruikshank (1992) where the "western philosophical tradition" is rooted in a problematic dualism that has become "a conceptual framework for addressing issues of representation. Entrenched oppositions between 'self/other', 'subject/object', 'us/them' inevitably leave power in the hands of the defining institution" (Cruikshank, 1992, p. 6). These entrenching oppositions have made their way into international public relations where the "dominance of the epistemology of colonialism … sets up the dichotomy of primitive/modern" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 200). Dutta and Pal (2011) have identified public relations as "one of the key tools of globalization" serving the interest of transnational corporations (p. 205) that manipulate "public opinion … on the basis of omissions, erasures, foregrounding, and backgrounding" (p. 207), and as such minimize "resistance to the operations of these corporations, and offering maximum opportunities for them to make a profit" (p. 208). This has led to public relations practitioners, because of the very nature of what public relations work entails, to being part of the global "wealth creation system" but rather than gaining power themselves they "are merely used in the process" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 51). The result is a public relations practice and research that "has neither

dealt well with dilemmas offered by concepts of *propaganda, dialogue* or the *public sphere*, nor has it produced extensive and convincing explanations of the actual practice" (Pieczka, 2002, p. 322).

What appears to be missing from this early understanding of public relations practice is "that public relations is political, no matter what the action" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 104). In its widespread influence across our society and culture, Johnston (2016) expands on this notion of public relations by first "situating public relations as *part of* the political process; second, in arguing that public relations practitioners are capable of navigating the public interest, just as lawyers, journalist, policy makers and anthropologist can" (Johnston, 2016, p. 15). In this political process, activists have also effectively used propaganda to advance their own self-interest "so there can be no absolute distinction" (Moloney, 2006, p. 14 as cited in Johnston, 2016, p. 14).

However, the politics are changing. Today, people have multiple identities and men and women both have different roles in public and private lives and as such, "every human being's life in Western society has become fragmented" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 58). Here too, "individualization does not remain private; it becomes political in a definite, new sense" (Beck 2000, p. 16). This has led to the deinstitutionalisation of "left" and "right" politics (Beck 2000, p. 13), where "in recent years it has been the American Right rather than the Left that has taken the lead in reinventing a politics of the streets" (Gerbaudo, 2012, pp. 106-107), and where some may "actually seek to resist social change" (Smith, 2005, p. 5). Public relations can now be used and advanced by any number of individuals or organizations acting in a professional manner. This political convergence of left/right ideologies, has added a layer of complexity to the practice of public relations, but has also created space for a different definition of public relations from the dominant corporate-economic model.

In exploring motivations for doing pro bono work, Ferre's (1993) research illustrated that "most respondents (61%) said that their primary motivation for doing pro bono work was

"conscience", 23% said "contact or exposure", and 16% said "other", suggesting that "individuals may be motivated by conscience, but large organizations are marked by collective self-interest" (pp. 68-69). These discrepancies between the Excellence Theory and its use in commercial practice, the inclusion of the political nature of public relations practitioners acting outside of the corporate-economic model, and the increasing complexity in contemporary society has led to a breakdown or an "essential dissonance in the practice itself" (Berger, 2005, p. 23). Because of this, there is a "need for an alternative approach to public relations" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 268). Public relations is increasingly seen as "sustained strategic attempts to influence relationships with constituents" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012b, p. 348), where "using our theories as resources, we have helped shape processes, policies, and practices of everyday life and our future" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. vii). Today "public relations professionals often function as boundary spanners, encountering diverse groups and perspectives" suggesting that "public relations practitioners are better viewed as custodians of discourse who work to ensure disparate voices from inside and outside the organization are heard and considered, not just managed" (Ciszek, 2016, p. 319). In this context, public relations as a practice, industry, and area of scholarship "is addressing a fundamental element of human sense-making processes" that "recognises the transactional nature of public relations, demands a reflexive profession, and reflexive scholarship, that recognises its role in the 'work-in-progress' that is the social and cultural environment" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 11). This has led to a "politicized third sector groups such as social collectives, community action groups, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) … activists employing strategies, tactics, and especially worldviews to challenge dominant positions" (Demetrious, 2008, p. 1), and where activist public relations can be seen as a contemporary form of practice (Demetrious, 2008, p. 2). Public relations "theoretical, metatheoretical, and methodological work" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. viii) demonstrates the unique characteristics of the field. This has led to a recognition amongst scholars that "within international public relations" there has been "an overwhelming lack of

attention to the public interest" (Johnston, 2016, p. 16). In drawing attention to this lack of public interest within the profession, the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) recently revised its definition of public relations to "the strategic management of relationships between organizations and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals, and serve the public interest" (Gregory & Valin in CPRS 2013 as cited in Johnston, 2016, p. 16).

My personal understanding of public relations is that of a mediated, often written communication activity for the development of mutually influential relationships. Practitioners engage various publics within a web of social, cultural, and economic relationships based on the foundation of public relations, where it began as a behavioural science focused on communication between publics (individuals or groups) in keeping with its more contemporary potential. Increasingly I have come to see public relations as more advanced and complex than the current structure as organizational or corporate communications exclusively. I believe that public relations has yet to reach its full practical, theoretical, and pedagogical potential, and lacks a clear definition of what it was, is, and can be due to its historical arc. Public relations has been consumed by an "overriding concern with proving the effectiveness of public relations practice and its contribution to the bottom line [that] stems from the expectation that agents have to prove their contribution and values" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 218). This challenge remains because today, there appears to be very little theoretical or practical movement within public relations scholarship and practice to change the domain's paradigm outside the views of a limited number of scholars. This is the problem and understanding that many contemporary public relations scholars, especially those who have investigated public relations and activism to date, have sought to address.

Activist and Activist Practitioners

While new definitions of public relations in practice are emerging, the role of the activists in public relations scholarship and practice is also "still unclear and evolving" (Smith & Ferguson,

2010, p. 396), and that conundrum is in part the rationale behind this study. Activists share many of the traits of public relations practitioners that Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified as characteristics of active publics in that both "recognize some problem and feel empowered to take some action, to seek information, and to communicate with each other and with the institution they deem responsible for the problem, and are likely to organize to address that problem" (Smith, 2005, p. 5). Activists are not "wild-eyed zealots or violent fanatics pursuing a self-centered cause but persons with high ethical and moral standards who had formed organizations to conduct research, inform and educate the people, and worked through legitimate channels" (Stewart, 1999, p. 96). They are "engaged in struggles across a range of different areas, across different countries and against different actors: governments, world organizations, individuals, and, on occasion, other activist groups" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 5).

For the public relations practitioner then, "an activist public is a group of two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics, or force" (Ehling, 2002, p. 446). Contemporary "activists now research and analyse other related issues and/or campaigns. Activists now study the communication processes. Activists now develop expertise and share information with other activists" (Demetrious, 2006, p. 99). Nor is the activist confined to one problem or approach. Research drawn from current public relations scholars has indicated three types of activists – internal, external, and policy activists. Internal activists are employees who adopt the many communication tactics and strategies often ascribed to external activist groups including "defining grievances, organizing to pressing demands, rallying and collaborating with other employee groups, engaging in disinformation and rumor spreading, and using the news media to pressure the organization" (McCown, 2007, p. 64). External activists "seek to build sources of legitimacy, power, and urgency that increase their likelihood of being heard by a corporation" (Zoller, 2009, p. 94). This is part of the ongoing complexity, changing politics, and the way people

now interact and where, "activists attack corporations because they *matter*" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 262). Activists can have a huge impact on an organization, either corporation or government, through increased regulations, boycotts or strikes, and negative media coverage "that can severely harm the revenues of the mainstream organization or impact its ability to operate without constraint or interference" (L. Grunig, 1992 as cited in Wakefield, 2007, p. 150), and thereby force organizations into a "crisis" mode (McCown, 2007, p. 53). An example of this effect is presented by Lewis, O'Donovan, and Willett (2017) who investigate the impact of activism on a large, powerful Tasmanian corporation, Gunns Ltd. The woodchip processor fought a long-running battle with environmental activists regarding Gunns' logging and processing activities. The authors' analysis "supports the contention that the events in 2004–2005 played a significant part in the decline of the long-run market value of Gunns over the subsequent period, through to its failure in 2011" (Lewis, O'Donovan, & Willett, 2017, p. 455). Policy activists are individuals who in relatively consistent ways champion "a value orientation and pragmatic commitment to a conception of policy which opens it up to the appropriate participation of all those who are involved in the policy process" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 10), from its "conception, operational formation, implementation, delivery on the ground, consumption and evaluation. Within this conception we may want to distinguish bureaucratic, professional, practitioner, and consumer types of policy activist" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 34).

There is a basic assumption here that activists possess some characteristic that "compels them to participate" (McAdam, 1986, p. 65) and as such, activists do not stop with policy adoption, rather continue "until the contest itself subsides" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 33). Activists can be conceived as "people who insist on action, who pursue action in order to make the world better, and who thus necessarily draw on practical knowledge of particulars as well as abstract knowledge of universals" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xxiv). In this way, "that inner strength and clear vison of what is the right thing to do is a core competency of the activist" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 199). When

those values and visions are compromised or undermined in the mediated messaging that affect their lives, the activist will eventually seek out others for collective activism. In this way activists "might not have changed the world, but they have changed their worlds" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 600).

Activism

If activists are the individuals to incite action, activism is the embodiment of that action. There is an understanding amongst some public relations scholars that "engaging in activism can be enriching for society and individuals" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 34). There is also an understanding amongst those same scholars that "extant scholarship lacks a nuanced conceptualization of the dynamic interplay between activism and public relations" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 448). This is due in part to the historical narrative of public relations that considers activism "fringe public relations" in relation to "the existing public relations orthodoxy" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 881). There are a number of reasons for this division that this research seeks to establish. The first challenge is in the language used to define activism as personal and outside the scope of business because of the way in which public relations has been configured historically. To understand this configuration, it is important to begin with the first contemporary definition of activism written at the end of the second wave of public relations development and within the parameters of the Excellence Theory as an effort by "a group of two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education compromise, persuasion pressure tactics, or force" (L. Grunig, 1992, p. 504). This is similar to the definition proposed by Kim and Sriramesh (2009) who define activism as the "coordinated effort of a group that organizes voluntarily in an effort to solve problems that threaten the common interest of members of the group" (p. 82). Both of these definitions are created in relation to their influence on business and state organizations or from the functionalist perspective.

From the perspective of the activist, activism is "widely understood as directly expressive of individual interests, or emotions, or ethical commitments rather than of a broader, more reflective and more intellectually informed perspective on social issues" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xiii), and can be conceived as "a publicly declared and open contribution to political life. It is a commitment, statement of vision, declaration of values, and offering of strategic action" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 33). More recently however, the "growth of the Internet, professionalization of activism, and emergence of formalized stakeholder participation" (Jaques, 2006, p. 411) have highlighted the need for a greater understanding of the communication processes involved and public relations understanding of activists and activism.

This struggle, and growing rift between the functionalist, critical, and activist approaches to public relations is truly exemplified in its economic entanglement where it "was not until the twenty-first century that the *Restatement of the Law, Agency* (American Law Institute 2001) replaced "master/servant" with "employer/employee" (Shapiro, 2005, p. 272). In that same year, Denise Deegan (2001) published *Managing Activism*, "a book endorsed by the Institute for Public Relations" that suggested "few business organizations are prepared for "the growing threat" of an "activist attack," and advises a proactive, rather than reactive, approach in learning how to control and direct them" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 24). Deegan (2001) notes that while activist groups "concerns may vary, they are universally united in their commitment to forcing change. Their campaigns can have widespread implications for those they target and beyond" and that "learning to manage activists involves learning about activists" (Deegan, 2001, pp. 1-3). This rift is at the centre of a growing complexity in public relations practices where activists act not only as "challenges for public relations practitioners" but can also be "practitioners themselves" (Smith & Ferguson, 2001, p.291).

Similarly as with defining the types of activists, activism also fits into internal, external, and policy categories. Internal or organizational activism draws reference to the "practitioner as

organizational activist" who "will preference employees' and external publics' discourse over that of management, will make the most humane decisions in a particular situation, and will promote new ways of thinking and problem solving through dissensus and conflict" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 368). In this way the public relations practitioner serves as "a conscience of the organization" and "will contribute to a culture or emancipation and liberation in the organization" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 64). External activism is often referred to as grassroots activism, "a concept of diverse citizen collectives focused on local issues which work to achieve change outside and on the fringes of legitimate institutions, such as government or corporations. These grassroots activist groups draw on the concept of community" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 41). In international public relations where interactions between "the local and the global" are manifested as grassroots activism or as resistive publics, the "locally situated interests of these dispersed publics were interconnected through their experiences of marginalization in the face of global policies, and this offered an entry point for identity building, mobilization, and communication" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 217). Policy activism is "any and all instances of a strategic commitment to the policy process in the context of a democratic government on behalf of a citizen community" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 10). Citizenship and community are central players in "contestation" as "a core aspect of activist communication" where "key concepts such as advocacy, conflict, and transgression do appear to be central to activism" (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 69).

Today, an emerging fourth form of activism has been identified as digital activism where the Internet and various forms of social media have created greater opportunities for activism. However, it has also given rise to slacktivism, a concept defined by Belarusan scholar Evgenyi Morozov as "feel good activism that has zero political or social impact" and gives those who participate "an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group" (Morozov, 19 May 2009). This lack of commitment by some can be equally harmful where "activism purporting to progress new agendas, or working to protect

or apply correctives may not lead to constructive change but rather deepen social division" (Demetrious, 2013, p, 49). Slacktivism has become an increasingly popular from of activism that removes any personal commitment and participation or "costs and risks" that comes with everyday life including "full-time employment, marriage, and family responsibilities" (McAdam, 1986, p. 70), because engaging in physical activism can have costs and creates risks to your employment, family, and other responsibilities. Because of this associated risk, participants in more radical forms of activism are expected to "(a) have a history of activism, (b) be deeply committed to the ideology and goals of the movement, (c) be integrated into activist networks, and (d) be relatively free of personal constraints that would make participation especially risky" (McAdam, 1986, p. 71).

Activists are also faced with issues of legitimacy where "they must establish the legitimacy of their own issues or social values. On the other hand, they must undermine the legitimacy of their target organisation and/or the values it represents" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 401). Legitimacy forms the basis of the five stage life cycle of activism: "strain, or stress, mobilization, confrontation, negotiation, and resolution" (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 179). For activists then, "it is precisely because activists are perceived to be independent of any economic self-interest that they have gained legitimacy to dissect and describe and advocate social, economic, and cultural impacts in the public sphere" (Demetrious, 2006, p. 99). In this light, "activism is a social phenomenon that can be related to problem-solving actions by individuals or groups who coalesce around problematic situations" (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009, p. 80). In the process of problem solving, group members attract others to their cause, and in doing so "create and maintain a shared collective identity among members for the time being, and mobilize resources and power to influence the problem-causing entity's decision or action through communicative action such as education, negotiation, persuasion, pressure tactics, or force" (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009, p. 82).

Because of this impact on the public sphere, activism calls for a more critical public relations, emphasizing "the importance of studying the impact of organizational environments on public relations practice" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 358). In this way, Holtzhausen (2012) provides what I consider a comprehensive definition of activism today, in that:

Activism is resistance in the small things and the big things. Activism means caring for the "Other" without asking anything in return. Activism means living life meaningfully, consciously, actively, honestly, responsibly, calling things the way you see them, intolerant of practices that marginalize, dehumanize, and discriminate, speaking truth to power. Activism also means continuously learning and gaining knowledge of how society functions. Knowledge remains the most powerful tool in leading a life of activism (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. xv).

Activism is public, voluntary, passionate, and values driven often in the face of much larger and more powerful organizations, either business or state, who have shown little regard for their fellow citizens and community, choosing to favour organizational and personal self-interest. As Holtzhausen (2012) and other postmodern scholars argue, "You are only powerless if you internalize that powerlessness" (p. xv). Activism calls for a return of integrity to business, government, and the public relations industry by expanding our definitions and knowledge of public relations practices in our lived world. Without this effort and understanding of the need for growth in public relations, and greater clarity and research moving forward, activisms complexity like that of contemporary public relations, public relations practitioners and activists, will remain limited in their abilities to communicate with each other.

Protest

Meaningful communications between two groups is a central role for public relations practitioners. However, when no one within an organization is listening, or answering a publics questions around an organizational activity, the result is often protest. Protest is the physical

manifestation of social contestation by publics or in other words, protest is a physical form of communication, and as Gerbaudo (2012) argues "communicative processes are crucial in the coordination of swarms" (p. 27). Theoretically, five perspectives are considered in interpreting an action as protest including: the credibility of the event; creating an optimal balance between appeal and threat actions; being seen as an aspect of conciliation to avoid full-scale conflict; as an invitation to form a coalition; and as a phase of bargaining by authorities (Turner, 1969, p. 815). As such, "contemporary protest culture is sustained by a narrative of *popular reunion*, which revolves around a re-composition or 'fusion' of individuals in the collective subject with majoritarian ambitions…. signifying their unity *despite* diversity" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 14). This diversity amongst protesters make their behaviour difficult to predict. It also provides protesters an option to choose "those actions they considered most efficacious for reaching the goals of the movement" (Opp, 1988, p. 853), including disruptive forms of protest.

Protest then can also be defined as performance or as "carnivalesque" (Weaver, 2014, p. 112) for groups that are "silenced and systematically denied discursive space because of political conflict" (Hater, Ellington, Dutta, & Norander, 2009, p. 38), and "comprises a particular genre of activist public relations which articulates conflict with, and resistance to, dominant discourses on controversial issues" (Weaver, 2010, p. 35). In this way disruptive image events "are highly charged protests that involve visuals" that succeed "by the protestors' abilities to reduce complex issues to symbols that disrupt people's comfort with the status quo" (Derville, 2005, p. 531). Protest provides "personal fulfillment by helping members act out against the 'enemy'…. this explanation accounts for why some activist organizations use tactics that alienate potential supporters" (Derville, 2005, p. 531). These disruptive forms of protest are generally more effective for disadvantaged or marginalized group members because of the skills, money, and time required to organize bureaucratically to overcome the influence of powerful groups, and actions are only "effective if it contributes to fragmentation and (in democracies) electoral realignment" (Louis,

2009, p. 736). It is in these moments of aesthetic performance that dominant (mis)representations of past events are challenged, creativity is unleashed, and the protest "serves as a means to reclaim voice and offer alternative narratives of hope and peace" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 38).

As seen in the changing nature of politics where activism, contestation, and discontent can originate from any point across the political spectrum, is the idea that "ideology may generate discontents that have distinctive-short-term or long-term-effects on protest" (Opp, 1988, p. 862). This manifestation of ideology into action is illustrated in the various forms of activism, where "forms of protest respond to the social conditions in which they are situated. When social conditions transform, political dissatisfaction is expressed in different ways" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 35). This includes protest, where as we have seen within the confines of the corporate-economic model of public relations, that "collective action (rule-breaking) is seen as distinct from collective action that is legitimized within a system (rule-conforming)" suggesting that "ritualized, normative conflict acknowledges and procedurally reinforces the power of advantaged groups, whereas nonnormative conflict challenges and undermines it" (Louis, 2009, p. 736). As one of the originators for the Occupy Movement, Micah White (2016) argues that "protest is a symptom of the need for social change, and … the absence of effective protest is a warning sign of impending civil strife. Whether you support or suppress protesters, history shows that dissent is necessary for social growth" (p. 6).

This idea of legitimacy is essential to organizations, public relations practitioners, activism and the physical manifestation of protest and how those actions get defined. Gaps in organizational legitimacy create "the strain that motivates activists and leads them to execute strategies to get their messages out and push for change" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 397). These collective acts of disruption can be viewed as "expressions of social protest, and sometimes as crime or rebellion, leading to different community reactions" (Turner, 1969, p. 815). Protest illustrates the essential characteristics of communications or reactions when no one is listening. In this, there are "social

processes at play in the social construction of activism [that] should be scrutinized" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 35). The value of protest is understood in relation to the legitimacy of the communicated complaint and its social, cultural, and economic impact on a public or community. As Demetrious (2013), Derville (2005), Dutta and Pal (2011), Gerbaudo (2012), Louis (2009), Opp (1988), Weaver (2014), Turner (1969), and White (2016) have each illustrated activism and protest are about "political dissatisfaction" with a representation by an identifiable public and are an enactment of an effort to set the record straight.

Social Movements

The development of an issue into a movement parallels the efforts needed to run a business or government program through the central role that communications play in addressing any and all issues satisfactorily to all publics and stakeholders involved. Social movements' lack of recognition within the field of public relations can be related to their understanding as "ad hoc, reactive, poorly resourced in both time and money, and with no ostensible links to dominant coalitions have been dismissed as falling too far out of the paradigm to fit with most public relations theories" (Demetrious, 2006, p. 99). The reason is simple: "movements are much more ephemeral. Demarcating the boundaries of a movement (in any other sense than the uninteresting one of formal affiliation with a movement organization) in order to distinguish participants from nonparticipants is extremely difficult" (McAdam, 1986, p. 67). Movements are "formed through diverse routes depending on the elements absent in the premovement situation" (Jenkins, 1983, p. 532). In other words, movement participants rally around a cause or issue that has caused them grief and that has manifested itself as collective political dissatisfaction. Social movements are "purposeful collective action which advocates with socio-political intent" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 34). This is an important distinction as a social movement is not static, it is an enduring process of confrontation characterized by its capacity for protest. Unlike purely political movements, "it operates at the level of civil society, whether national or transnational" (Burgmann, 2003, p. 4).

