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A Historical and Analytical Study of Feminization in the Field of Public Relations

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Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Purpose of Study	5
Limitations of Study	5
Terms	6
Chapter 2: The History and Feminization of Public Relations	7
Early Origins	7
Edward Bernays: “Father” of Public Relations (b. 1891)	7
Ivy Lee (b. 1877)	9
Public Relations 1917-1929	10
Public Relations 1930-1940	11
Public Relations 1941-1960	12
Lorena Hickok	13
Doris Fleischman	14
Public Relations 1960-1980	15
Public Relations 1980-2000	16
Public Relations 2000-Present	17
Chapter 3: Why Women are drawn to Public Relations	19
Chapter 4: Feminization Issues as Experienced by Female Practitioners	21
Social Issues	21
Professional Issues	22
Economic Issues	24

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions	25
What Can Be Done to Achieve Gender Equality within Public Relations	25
Recommendations for Further Study	27
References	28

Abstract

The origin of the public relations field can be traced back more than 1,000 years. The use of its basic concepts can be seen throughout history, and increased in the 19th and 20th centuries. Until the mid-1900s, the field was largely comprised of men. World War II spurred the beginning of the feminization process, which caused public relations to experience a large influx of women. The number of female practitioners has since continued to increase. Even though feminization occurred and the field is now largely female-dominated, female practitioners experience a wide variety of gender inequalities in social, professional and economic areas. This study is a historical analysis of the feminization of public relations, why women are drawn to the field, the obstacles female practitioners face, and what can be done in the future to achieve gender equality.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The public relations field is currently comprised of mostly women. Therefore, a historical analysis of the feminization of public relations, why women are drawn to the field, the obstacles female practitioners face, and what can be done in the future to achieve gender equality is important. Even though feminization of the field occurred in the mid to late twentieth century, female practitioners still face a variety of gender inequalities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to recognize the importance of females to the development of the public relations field via a historical analysis, to explore why females are drawn to public relations, to examine the gender inequalities female practitioners experience and to explore possible ways that gender equality can be achieved within the field. It is essential to bring attention to the discrimination female public relations practitioners experience, especially since they may be perceived as having access to equal opportunities because they are the field's majority. More than three-fourths of public relations practitioners are women; therefore, there is a pressing need for research regarding a solution to the obstacles they face.

Limitations of Study

This study relies on the previous work of scholars in the field rather than including the results of an original survey and research. Furthermore, limited research is available. There are nuances of the public relations field that may not be noted through the course of this study.

Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of terminology apply:

- Feminization— a process involving a large influx of women into an organization or business.
- Gender Equality— the equal treatment of males and females within a business or field, from salary to social relationships.
- Glass Ceiling- an invisible barrier that blocks the advancement, typically of women and minorities, to higher positions within a business or organization.
- Practitioners/Professionals— those who work in the public relations field, whether through an agency or firm; those who practice, or implement, public relations tactics as a means of achieving a positive relationship between their clients and the public.
- Publics— groups of people, businesses or organizations who are connected via shared concerns or interests.
- Public Relations— a communications field that aims to create and manage positive relationships between publics through special events, social media, printed publications and various other means.

Chapter 2: The History and Feminization of Public Relations

Early Origins

Even though public relations has no defined founder or date of origin, many historians trace the use of its basic concepts back to Pericles' reign over Athens from 461 to 429 B.C. (Guth & Marsh, 2000). As the men of Athens, which was the "first true democracy," were able to debate freely and create laws, they began to learn about public opinion and the different approaches that can be used to influence it. Historians tend to disagree regarding who coined the phrase "public relations," many contending that Thomas Jefferson was the first to combine the terms "public" and "relations," while others hold that it was created by Dorman Eaton in his address, titled "The Public Relations and Duties of the Legal Profession," to the 1882 Yale University School of Law graduating class (Newsom, Turk & Kruckeberg, 2000; Smith, 2011). Whether Jefferson or Eaton is responsible for fabricating the phrase "public relations," "the term was not used in its modern sense until 1897, when it appeared in the Association of American Railroads' *Yearbook of Railway Literature*" (p. 50).

Edward Bernays: "Father" of Public Relations (b. 1891)

Looking at public relations' unclear origins, it is no surprise that the field does not credit a single practitioner as its founder. Irwin Ross, the author of "The Image Merchants: The Fabulous World of American Public Relations," considered Edward Bernays "the first and doubtless....leading ideologue of public relations" (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 30). Bernays, who is known as the first person to call himself a "public relations counsel," authored *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, a book about public relations (p. 31). A 1925 "American Journal of Sociology" review claims that *Crystallizing Public Opinion* "is an attempt of a practical publicist to interpret problems of publicity in terms of [Wilfred] Trotter's theory of the herd instinct, [which is found

in his book *The Instinct of the Herd in Peace and War*]” (“Crystallizing Public Opinion,” p. 751). According to Dalrymple (2008), “[Trotter] divided the human race into two types: the resisters, who cleaved to the status quo, and the sensitive, who had new ideas that they wanted to try out at the expense of the status quo” (p. 639).

Bernays’ background was in psychology, which helped him advise companies like Proctor & Gamble and Beech-Nut Packing Company because he was knowledgeable of how to catch the attention of and persuade consumers. According to Larson (1967), “an original idea of [Bernays’] with a touch of genius was to build nationwide interest in soap sculpture to promote Ivory Soap for Proctor and Gamble” (p. 140). He did this by “[encouraging] children to use soap by sponsoring a soap-carving contest” (“The Top Public,” 2006). In the early twentieth century,

Bernays represented the Beechnut [*sic*] Packing Company, which sold bacon. To spark sales, Bernays came up with the idea of promoting bacon and eggs as an alternative to coffee and toast--a breakfast that not only tasted good but was inexpensive and gave people energy. He even managed to persuade a prominent New York doctor to conduct a survey of his colleagues on the merits of a “hearty” breakfast, whose results were widely distributed by Bernays. (Auletta, 2007, p. 46)

He “utilized a wide range of techniques to gain publicity for his clients: committees of experts and notables, seminars, symposiums, charity balls, consumer surveys, pamphlets, awards, and contests” (Larson, 1967, p. 140). But, according to Cannon (1999),

Bernays’ most impressive accomplishment as a manipulator of images may have been what he did with his own, [Larry] Tye suggests. Because he outlived most of his competitors and critics, Bernays’ claim to be the ‘father of public relations’

gained some currency with the news media. (p. 87)

Ivy Lee (b. 1877)

In spite