Social movements traditionally pass through three periods: "inception, crisis, and communication [where certain] rhetorical strategies are appropriate to each period" (Smith & Windes, 1975, p. 141). Jenkins (1983) argues that a social movement's success is measured by the tangible benefits set by organizers and formal acceptance by its main antagonist, with outcomes measured as full success, cooptation (acceptance but no benefits), pre-emption (benefits but no acceptance), and failure (p. 543). This progress in social movements saw the development of professional social movement organizations (SMOs) with outside leadership, full time paid staff, small or nonexistent membership, resources from conscience constituencies, and actions that "speak for" rather than involve an aggrieved group (Jenkins, 1983, p. 533). However, "not all activism or social movements develop into social movement organizations (SMO), non-government organizations (NGO) or nonprofit/charitable organizations where there is an ongoing advocacy efforts" (Jenkins, 1983, p. 545).

Today, four areas affect the shape of social movements: the issues identified as significant; organizational form adopted; the repertoires of action or style of protest; and constituencies (Giddens, 2009, pp. 1017-1018). These New Social Movements (NSMs) "appear categorically different from earlier ones" and are now "organized around individualize social divisions, such as sexuality, gender, and race" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 35) as illustrated by such groups as Idle No More (indigenous issues), Black Lives Matter (race issues), and the Occupy Movement (economic issues). As Dozier and Lauzen (2000) argue, these "irreconcilable differences are likely to spur social movements" involving "broad shifts in attitudes, agendas, and behaviours of diverse peoples over extended periods of time" (p. 13). Within the structure of these NSMs is a suggestion that the "construction of a collective identity is the most central task" and is "a negotiated process in which the 'we' involved in collective action is elaborated and given meaning" (Gamson, 1992, pp. 56-57). When considered in association to the practices of public relations, "the creation of an ongoing

collective identity that maintains the loyalty and commitments of participants is a cultural achievement in its own right" (Gamson, 1992, p. 57).

Increasingly, the rapid rise of digital technologies including the Internet, social media, and networking logic as mediated forms of communication has facilitated practices such as Indymedia, culture jamming, guerrilla communication, and electronic civil disobedience (Juris, 2008, p. 284). The Internet also brings into play leaderless politics through the ideology of horizontalism and structurelessness that "obscures the fact that the process of mobilization is constitutively ridden with imbalances and asymmetrical relationships between those who mobilise and those mobilised, between those *leading* the process and those following" (Melucci, 1996, p. 345). Here, "the ideology of structurelessness thus becomes an astute way of side-stepping the question of leadership, and allows the de facto leaders to remain unaccountable" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 25), further complicating a movements legitimacy and identifying key stakeholders who can speak for the collective. What is clear is that little has truly changed in spite of these advances in technology and "what exists in society *is* the flux of social change" (Smith & Windes, 1975, p. 141). This flux represents the points where public relations, activism, and social movements meet and as such, needs to be addressed as part of the public relations field moving forward.

Activist Organizations

While not all activism develops into social movement organizations (SMO), non-government organizations (NGO) or nonprofit/charitable organizations, some do and "have been a figure of the global economy for over four hundred years, starting with the Rosicrucian Order, an Egyptian educational organization founded in the sixteenth century" (Spar & La Mure, 2003, p. 79). Activist organizations are characterized by "their structural and communicative characteristics" and "become part of the system only to the extent that they are incorporated into the decision-making centres of the system" (Leitch & Neilson, 2001, p. 132). This means that in our contemporary world, activist organizations "are what they say they are" (Castells, 2010, p. 73),

and from this perspective, "groups are activist when they define themselves as such" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 356).

Here too legitimacy plays a vital role where activist organizations operate in the "tensions between what is and what ought to be" (Heath & Waymer, 2009, p. 201). In contemporary society, when a system of state and economy acts in ways that violates "what the activists believe would be more legitimate and socially responsible" those actions then "create the strain that motivates activists and leads them to execute strategies to get their messages out and push for change" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 397). Activist organizations use public relations for two interrelated purposes: first, "to rectify the conditions identified by the activist publics", and second, "to maintain their organizations and their functions" adding that "as with other organizations, activist movements tend to move through various stages of development" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, pp. 397-399). Activist organizations face "communication and organizational challenges" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 399) at each of the five stages of development (Heath & Palenchar, 2009, p. 179). In this way, activists and activist organizations practice public relations "using strategies and tactics of the field to achieve goals that are not that dissimilar from those of their, more institutionalized organizations" (Smith, 2005, p. 5). In their use of public relations practices, activist organizations pursue three goals comprising of a call: for or to resist change on part of a target organization, industry, or field; to seek public policy or regulatory changes that would, in turn, effect change in institutional or public behaviour; and to change social norms with "many activist organizations pursue all three outcomes" (Coombs & Holladay, 2010 as cited in Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 397).

Among activist organizations three distinctions are identified: the degree of change sought; their use of organizational strategies; and their distinction between self- and other-directed movements" (Derville, 2005, p. 528-529). This distinction is important "because the communication demands of the two types of radical activist organizations differ" where self-

directed activist organizations are "those in which people engage in activism for themselves based on their identities" while other-directed activist organizations are people which "help others achieve rights" (Derville, 2005, p. 529). On the extreme end of this organizational spectrum are radical activist organizations, defined as "a group of two or more people who come together in opposition to something in their environment, including threats to the status quo" adding that "radical activist organizations are more fundamentalist than mainstream activist organizations" where "a fundamental change is one that dramatically alters people's lives" (Derville, 2005, p. 528).

In summary, these definitions accentuate the duality of serving both the organization and its publics' interest as a central component of J. E. Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory, as well as ties to earlier conceptions of its professional practice constructed by Edward Bernays that have become ingrained in the corporate-economic model of public relations. In defining the object of our exploration as public relations, including practitioners, the broader industry, and academic scholarship in relations to activism, including its sub-categories of the activist, protest, social movements and activist organizations, this research establishes the distinct characteristics of each as well as strong parallels between activism and public relations that needs to be examined in its historical, theoretical, and practical context including pedagogy.

Methodology

Activism is of interest "to those who practice, study, and critique public relations" (Johnston, 2016, p. 24). My interest in exploring activism in public relations comes from my personal experiences as a Canadian public relations practitioner. Given the disparate research into the theoretical applications of activism to the process of public relations, my research strategy began with an idea of responding to the calls of previous authors to take up the mantle of critical public relations, consistent with and expanding upon, my undergraduate work in critical literary theory and aesthetics. Here the researcher requires reflexivity, where "the writer is conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). In this way the researcher also becomes the key instrument of the research as they "collect data themselves through examining documents" and the use of "an instrument, but it is one designed by the researcher" (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). This research is then reflected in the extent that as the researcher, the "analysis (and writing) offers an alternative to common sense or the dominant discourse" (Creswell, 2013, p. 216). In proposing that all public relations tools involve text (writing) or visual images (representation) with a set (power) structure, Ihlen and van Ruler (2007) note how public relations theory "is rooted in different disciplinary fields", and that "a broad range of paradigms and research methods contributes to the growth of a knowledge field" (p. 244). Research also indicates that currently it is not a growth with which all academics and practitioners agree. The objective then of this examination of the existing literature on activism within public relations scholarship as written by public relations practitioners and scholars is to assess the areas where activism and public relations intersect both historically and within society currently. This point of departure in the ongoing development of public relations includes its current practice as organizational communication and potential as public communication, its theoretical development within the field as critical public relations, and the points where activism intersects with public relations practice. To achieve this I utilized Strauss' and Corbin's (1990)

approach where, "the researcher works to understand categories in relation to other categories and their subcategories…. to delineate and extricate relationships on which the axis of the category is being focused" (Strauss, 1987 as cited in Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 553), and in this case activism and public relations.

My foundational reading list provided the initial references to rhetoric, writing, and power within public relations theory and practice, including emerging ideas of various communications theories, public relations activism, and activist publics. Using this initial research, subsequent articles and text were found utilizing a snowball approach drawing from a reference list of all documents researched. This preliminary review of the literature identified 44 articles that in turn provided an additional 56 relevant articles and text references tied specifically to activism, including theories on and the practice of activism, activist public relations practitioners, and eventually leading me to critical public relations theory and public communications. Secondary sources and references provide further substantiation of the primary resources and further explanations of the concepts and arguments presented. In total, over 230 documents consisting of primary and secondary sources were then used to construct data samples. References to activism within the primary public relations literature were then organized chronologically by date to illustrate developments over time. Secondary sources were used to substantiate identified historical, theoretical, and practical points of intersection between activism and public relations. This method of acquiring references was followed from historical saturation (no further references were found in articles or text looking back in time) through to the most current publications including current association communications and popular media references.

Key themes from the data samples collected were then identified and analyzing including activism, public relations activists, public relations theories on activism and activists, as well as activism's theoretical and practical implications for the practice of public relations. This initial search lead to a secondary set of key words that included behaviour, critical public relations, and

public communications. From this analysis codes were selected and "developed in terms of their properties, dimensions, and relationships" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 as cited in Walker & Myrick, 2006, p. 556). These codes were then categorized by their relation to the identified themes and then grouped accordingly. This large pool of data was then edited to isolate key points where activism intersected with public relations in definitions, history, theory, and practice to form a complete narrative. Within my exploration of the public relations literarture on activism, a number of foundational issues became apparent that are then discussed as challenges, omissions, and opportunities for the ongoing development of the public relations field as both a topic of theoretical research and active practice.

Validation Strategy

Ensuring the data is valid is a critical role for the researcher, and validation is more than mere checks and balances. To ensure validity, periodic and selected reviews of data sets and my own analysis were reviewed against the original articles and texts to collaborate evidence along with routine checks for any distortions or biases introduced by myself or within the research targets, including integration of any negative case studies that arise to ensure a rich and thick description of activism and public relations. The "process of recovering and critiquing validity claims is not merely an abstract idea or principle but also an invocation of critique and critical self-awareness in *concrete* and *practical* decision making" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 577). Highmore's (2006) description of "de Certeau's epistemology: 'what is a theory, if not the articulation of a practice? And what is an epistemology, if not a discourse that elucidates that relationship?" (Highmore, 2006, p. 50) forms the foundation of my validation strategy by exploring the relationship between theory and practice when it comes to activism and the public relations industry and its scholarship.

Increasingly, public relations is seen as "central to political, economic, technological and socio-cultural change" (L'Etang, 2008, p. 326). In this scenario, criticisms of its exclusive use as

a tool for business and state organizations as a means of controlling publics first lead me to question the perceived role of public relations professionals and the power that practitioners have through the written word, as well as its use as a tool in activism. As an activist, L'Etang's (2008) emphasis on reflexivity and analysis grounded me in a methodological approach to writing public relations research. Reflexivity is critical in knowing "from which perspective a scholar enters into her subject matter" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 90), because "the researcher is also the object of study" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 192). As a public relations practitioner I have witnessed the importance of activism where I have seen my "choices and actions" in challenging prevailing power structures" have a positive influence and have been "influenced by them" (Berger, 2005, p. 25). However, it has also provided professional opportunities to lobby and advocate for causes I found meaningful, and recognition for my efforts that have influenced entire communities positively. After working, teaching, and studying public relations as a practice, I too have come to believe that "a practitioner must go beyond advocacy of doing the right thing to carrying out actions to support and supplement advocacy in the organization and larger social system" (Berger, 2005, p. 24).

As an activist, researcher, and public relations practitioner I am cognisant that I must be constantly aware of not crossing any boundary where my thoughts are influencing the data. Likewise, I am seeking to insert myself into the history of critical public relations scholarship contributing to the growth of public relations as a knowledge domain and in this particular case, the practice of public relations as one that includes activism, and public relations practitioners as activists. In this way my own narrative or story at this point in history and in the context of my own Canadian identity adds validity to this study. This approach recognizes that just like public relations "social life is itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*" where activist seek narratives to guide their action, to change their identity, and where "experience" is created through narratives (Somers & Gibson, 1993, p. 39). In this respect I have

followed Somers and Gibson's (1993) suggestion that researchers must incorporate "dimensions of *time*, *space*, and *relationality*" (p. 41).

Why Now in History (Time)

While my own public relations experiences are a determining factor to answering the question of why this is an appropriate time to foreground (or make explicit) the relationship between activism and public relations, for a second reason one need only explore the increasing civil unrest presented in recent media accounts. While Greenpeace and Amnesty International represent the founding of activist organizations in North America, Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and the Occupy Movement represent contemporary examples of the "significant growth in the number of activist groups" (Anderson, 1992, p. 151) that have developed sophistication and expanded their influence to where "activism on a global scale became a trend" (Anderson, 1992, p. 152).

There are also signs of change within the field of public relations as recently illustrated when "industry magazine *PRWeek* featured the anti-capitalist Occupy Movement in one of the "Top 5 PR Picks" for 2012" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 155). Then there's the Nobel Committee's recognition of activism when on October 13, 2016 Bob Dylan was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2016 for his lyrics that formed the anti-war and civil rights anthems of his generation. From the art world, *artnet News* recently reported "that 'Activism' Is the Trend at New Art Dealers Alliance" (Viveros-Fauné, 2017 March 3). This year also marks the 500th anniversary of what I consider one of the first instances of using mediated communications for an activist purpose when in 1517 Martin Luther nailed to the door of a church in Wittenberg a list of complaints against Church abuses (Heuer, 2017, p. 82). It also recognises that one of the most compelling socio-cultural changes in public relations has been the introduction of Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory, now celebrating the 25th anniversary of its publication.

Threaded throughout the historical development of public relations as a profession is this concept of social change, defined as "any relatively enduring alteration in social relationships, behaviour patterns, values, norms, and attitudes occurring over time … every time society decides that the formerly unacceptable is acceptable or the formerly acceptable is now unacceptable it is engaging social change" (Walsh & Hemmens, 2011, p. 282). For example, "communication originally was classified as a professional field that trained journalist and public relations specialists" whereas today public relations is "being positioned as a research field and applied discipline" (Buzzanell, Bach, Braithwaite, Putnam, & Self, 2009, pp. 12-13). In spite of this recent advancement however, the reality is that "communication specialist and member associations are still not on the radar for many agencies that seek experts on social problems," and that as a profession, "communication needs to exert more influence on private foundations, think tanks, and industries that shape public and government thinking about communication and related fields" (Buzzanell et al, 2009, p. 19). This need for change within the public relations profession was confirmed when the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) began surveying members (CPRS #ElevatePR Survey) to see the CPRS become "a force that moves the profession" and "a force that shapes the profession on a national level" (S. Hanel, Personal Correspondence, CPRS Hamilton Newsletter, 22 June 2017).

Finally, one of the most compelling rationales behind this investigation is the numbers of scholars exploring activism in relation to the practice of public relations since the millennial turn. In the first five years after 2000 there were several scholars directly addressing activisms relationship to public relations including Guiniven (2002), Holtzhausen and Voto (2002), Hung (2003), Smith and Ferguson (2001), Spar and La Mure (2003), Thomson and John (2003), and Taylor, Kent, and White (2001). However, these numbers would begin growing exponentially from 2005 onward with contributions from inside and outside the field of public relations from scholars such as Calhoun (2008), Chari and Donner (2010), Curtin (2016), Derville (2005), Ganesh

and Zoller (2012), Gerbaudo (2012), Hale (2008), Hara and Estrada (2005), Henderson (2005), Jaques (2006), Kim and Sriramesh (2009), McCown (2007), Nabudere (2008), Reber and Berger (2005), Reber and Kim (2006), Seo, Kim, and Yang (2009), Smith (2005), Sommerfeldt, Kent, and Taylor (2012), Stokes and Rubin (2010), Wakefield (2007), White (2012), Zoller (2009), and Zoller and Tener (2010), with several - Ciszek (2015, 2016), Coombs and Holladay (2012a, 2012b, 2013), Demetrious (2006, 2008, 2013), Holtzhausen (2007, 2012), Sommerfeldt (2011, 2012, 2013), and Weaver (2010, 2014) - making multiple contributions to the topic. This has also been echoed in the growing range of research opened up by exploring this relationship where in the first five years of the new millennium research topics focused on managing activism; public relations, activism, and the role of the scholar; new activism and the corporate response; dealing with activism in Canada; how activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships; public relations practitioner as organizational activist; relationship building, activism, and conflict resolution; communicating global activism; and the power of activism. Whereas since the mid-decade onwards, scholars have tackled increasingly complex and diverse topics like radical activist tactics, analyzing the mobilization of grassroots activities via the Internet, communicating for (social) impact; ethnographies of activism; activist practitioner perspectives; activist public relations; activism and public relations; how activism moves critical PR toward the mainstream; the role of public relations with internal activists; exploring articulation in internal activism and public relations theory; activism and the limits of symmetry; activist rules and the convergence with issues management; dialogue, activism, and democratic social change; research, activism, and knowledge production; carnivalesque activism as a public relations genre; how activist groups use websites in media relations; social media and contemporary activism; digital activism; global activism and new media; activist online resource mobilization; and the theory of international public relations, the Internet, and activism – amongst others. This includes an increasing array of journals disseminating this information covering an array of research areas from, for example,

anthropology, communication, communication theory, corporate communications, ethics, ethnography, history, information science, intercultural relations, management, media, public affairs, public opinion, social issues, and sociology as well as those addressing public relations specifically – the Journal of Public Relations Research, Public Relations Inquiry, and Public Relations Review. The sheer escalation of practitioners and scholars seeking to integrate activism into the field of public relations as a central component of public relations history, theory, and practice continues to increase suggesting that now is the time to begin integrating activism into the field and applied discipline of public relations.

Personal Experience (Space)

Researchers inhabit a particular space, where "questions of validity and agency are pertinent" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, p. 281) and in that space public relations practitioners "cannot presume to speak on behalf of the worlds socially excluded, but writing against inequality is imperative" (Bourgois, 2006, pp. x–xi). As a public relations practitioner with a "boutique" consultancy (Likely, 2009, p. 657) who came to the industry through work experience as a Canadian Special Forces Medical Assistant, then gaining undergraduate degrees in English Literature and Fine Art, to teaching computer skills, these experiences collectively inspired me to seek public relations and communications qualification through the college system in Canada, through to pursuing graduate studies. At each point, activism has been a critical component of my practice, and personality. Today, these experiences are now being reflected in contemporary public relations scholarship through the recent introduction of aesthetic theories to public relations that points to a redefining of public relations itself. In this way, activism as a topic of research also builds upon my undergraduate work in critical literary theory and aesthetics where these critical theorists, their theories and scholarship, including Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and most specifically Jacques Derrida whose "development of the principle of

différence" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 17), and "deconstruction methods" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 253) are currently being introduced to the domain of public relations.

Engaging with activism is also connected with the personal space of many of the scholars cited in this study: Marx was concerned with how humankind could flourish (Weaver, 2016, p. 44); Hale (2008) claims that "nearly all the authors in this volume report that a good part of their insight and analysis – not just their data – comes from the communities, organisations, and movements with which they are aligned" (p. 15); in referring to her South African heritage, Holtzhausen (2012) notes how her "consciousness took shape at the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, and culture" (p. ix), adding that "one cannot understand the devastating effects of discrimination unless you have experienced it" (p. xii); and Demetrious (2013) notes how her own activist campaigns have served to deepen her "understanding of the public relations/activism nexus" (Acknowledgements).

My personal biography includes being raised in a broken home typical of Canadian families in the 1970s where I was also exposed to adversity at an early age when my younger sister was born with Spina Bifida. I was exposed to different races through migrant Jamaican farm workers who became like family, and spent my childhood amongst the Bkejwanong Territory or Walpole Island First Nation, while coming to understanding life as a gay man all provided an affinity for the "Other" as one myself. In this way the activism of Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, the Occupy Movement, or my own efforts in the Gay Pride Movement correspond to practitioners who speak out and strive for power as "practitioners who themselves have felt marginalized in some way in their own lives" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 75). This sense of creating one's self, reacting against socially imposed definitions of a particular public, and seeking to change the defining social order or "not knowing one's 'place' has to be one attribute of activism" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 89). In this way, activism has increasingly come to "refer to people who feel strongly about an issue and actively advocate on behalf of that issue" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p.

375). As an activist, I have been motivated by each of these points at different times. Collectively, L'Etang (2008) and Highmore's (2006) description of the historian as bricoleur work well with my practice as a public relations writer, fine artist, and social activist as well as within the concept of history as a developing process that delivers many alternate voices and perspectives in a postmodern method that decries one overall explanation. Intellectually understanding the activist process, and what drives people to take an activist stance - lobbying, advocating, and engaging in activism to bring about positive social and organizational change to improve efficiency, profits, and working/living conditions – affects all individuals, organizations, and governments, yet remains an understudied process within public relations theory, practice, and pedagogy. In this way my own experiences as an activist and a seasoned public relations practitioner have helped me create myself – "as a painter does with painting" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 198) - to now as an activist trying to find myself, and others, within the field of public relations.

The Canadian Experience (Relationality)

While the time to study activism seems appropriate, and my experiences as an activist and public relations practitioner validates my approach and understanding within both activism and public relations, it is also important that the research "reflects the conditions under which it takes place" (Skærbæk, 2011, p. 43). In this respect it will be important to understand how public relations is practiced in Canada and how activism is reflected within its historical and current practice. Public relations was developed as a topic of study in Canada when the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) began efforts to professionalize the society with the first university extension training course at the University of Toronto in 1949, to where the first public relations degree program was in the French language in the early 1970s at Laval University, and in English at Mount St. Vincent University in 1977 (Likely, 2009, p. 657). Today after years of development, "educational institutions have yet to build a solid base of Canadian research in public relations and

thus establish a unique body of Canadian public relations knowledge" (Likely, 2009, p. 662), however this also presents the industry an opportunity to redefine public relations in Canada.

There are also a number of practical examples that illustrate how Canada is in a unique position to capitalize on this opportunity based on the Canadian approach where "the Official Language Act of 1969 made French and English linguistic equals" (Guiniven, 2002, p. 398), and the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms "began a process of recognizing and supporting individual rights…. such as those based on sexual orientation, gender, and age" (Likely, 2009, pp. 662-663). When the International Communication Association (ICA) chose to hold their 2008 conference in Montreal, Canada under the theme, *Communicating for Social Impact* (Buzzanell, 2009, p. vii), and encouraging "members of our field to promote the meaningfulness of our work and its distinctive qualities in multiple and innovative outlets" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. ix), it reflected many Canadian values. More recently, "in response to the criticism of 'no public interest' the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) embraced the term" adding to the CPRSs definition of public relations to "serve the public interest" (Gregory & Valin in CPRS 2013 as cited in Johnston, 2016, p. 16). There's also the aforementioned CPRSs 2017 members survey (CPRS #ElevatePR Survey).

In a move that further validates this investigation into activism and public relations in time, space, and relationality, the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) launched its Behavioral Insights Research Center (BIRC) in March 2016 with Terry Flynn, Associate Professor at McMaster University, as Director. Having the Director of the Institute for Public Relations' (IPR) Behavioral Insights Research Center located in Canada with its research focused on "key factors of message influence" where "understanding key factors that may cause messages to fail" (Flynn, 2016, October 26) is another milestone in public relations ongoing professional development. To date, research has focused on understanding how and why people think and behave the way they do, such as activists, and to conduct research on the factors that influence attitude and behavioral

change to enable effective communication (Flynn, 2016). Then there are the other Canadian scholars whose work is central to this study and public relations evolution in Canada including: Pearson (1987) who was a member of Mount Saint Vincent University at the time; Karlberg (1996) was publishing from the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University; and Louis (2009) who received her PhD at McGill in 2001 based on her "theoretical interests as well as experience as a community activist" (p. 748).

While I have come to see the value of activism and public relations, in sync with other public relations scholars within this study, to date there is little evidence within the broader public relations industry that this position is supported by public relations practitioners and by leading public relations association, academic institutions and scholars – even in Canada. Canada's respect for linguistic rights and supporting individual rights, the International Communication Association (ICA)'s choice of topics that reflects these values, the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) launching their Behavioral Insights Research Center (BIRC) in 2016 in Canada, and the Canadian Public Relations Society's (CPRS) efforts to redefine the profession in Canada in 2017 collectively suggest that unique opportunities exist for research in the Canadian context moving forward, including the study of activism in public relations.

Activism in Public Relations History

The purpose of this study is not to erase or challenge the dominant historical representation of public relations such as the absence of visible minorities or the gay community and negative portraits of themselves or other marginalized groups; rather it is about writing activism and the positive role public relations activists play back into the field of public relations. In public relations history corporations and states remain the founding and dominant pillars in public relations, where "historically, public relations research has been driven by organisational interests, treating the profession as an organisational function first and foremost" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 1). However as Lamme (2003) argues, activists had communication plans "largely in place long before oft-cited public relations pioneers such as Edward Bernays and John Hill began practicing" (p. 123). In this dominant narrative "activist activities are viewed as related to public relations but only as antecedents and not necessarily part of its corpus. Activists are part of the preceding events that lead to the creation of U.S. public relations, but are not the originators of U.S. public relations" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012b, p. 348). This dominance is what needs addressing, where "public relations (PR) history-writing has profoundly shaped the discipline and that its US bias may have limited theoretical developments," and as such there are histories "from other cultures [that] can reveal alternative models for theoretical development" (L'Etang, 2008, p. 319), as in the still developing Canadian model.

There is an understanding that "activist scholarship is as old as Machiavelli and Marx or indeed Aristotle," where the social sciences have developed "partly in and through activist scholarship" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xiii), and that "activist research methods regularly yield special insight, insider knowledge, and experience-based understanding" (Hale, 2008, p. 21). There are numerous examples throughout history where "protagonists needed to contest and reformulate dominant representations of themselves and their conditions in order to advance their struggles", and where "the richness of activist research" is derived from engagement with the "ethical-political

contradictions in our work" (Hale, 2008, pp. 22-23). Activism is an idea that has been slow burning

for marginalized publics since the New Social Movements (NSMs) of the 1960s and 1970s

identified by Calhoun (1994), and more recently as a research topic for public relations scholars.

The challenge then "is neither to discover nor to invent the past. Rather it is to appropriate and

interpret knowledge histories through a reconstruction of their making, resonance, and

contestedness over time" (Somers & Gibson, 1993, p. 44); and in drawing from a broad body of

research "make common causes with those in other disciplines who have faced similar if not

identical problems…. paying attention to ways of communicating its distinctive forms of

'Otherness'" (Jordanova, 2013, p. 258). This challenge remains and "within the field of public

relations there has not been enough reflexivity or deliberation of activism and its relationship to

social change" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 7).

Pre - 1980

In exploring the "then" or history of public relations it is generally accepted that as a

profession, it was founded as a means of promotion or publicity, where the "Rockefellers and the

Gettys, powerful industrial leaders, suddenly realized that public opinion did matter" (Coombs &

Holladay, 2013, p. 63) and in response "hired the first public relations counselors or established

departments designed to tell the organization's story" (Smith, 2005, p. 5). This is how the field of

public relations began taking form officially in the early 1900s yet today still remains a disparate

collection of ideas, suggesting that in spite of one hundred years of effort, public relations as an

industry, profession, and field of study is still in its infancy where activism's role has continued to

develop alongside and within the shadows of the public relations orthodoxy.

In reinserting activism into the field of public relations then "the idea of public relations as

social and organizational activism is not so far-fetched" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 375) and a central

figure in this reimagining is John Dewey (1859-1952). One of the first scholars to recognize

Dewey's ideas was Katz (1960) who highlighted Dewey's (1910) contributed to our "problem of

understanding" (p. 175). Scholars writing on activism within public relations have increasingly incorporated John Dewey's scholarship since 2005: Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) noted Dewey's (1916) contribution to the "essentials of reflection and scientific method" (p. 580). Sommerfeldt (2012) argues that the situational theory of publics is "derived from Dewey's (1927) concept of an active public - a group that is created by mutual recognition of a shared problem and organizes in an attempt to solve that problem" (p. 270). Dewey's central premise was that he "leveraged aesthetic experiences as ways of knowing" positioning "instrumental and objectivist rationalities as narrow views of reason and recognized dimensions of human experience constricted by formalization and routinization" (Hater, Ellington, Dutta, & Norander, 2009, p. 35). This can be seen in his later writings where Dewey's (1934/1980) "aesthetic process … represents experience" (Hater, et al., 2009, pp. 36-37); there's Dewey's (1935) notion of "conflicting interests" (Johnston, 2016, p. 197); and the work of Dewy and Bentley (1949) where in defining "transactions" they suggest that "every engagement between connected actors necessarily results in a change in the identity of those actors; their identity emerges through these transactions" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 4). What is relevant in the work of Dewey today in relation to activism and public relations is that "even as he acknowledged the value of rules and patterned interactions, Dewey sought to develop individuals' creative capacities to foster a full and free interplay of ideas in [a] communal context" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 35).

In exploring activism and public relations, I identify the first wave of public relations development as a profession and as an industry as beginning around the turn of the twentieth century through to the start of World War Two in 1939 that includes amongst others the writings of Bernays (1923, 1928), Dewey (1910, 1916, 1927, 1934, 1935), Durkheim (1912), Lasswell (1934, 1938), Lippmann (1922), and Martin (1920) as identified by current public relations scholars. In activisms role as a public face to an issues, Gerbaudo (2012, p. 14) references Durkheim's work on "symbolic construction" that provides for "a *sense of togetherness* and the

fuelling of an *emotional tension* extending from distant mediated connections to the 'effervescence' of physical proximity" (Durkheim, 1912/1965, p. 162). While in taking an antagonistic approach Gamson (1992) in describing social movements as "destructive outbursts" (p. 54) draws on Martin (1920) who wrote that "a crowd is a device for indulging ourselves in a kind of temporary insanity by all going crazy together" (Martin, 1920, p. 37). Another early influencer recognized by Katz (1960) in addressing "our already existing stereotypes" (p. 176) is Walter Lippmann (1922) who argues, stereotypes provide "an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 95). These concepts of a symbolic construction of oneself and the need to be together with others of a like mind is at the heart of activism and protest even today, driven by the need to both belong and react against these stereotypical norms where "there is a direct relationship between stimulus-response transmission theories of communication and the beliefs espoused by Lippmann, Lasswell, and Bernays" (Weaver, Motion & Roper, 2006, p. 11).

Even in this earliest formation of public relations as an industry, profession, and field of study discrepancies were already forming around the division between a public or activist interpretation of public relations suggested by Dewey's ideas of civil society and Durkheim's sense of togetherness juxtaposed against those of Lasswell, Lippmann, and Bernays. Their notion of public relations as propaganda became established as "the new profession of public relations counsel" where Edward Bernays (1928) "established the idea of an institution identifying a grouping or association for the purpose of social control" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 14), and in democratic society, public relations became "primarily a sales pitch not an exercise in society theory" (Miller, 2005, p. 17). While these ideas formed the basis of the public relations industry, the next period of evolution or second wave of public relations development from 1940 to 1999 was "inspired and driven by the two World Wars" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 266) and the economic

growth that followed. It also brought the first recognition that critical theory and linguistics, the language or words we use in public relations communications are important and have a social impact. The work of Mills (1940) highlights the importance of the "modern study of language" in the area of social theory, which I believe is also a critical component of public relations in that "we must approach linguistic behavior, not by referring it to private states in individuals, but by observing its social function of coordinating diverse actions" because "language is taken by other persons as an indicator of future actions" (Mills, 1940, p. 904). Recognized as one of the first articles in public relations to take a critical approach, Lazarsfeld's (1941) introduced what we today call media monitoring to "keep track of what is communicated by others" (p. 3) because "a number of important new technologies have been developed in the course of all these research efforts" (p. 2). In suggesting a critical approach to organizational communications, Lazarsfeld (1941) became "one of the founding scholars of empirical–administrative research in mass communication, [and] to incorporate critical theory into the study of media" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 16). However, this "original attempt to marry critical and administrative research in communication ended in failure" (Rogers, 1994 as cited by Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 16).

By mid-century the predominance of public relations as "communication from an organization to a public" became galvanized and "explicitly articulated" by Edward Bernays (1955), cementing his reputation as "one of the father figures of the practice" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 265). While Bernays is undoubtedly represented in practice, it is Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance that is recognized as the theoretical foundation of public relations albeit from its sponsor, Bernard Berelson, the Director of Behavioural Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation's perspective who requested he undertake a "propositional inventory" of the substantive area of "communication and social influence" (Festinger, 1957, p. v), and in doing so firmly establishing the link between conventional public relations and the corporate agenda. During this same timeframe Durkheim (1957) and Arendt (1958) continued to develop ideas that

could collectively form a different foundation of public relations, one that is inclusive and recognizes a public as an essential component in communication to achieve representational democracy. Here Demetrious (2013) argues that in discussing civil ethics and morals, Durkheim (1957) predicted "business and industry will dominate society" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 48), suggesting that his ideas formed an intersection of communication and community and in doing so legitimised "civil disobedience as one of the important symbolic repertoires of communicative action in activism" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 50). By incorporating Durkheim's (1957) ideas into the contemporary discussion of activism and public relations, Demetrious (2013) argues that "marginal groups and communication are necessary to achieve representational democracy" (p. 48) and that "the communication activities of public relations and activism and their relationship [is] centrally important to the democratic ideal" (p. 49). While they are not fully part of the public relations functionalist history, these philosophies will begin to be played out in the latter half of the twentieth century.

This effort by the burgeoning public relations industry to reinforce self-sameness for the purpose of social control during the 1950s gave rise to the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s as well the creation of a number of seminal texts cited by contemporary public relations scholars working on activism. The period is characterised by 1960s activists utilizing "public relations to attract the attention of the corporate elite, developing and utilizing many of the modern tools of public relations" (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, p. 63), and by the end of the decade had raised issues of "feminist, queer, anti-racist, post-colonial, environmental and other struggles" by questioning the "ways in which activist publics were conventionally defined, established, maintained, and transformed for new struggles" (Chari & Donner, 2010, p. 77). Often these authors were writing against an increasing emphasis on "individual utilitarian models" like those expressed by economist Mancur Olson (1965, 1971) who addressed these efforts to consolidate individual and categorical identities where the "absence of a collective identity is assumed" and as such

"solidarity and collective identity operate to blur the distinction between individual and group interests" (Gamson, 1992, p. 57). This 'blurring' has led, in my opinion, to much of contemporary society's current identity-based activism, and is only now finding its way into public relations theory. This is largely because literature published prior to 1970 established this absence of a collective identity as the dominant ideology of public relations to where it became ingrained in the academic economics literature in the early 1970s and had become part of the "business schools, the management literature, specialized academic and applied practitioner journals … by the early 1990s" (Shapiro, 2005, p. 269). Olson's model of "motivation and fervor were key ingredients that activist causes can invoke, perhaps offsetting the clear resource advantage of the large corporations and other organizations that activists target" suggesting that as "scholars, we should delight in such paradoxes, for they focus our attention on research questions and issues that permit the discovery of new theory" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 11). The first scholar to address these struggles was Paulo Freire (1970) whose *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* calls for a praxis in learning, "combining *reflection* and *action* directed at structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1970, p. 126). Freire "attempted to overcome the theory/practice dichotomy by empowering individuals and communities to engage in productive and reflective activities of learning through action" captured a recurring theme that "modern politics had created a 'fear of freedom' among the oppressed, who were politically subjugated in societies where theories about freedom and democracy and their practice did not coincide" (Nabudere, 2008, p. 63). Freire (1970) argues that "just as the oppressor, in order to oppress, needs a theory of oppressive action, so the oppressed, in order to become free, also need a theory of action" (p. 183). One of the most influential texts of the period is Saul D. Alinsky's (1972) *Rules for radicals: A primer for realistic radicals*, where he argues what I believe is a central tenant to activism, and perhaps a rationale as to why it is also excluded from the dominant corporate-economic model of public relations, arguing that "people cannot be free unless they are willing to sacrifice some of their interest to guarantee the freedom of others" (p. xxv).

Alinsky's text "crystallised connections between youth culture, social structures, and the allocation of social, political, and cultural resources with the urgent need for action" and in drawing these elements together, "he constructed an ideal of moral authority and social renewal progressed through a bright generation of protestors" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 38). This second wave in the development of public relations as profession also saw rise to many of the discrepancies and complexities that are currently being discussed in terms of activisms' role in public relations including where one way communication from a corporation to an absent or undefined and disempowered public to the corporation's benefit has become the norm within the industry. While Arendt (1958) argued that "we are distinct from each other, and often strive to distinguish ourselves further" (Arendt, 1958 as cited in Calhoun, 1994, p. 9), this idea was drowned out by the conventional understanding of publics and public relations presented by Bernays' (1955) one way public relations communications that "intensified efforts to consolidate individual and categorical identities, to reinforce self-sameness" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 9). Public relations continues to be a tool of support for business and governments "specialised self-interest" and has become "at odds with and undermines the broader public's common self-interest.… and avoids any rigorous discussion of civil society and public communication" (Demetrious, 2006, pp. 102-103). Historically, the work of Olson (1965, 1971), Freire (1970), and Alinsky (1972) established a theoretical grounding for activism in public relations, but collectively their push and others for greater equality and economic certainty for marginalized publics would result in the greatest push back in history during the next decade followed by an even greater marginalization from economic success for many different publics.

The 1980s and 1990s

This distancing between organizations and governments, and the public both in North America and increasingly globally took hold when the push back by established powerbrokers during the middle-part of the twentieth century became institutionalized in the 1980s. It is also the

point where the powerful tactics and strategies of public relations became ingrained in this distancing process as a "support function whose source of power was its expertise in communications" (Berger, 2005, pp. 6-7). It is during this period that economics become central to public relations activities when the focus on economics and the management of communications was extended into the regulatory system through the rise of a market-orientated approach associated with the "Reagan Revolution and Thatcherism' of the 1980s" (Bozeman, 2007, p. 5). This change resulted when within the rise of global political economies the individual interest of its wealthiest individuals and the corporations they controlled were in constant tension with the public's interest (Johnston, 2016, p. 31). The objective then of undoing the existing Keynesian welfare state and replacing it with a deregulatory policy agenda was to liberate "the sphere of market-based action and decreases the legitimate sphere of government intervention on behalf of the maintenance and development of a citizen community" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 8). The problem for those marginalized is that this economic focus and the "evolution of power upwards to the supranational level has occurred without the prerequisite democratic controls" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 262), and has seen "a gradual increase since the mid-1980s" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 263). The result has been the rise of globalization where "corporations have grown ever more powerful at the expense of democratic institutions" and that to secure this dominant corporate-economic paradigm "international bodies have been established that set the needs and desires of corporations above those of citizens. Governments are mere tools of corporations, and have been provided with the ideal excuse for pursuing the policies that favour them" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 1). However, with a growing resistance from marginalized publics and an emerging global information economy, "this system is now under pressure" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 1).

It was also during the period of Reagan and Thatcher that the institutionalization of corporate control legitimization was securely anchored in the public relations literature when the Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) funded J. E.

Grunig in the development of the Excellence Theory during this period of globalization. This integration of public relations with efforts at economic globalization securely anchored public relations study and practice as a functionalist process in support of organizational legitimacy against all other forms of practice. This was a milestone in public relations history and was the first recognition that "public relations research has been driven by organisational interests, treating the profession as an organisational function first and foremost" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 1). Grunig and Hunt's (1984) milestone research identified four historical models of public relations: press agentry/publicity; the public information model; the two-way symmetrical model of public relations developed by Edward Bernays through his use of scientific research and partially grounded in psychology (Holtzhausen, 2012, pp. 67-68); and the two-way symmetrical model to facilitate "understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics" (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 289). In this way, J. E. Grunig (1992) took what Bernays had started and made the public relations industry a profession and topic of formalized research.

As the founder of contemporary public relations, J. E. Grunig is recognized today as "one of the first scholars to formally theorise public relations and consolidate his thoughts in textbook form" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 2), given that before the Excellence Theory there was no standard in the field of public relations to measure theoretical development (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 363). The Excellence Model has also become "the basis of an international study of PR practice" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011 p. 2), and as such "has probably done more to develop public relations theory and scholarship than any other single school of thought" (Botan & Hazleton, 2006, p. 6) in becoming "the closest the field of public relations has to a dominant paradigm" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 3). This line in the sands of time established the contemporary foundation of current public relations practices and criticisms. In her review of activism and the Excellence Theory, Holtzhausen (2007) outlines the six contextual conditions that affect public relations as

"activism … culture and language, political, economic, and media systems, and level of development" (p. 357). Activisms relationship to the Excellence Theory was first formally articulated by public relations analyst L. Grunig (1992) as something to be "managed", while suggesting that studying activism helps "practitioners deal in more than an ad hoc way with the opposition their organizations face from activist groups" while viewing activism as "a legitimate method of communication" (L. Grunig, 1992, pp. 503-527). Efforts to address activists "in more than an ad hoc way" and activism as "a legitimate method of communication" have not fully materialized in the 25 years since its introduction, and are only now beginning to be discussed. Early critiques note that studies like Excellence have focused on activism "not from the perspective of the activist publics, but from the perspective of how organizations respond to public activism" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 272), and that "this fact contributes to the relative silence about grassroots and other forms of activism in dominant public relations discourse" (Demetrious, 2006, p. 102). There is no doubt that "when the Excellence Study was conceptualized" the organizational theorists of the time viewed activists as real threats to organizations. While these "perspectives have indeed changed … the Excellence Theory is not quite appropriate for activist groups" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 364) because this approach "emphasizes the importance of public relations as a management function, membership in the dominant coalition, and strategic planning of public relations with measurable outcomes, preferably in economic terms" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 59).

While the Excellence Theory was busy becoming a dominant economic paradigm, activism scholarship also continued to progress. In outlining a model of recruitment to high-risk/cost activism that emphasizes both the structural and individual motivational factors including "an intense ideological identification with the values of the movement", McAdam (1986) suggests that "a prior history of activism and integration into supportive networks acts as the structural 'pull' encouraging the individual to make good on his or her strongly held beliefs" (p. 64). In addressing the dynamics of grievances Opp (1988) argues that grievances often "arise in response to critical

incidents" (p. 854), identifying ideology as a generator of "discontents that have distinctive-short-term or long-term-effects on protest" (p. 862). Opp (1988), while working outside the field of public relations, was amongst the first contemporary scholars to recognize the relevance of the emotional content of dialogue. This year also saw the publication of Spivak's (1988) *Can the subaltern speak?* bringing together "the most important contributions of French poststructuralist theory" (Spivak, 1988, p. 66). Spivak (1988) introduced to public relations the idea that the "networks of power/desire/interest are so heterogeneous, that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive" (p. 66), similar to Olson (1965, 1971) notion of an absence of a collective identity being counterproductive to the development of a democratic society. Simply put, Spivak's argument calls for "a more patient mode of engagement with subjects, and a suspension of the rush to identify or represent" (Mahmood, 2005 as cited in Chari & Donner, 2010, p. 80). Spivak's (1988) work was the first of a "slew of scathing critiques [that] emerged over the 1980s and 1990s contesting the role of public relations in society, and in particular these critiques sought to shed light on the more prominent unethical practices" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 63). One of the most highly recognized of these critiques is Stauber and Rampton's (1995) *Toxic Sludge is Good for You* that "fused satire with informed political, media and cultural perspectives to expose the inner workings and relations to power in the public relations industry" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 73), and argues that "public relations practitioners bow routinely to the self-interest of their employers. This leads to unscrupulous behaviour and deliberate harm to the reputation of the opposition" (Stauber & Rampton, 1995, pp. 3-4). Stauber and Rampton (1995) also address the development of unethical practices within public relations agencies on behalf of powerful clients including "astroturfing" or grassroots movements "controlled by the private interests that pay their bills" (p. 14) and "grasstops communications" that involves hiring "friends and family of prominent Washington politicos" (p. 80). Their fundamental argument is that "the democratic process has been railroaded through the use of PR techniques" (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, p. 9)

to serve their clients' unethical ends. What has become one of the more prominent criticisms came the following year from Karlberg (1996) whose "critique of public relations derives from the concerns of John Dewey … and other Chicago School theorists concerned with the condition of *community* in an era of mass communication" (p. 26). In his criticisms Karlberg (1996) argued that a contradiction exists "between two-way symmetrical theory and the asymmetrical research agenda it perpetuates: an agenda that continues to subsidize commercial and state communications at the expense of other segments of the population" and to achieve real inclusion and balance in public relations, "research must begin to address the public communications needs and constraints of previously excluded segments of the population" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 263). McCown (2007) is amongst the contemporary scholars who have recognized Karlberg's observation that powerless publics because of their lack of resources, "often experience constraints great enough to prevent them from participating in information seeking or active communication behaviours" (McCown, 2007, pp. 52-53).

While L. Grunig (1992) was calling for activists to be managed, Anderson's (1992) research argued that activist groups are strategic publics because they create issues and that "research on activism has become one of the most important domains of public relations research" (p. 151). Anderson (1992) calls for more activist scholarship in public relations research and for public relations practitioners to "develop sensitivity to activists, be able to identify activist publics before they become active, and develop communication strategies to foster mutual understanding with them" (Anderson, 1992, p. 151). While environmental, consumer, and feminist activists began seeing success in promoting cultural awareness of the politics, economies, and discourses of power, in the 1990s (Weaver, 2001, p. 283) activists, according to author Naomi Klein (2000) were primarily responding to the corporate-branding phenomenon, where "brands are … intimately entangled with our culture and our identities" (Klein, 2000, p. 335), again suggesting "activists attack corporations because they *matter*" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 262). As the

1990s came to a close a new reality began to settle in across the globe, new forms of digital communications technology were about to dominate our "communities, cultures, and worldviews" (DeLuca, 1999, p. xii), and "constitute a major inspiration for the development of new forms of activism" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 107).

2000 - Now

The new millennium sparked what I consider the third wave, or the contemporary period in public relations development, or the post-Excellence era beginning with Dozier and Lauzen's (2000) suggestion that "it would be more interesting to study social movements to see how they differ from other types of publics, how they are not adequately accommodated by existing public relations theory" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 9). Their argument also calls for the development of critical theory in public relations where "critical theory suggests ways to study activism from a new perspective that would enhance practices and further the evolution of the intellectual domain" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 3). This contemporary period has seen "a sea change in public relations emphasis, moving from manipulation and persuasion to a focus on relationship building" (McCown, 2007, p. 54). There is also "an emerging body of activist/activism public relations research and ample space for critical scholars to contribute to the discussion" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 886) that has continued to increase in momentum and magnitude through the number of articles published through to present day. This millennial turn also saw a number of ideological shifts taking place amongst public relations scholars including the introduction of a postmodern perspective towards public relations theory and practice where Derina R. Holtzhausen (2000) was amongst the first to call for public relations to be "freed from its narrow definition as organizational communication management" by addressing "the implications of a radical philosophy of politics" through "(a) the public relations practitioner as activist, (b) corporate public relations as activism, and (c) public relations practitioners as organizational activists" (p. 99). That same year Postmodern Feminist Chela Sandoval (2000) wrote in *Methodology of the Oppressed*

about "a differential consciousness, a postmodern mode of resistance deployed in activism and oppositional social movements" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 40) that in many ways reflects Dozier and Lauzen's (2000) call for a different approach to the intellectual domain of public relations. In her argument, Sandoval (2000) writes that "the citizen-subject can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to 'break with ideology' while at the same time also speaking in, and from within, ideology" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 43). Hale (2008) picks up on Sandoval's warning against "organized struggles for social justice that, for a combination of reasons, end up taking on noxious features of their adversaries and oppressors" suggesting that we "need to create and defend safe spaces from which to carry out activist scholarship within often inhospitable environments" (p. 17). This concept of differential consciousness "marked by mobility within a dominant ideology, between different ideological positions or identities, allowing subjects to strategically occupy or perform multiple, even competing, positions on issues" and is "an especially practical postmodern theory and offers concrete suggestions for praxis" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, pp. 40-41). While the concept of differential consciousness and postmodernism worked to address the sea of social and cultural change taking place globally, the following year saw the introduction of the Internet in relation to the activists and activism with Taylor, Kent, and White's (2001) examination of "the mediated communication of activist organizations to understand how these groups use their websites to build relationships with publics" and noting that "activist organizations are better prepared to address the needs of member publics rather than media needs" (p. 263). This effort was amongst the "first to explore the unique public relations needs of activist groups and to consider activists as public relations practitioners" (Sommerfeldt, Kent, & Taylor, 2012, p. 304).

The introduction of criticisms to the Excellence Theory and increasing consideration of activists as public relations practitioners has contributed to a growing complexity and questioning of what can public relations be in this post-Excellence era. This was first addressed by Weaver

(2001) in "the context of the new global information economy" where corporate public relations are now dominant discourses, and where activists now "demonstrate a detailed understanding of the practice of discourse management themselves" (p. 283). This is seen as the first recognition that "practitioner resistance and activism may offer best hope for professionals to do the right thing and to actualize the possibilities of a practice serving the interests and voices of many" (Berger, 2005, p. 6). This idea of practitioner resistance and activism was clearly delineated the following year in Holtzhausen and Voto's (2002) examination of public relations practitioners "postmodern values and organizational activist behaviour" (p. 76). By the middle of the decade, a number of scholars had recognized the limits of the Excellence Theory approach where the "primacy of the dominant coalition in making organizational decisions and influencing public relations practices … [forms] a matrix of constraints that undermine and limit the function" (Berger, 2005, p. 5) of the public relations practitioner.

During the next decade through to the point of writing, research on activism and activist has continued to increase exponentially. The work of Dewey, Alinsky, and Freire are increasingly finding their way into the field of public relations scholarship along with the idea that "public relations practitioners have all the necessary attributes and skills to lead social change movements" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 375). Increasingly, there have been calls by public relations scholars to recognize practitioners failures and "the damage to reputation that results from mishandling relationships, and not communicating with activists" and as such, "understanding the interplay between activism and public relations is therefore essential" (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009, p. 80). However, as previously indicated, the "role of activists in public relations scholarship and practice is still unclear and evolving" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 396), further illustrating that this is the right time in history to accept the challenge of integrating activism and activism scholarship into the field of public relations. Most recently, there have been calls for a culture-centred approach where "the researcher/scholar/practitioner" in "an enactment of solidarity enters the space of

meaning coconstruction with subaltern participants" where "problems are articulated and solutions are coconstructed" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 220). Dutta, Ban, and Pal (2012) argue that in practice, the "value of a critical perspective is that it interrogates the ideological and economic basis of public relations … and opens up a discursive and resistive space for articulating new ways of thinking about public relations" (p. 2). They argue that from the theorising about public relations, "the culture-centred approach provides an opening for an epistemic shift in our understanding of what counts as public relations and what ought to be studied under the purview of public relations (Dutta, Ban, & Pal, 2012, p. 5). This culture-centred approach addresses "the interaction between culture, structure, and agency that contributes to the co-construction of meanings by cultural members of a community within the context of broader politics of social change" (Dutta, et al., 2012, p. 5). They cite as an example, Kim and Dutta's (2009) use of a culture-centred approach to examine how the public relations "strategies of FEMA maintained the status quo, and simultaneously silenced the voices of the displaced people of New Orleans" (Dutta, et al., 2012, p. 6), illustrating "how the application of the subaltern studies framework can provide a theoretical entry point for conceptualizing crisis communication from below and for facilitating academic self-reflexivity in crisis communication scholarship" (Kim & Dutta, 2009, p. 142). The culture-centred approach also captures another industrial shift that will be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter where a move from the situational theory of publics to structuration theory provides a "viable theoretical alternative to understand activist group publics" (Sommerfeldt, 2012, p. 269) because "structuration theory … is fundamentally concerned with the intricacies of discursive interactions" (Sommerfeldt, 2012, p. 272). In effect, delineating activist publics and "activists' motivations for choosing different tactics and communication channels" (Curtin, 2016, p. 20).

The rise of digital technologies, the Internet, and social media sites also saw an increase in public relations research in these areas that has in many respects overwhelmed many practitioners

and scholars "by the sheer abundance and diversity of the communicative practices they channel" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p.3). Following Gerbaudo's (2012) observation that the full impact of these new media have yet to be realized, Weaver (2016) argues that with the emergence of the digital economy, there has been a material change that has facilitated "the rise of new creative thinking, information sharing, organising, collaborative production, protest and activism" (p. 49). Collectively, these historical developments have initiated calls for the development of a critical public relations (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000); calls for the development of a public communication by "broadening the analysis of public relations activities beyond [the] narrow scope of professional practices and institutional sites" and allowing for a "more lateral and creative understanding of communicative practices" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 5); as well as calls for public relations practitioners and scholars to addresses public interest and the public sphere to "advance our qualitative understandings of public relations, beyond that which is empirically measurable or positivist in approach" (Johnston, 2016, pp. 5-7).

This exploration of public relations history has illustrated that it is easy to "conclude that the Marx of political economy and cultural studies form pillars of critical communications study" (Mosco, 2012, p. 571) that began over 100 years ago, yet like many of the great ideas produced by the aesthetic theories of the last century "there has been no extended discussion of how Marx's theories can be applied to understanding the economic, social, and cultural functions of public relations" (Weaver, 2016, p. 44). Since the 1990s, there have been increased demands by scholars for public relations go beyond "the status quo, examining business, politics, government, civil society and activism with reflexivity and a broad mind" (Johnston, 2016, Acknowledgements) to address the integral part of the capitalist communication complex that "public relations has played, and continues to play … in the perpetuation of social divisions based on wealth … and the ideologies that support their activities" (Weaver, 2016, p. 50).

Activism in Public Relations Theory

Marxism and the "many of the ideas developed in Marx's theorising of the political economy of capitalism can advance our understanding of the political, social and cultural function that public relations plays in the globalised world" (Weaver, 2016, p. 50). However, while "the ideas of Marx and Engles shed light on historical activist attitudes and stances" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 46), with the changing geo-political face of contemporary activism, they "are unable to explain fully contemporary changes to activism" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 46). Public relations theoretical historical foundation begins with Lazarsfeld's (1941) introduction of idea of research (p. 3), and Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance where both are base "in the realm of West-centric understandings … of serving corporate and managerial interests" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 216). Because of this focus, public relations theory formed "with a historical animosity to activism" and in doing so according to Demetrious (2013), has failed "to provide intellectual leadership in relations activism, and particularly in the communication activities between groups within the social conditions of risk society" and intrinsically is "limited in its ability to understand in socially complex and interdisciplinary ways the Internet, social media, and communicative relations in the wake of cultural and technological developments" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 130).

Public relations development as a profession and within the limited contemporary economic-corporate model took place in the period of theoretical development known as Modernism. Historically, Modernism developed following Feudalism (Best & Keller, 1991, p. 2), and the "culture of representation" (Ermarth, 2001, p. 202) that emerged during the Renaissance (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 8). Many of Modernism influences have become recognized as synonymous to "the creation and stabilisation of boundaries and with a preoccupation with the notions of identity" (Somerville, 1999, p. 8). This "modernist power came about by permeating all levels of micropolitical power, including family, educational, religious institutions, and business and state organizations" (Althusser, 1971; Baudrillard, 1975, 1981; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983;

Foucault, 1980 as cited in Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 62). Here "organization theories were largely shaped through modernist thought" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 140). These modernist ideals became incorporated into the Excellence Theory's functionalist approach that "started to emerge during the late 1980s" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 252), to where it has become a metanarrative that has "drowned out other, equally valid, discourses in public relations theory and research" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 256). Public relations scholars continue to debate how the Excellence Theory "fails to capture the complexity and multiplicity of the public relations environment" (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997, p. 33). This dominant metanarrative has, in turn, motivated many public relations scholars to seek "theoretical positions that grant greater indeterminacy of power in how ideology was conceptualised, and which acknowledged human actors as having agency" and that in this search, "a great many critical scholars have turned away from Marx and took up, or adopted from the outset, poststructuralist, social constructionist, and/or postmodernist perspectives" in order to "decentralise the economic class as the locus of social power" and see power as "the product of social relations, rather than social structures" (Weaver, 2016, p. 47).

In employing this Nietzschean worldview, Lee and Brown (1994) argue that "if everything that is involved in a relationship is involved in politics, then everything can be understood through political discourse" (p. 778). This theoretical construction of discourse as political "emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as an outgrowth of the civil rights, antiwar, consumer, and student protest movements" (Westin, 1981, p. 7) where two important theoretical approaches in organization theory developed, symbolic-interpretivism and postmodernism. Both share some critical parallels including "the social construction of reality, the problems of representation, and the necessity for reflexivity. However, the postmodern focus on the role of language clearly sets the approach apart from symbolic-interpretivism" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 140). This new approach began manifesting itself within public relations scholarship as part of the call for the development of a critical public

relations and builds upon Spivak's (1988) argument that "the production of theory is also a practice" (p. 70). The problem with the dominant corporate-economic model of public relations is that "the Excellence Model does not fully address the separate issues of powerless publics and irreconcilable differences" where "*powerless publics* are those groupings of people whose lives are affected by the behaviour of a focal organization but lack sufficient resources to demand mutually beneficial relationships with that organization" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 12). For public relations practitioners in this situation, "power is not given but continuously shaped through social practice. Organizations in themselves do not have power" rather it is "the people in them that shape their power" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 178), whereas "postmodernism focuses on how power is discursively constituted through political processes at the local or immediate level" and as such, "practitioners should be analyzed for how people are spoken to and about" (Holtzhausen, 2012, pp. 194-195). This modernist power however is also subject to postmodern resistance and as Coombs and Holladay (2012a) point out "the discussion of power … raises the issue of activism. If organizations do not respond to symmetrical communication efforts from publics, those publics become activists and employ asymmetrical efforts to force the organization to engage with them" (p. 884).

These critiques of power became a "consistent theme in postmodern philosophy" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 257) and where the French poststructuralist first introduced to public relations by Spivak (1988) have addressed the field's emphasis as an organizational function including: Foucault's (1977, 1982) interpretations of the links between knowledge and power; Lyotard's (1988) concept of language games to critique the dominant focus on strategy in public relations; Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony; Bourdieu's (1977) concept of agency and symbolic capital; Baudrillard's (1981, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1994) concept of hyperreality; and Lyotard's (1988) critique of consensus, which enlightens and rejects the domination of two-way symmetry as a viable public relations practice (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 254). These critiques became

known as aesthetic theory and today are increasingly cited by public relations scholars addressing activism. Postmodernism then encourages "different and plural discourses that allow scholars to perceive more possibilities than what is in the field of vision of a singular dominant discourse of modernity and objectivity" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 32). Within these pluralist voices is the guiding motivation "to respect differences" (Foucault, 1973, p. xii). It is within this reflective and respectful theoretical approach to differences that a "postmodern approach calls for public relations practitioners not only to fulfill activist roles on behalf of their stakeholders (Berger, 2005) but also to enable those groups to become activists" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 400).

This has led to a "fourth generation" of research within this third wave of public relations development "in the context of social movements in the developing world" and that has "roots in liberation theology and neo-Marxist approaches to community development (e.g., in Latin America) but also has rather liberal origins in human rights activism (e.g., in Asia)" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 560). Referred to as Postcolonial Theory or Postcolonialism, Dutta and Pal (2011) note that "postcolonial theory examines the symbolic representations and material relationships that underlie the process of colonization" while urging us "to disrupt the neocolonial interests of transnational hegemony by taking an activist stance in our articulations of knowledge" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, pp. 196-199). Today, "postcolonial theorists encourage research that makes space for otherwise ignored voices" (Edwards, 2011, p. 19), by calling on public relations practitioners to "continuously questions one's privilege and the ways in which this privilege could close off possibilities for meaningful dialogue and structural transformation" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 221). In this way, "language should be treated with the utmost respect" and as such "the way public relations uses language should be scrutinized for its social effects" (Christians, 1997, p. 13). There is an increasing recognition that public relations through its theoretical development and practice manufactures, reproduces, and circulates "symbolic representations and interpretive frames that carry out the agenda of globalization" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 196) to which Hallam

(2013) identifies the central concern as "when any form of representation predominates (whether textual or visual) there is a corresponding marginalisation of "Other" perspectives" (p. 274). This form of representation is defined as "the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning" (Hall, 1997, p. 61). Language is a powerful tool and as Holtzhausen (2012) notes "language also is a manifestation of how culture, society, history, knowledge, and power, amongst other things, shape the individual" and as such an "analysis of language would therefore also shed light on the broader social and political discourses that take place in society" as well as "structured ways of thinking, writing, and applying knowledge" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 14). Tench's (2003) article exploring public relations writing is one of the few attempts to "establish the existence of a professional language genre for public relations by evaluating the history of genre analysis and its application in a professional context" (p. 139). However, as Dutta, Ban, and Pal (2012) argue, absent in the analysis of public relations writing are "systematic interrogations of Euro and US-centric articulations of 'god terms' such as democracy, civil society, and public sphere, which are themselves culturally rooted constructs embedded in dominant structures of power and are often public relations instruments" (p. 2). This structural transition, developed from critiques of the Excellence Theory, calls for a critical public relations (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000) and for a postmodern perspective within public relations practice and theory (Holtzhausen, 2000) that has begun to take shape through recognizing the "tension between localized agency and structural constraints" (Curtin, 2016, p. 21) and introducing "structuration theory … as an alternative approach to analyzing publics" (Sommerfeldt, 2012, p. 272), as can be seen in the aforementioned FEMA example. In this context, "structure refers to the systems of organizing that both constrain and enable the enactment of choices" and that it is "in the realm of structures that theoretical entry points are created for transforming policies and existing practices that marginalize the subaltern sector" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 218). In this way "structuration theory may therefore be a productive

theoretical standpoint from which to view the systems of activist relationships as related to the constant evolution of issues and the structures governing their discussion" and as such, structures "are the guidelines for interaction as well as the results of interactions. Actions taken within interactions can lead to the reshaping of structures that will, in turn, affect future interactions and relationships" where "structuration places communicative interactions at the center of meaning making and issue development" (Sommerfeldt, 2012, pp. 272-284). Curtin (2016) argues that these communicative interactions as articulation theory "expands the notion of public relations practitioner to encompass those who articulate relations to achieve public opinion goals and legitimize their positions - including activists" (p. 21).

When it comes to activists' use of public relations theories, the social movements of the 1960s "dramatically challenged" our assumption of activism and activists by "providing a rich array of experience and enlisting the active sympathies of an enlarged pool of analysts" and in doing so "stimulated a shift in theoretical assumptions and analytic emphases that eventually became formalized in the resource mobilization theory" (Jenkins, 1983, p. 528). Collective Action Theory is also critical for activists and activism in our post-industrial age where there is an acceptance by scholars of modernity's condition of multiplicity as automatically defining collective action rather than recognizing collective action theories "as the point of departure for a complex process of social re-composition and symbolic articulation, facilitating the 'fusion' of individuals into a new collective agent" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 29). One of the first authors to recognize individual or practitioner agency was Mills (1940) where there is an acting "on behalf of another" and where "he is influencing others-and himself" (p. 907). Agency, as seen through the human sciences is defined as "a gathering of those things in which our humanity is said to reside – a range of practices (tool use, division of labour, social adaption, language formation) and underlying affordances (physiological adaption, language acquisition devices, symbolic representation)" (Lee & Brown, 1994, p. 772). Given the central role of communication in

collective action it's surprising how little public relations research there is on the topic, especially in the area of using "collective action to create social change" (Louis, 2009, p. 728). A third critical theory for activism is the Actor Network Theory (ANT), defined as a commitment to "demonstrating that the elements bound together in a network (including the people) are constituted and shaped by their involvement with each other" (Lee & Brown, 1994, p. 775). ANT proposes an interconnectedness with a key feature being its "resistance to the modern reification of boundaries which prevent us from seeing the ways in which the "social", the "technical" and the "natural" are intermingled in a *seamless web*" (Somerville, 1999, p. 9). In this way, ANT highlights the "struggle for dominance" and a recognition that "networks are nested one within another" (Lee & Brown, 1994, p. 784).

While Resource Mobilization, Collective Action Theories, and ANT are related to the activists and activism, when it comes to the public relations practitioner, agency and resistance theories dominate discussions that address the practice, power inequities, and the dominant corporate-economic model and ideologies that have colonized public relations more generally. There is an understanding that "public relations would be easy without resistance" (Flynn, 2016, October 26). However, in many ways resistance is essential to the communication process and in some respects can be related to the theory of cognitive dissonance or "being psychologically uncomfortable" (Festinger, 1957, p. 3). This being uncomfortable is the result of "practices of domination and exploitation [that] typically generate the insults and slights to human dignity that in turn foster a hidden transcript of indignation" (Scott, 1990, p. 6). Here "resistance emerges as a response to threats to the consistency of one's mental framework, such as when a message's intended change in attitude is inconsistent with receiver's present mindset" (Flynn, 2016, October 26). Major resistances include "counterarguing, message minimization, perceived invulnerability, negative outcome expectancies, opposing perceived norms, lack of self-efficacy, reactance, and selective avoidance" (Flynn, 2016, October 26). In this way "resistance can be heroic or mundane

acts: active (e.g., protests), passive (e.g., boycotts), or even subversive (e.g., sabotage)" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 35). Resistance then is "contextual and many layered rather than static and uniform" (Haenfler, 2004, p. 43). This dichotomy between public relations foundational theories from the dominant corporate-economic perspective, to postmodern theories that insists on difference, diversity, multiplicity, social and cultural pluralism as well as agency and resistance brings "chaos and complexity theory to public relations practice" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 372), suggesting there "needs greater attention" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 30) to the analysis of public relations and its effects as a social apparatus. The result however is that there is very little evidence found of "any citations of public relations theorists in other domains" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 2). This is further evidence of "a deeper and perhaps more fundamental level of complexity" within the field of public relations that is beginning to express itself as "dissonance" (Berger, 2005, p. 23) in public relations practice. This is the theoretical and practical position that public relations practitioners and scholars find themselves in today.

Activism in Public Relations Practice

Exploring the historical and theoretical progression of public relations as an industry, a profession, and field of study has illustrated that when it comes to the practice of public relations, activism and responding to activists in many ways has been and remains a central character in the development of our contemporary understanding of public relations. Scholarship on activism and public relations reveals three central components of the functionalist dominant corporate–economic model of public relations as a management process, a control mechanism, and a technical skill where activism has played a central role in the development of strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Public relations role as a management process came about through the development of the concept of the "dominant coalition" in public relations theory, where "this group of powerful insiders makes strategic choices, allocates resources, and influences public relations practices" (Berger, 2005, p. 8). Here the "goal is for public relations practitioners to identify an issue, mobilize resources, and develop and implement a strategic plan" as a way to "balance opportunities and threats" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 449). In this management process there is "the importance of employee communication and 'activists' activities in raising leadership's awareness of profound communication gaps" (McCown, 2007, p. 63), and as such, "organizations must anticipate activists pressures because activist groups can issue grievances, boycott or strike an organization, garner negative media attention, and take other actions that can severely harm the revenue of an organization" (Grunig, 1992 as cited in Ciszek, 2015, p. 449). Because of this overarching tendency in public relations scholarship, many public relations scholars look at activism "as something to be managed or as something that forces corporations toward better public relations practice" (Reber & Berger, 2005, p. 186), but rarely as a communications process with its own strategies and tactics.

To fully understand the relationship between the activist and the public relations practitioner, it is equally important to examine practitioner actions to get the complete narrative. Traditionally, when it comes to the public relations practitioner, "Role Theory … [has] embodied this functionalist perspective and driven much research in the field" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 448). Here "the manager/technician dichotomy" has become "one of the most prominent defining mechanisms in roles research" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 147). This manager/technician or "employer/employee" (Shapiro, 2005, p. 272) ideology is represented in practice by the dominant coalitions through "*decisions*, which translate into actions and values, and *deliverables*, which are usually texts of one form or another that are delivered to, or enacted with, publics" (Berger, 2005, p. 13). Role Theory has been criticised for creating "public relations activity and behaviour [that has] been self-serving, overconfident, unscrupulous and ideologically invasive. Hence it has failed to obtain the acknowledgements and privileges that society confers when an occupation is recognised as a specialized professional activity" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 8). This criticism stems from the acknowledgement that scholars in public relations "are also teachers and advisers to future public relations practitioners ... [working] as public relations consultants … [obtaining] funding for research projects, either directly from corporations or from trade or professional associations … [and] speak at professional meetings and practitioner workshops" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 7). There is a perception that through these linkages to the corporations and other large organizations that hire practitioners, there is a tendency to foster "a certain intellectual myopia, a systemic nearsightedness regarding alternative perspectives. This intellectual myopia is particularly pronounced when we scholars of public relations study activist publics" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 7). For example, when L. A. Grunig (1987) sampled a "representation of different kinds of organizations" in exploring their relations with various publics, she noted that "the typical relationship between organizations and activist groups was more hostile than cooperative" (p. 50), footnoting that "less than 5% of the sample indicated that they had *no* dealings with activist groups

during their tenure with the organization" (p. 57). This suggest that 95% of practitioners did interact with activists illustrating the depth of this complex relationship and a further rationale for its study and inclusion into the field of public relations.

Role Theory also presents a number of challenges in this management process beginning with practitioners themselves who often define their roles differently (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 148). This is emphasised by the recognition that public relations practitioners, both as technicians and managers, are often excluded from the dominant coalition or corporate inner circle because management does not understand or appreciate the public relations role; or practitioner skills, experience, and education are deficient (Berger, 2005, p. 7). Here there is an "overriding concern with proving the effectiveness of public relations practice and its contribution to the bottom line [that] stems from the expectation that agents have to prove their contribution and values" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 218). Because of public relations formation in servitude to the dominant coalition in the role of "employee" the agency of public relations practitioners "is one of the field's most underdeveloped areas … because economic agency determines the role of practice in organizations" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 30) where practitioner agency is often extremely limited in the corporate–economic model.

The concept of public relations as a "control mechanism" originates in public relations "social scientific foundation" where its purpose is to understand "the communication behaviour of its publics in such a way that the messages created and the information disseminated can have an optimal and measurable outcome in terms of controlling those publics to the benefit of the organization they work for" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 185). This "control mechanism" is determined by the "shape of an organization's responses to activism [and] depends on the assumptions of the company's managers towards both public relations and activists" (Smith, 2005, p. 6). Here it is "the objective of, or the approach to be adopted, in decision-making rather than a specific or immutable outcome to be achieved" (Wheeler, 2006, p. 24) that is important both to the

organization and the public relations practitioner. This process where the public relations practitioner as employee and controlled by a dominant coalition has also been transferred to the international stage where public relations acts as "global systems of power and control" that "manufacture, reproduce, and circulate symbolic representations and interpretive frames that carry out the agenda of globalization" (p. 196). In public relations practitioner's efforts to achieve these objectives, we "frame" a discourse, and we "segment" or "categorize publics" who are "increasingly complex because they align with multiple demographic and sociographic groups, and they identify as "*Other*" to traditional segments" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, p. 284). In this way "identifying publics as conceptualized in public relations is a segmentation technique" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 118). In theory this technique is "aimed at grouping people together so we can better communicate with them" however, "from a postmodern perspective, the ultimate aim of this segmentation is typical of the social scientific method of creating categories of people for the purpose of administration and control" (p. 118), and in this manner, "we engage publics to minimize their impact on the organization in particular" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 119).

The technical aspect of public relations in practice is focused on skills like the creation of text deliverables as "news releases, speeches, position statements, newsletter copy, [and] announcements" (Berger, 2005, p. 13), and tactics that are "specific behaviors intended to implement strategies" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 350). The "familiar SWOT [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats] analysis is part of this process, as are goal setting, strategic formulation and implementation, and evaluation" (Porter, 1985 as cited in Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 153). In turn, five general categories of tactics used by activists have been identified including media relations techniques; symbolic activities; organizing activities; legislative activities; and civil disobedience (Jackson, 1982, p. 215). This parallel use of tactics by activists suggests that "studying activism from an outsider, or Us/Other, perspective implies that activists always stand outside the organizations they are working to change" (Curtin, 2016, p. 21) and that activists are better

conceptualized as publics where it should be understood that "while the activist group is always an activist public, the activist public is not always an activist group or organization" (Dougall, 2005, p. 536).

Traditionally, public relations tactics are enacted through discourse and "are used for control at every level" where the results are "a system where rigidity rules and people are evaluated and compensated for their conformity rather than value-added behaviour" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 111). This is a concern and criticism that dates back to the second wave of public relations professionalization where Mills (1940) defined this process as "lingual segments of social action, [where] motives orient actions by enabling discrimination between their objects" (p. 908). In this way "adjectives such as 'good', 'pleasant', and 'bad' promote action or deter it … words often function as directives and incentives by virtue of their being the judgments of others as anticipated by the actor" and as such, "the 'control' of others is not usually direct but rather through the manipulation of a field of objects" (Mills, 1940, p. 908). The use of language, discourse, or writing "is one of the foundations of a successful public relations practitioner and the ability to communicate messages clearly and concisely is one of their differentiating skills" (Tench, 2003, p. 139). Public relations, through its ability to reach multiple communication channels through written text should be able to manipulate any of these communicative objects in a way that benefits both the organization and its publics. However, there remains a belief that "public relations writing courses over-emphasized the importance of writing press releases and under-emphasized other writing-related tasks" (Wise, 2005, p. 39), and as such, "public relations writing's capacity to genuinely imagine the place of the other in order for organisations and corporations to meet their various social obligations is still … severely limited" (Surma, 2006, p. 47).

The challenge is that "people bring their own experiences and personal associations to their reading of cultural text" and creating messages (discourse or writing) for a heterogeneous audience "may provide them with meanings quite different from the preferred reading. Oppositional and

aberrant readings are common" (Gamson, 1995, p. 87), as has been seen during the dramatic social and cultural changes experienced over the past 25 years. This is because currently publics, the public sphere, public interest, and public opinion remain predominantly outside the practice of public relations as constructed in servitude to corporate interests where little effort is exerted to understand "the collective impact of normatively accepting public relations activities" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 92). This has resulted in a shift in the practice of public relations from promoting "communications in the public sphere to one of building relationships in the private sphere ... that contributes to the image of the field as one that subversively and covertly builds alliances that cannot stand public scrutiny" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 209). By the end of this second wave of public relations development, scholars including Karlberg (1996) and Yeatman (1998) recognized that as instrument of commerce and state interests, this corporate-economic model relegates citizens and public interest groups to the fringes of public relations research in favour of private interests and privately-orientated choices. In this functionalist understanding of public relations, "publics" are more than receivers or transmitters of messages, they are "targeted and constructed categories for social control" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 148). This idea of "publics" as largely cooperative and malleable has been a central premise in public relations since Edward Bernays penned *Propaganda* in 1928 where it has been "used to predict behaviour and develop strategies in communicative activities to neutralise opposition or build support for industry" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 79). This is "the *self*-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen" creating a "decidedly lopsided discussion … designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule" (Scott, 1990, p. 18). These "dominant publics" can be defined as "those that can take their discourse pragmatics and their lifeworlds for granted, misrecognizing the indefinite scope of their expansive address as universal and normative" (Warner, 2005, p. 122).

Today, in this third wave of public relations professional development there is an understanding that the "public interest in our discipline is rooted in popular beliefs that communication is important, faulty communication is to blame for many human problems, and better communication can make a better world" (Craig, 2005, p. 662). Not fully grasping the communication needs of an active public has become a glaring omission in the corporate-economic model of public relations currently promoted in its functionalist format because they are "important *initiators* of (rather than targets for) public relations programs because they are most likely to be aware of and concerned with what *organizations are doing*" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 272). Further, "if *citizen groups* do not communicate with organizations and attempt to manage conflict, those *organizations can limit the ability of citizens* to create the kind of communities in which they would like to live" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 272). The challenge then becomes even more prominent "when any public is taken to be *the* public, those limitations invisibly order the political world" (Warner, 2002, p. 107), adding that what is "at stake in the dispute is not just a difference of views about style but different contexts for writing, different ways of imagining a public" but "what currently counts as politics, or that political position taking is the only way of being creatively related to a public" (Warner, 2002, p. 142). This also suggests that a critical approach to communication can inform our understanding of "public metadiscourse – how we talk about how we talk – in the public interest" (Craig, 2005, p. 666).

When public relations discourse "is used to create perceptions of truth and to devalue certain terms and positions to create and promote organizational ideology" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 253), the problem of control raised through these communication-based politics places ethics at "the epicentre of the public and self-interest" (Johnston, 2016, p. 170). This "praxis/theory dichotomy in public relations ethics remains one of the field's most challenging conflicts and one a universalistic modernist ethics approach cannot solve. No ethics code can predict the fragmented and situational nature of ethical decision-making in public relations practice" (Holtzhausen, 2012,

p. 37), suggesting "good ideas, and good intentions, then, are no guarantee of success" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 13). Even more troubling when it comes to ethics and association level accountability, in an example presented from the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ) where a local public relations agency member was found to have violated PRINZs code of conduct, is that when faced with potential sanction they "did further damage to the principles of industry self-regulation and peer review of professional practices by publically resigning from PRINZ" (Harrison, 2004, p. 6 as cited in Demetrious, 2013, p. 70). This ethical challenge and lack of self-regulation was first revealed by Fitzpatrick (1996) who in the first comprehensive survey of institutional ethics officers in North American institutions, argues that "public relations professionals are not playing key roles in the institutionalization of ethics and that public relations remains a relatively untapped resource in ethics programs" (Fitzpatrick, 1996, p. 249), adding that "the lack of a community orientation by ethics officers is noteworthy" because it indicates that philanthropic activities are "of little importance" and there is a "lack of recognition and/or appreciation among ethics officers for the benefits of positive community relations" (Fitzpatrick, 1996, p. 256). This raises the question of the public relations practitioner's "ethical decisions and on whose behalf they are made, or who benefits from them" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 46) as well as raising questions regarding the perceived lack of self-regulation as in the PRINZ example, given that "overwhelmingly … public relations executives do not see reporting wrong-doing as part of their job" (Greenwood, 2015, p. 497). The challenge remains because today, there appears to be very little theoretical or practical movement within public relations scholarship and practice to change the field's paradigm.

However, this is not the full story. Since the millennial turn there has been increasing amounts of research "to see how public relations theory and practice in external organizational rhetoric can serve community interests - or not" and in this way the use of language, or "rhetoric (as the discourse) and public relations (as the enactment of that discourse) are essential to building and sustaining a society as a good place to live because they create various types of social capital"

(Taylor, 2011, p. 436). In examining Public Relations Society of America member practitioners, Ferre (1993) noted that eighty-seven per cent of respondents said that they did pro bono work in 1990 and within that group "fourteen respondents who perform pro bono work received no request for volunteer service ... they were fully proactive … [and] sought pro bono work on their own accord" (Ferre, 1993, pp. 61-64). This is a very different representation than that of the practitioner as undervalued, unfulfilled, and dependent on the dominant corporate-economic model of public relations. Ferre's (1993) research indicated that "most respondents (61%) said that their primary motivation for doing pro bono work was "conscience", 23% said "contact or exposure", and 16% said "other", suggesting that "individuals may be motivated by conscience, but large organizations are marked by collective self-interest" and, that "self-interest appears to be more powerful a motivator than sympathy" (Ferre, 1993, pp. 68-69).

In terms of a practitioners own activism, there are "many different actions, opportunities, and contexts [that] exist in organizations and society where practitioners can exhibit activist behaviour. As such activism is part of the whole that makes up practitioner behaviour and not the only identifying attribute" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 64). Those who see their role as boundary spanners "will inevitably be more in touch with the societal and cultural environment of organizations and will therefore be more susceptible to these changes than most others" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 77). In this boundary spanning process, Curtin (2016) argues that "activists internal to membership organizations may experience particular tensions and constraints in their roles" not simply because "they are committed to the organizational mission" but they believe that through the dominant coalition use of communications and strategies as control mechanisms that "the organization is not upholding that mission" and then "tensions result between organizational identity and member identity" (Curtin, 2016, p. 29). As such, "when there are tensors, a lack of information, an unequal distribution of power, or any other postmodern

moment activist practitioners have to become involved" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 132), and defy "structured ways of thinking, writing, and applying knowledge" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 14).

Practitioners pro bono work has many faces including working for free on behalf of a cause they believe in as "activist public relations practitioners" (Holtzhausen, 2007, 2012; Sommerfeldt, Kent, & Taylor, 2012). While this is not the case for all practitioners doing pro bono work, coupled with the statistic that "fewer than 5% of public relations practitioners had never dealt with activists" (L. Grunig, 1987, p. 57), the suggestion is that there is something about practitioners roles and "the agency of public relations practitioners" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 30) that has not been captured nor fully explored within public relations scholarship. In acknowledging that "much of what practitioners do is routine and takes place within a shared genre of discourse" the reality remains that "practitioners are not confronted on a daily basis with the very complex choices that trigger postmodern activist behaviour. But they should be aware when these opportunities arrive" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 64). In taking a postmodern stance, there is movement to replace the modernist "rational agency with communal rationality, empirical knowledge with social construction, and language as representation with language as action" (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004 p. 228). This appears to be yet again another example of what Berger (2005) identified as a "dissonance" (p. 23) in the field of public relations.

Increasingly public relations practitioners are called by scholars to place greater emphasis on understanding the publics' communicative needs by focusing on dialogic processes and creation of shared understanding" (McCown, 2007, pp. 52-53). This concept dates back to the "rhetorical heritage of public relations" where "ideas are contested, issues are examined, and decisions are made collaboratively" (Heath, 2000, p. 69), and in this way "rhetoric is the rationale of the suasory process of asserting and contesting propositions - perspectives of fact, value, policy, identification, and narrative" (Heath, 2000, p. 72). This distinction was highlighted at the turn of the millennium when Heath (2000) argued that "savvy public relations practitioners … will acknowledge in their

minds, planning, and communication that the statements they elect to use will stimulate or spark debate as to how the statements reflect values that foster or frustrate the growth of community" (Heath, 2000, p. 84). However, the concern remains that "the inscribed and interpretable effects (semiotic, practical, cultural, subjective, and collective) of written language" (Surma, 2006, pp. 43-44), remains outside of the public relations field.

Activism has been the impetus to a number of public relations practices like strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The ability to use communications strategically is central to the role that public relations practitioners and activists share. Public relations practitioners' use strategic communications as a "tool utilizing modern-day bureaucracies to communicate and maintain relationships with their key publics" which is squarely rooted in this corporate-economic or modernist model with "its primary bias towards serving corporate interests and managing relationships on behalf of corporate players" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 212). Issues management forms part of the foundational thought that is public relations today beginning with Edward Bernays who saw practitioners developing "strategies in communicative activities to neutralise opposition or build support for industry over the course of the twentieth century" (Seitel, 2011 as cited in Demetrious, 2013, p. 79). It is this "need to anticipate problematic situations and to engage in public debate with activists [that] gave rise to issue management and crisis communication" (Smith, 2005, p. 6). Scholarship in issues management was "created in the 1970s as a response strategy and early warning tool for dealing with the emergent and robust protest against business in the USA" (Heath, 2002, p. 209). This was the time when "activism was evolving in line with the rules of Saul Alinsky and his disciples, [and] issue management was developing from the pioneering work of W. Howard Chase, Ray Ewing and others" (Jaques, 2006, p. 410). Since this period issue management has "grown largely through public relations textbooks and communication journals" to where it is now "taught through courses in corporate communication in schools of business" however this approach as illustrated, denies "the obvious

application of formal issue management outside the corporate environment and ignores its symbiotic relationship with activism" (Jaques, 2006, p. 411). Issues management usefulness originates in developing "a body of knowledge and associated research techniques" where "issues management explains and improves organization - public communication and subsequent relationship building" (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p. 658). Issues management is an integral public relations function where more has been "written in this area of Canadian public relations than any other" (Likely, 2009, p. 666). In the most recent wave of public relations development as a profession, "the rules of activism and the academic/corporate principles of issue management appear to have increasingly begun to converge" (Jaques, 2006, p. 411). In this way and central to activism "is the identification, development, and resolution of issues, and an issues management perspective dominates most scholarly work on activism" and in that "issue communication is also essential to activist organization maintenance" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 400). For example, Demetrious (2013) notes how "the sub-division of "interest-based" and "issue-based" activism loosely corresponds to public relations notions of "organisational self-interest" and "issues management" (p. 36). The convergence of left/right ideologies within the dominant corporate-economic model of public relations has slowly permeated our culture and society as a whole, and is increasingly coming into conflict with the public's cultural, economic, and social lifeworld. This is because "many activist campaigns are focused around issues relating to products or services that radicals believe are dangerous or detrimental to humans and societal well-being" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 264). Corporate examples are numerous as part of the growing "sustainability landscape" (Gunther, 2015, February 9), where activists efforts including The Breast Cancer Fund have encouraged Revlon to change formulations and publish an ingredients policy; Nike to change its labour practices; and Kimberly Clark to stop making tissue paper from old growth forest following a five year Greenpeace campaign where today the corporation and activist group "continue to collaborate" (Gunther, 2015, February 9). In adopting an antagonist approach to

activists and activism, there is an argument to be made that "by communicating about issues, even when advocating on behalf of one party, public relations practitioners place issues on the agenda and invoke reaction and discussion," and that "it might even be that practitioners attract activism through the communication process and in this way stimulate democratic discourse" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 364). This democratic discourse is increasingly seen as a social responsibility and is defined as organizational management keeping "an eye on the effects of their decisions on society as well as on the organization" (Grunig, 1992, p. 17). The term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has now come to be generally understood to define "the attitudes and practices which distinguish those organizations which take heed of the wider consequences of their activities rather than being motivated by considerations of profit alone" (Meech, 1996, p. 66). Since CSR's development it has inspired some corporations to think about "the way in which they do business and are becoming more *honest*" and a "company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative is often used to demonstrate their ethical standpoint" however, it is vital "that companies do not see such CSR activity as merely a public relations exercise: it has to be part of the way in which the company does business" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 12). It has also come to represent how some unethical corporations have tried to "exploit CSR efforts with attempts to create the illusion of responsibility. Such corporations are charged with greenwashing (overblown claims of environmental efforts) and bluewashing (overstated claims of support for the UN Global Compact)" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 885). The paradox of public relations here is the promotion of irresponsible practices even as organisations make claims of responsibility (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 214), suggesting that there "needs to be a different conception of and approach to the development, function, and usability of social responsibility texts" (Surma, 2006, p. 58).

Public relations practitioner's use of strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) suggest that "if we can identify how practitioners come to know communication about an issue, we can compare that with how publics come to know

communication about the issue" and as seen in this review of activism, "the ultimate goal of researching practitioners' identities is to reduce the gaps between producers' and consumers' communicative power" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, p. 293). In this way both public relations professionals and activists are recognized as using public relations strategies and tactics to pursue two general goals: the first "is to influence public opinion and behaviour to rectify the situation they see as problematic", while the second is "to create and maintain organized, structured, and coordinated efforts. These goals are not that different from those of other organizations, which use public relations both to pursue their strategic goals and to maintain the organization" (Smith, 2005, p. 7).

There is little doubt that public relations is changing through this increased recognition of publics, as well as through new applied communications channels like the Internet and social media where "the question today is not so much a question of 'if' but 'how' to use social media in public relations" (Taylor & Kent, 2010, p. 207). In exploring "the role of public relations professionals in a post mass media society" Kent (2013) argues that as the field of public relations revives its conceptualization of "relationship", public relations professionals must also endeavour to "benefit democracy and society as a whole" (p. 337). The challenges identified within the practice of public relations of the 1990s remain and as indicated have been amplified within the parameters of the Excellence Theory and its dominant corporate-economic model where public relations practitioners in "meeting the challenge [still] require developing sensitivity to what activists are doing and what they plan to do. It will [still] require learning to identify activist publics before they become active and developing communication strategies to foster mutual understanding with them" (Anderson, 1992, p. 152). It is in this "latent potential of activists to become more prominent actors in public relations [that] legitimizes them as a focus for study" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 885).

Activism's Implications for Public Relations

Exploring activisms relationship to public relations history, theory, and practice, has revealed a number of challenges, omissions, and opportunities for further research based on the points where they intersect and articulate within public relations practice, its industry, and scholarship. This critical exploration began where public relations developed as a profession historically with the integration of activism into that narrative, to its critical development utilizing a variety of communication, cultural, social, and economic theories, through to where public relations practices were developed to control the masses by minimizing the impact of activists on organizations. Identifying the definition of public relations and activism including the activist, protest, social movements, and activist organizations has revealed the unique character of each. Examining activism in public relations has revealed an incomplete view of public relations theory, practice, and scholarship that often takes activist publics for granted and in doing so, creates the very conditions within which activism flourishes as individuals are marginalized and "Othered" in the name of growing profiteering. It has also illustrated the many shortfalls in our current approach to communications. This examination of activism and public relations now needs to address these challenges, omissions, and the opportunities that public relations scholars working on activism have identified for the public relations profession.

Within the various points of similarity and conflict, there is little recognition of activists communications efforts to create stronger organizations, more inclusive policies, and space where the public, those affected and impacted by the decisions of the public relations industry and practitioners can have their voices heard, and their identity realized outside of simply being a target for communications and an organizations marketing efforts. Each of these points illustrate where public relations has failed to capture a complete picture of the theory behind the action as well as who practices public relations, and how. In presenting the narrative within public relations development as a profession and originally conceived by Bernays (1923, 1928, 1955) as a function

of business, against current understandings where practitioners and scholars have illustrated the many challenges currently faced by the public relations industry. Public relations is increasingly complex and in many respects has failed to live up to its potential since the introduction of the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) twenty-five years ago. There are any number of reason why this has happened, and many of these challenges still exists.

First amongst scholars to recognize this disconnect between public relations associations, educational institutions, and practitioners was Berger (2005) who argued that "there is little evidence that the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators, or similar organizations have carried out or are interested in activist approaches" (p. 21). He suggests "devoting conference sessions to political astuteness, preparing case studies of public relations and power issues inside the dominant coalition, and establishing working groups to address such topics" (Berger, 2005, p. 22). This development is slowly emerging, where as an example, Lewis, O'Donovan, and Willett (2017) have authored a case study on the effect of environmental activism on the long-run market value of a company. Shapiro (2005) outlined how professionals and professional public relations associations should "provide the solution to these agency problems", citing the four key areas that create practitioner agency as: careful and competitive selection procedures; training and credentialing, licensing, recertification, and mandatory continuing education; establishing protocols or specify best practices to limit agent discretion; and creating ethics codes to curb the self-interest and opportunism of practitioners (p. 276). A related concern is raised by Ferre (1993) in calling attention to public relations practitioners pro bono work because the "PRSA's Code of Professional Standards for the Practice of Public Relations [does] not encourage pro bono work" (Ferre, 1993, p. 72). Johnston (2016) frames this problem in relation to critiques that amongst public relations associations globally there has been an overwhelming lack of interest in "public interest" (p. 16).

The more imperative critiques of the International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), and its Canadian counterpart the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) is their ability, or inability, to regulate its practice given that a "majority of senior practitioners practicing across Canada are not members of CPRS or IABC in Canada" (Likely, 2009, p. 659). On this point, Likely (2009) notes that in 2004 "Canada had 36,800 employed public relations and communication practitioners" where the industry saw "an increase of 56 percent since the mid-1990s (Canadian Government Job Futures 2007)" yet the number of practitioners seeking association membership "did not keep pace" (p. 659). This supports Ferre's (1993) previous assertion that "fewer than one in fifteen public relations practitioners belong to the PRSA," suggesting that the results of his survey "reflect the attitudes and behaviours of the membership of PRSA more than the practice of public relations as a whole" (Ferre, 1993, pp. 60-61). This is even more problematic when you consider Likely's (2009) figures from the Center for Media and Democracy (2007) that show "that less than 10 percent of public relations practitioners in the US belong to the PRSA" indicating a decrease and a levelling off of practitioners seeking membership from Ferre's (1993) earlier assertion. The one consistency between the PRSA and the CPRS is that when combined, the "IABC's 2007 total of Canadian members with those of CPRS would yield a total of 3,800 – putting the Canadian percentage very close to that of the American 10 percent" (Likely, 2009, p. 659). The limitations of practitioner membership in these professional associations suggest that their ability to have a meaningful impact on the broader industry and its pedagogy is limited, and as the work of Ferre (1993) and Berger (2005) suggests there is little intention to do so. However, this too is showing signs of change as the Canadian Public Relations Society is seeking "to provide an overview of some of the most notable trends affecting the public relations profession today, and to put forward hypotheses about future opportunities and challenges facing PR professionals, organizational communication and the profession itself" (Tisch, 2017, p. 1) by inquiring amongst members "how

the Canadian Public Relations Society can support Canada's PR and communication management professionals in seizing the compelling opportunities, and addressing [these] very real challenges" (Tisch, 2017, p. 5). While it is presented within the concept of public relations as a management function exclusively, the predominant thought amongst Canadian practitioners, is that it also reflects the "essential dialogues about the needs of public relations professionals as they seek to enhance their value to organizations, and to Canadian and global society" (Tisch, 2017, p. 6).

While the limits of the various public relations associations present a challenge to including activism as a core competency of public relations practitioners, another equally pressing challenge comes from public relations' pedagogy. Education forms the real foundation of public relations because it is where scholars and emerging practitioners exchange knowledge within the framework of the field. This framework has faced a number of criticisms including its focus as an organizational practice, and in how public relations uses writing and language without considering its impact on marginalized individuals and groups. Pedagogy, or the art and practice of teaching, in this case public relations and communications, is a central concern in understanding activism in relation to public relations practitioners and critical practices where "as sites of knowledge production, Western educational institutions are key players in the dissemination of the neoliberal logic across the globe" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 215). The inclusion of activism into the "metanarratives in public relations" presents a number of challenges beginning with who "sets the parameters of what is studied and how it is situated without questioning the underlying assumptions" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 187). A second challenge in developing an understanding of activism in relation to public relations practitioners and practices, is that "public relations is taught from a management perspective" where "students are taught to be submissive and docile corporate citizens" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 79). A third challenge is identified by Demetrious (2013) who suggests that "public relations education, generally, has overemphasized technical expertise" (p. 139).

There has also been a number of practical institutional challenges to including activism in growing field of public relations as activist scholarship demands universities, disciplines, and interdisciplinary fields like public relations change. Universities "are as committed as ever to internal academic hierarchies" where faculty members "hold different ranks" and "junior scholars compete for tenure" and in this way "departments are ranked by their research prestige" and "conformity is rewarded more than the attempt to make a distinctive contribution" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xv). The real challenge then in understanding activism in relation to public relations practitioners and practices is that "activist scholars confront patterns of academic organization and reproduction [that is] at odds with these foci" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xv). Because of these limits, it is important for teachers of communication, public relations, and media "to present students with opportunities to learn how communication processes are both structured and ideologically invested and can be used by organizations as a powerful instrument to further self-interest and in doing so can work to society's detriment or betterment" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 139). In this statement I am reminded of Ubuntu, an African concept of humanity towards others (Ess, 2014, p. 97) that involves "acquiring and practicing certain virtues, including a strong sense of interconnectedness with one's larger community and the states and fates of others in that community" (Ess, 2014, p. 251). This, however, is not a core competency nor theoretical focus within the current dominant coalition approach that utilizes a corporate-economic model exclusively but it is in postmodernism and postcolonialism and could be a core competency if we expand the public relations model to include all publics.

An equal challenge within these limits is that "there are no universal standards for public relations education in Canada" (Likely, 2009, p. 659), and that "educational institutions have yet to build a solid base of Canadian research in public relations and thus establish a unique body of Canadian public relations knowledge" (Likely, 2009, p. 662). This concerns has recently been reiterated where "despite the excellence of post-secondary public relations education in Canada,

there are gaps in continuing education for professionals after graduation" and while there is "considerable continuing education about the technical aspects of PR" there remains "not enough on the strategic functions, and on the management and use of data" (Tisch, 2017, p. 6). These concerns raised by Demetrious (2013), Dutta and Pal (2011), Holtzhausen (2012), and more specifically in Canada by Likely (2009) and Tisch (2017) suggests that there is an opportunity for a Canadian educational institution to advance research into publics and activists/activism as a research component and practice within public relations to advance the field with the development degrees in critical public relations and public communication through insightful scholarship and pedagogy.

The final challenge identified also stems from public relations use of language and narrative in creating context for audiences, publics, and the various stakeholders in how they are represented in text. Here representation is understood as the cultural use language to produce meaning (Hall, 1997, p. 61). In utilizing the dominant coalition approach from the corporate-economic model exclusively the result is a problematic fiction that is creatively related to a public, but does not represent that public. This is not new for the practice of public relations nor the practice of activism as Warner (2002) argues, the idea of authorizing fiction as propaganda "had been part of the public strategy of the temperance movement since 1836, when the second convention of the American Temperance Union, in Saratoga, formally voted to endorse fiction and other 'products of fancy' as public-sphere instruments" (p. 276). However, increasingly public relations scholars are presenting the idea of a storied narrativity as mediating ones idea of self in how we understand discourse, where "the self is half somebody else's" (Habermas, 2003, as cited by LeCoure and Mills, 2008, p. 7), much like in Ubuntu, because discourse is always situated in a specific context and the discursive condition is always "temporary" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 237). Here, reminiscent of Dewey (1934/1980), "experience" is constituted through narratives; people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some

way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives in their daily lives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives (Somers & Gibson, 1993, pp. 38-39). Practitioners and scholars are both coming to realize that "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (Somers & Gibson, 1993, pp. 58-59).

Within this narrative concept of the social world, public relations in addressing a generic public or more specifically omitting a serious reflection of identity, representation, and the emotional response to organizational messaging and as indicated may be creating the very conditions which inflame activism because they are ill informed and ill prepared for negative reactions by specific publics to a poorly formed organizational narrative. Identity is political and constructed from socially constructed meanings and practices that "provide a cultural context for planning, empowering, executing, and evaluating individual and collective participation. Identity … is not simply an essentialist category but rather is a kinetic site for social and political action" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 452). In this way then, identity politics movements like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More "are political because they involve refusing, diminishing or displacing identities others wish to recognize in individuals" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 21). This argument suggest that "where a particular category of identity has been repressed, delegitimated or devalued in dominant discourses, a vital response may be to claim value for all those labeled by this category, thus implicitly invoking it in an essentialist way" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 17). This repression, in part constructed through the dominant corporate-economic messaging developed during the first and second wave of public relations development as a practice and industry by Bernays (1923, 1928, 1955), and its expansion to a field of study as solidified by Grunig (1992), has led to an understanding amongst public relations scholars and activists that "militant acts fulfill the

organizational goal of building identity" and as such, "recasting members' identities is a vital goal" (Derville, 2005, p. 530). The challenge for public relations in exploring identity further in relations to publics, the public interest, and social movements generally within the currently defined field is that it involves "deep psychological issues (at the microlevel) that are acted out at the societal level (at the macrolevel). Public relations practices are largely focused at the meso- or organizational level" whereas in the real world activist "organizations do not represent social movements the way dominant coalitions in corporations represent investors" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 13). This has led to an understanding amongst aesthetic theorist and increasingly public relations scholars that "because self and other are mutually constitutive, identification and objectification go hand in hand" whereas "otherness is as much about the construction of oneself, as it is about creating distance" and this "sense of distance is generally made, manufactured, and then treated as found, discovered, as if, in other words, it was a natural object rather than a social construction" (Jordanova, 2013, p. 250).

Since the millennial turn of 2000 public relations scholars have begun to look for alternatives to the current dominant corporate-economic model as expressed through the Excellence Theory with the introduction of an "intersectional approach to publics that complements current segmentation strategies with publics…. to better understand the sociopolitical contexts of public relations communication relationships that lead to the construction of identities" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, 279). There is a belief that within the current formation of the field of public relations, that "existing stakeholder definitions inhibit us from really understanding and studying our influence on society" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 189) because of the traditional paradigm of segmenting a 'publics' identity into discrete demographics has limited "our understanding of how multiple identities shape publics' communication behaviours" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, p. 284). Vardeman-Winter, et al. (2013) "assert that publics have social *identities* – rather than one *identity* as comprised of different facets" (p. 280). They identify

three characteristics that explain intersectionality: "*identity interdependence, reliance on sociological* other*ing* and *spatial and temporal contextuality*" (Vardeman-Winter, et. al., 2013, p. 285). There is also an increase in critical scholarship that is illuminated by intersectionality as a crisis of representation "over who has what power in public relations, based on their identities and how these identities are situated in sociological contexts" (Vardeman-Winter, et. al., 2013, p. 296). There is an increasing understanding that "through the use of representational images, such as brands" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 142) that our representations tend to "arouse an enthusiasm and mood swing not necessarily inspired by the things themselves" (Jameson, 1995, p. x). For the public this "interplay of production and consumption creates identities, which are often multiple, conflicting, and may be assumed or imposed, subject to relative power in any given context" (Curtin & Gaither, 2005 as cited in Curtin, 2016, p. 21). For theoreticians and practitioners "research which addresses the social-psychological outcomes of collective action and links these to identities, norms, intentions, and support for social change in bystanders, protagonists, and opponents has a great deal of interest" (Louis, 2009, p. 727).

Today, the "emphasis has shifted from a concern with representation as an objectifying process which subordinates the 'Other', towards an investigation of the significance of representation in the formation of multiple, negotiated subjectivities, and social identities" (Hallam & Street, 2013, p. 4). This concern with representations of identity in public relations messaging and its impact on publics is gaining momentum amongst public relations scholars and recognized elsewhere for example, when Gerbaudo (2012) argues that "there appears to be something even more compelling" (p. 156) where "influential Facebook admins and activist tweeps [or followers] have played a crucial role in setting the scene for the movements' gatherings in public spaces, by constructing common identifications and accumulating or triggering an emotional impulse towards public assembly" (p. 13). This something "even more compelling" or "emotional impulse" was first identified over a century ago in the recognition that "it entails the symbolic construction of a

sense of togetherness and the fuelling of an *emotional tension* extending from distant mediated connections to the 'effervescence' of physical proximity" (Durkheim, 1912/1965, p. 162). While this connection between identity and emotions has long been established, the challenge remains that the "role of emotions has been a highly neglected topic in social movement studies" (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001 as cited in Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 9).

These emotional responses often arise "in response to critical incidents" (Opp, 1988, p. 854). These critical incidents range from "undeserved suffering to malicious or selfish acts by clearly identifiable persons or groups" that are represented as malicious, selfishness, and greed by corporations, government agencies, or specifiable groups wherever the antagonist's indifference may be sufficient to produce "the emotional component of an injustice" (Gamson, 1995, p. 91). The sense of togetherness of collective action and the emotional responses that creates them is referred to as "an *affective* aspect, the emotional reactions of participants, and an aspect of political *agency*. In the affective aspect of subjectivity, the action research process creates opportunities for feelings to be made accessible and explored" and it is "through these interactions, new forms of practical consciousness emerge" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 571). In actively caring for distant "Others" Milligan and Wiles (2010) argue that, "values from an individual's personal emotional relationships become applied to more spatially distant social relationships (and vice versa) as a way of thinking ethically and acting responsibly in an increasingly connected world", and that in this way, "caring for and about socially and spatially distant others can be seen as a form of citizenship" (pp. 742-744). Recent research from the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) has begun to examine the purpose of internal communication as establishing "employees' deeper-level emotional connection with the organization" where "the organization's emotional culture characterized by joy, happiness, excitement, and compassionate love, affection, and warmth, can meet employees' psychological need for mutual respect, care, connection, and reliance on one another in the organization" (Men, 2017, July 24). Here the parallels with activism and public

relations begin to come together. Just as managers are expected to create a positive emotional culture for employees in their messaging to drive the organization forward, activist social media messages and blog posts have formed channels of information. These "crucial *emotional conduits* through which organisers have condensed individual sentiments of indignation, anger, pride, and a sense of shared victimhood and transformed them into political passions driving the process of mobilization" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 14). Through Facebook, Twitter and other social media, these "forms of communication have contributed in creating a contagious *emotional attraction* around mass sit-ins to sustain participation after the movement's landing in public space" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 161). These social medias then become a form of "C3 (Command, Control and Communications) devices of contemporary social movements, bestowing them with a technological edge over a sluggish state apparatus" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 161). This is "an approach that places communication at the core of conflict resolution" (Albert, 2009, p. 129).

Identity, representation, and emotion responses all offer new opportunities to expand the boundaries of public relations research and theoretical development, as does advancements in social media and digital technologies. However, social media and digital technologies research by public relations scholars exploring activism argue that meaningful components are being ignored so rather than consider these communications channels as opportunities, they remain a challenge if not an outright omission. The challenge, as has been demonstrated, is eloquently expressed by Tisch (2017) who argues that "most organizations use communication technology to *improve amplification*, not to *improve listening…*. organizational-public communication is overwhelmingly comprised of organizational *speaking* to disseminate organizations' messages using a *transmissional* or broadcast model" (Tisch, 2017, pp. 1-2). For the public relations practitioner then the Internet has reproduced "the dynamics of secession, exclusion, and segmentation" of contemporary societies and exacerbated the separation between the "information rich" and the "information-poor" (Gitlin, 1998, p. 172 as cited in Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 34). This is

further exemplified statistically where "as of 2013, it was estimated that more than 60% of global citizens were not Internet users (International Telecommunications Union, 2013), a figure missing from social media and public relations literature" and where this "dystopian view of the Internet reveals that emancipatory and democratizing narratives of social media can be naïve and misleading" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 41). Given this dichotomy between social media's potential and reality, Ciszek (2016) argues that "rather than trying to manage publics and control the conversation, practitioners can use social media as a space to harvest knowledge of multiple and competing perspectives that arise from difference" that can then be used "to inform organizational practices and policies and develop short-term and long-term strategies" (p. 318).

There is also an understanding amongst scholars pursuing activism studies within public relations that "Internet activism can be divided into pre- and post-social media stages" and that "activists have been at the forefront of integrating Internet communication channels into public relations efforts" (Coombs & Holladay, 2013, p. 83) during both stages. Coombs and Holladay (2013) argue that the very conservative "American Family Association (AFA) offers an excellent example of how activists utilized the Internet prior to the explosion of social media … with the threat of boycotts and the resultant negative publicity" (p. 83); in the post-social media era two activists groups pressured clothier Versace "to stop the use of sandblasting" using the online petition site Change.org (p. 84). However, here too there are significant challenges for participants where Facebook "activists have had to face repeated censorship from this corporate service, such as the closing of pages and accounts" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 147). There is also a belief that as activism continues to grow and develop at times into civil unrest that social media can create serious attendant risks for activists, "given the increased possibilities for monitoring by state security apparatus" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 8). This post-social media stage in the development of public relations will continue to present challenges to public relations communications through the ongoing introduction of new social medias, the development of specialized social media

departments outside of public relations, and the ongoing applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the public relations function. Practitioners and scholars both understanding that "these new media are changing the way public relations is practiced" (Wright & Hinson, 2015, p. 8), and while many practitioners believe that digital and social media communications "should be the responsibility of communications and public relations, the emergence of digital and/or social media departments has lowered that percentage" (Wright & Hinson, 2015, p. 8). With questions remaining around the role of public relations in practice and as a subject of academic rigour this should be worrying to both. The pressures of digital media communications increasingly bring public relations and activism into closer proximity as "public relations professionals will need to become experts in 'social physics' – the science of using mathematical tools inspired by physics to understand the behaviour of crowds" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4). This lack of understanding and pedagogy around these emerging challenges to the profession is reflected in the public relations industry's lack of a "culture of research and data" that leaves public relations budgets "often starved of resources for research" and calls for the public relations industry in Canada to "transforming itself into a blend of art and science – in the way we define the profession, describe its value, develop curricula for academic programs, and recruit people into academic programs and workplaces" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4).

More broadly in seeking "an alternative organisational communicative mode to public relations" the view amongst practitioners and scholars alike is increasingly one where "activism has changed direction, so has public relations" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 129). This has led to a renewed called for a public communication that "contributes to understanding patterns of public discourse used by groups to improve their society through innovation" and "moves us closer to comprehension of how public communication functions in a nation undergoing change" (Smith & Windes, 1975, p. 152). It has also formed part of the critique of the Excellence Theory where Karlberg (1996) argued that "public communication skills and resources must be extended to all

segments of society if communicative symmetry is to be realized" (p. 273). Public communication answers Holtzhausen's (2012) call to get "involved in our local communities with local activist groups using our knowledge of and expertise with public communication to bring about change" noting that through our work in "capitalist institutions, we are the people who can and should question the devastation wrought on people and the environment in the name of profit" and in doing so "finally shed the mantle of spin doctors, manipulators, persuaders, and empty heads who are blind servants of those in power" (p. xvi). This may already be the reality for many practitioners given that eighty-seven per cent of independent and agency public relations practitioners surveyed by Ferre (1993) responded that "they did pro bono work in 1990" (p. 61). The question remains is this still the situation today, and if so what does it mean and say about public relations practitioners and the public relation industry?

Public communications represents a different way to approach public relations outside of the dominant corporate-economic model of organizational communications that currently dominates the public relations industry and its pedagogy. Public communication is defined as "a dynamically interactive values-based and holistic approach that asks what each separate organisation communicative practise adds up to, from a socio-political perspective; and how are "truths" and "self-interest" defined and acted on" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 131). The defining characteristics of public communication are openness to ideas; a commitment, to truthfulness; the development of depth of discussion in public debate; the tendency to explain choices facing the public, rather than engage in participation; a long-term commitment to the group's objectives and the ability to maintain a critical distance from their subjectivities (Demetrious, 2013, pp. 136-137). Moreover, "it can be used by those in business and by activists and represents an important reorientation towards sustainability and ethics in the communicative fields" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 130) and in this way, "public communication is not penetrated by authority and the public remains independent in its decision-making" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 138).

This is because "*it is communication that organises, rather than organization that communicates*. As a corollary, 'communicators' also automatically become 'organisers', given the influence they can have through their communications on the unfolding of collective action" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 139). In this way, an "activist practice invites everybody to the discussion table and does not privilege management's view over those of stakeholders. They are comfortable in the boardroom as in the township or housing project" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 238), and will be able to "use the insights of postmodern theory and other critical discourses to develop new theories and politics to meet the challenges of the current decade and next century" (Best & Keller, 1991, p. xi). For Best and Keller (1991) the next century would see Dozier and Lauzen (2000) calling for "a conscious uncoupling of the intellectual agenda from the day-to-day thoughts, actions, and pre-occupations of practitioners" (p. 4) and argue that a critical reflection is necessary if public relations is to evolve as an intellectual domain. At the same time Holtzhausen (2000) was arguing that a "postmodern analysis of public relations offers a new critical approach to public relations theory and practice and suggests that public relations should be freed from its narrow definition as organizational communication management" (p. 93). These concepts date back to the start of the second wave of public relations development when Lazarsfeld (1941) argued that "the general role of our media of communication in the present social system should be studied" (p. 9). However, in our contemporary times, "the most frequent and publicly visible or publicly accessible counters to corporate public relations narratives are those produced by activist organisations, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International" (Surma, 2006, p. 49), not critical public relations theorists or public intellectuals. Likewise, the term "public intellectual" has changed to "mean a quasi-journalistic pundit with mass following" whereas "older conceptions – such as that of the intellectual as the conscience of the age, adhering to convictions or historical memory whether anyone listened or not" (Warner, 2002, pp. 143-144). Yet while both constructions of "public intellectual" are needed, it remains "one area where public relations scholars are lacking"

(Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 198). As Lazarsfeld (1941) argued "if there is any general rule of thumb in intellectual work it should be the advice never to pass over criticism without exhausting all the constructive possibilities, which might be implied in another person's point of view" (p. 16).

These calls within the public relations profession for the development of an intellectual domain for public relations scholarship and practitioners to act as public intellectuals has not materialized fully in any area of public relations practice, theory, and pedagogy. In fact as Kim and Sriramesh (2009) state, "we do not know of any research that has investigated the impact of culture on activism and linked it to public relations" (p. 89). This lack of development has occurred during the same period as the rise of digital and social media and increasingly, "the application of chaos and complexity theory to public relations practice" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 372), where "it is more important than in any other period for public relations practitioners to ensure grassroots democracy and activism in their organizations and society, to speak out about the unjust use of power, and to use strategies to resist power" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 196). This has led to a renewed call for the development of a critical public relations where "critical theory addresses nuances of activism and public relations and provides new ways to conceptualize activism that serve to enhance the theoretical and empirical domains of public relations in ways that functionalist approaches cannot" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 451).

Public relations scholars increasingly have illustrated the role of the activist and activism within public relations under the dominant paradigm of Excellence Theory. The state of the field is one where "critical public relations has been on the fringe of the field because it asks the tough questions about power, persuasion, and activism that the orthodoxy of public relations chooses to ignore" and that activism "seems to be the key to taking that next step in advancing the discussion of critical ideas in public relations away from the fringe and moving toward mainstream" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, pp. 880-884). In this respect, "critique is not the same thing as just objecting to the way things are; intellectual criticism is not mere complaining" but rather "is an effort to

understand how things could be different and why existing frameworks of knowledge do not recognize all the actual possibilities" as well as "an orientation to the world that combines the efforts to understand why it is as it is (the more conventional domain of science) and how it could be otherwise (the more conventional domain of action)" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xxv). In this way then, "critical action research expresses a commitment to bring together broad social analysis – the self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way in which language is used, organization and power in a local situation, and action to improve things" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 560). In their original call for the development of public relations intellectual domain, Dozier and Lauzen (2000) identified four ways that critical theory informs public relations scholarship: first, critical theory introduces new concepts that contribute to theory; second, critical theory forces a shift away from the organizational level of analysis and toward both the societal and the individual levels of analysis; third, critical theory highlights the moral and ethical contradictions in public relations practices; and, fourth, critical theory helps make sensible the unreasonable behaviour of activists and activist organizations joined to social movements (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, pp. 18-19).

This movement within public relations scholarship has led to the introduction of postmodern, postcolonial, and aesthetic theorists and theories into the field of public relations with suggestions that "an aesthetic view of knowledge is vital for engaged communication scholarship" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 33). Here "the theoretical and practical incorporation of aesthetic rationalities in engaged scholarship [create the] logics of possibility that cultivate individuals' capacity to imagine otherwise" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 34). Aesthetics corresponds to my own scholarly foundation and formation, and has provided the gateway to formal activism in my own public relations practice in addressing social injustices, for example, in advocating for gay rights or for the health and safety of my fellow workers in a workplace with inadequate ventilation. Aesthetics has inspired my artistic practice and may in fact be what drew me to activism and public relations in the first place, where a "large part of the richness of activist research comes precisely

from humble, forthright engagement with these ethical-political contradictions in our work" (Hale, 2008, p. 23). There is increasingly an understanding amongst public relations scholars that "public relations is about persuasion rather using the veneer of public relations as information" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 881) because of critical public relations scholarship. Like activism, critical theory has deep roots in public relations and has since Festinger (1957) introduced his theory of cognitive dissonance sixty years ago and as Mosco (2012) argues, "it is not an exaggeration to conclude that the Marx of political economy and cultural studies form pillars of critical communications study" (p. 571). If the field and profession of public relations are to actualize their full potential through practitioners and scholars then there needs to be an understanding that "activism can bring more voices into the dialogue and advance the quality of civil society" and to achieve this, critical public relations offers an "emerging and contemporary theoretical framework within the field that argues for alternative approaches to the practice of public relations" (Demetrious, 2008, p. 2).

This exploration of activism in public relations has also revealed that as "activist behaviour becomes more like traditional organizations as their organizational structure develops and integrates into existing economic, social, and governmental systems" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 351), as practitioners, theoretical scholars, and teachers of public relations we must ask ourselves who is "empowered to speak" and the answer "unfolds in large part in the moment of identity and how identities were created (production), packaged (representation), and shaped by cultural norms (representation)" (Curtin, 2016, p. 26). As a category, research has also indicated that activists may include public relations practitioners and corporate public relations professionals who may be involved in activist causes and engaged in creating discourses by which "those with vested interests seek to shape organizational or public policy" (Roper, 2011, p. 71), and where both are "producers and consumers of those competing discourses" (Curtin, 2016, p. 30). It has also recognized that "activists question hegemonic meaning, and in this process think differently, often

cutting through established constructed objects and reconstructing new objects. This explains their innovation and originality" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 146). Twenty-five years ago Anderson (1992) recognized that successful public relations practitioners "will require developing sensitivity to what activists are doing and what they plan to do. It will require learning to identify activist publics before they become active and developing communication strategies to foster mutual understanding with them" (p. 152). Research has shown a similar understanding of social movements as being "simply 'politics by other means' [and] often times the only means open to relatively powerless challenging groups" (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988, p. 699). It has revealed that "movements can occur only where the legitimacy and efficacy of group action designed to change the environment are recognized" (Smith & Windes, 1975, p. 145) by both the offending organization and relative publics. It has shown that "people affiliate with groups for a variety of reasons, but they are not about to do so if the group's identity is incompatible with their image of themselves" (Friedman & McAdams, 1992, p. 164). It has also illustrated the gap in time between when the concept of activism was presented as valuable to public relations in the Excellence Theory (1992) to where it is increasingly being recognized as "providing occasions for new knowledge creation, challenges to received wisdom, and new ways of thinking" (Calhoun, 2008, p. xxv).

In calling for activism to be included in public relations history, theory, and practice, research has also revealed a number of areas requiring further investigation as well as the need to measure our public relations messaging and campaigns for their impact on both targeted and casual observers of those messages to avoid othering and marginalization as well as their broader cultural and social impacts on publics and communities. Increasingly amongst organizational practitioners, consulting practitioners, and scholars there is an understanding that "evaluation enables us to make qualitative and lexical distinctions among the infinite variety of events, experiences, characters, institutional promises, and social factors that impinge our lives" (Somers & Gibson, 1993, p. 60).

While "ethical scrutiny in public relations … tends to focus on the activities of an offending organization or an individual practitioner" this examination also draws attention to "the collective impact of normatively accepting public relations activities in social terms" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 92). Traditionally "we engage publics to minimize their impact on the organization in particular" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 119), and as such, "activism emphasizes the importance of studying the impact of organizational environments on [the] public relations practice" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 358). From a public relations standpoint, "problematic situations arise when people perceive some adverse impact of an institutions actions or policies" (Smith, 2005, p. 5) and in this manner, the "manufacturing of 'words' by public relations practitioners and the effects of these words need to be understood beyond marketplace imperatives" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 3). Here, the "most common metrics of communication remain overwhelmingly geared toward evaluating the results of outbound communication, often meaning the performance of content: impressions counts and audience reach; content analysis; and shifts in awareness, understanding, and support" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4).

From the turn of the millennium, this third wave of public relations development as a profession has seen "activism brought to bear through governmental policy" to where it has had a "substantial impact on the values of society" through "multiple voices, multiple stakeholders, and multiple publics" (Heath, 2000, p. 82). Today, research into the impact of activism on public relations practice "has made major contributions to the development of public relations theory, because it focuses the attention of scholars on a number of factors to consider when evaluating successful public relations practices" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 357). For example, corporate social responsibility (CSR) "argues that organizations should have a positive net effect on society and consider not only their financial impact but also their environmental and social impacts on the world" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 884), as seen through the International Communication

Association (ICA)'s 2008 conference theme, *Communicating for Social Impact* (Buzzanell, 2009, p. vii).

Within public relations scholarship, suggestions for future or further research is extensive – the items left unexplored by scholars and practitioners could be an investigation unto itself, much like this exploration of activism in relation to public relations. There is a perception amongst some public relations scholars that because of the Excellence Theory's limitations that the field of "public relations has been on its own snipe hunt trying to validate some of its most well-known theories" and that the disconnect identified by public relations scholars "between public relations researchers and practitioners is really where we must focus our future energies" (Sommerfeldt, Kent, & Taylor, 2012, p. 311). Likewise, there is a belief that "public relations scholars and practitioners should also try harder to account for emotions … taking seriously the implications that nonrational debate has for organizations and publics" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 40). Researching activist campaigns like those by Greenpeace or Canada's indigenous population involvement in the Idle No More campaign creates an "opportunity to explore the challenges faced by marginalized groups and voices … in trying to change public policy, opinion, and dominant social, cultural, and or/economic practices" (Weaver, 2014, p. 110). This echoes the call by a number of other scholars including Gerbaudo (2012) for "the invention of new ways to make sense of the process by which social movements are triggered and guided" (p. 166) because the "distal role of collective action in shaping public opinion, and the secondary role of public opinion as a mediator of these effects, is not typically examined" (Louis, 2009, p. 738). This line of research would allow for more systematic examination of "routine" and "normative" collective action compared to "disruptive" and "antinormative" actions, "in order to identify the attributes and processes that trigger or mediate the relationship between particular forms of collective action" (Louis, 2009, p. 739). These new forms of collective action today are taking place in hyperspace through digital technologies and over an ever increasing array of social media where "new forms

of mobilization emerge almost daily as technology grows at an exponential pace - heightening the importance for researchers to understand how activists are gaining support and building relationships via new technologies" (Sommerfeldt, 2013, p. 364) and by asking should social media theory in public relations be repositioned to include people who have been disenfranchised by the Internet revolution, and why" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 42), given social medias necessary ties to economic affordability amongst specific publics. On the flip side, "research in public relations should explore how narrowly searching for consensus-driven relationships on social media can marginalize potentially valuable dissenting voices, and ask how that process can practically be avoided (or if it even should be)" (Kennedy & Sommerfeldt, 2015, p. 38).

These technological advances may represent the greatest challenge to public relations ongoing development as a profession as illustrated with "the emergence of digital and/or social media departments" (Wright & Hinson, 2015, p. 8) and the belief amongst some that "the rise of artificial intelligence may endanger the 'technical specialist' streams of public relations – a development that could lead to fewer jobs that fit even the broadest definitions of public relations" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4). As such, the goal is "to expand the scale and scope of the strategic role" in the professional development and practices of public relations "to more closely resemble that of the management consultant, albeit with an orientation toward the impact of relationships, reputation and communication on the business" (Tisch, 2017, pp. 4-5). There is a growing belief amongst public relations scholars engaged with activism that this "new approach has important ramifications for the teaching and practice of public relations, and hence for activism, government, and business" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 138). Here a "just practice is based on allowing stakeholders to participate in the *game of the just* and allowing them to speak for themselves" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 44).

As this examination of activism and public relations has indicated, "contemporary scholars grapple afresh with how an artistic mindset can enable scholarship to be more responsive to

external stakeholders' interests and needs as well as broader economic and institutional contexts" (Hater, et al, 2009, p. 40). While at the same time "there is a tremendous need, and a great opportunity, for communication scholars and practitioners to address many critical issues" (Albert, 2009, p. 138). In exploring activism in relation to public relations history, theory, and practice I find a concurrence with Albert (2009) who suggests that "research on communication and communicative behaviours could be carried out at different levels of analyses and also at cross-cutting levels: interpersonal, group, intracultural, intercultural, national, and international" (p. 136).

Summary & Comments

This study of activism in public relations scholarship in identifying the current understandings of public relations practitioners, the public relations industry, and scholarship in public relations as it relates to its definition, history, theory, and practice has identified a number of key intersections that facilitate and support the call for the development of a critical branch of public relations that includes a call for practitioners to engage as public intellectuals, the development of a public communication separate and equal to the current configurations as organizational communications, and to achieve this a greater reflexivity and expansion of the boundaries of public relations as it has been historically formed. This study identified professional associations, the approach to pedagogy, and practitioners' use of language and writing as impediments to the field of public relations growth into a more socially and culturally responsible industry in the broader public's view. My research suggests that an alternative construction of public relations founding ideologies through activism opens up new possibilities that imagines a broader definition of public relations and the public relations industry. As has been argued, there is a critical danger with "a preoccupation with a particular level of analysis" and that "activism and activist publics should be considered anew" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 6), because as currently situated, public relations practitioners are "inadequately trained and ill-situated to prescribe the scholarly agenda in the intellectual domain of public relations" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 20).

From the first instances of using mediated communications for an activist purpose by Martin Luther in 1517, to the introduction of Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory, public relations as a profession has relegated activism to its margins to its detriment as Ciszek (2015, p. 453) argues. This study has begun to illustrate that public relations as a field of endeavour with multiple theories and practices, is still in its infancy as a profession, an industry, and topic of academic study and because of this, activism is of interest "to those who practice, study, and critique public

relations" (Johnston, 2016, p. 24). It has shown, through current scholarship, that there exists multiple views within the public relations industry to the way it is theoretically conceived, practiced, and taught in the socio-cultural real world.

In defining the terms of this study as practice, the industry, and scholarship of public relations in relation to the points where these understandings intersect with activism, I am drawn to Edwards' (2011) definition of public relations as "flow rather than [as an] organizational function that can accommodate the range of research encompassed by these continua, thereby facilitating greater unity, inclusivity and, I would hope, dialogue in the field" (p. 7). Prior to including activism into this equation or discussion, Edwards' (2011) assertion made little sense given that I, like many practitioners, viewed public relations communication efforts more realistically as asymmetrical where "most organizations use communication technology to *improve amplification*, not to *improve listening*" (Tisch, 2017, pp. 1-2). Counter to this assertion is activisms contribution "to understanding patterns of public discourse used by groups to improve their society through innovation" (Smith & Windes, 1975, p. 152). This focus on social innovation through activism, in my opinion, then realizes public relations full potential as dialogue or flow between activist publics and an organizations publics or simple between two groups of publics, and that recognizes activism as "a legitimate method of communication" (L. Grunig, 1992, p. 527).

Research drawn from current public relations scholarship has indicated four types of activist – internal, external, policy activists, and the emerging area of digital activism. In contesting the dominate corporate-economic model or exhibiting various forms of protest in the public sphere, activism "creates a 'disruptive space', where the empathetic emotions of self-care and self-sacrifice and their expression challenges and resist dominant individualist, competitive, rationalist ideologies" (Weaver, 2014, p. 112) of the corporate-economic sphere. Here, activists are "persons with high ethical and moral standards" (Stewart, 1999, p. 96), and are "engaged in struggles across a range of different areas, across different countries and against different actors: governments,

world organizations, individuals, and, on occasion, other activist groups" (Thompson & John, 2003, p. 5), and in this way, the "inner strength and clear vison of what is the right thing to do is a core competency of the activist" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 199). Activism calls for a return of integrity to business, government, and the public relations industry by expanding our definitions and knowledge of public relations practices in our lived world. Without this effort and understanding of the need for growth in public relations, those marginalized and labelled "Other" will have no other recourse than to become active with increasing civil disobedience as a last resort. The challenge remains within the current practice and definition of the public relations industry that diversity amongst members and distinguishing activist participants from nonparticipants, remains extremely difficult.

The first wave of public relations development as a practice, industry, and field of scholarship illustrates that while activists were part of "the creation of U.S. public relations, [they] are not the originators of U.S. public relations" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012b, p. 384). Here the ideas that competed with Bernays (1923, 1928), Lasswell (1934, 1938), Lippmann (1922), and Martin (1920), like those of Dewey (1910, 1916, 1927, 1934, 1935), and Durkheim (1912, 1957), have been pushed to the margins of public relations discourse and are now considered "fringe public relations" in relation to "the existing public relations orthodoxy" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 881). This dominance is what needs addressing, because it has led to an overarching ideology where the "absence of a collective identity is assumed" (Gamson, 1992, p. 57), and the distinction between individual and group interests is blurred. As an alternative, the early theoretical works of Althusser (1971), Baudrillard (1975), Bourdieu (1977), and Foucault (1973, 1977) began addressing these developments over the second wave of public relations development, with the later scholarship of Bourgois (2006), Derrida (1981), Deleuze & Guattari (1983), Habermas (1984, 1987), Jameson (1995), and Lyotard (1984, 1988) also finding their way into public relations theory as aesthetics through the current resurgent interest in contemporary society's identify-based

activism. This second wave in the development of public relations as a profession also saw the introduction of activisms role in public relations through the efforts of Olson (1965, 1971), Freire (1970), and Alinsky (1972) to establish a theoretical grounding for activism in the public relations industry. However, as illustrated, their push for greater equality and economic certainty for the marginalized would result in the greatest push back in history during the following decade as this absence of a collective identity would become institutionalized in the de-regulations efforts of globalization and securely anchored within the field of public relations through the Excellence Theory as well as criticisms and demands that public relations go beyond "the status quo" (Johnston, 2016, Acknowledgements).

In relation to public relations theoretical foundation, it began during the second wave of public relations development with Lazarsfeld's (1941) original efforts to incorporate critical theory into the study of media, followed by Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance that today is recognized as the theoretical foundation of public relations, to the discrepancies observed between the Excellence Theory and its use in commercial practice, the inclusion of the political nature of public relations, and the increasing complexity in contemporary society have all led to a breakdown or what Berger (2005) identified as this "dissonance in the practice" (p. 23), and because of this there is a "need for an alternative approach to public relations" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 268). Public relations theoretical, metatheoretical, and methodological development in the third wave of public relations illustrates the unique characteristics of public relations where increasingly the focus is on meaning-making as it evolves within mediated communication (Buzzanell, 2009, p. viii). Within this theoretical construction, "communicative practices are constituted at the intersections of culture, structure, and agency" and their interplay offers a theoretical and empirical opening "to bring about change through the presence of those voices that have historically been written over, written about, stripped of agency, and targeted through interventions" and in this way the theorization of public relations-as-resistance opens up the possibilities of social change to the

"structures of inequality and oppression that create and sustain the margins" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, pp. 218-219). Here postmodern and postcolonial theories "encourage research that makes space for otherwise ignored voices" (Edwards, 2011, p. 19), by calling on public relations practitioners to "continuously questions one's privilege and the ways in which this privilege could close off possibilities for meaningful dialogue and structural transformation" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, p. 221). This call exposes public relations' use of language as a mechanism of control suggesting that "language should be treated with the utmost respect" and in turn that "the way public relations uses language should be scrutinized for its social effects" (Christians, 1997, p. 13).

In this third wave of public relations development, "being aesthetic in the pursuit of knowledge means to create new knowledge, not merely building on what has previously been done and trying to confirm those previous findings" and in doing so, recovering "one's own identity and history by becoming aware how that identity has been infiltrated by dominant social paradigms and norms" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 198). These "aesthetic experiences invite us to stretch our imagination to grasp events befalling another individual and craft previously unimagined possibilities ... to move beyond the boundaries of our own bodies and truths, appreciate others' experiences, and interrupt automatic patterns" (Hater, et al, 2009, p. 36). Increasingly public relations scholars are drawing on Dewey's (1934/1980) aesthetic process, and second wave aesthetic theorist including Althusser (1971), Baudrillard (1975, 1981, 1983, 1984, 1987, 1994), Bourdieu (1977), Bourgois (2006), Derrida (1981), Deleuze & Guattari (1983), Foucault (1973, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1984), Habermas (1984, 1987), Jameson (1995), and Lyotard (1984, 1988), as well as others "to disrupt the neocolonial interests of transnational hegemony by taking an activist stance in our articulations of knowledge" (Dutta & Pal, 2011, pp. 196-199). This research into the relationship between activism and public relations has shown that increasingly, the use of these and other complex theories like intersectionality "helps researchers and practitioners to better

understand the sociopolitical contexts of public relations communication relationships" (Vardeman-Winter, et al., 2013, p. 279).

In examining activism and its relationship to the practice of public relations, that is the role that public relations practitioners play daily, scholarship reveals three central components of the functionalist dominant corporate–economic model of public relations as a management process, a control mechanism, and a set of technical skills with activism playing a central role in the development of strategic communications, issues management, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs amongst others. Within this model established during the second wave of public relations development as a profession, the concept of a dominant coalition overseeing all decisions for a particular organization has limited the role of public relations practitioners to primarily that of "employee" because "copy production is the reason for their employment" (Pearson, 1987, p. 14), and in this way understanding the agency of public relations practitioners is essential "because economic agency determines the role of practice in organizations" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 30). This has resulted in public relations practitioners being limited to technician and manager roles placed outside of this corporate inner circle because as Berger (2005) has illustrated, most managers do not "understand or appreciate the public relations role" and often believe that "practitioner skills, experience, and education are deficient" (p. 7).

This situation where "public relations practitioner's bow routinely to the self-interest of their employers" has led to "unscrupulous behaviour and deliberate harm to the reputation of the opposition" (Stauber & Rampton, 1995, pp. 3-4) that in turn has drawn increasing critiques of practitioner ethics. When public relations discourse "is used to create perceptions of truth and to devalue certain terms and positions to create and promote organizational ideology" (Holtzhausen, 2002, p. 253), the problem of control raised through these communication-based politics places ethics at "the epicentre of the public and self-interest" (Johnstone, 2016, p. 170). This is further exemplified in the various global public relations associations' inability prevent unethical

behaviour by members through "self-regulation and peer review of professional practices" (Harrison, 2004, p. 6 as cited in Demetrious, 2013, p. 70), as seen in the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ) example.

However, since the millennial turn and within this third wave of public relations development as a profession there has been "a shift away from the notion of public relations practice as a tool of commerce toward a framework that broadens the scope of public relations to include social, cultural, and political contexts" (Ciszek, 2015, p. 451). Research has shown that practitioners who see their role as boundary spanners "will inevitably be more in touch with the societal and cultural environment of organizations" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 77), and that practitioners routinely do pro bono work as "a relief from routine…. the benefit of exposure…. [and] increased business" (Ferre, 1993, p. 66), while 95% of practitioners interacted with activists and activist groups during their employment with the organization (Grunig, 1987, p. 57), further illustrating the dynamic depth of this complex relationship and a further rationale for its study and inclusion into the field of public relations. This has led to increase calls from public relations scholars for "more sophisticated theories … on public relations practitioners, practices, and strategies" to more fully understand the pressures on and performance of public relations professionals in "group, organizational, and social contexts of practice as well as the professional background and orientation of the practitioner" (Berger, 2005, p. 23). It has also led to calls for a greater review and understanding of public relations practitioners' use of language "to see how they shape and are shaped by their institutions through their discourse and narrative, and how they shape and are shaped by society" in order to "describe how public relations works best or how it contributes to global practices" (Holtzhausen, 2012, pp. 194-195).

While this ideological shift towards understanding activisms relationship to public relations is progressing slowly, in this developing paradigm Kim and Sriramesh (2009) are blunt in their assessment suggesting that "organizations that are not sensitive to the dynamism in their

socio-cultural environment will pay the price by losing public trust and relationships with key stakeholders. More importantly, they may face threats to their own reputation" (p. 92). Because of this impact on the public sphere, activism emphasizes studying the impact of organizational environments on the practice of public relations (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 358). In this way "studying" implies pedagogy as a central concern in understanding activism in relation to public relations practitioners and practices. The inclusion of activism into the "metanarratives in public relations" presents a number of challenges beginning with who sets the parameters of what is studied and how (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 187). A second challenge is that "public relations is taught from a management perspective" where "students are taught to be submissive and docile corporate citizens" (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002, p. 79). As third challenge is identified by Demetrious (2013) who suggests that "public relations education, generally, has overemphasized technical expertise" (p. 139). Historical and theoretical understandings of activism in relation to the practice of public relations, the public relation industry, and scholarship on public relations has shown that increasingly the practice of public relations is beginning to fully actualize its socio-cultural role in everyday life, recognizing itself as a unique and powerful set of skills, and struggling with its own identity as one reflected in the counter process of activism.

It has also illustrated the weak role that public relations associations play in the field's ongoing development and exert little meaningful impact on the industries overall development with the scholarship of Ferre (1993) and Berger (2005) suggesting there is little intention to do so. In the face of these critiques during this third wave of public relations development there has been an "inadequate academic effort to explore the wider social implications of public relations activity" (Karlberg, 1996, p. 264) that began with Freire's (1970) call for a distinction between practice and theory "directed at [the] structures to be transformed" (p. 126). The challenge of these critiques remains where "there are no universal standards for public relations education in Canada" and that "educational institutions have yet to build a solid base of Canadian research in public relations and

thus establish a unique body of Canadian public relations knowledge" (Likely, 2009, pp. 659-662). This becomes clearer when we examine public relations textbooks. J. E. Grunig is recognized today as "one of the first scholars to formally theorise public relations and consolidate his thoughts in textbook form" (Edwards & Hodges, 2011, p. 2). Today, in the introductory public relations textbooks I have taught from - the first an American publication *This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations* by Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg (2012) and the second a Canadian publication *Canadian PR for the Real World* by Cardin and McMullan (2014) - both are written primarily from a corporate/employee perspective in keeping with the domains dominant corporate-economic model of practice, and where the words activist and activism occasionally appear, but not as unique categories in either text's index. In searching for textbooks on public relations writing, I discovered few contemporary text and the most prominent text, were originally published over 25 years ago and have simple gone through numerous editions. This was expressed through the exploration of public relations tactics where, "public relations writing courses over-emphasized the importance of writing press releases and under-emphasized other writing-related tasks" (Wise, 2005, p. 39), and where "issue management has grown largely through public relations textbooks" (Jaques, 2006, p. 411). Unless activism and its role in the development of public relations as a profession gains greater recognition in public relations textbooks, public relations ability to develop a critical and public perspective will remain challenged. This lack of pedagogical understanding around these emerging challenges to the profession is reflected in the public relations industry's lack of a "culture of research and data" that leaves public relations budgets "often starved of resources for research" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4). Another reason for this lack of a more critical approach to public relations lies in "the field's case studies, texts, and research" (Holtzhausen, 2000, p. 100) where there exist a need to "create a data bank of case studies of specific events, strategies, and tactics practitioners can use to adapt for their own activist needs" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 196). This echoes earlier calls for gaining "experiential knowledge of injustice" by "using exemplary cases to

embody them" (Gamson, 1995, p. 105), and that "we do not have enough case studies of bureaucratic or insider policy activism" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 14). Because of these shortfalls, the "only obstacle in the way of public relations practitioners operating as activists is located in the classroom" (Holtzhausen, 2000, p. 100). Finally, there are the implcations of new digital technologies and digital activism, where "communication technology has not lived up to its promise of fixing organisational problems" (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 165) rather, it has accentuated the distance between the information 'rich' and 'poor' in an era of growing complexity.

However, "we need not reject or abandon traditional modes of research" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 34), rather we must strive to broaden our understandings of "research logics to include knowledge that derives from storied, emotive, and embodied experiences" (Hater, et al., 2009, p. 35). We "need to create and defend safe spaces from which to carry out activist scholarship within often inhospitable environments" (Hale, 2008, p. 17), and respond to calls to transform public relations into a blend of "art and science" (Tisch, 2017, p. 4). Activism, while it remains on the fringes of public relations orthodoxy, it is increasingly gaining space in public relations through the advancement of a number of theoretical paradigms within critical public relations scholarship, within the practice of public relations in its strategies, tool, tactics, and techniques, and in its internal and external communications, with an increased call for its inclusion in public realtions pedagogy and textbooks, suggesting that there is an opportunity for postsecondary institutions to advance research on activist publics and public relations activism, including advanced degrees in critical public relations and public communication, while presenting a unique opportunities for further research in the Canadian context.

This examination of activism and public relations has revealed several key points of intersection in answering Dutta's (2009) question: "Where are the voices of activists in the public relations literature?" (p. 293). It has shown that key advocates for an activist position in public relations include Ciszek, Coombs and Holladay, Demetrious, Holtzhausen, Sommerfeldt, and

Weaver amongst others but this is not the complete picture suggesting the need for further research on practitioners and scholars alike. Implicit in much of this research is the acknowledgement that "activism is a legitimate line of inquiry that can contribute to public relations theory building" (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, pp. 399-400). However, it has also revealed that while citizenship and community are central players in both activism and public relations, and while "advocacy, conflict, and transgression" are "a core aspect of activist communication" and therefore "appear to be central to activism" (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 69), "public relations theory … collides with key tenants of citizenship" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 27). Engaging in physical activism can have costs and can create risks to your employment, family, and other responsibilities and within the process of protest, an "individuals' emotions and beliefs might be changed by collective action" (Louis, 2009, p. 729), which in part is what public relations says it does, change behaviours. However, as presented, emotions do not play a role currently in our contemporary understanding or applications of public relation communications as it has been historically configure. In this respect, "knowledge remains the most powerful tool in leading a life of activism" (Holtzhausen, 2012, Preface xv). Activist tactics force organizations to "listen" to concerns and to revamp their public relations practices to increase "opportunities for input, shared decision-making, and trust and relationship building" (McCown, 2007, p. 63). In this way this examination has revealed that by "broadening the analysis of public relations activities beyond [the] narrow scope of professional practices and institutional sites allows for a more lateral and creative understanding of communicative practices" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 5), which is in keeping with my experiences as a public relations practitioner and activist.

The introduction of activism into public relations theory and practice as a foundational condition, driven by Dewey's (1927) concept of an active public rather that Bernays' (1928) propaganda, offers a clearer division of responsibility for the industry over the one founded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) where the basic tenant of the

Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) is business and organizational communications rather than in the broader category of public communications and public relations. Activism highlights "our need to promote our work as essential to specific social agendas [while] distinguishing and publicizing our work from that of other disciplines is increasingly important" (Buzzanell, 2009, p. ix) as in the development of a theory and practice that has been actually sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) or other similar national public relations association, like the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS), rather than by business communicators exclusively.

Public relations as an integral part of the capitalist communication complex historically and theoretically conceived by Bernays (1923, 1928, 1955) and Grunig (1992), "has played, and continues to play, a significant role in the perpetuation of social divisions based on wealth" (Weaver, 2016, p. 50). I believe, public relations has yet to reach its full practical, theoretical, and pedagogical potential, and lacks a clear definition of what it was, is, and can be because of its historical construction. Public relations has been consumed by an "overriding concern with proving the effectiveness of public relations practice and its contribution to the bottom line [that] stems from the expectation that agents have to prove their contribution and values" (Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 218). In this configuration of the corporate-economic model, the logic presented towards not making changes in the field are based on an economic rationalist argument that "inclusive approaches do not make sense in an us-against-them, dog-eat-dog business world; relationships are nice but we are not in the relationship-building business; and emotional responses are detrimental to the bottom line" (Berger, 2005, 17). However, the broader implications for the practice of public relation is that "if societies value their market economies more than their people and environment, one can assume that activists' interest will also be less valued than those of corporations" (Holtzhausen, 2007, p. 371) and in this situation, "if the only value system is money it negates any ethical arguments" (Bauman, 1993, p. 84). From the point of public relations scholarship and pedagogy as has been illustrated, "there simply are not enough of these analysis

around to show how money has become that basis of the ethical debate in our field" (Toth, 2002 as cited in Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 200). Activism research explored in this study has revealed that while public relations is recognized as a profession, industry, and field of study to-date, there remains a dissonance between the Excellence Theory and its use in commercial practice, between public relations theorists and other fields, between the modernist rational agency and communal rationality, between the political nature of public relations and the increasing complexity in contemporary society, and more specifically between academics, governing associations, practitioners, and scholars when it comes to accepting any degree of responsibility for the marginalizing effect certain public relations campaigns can have on a wide variety of publics. In this way "we need to live in ways which enable us to adapt to ongoing change, complexity and uncertainty" (Yeatman, 1998, p. 31) and "activism seems to be the key to taking that next step in advancing the discussion of critical ideas in public relations away from the fringe and moving toward mainstream" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012a, p. 884) and providing a bridge between these multiple discrepancies currently within the public relations industry.

In examining activism's relationship to public relations as then against now, it is reflective of "the postmodern idea of Becoming rather than being" (Docherty, 1993 as cited in Holtzhausen, 2012, p. 198). Increasingly as has been argued, a "variety of methodological perspectives are needed if public relations scholarship is to come to terms with the complex issue of activism" and to "explore the paradoxes and pursue theoretical approaches that enrich their understanding of how public relations functions in broader social, economic, and political contexts" (Curtin, 2016, p. 31). Here "acquiring and practicing certain virtues" can create "a strong sense of interconnectedness with one's larger community and the states and fates of others in that community" (Ess, 2014, p. 251). This call for the development of a critical public relations and public communication as the premise for public relations activities rather than corporate communication exclusively answers Holtzhausen's (2012) call to get "involved in our local

communities with local activist groups using our knowledge of and expertise with public communication to bring about change" (p. xvi). Holtzhausen (2012) argument is that through our work in "capitalist institutions, we are the people who can and should question the devastation wrought on people and the environment in the name of profit" and in doing so "finally shed the mantle of spin doctors, manipulators, persuaders, and empty heads who are blind servants of those in power" (p. xvi). This study has also illustrated the opportunities that further research into identity, representation, and emotional responses can have on expanding the boundaries of public relations research and theoretical development, as well as everyday practice. As Tisch (2017) has identified, public relations practitioners need to start listening, rather than simply amplifying the message, and to evaluate the "health of the relationship between the organization and key publics" (p. 4). This listening, like public relations research itself, need to be addressed across social, cultural, and economic boundaries to include interpersonal, group, intracultural, intercultural, national, and international relationships (Albert, 2009, p. 136).

Today the reality remains that few scholars "have yet explored the possibility of studying the role, or the potential role, of public relations in activism" (Holtzhausen, 2000, p. 100). Rapid changes in technology, immigration, and developments in communication have heightened the need for refinements in public relations theory "to provide more adequate guides for those who are practicing or preparing to operate across the cultural, political, and economic boundaries that comprise comprehensive international public relations" (Wakefield, 2007, p. 138), and if business in their public relations dealing with resistance from activist groups "contribute to significant social havoc through the suppression of ideas, conflict, and antagonism … they will waste the collective resources of the state and risk their long-term business viability" (Demetrious, 2013, p. 32). The reality remains that activists do not want to "take decision-making power from the organization", but they do want assurance that the company is using its power "responsibly" (Anderson, 1992, p. 163). To adapt to this changing global reality, there will be a need for

curriculum changes within the public relations industry and the development of new textbooks and courses that take into account aesthetics; the ethical, technical, and practical use of language; and, the role of representation in our communication and action to avoid marginalization and "Othering" of publics, as well as a realistic investigation into the theoretical constructs of publics and relationships.

The next step for researchers and practitioners is to develop an ideal model of activist praxis within critical public relations, and in this case how public relations and activism is practiced in Canada, as well as other democratic nations, by exploring the history of critical communications studies in Canada. Future studies can identify, survey, and interview activist in their use of public relations tactics and strategies, and public relations practitioners in their use of activism as a means to developing this new model public communications and social relationships. There also needs to be ethnographic studies of who practices public relations, why, and how. Given the ongoing negative public perception of the public relations industry and its representation in contemporary scholarship, measuring for social-economic impact on the widest range of publics would be a good place to start building case studies. Twenty-five years after the introduction of the Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1992) into the field of U.S. public relations "the public relations occupation in Canada is still searching for its own identity" (Likely, 2009, p. 662). Today the recent investigation into the future of public relations in Canada by the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) confirms that not only is there an urgent case for further consideration and reform in public relations, but as Demetrious (2013, p. 101) has illustrated, "the time to do it is now."

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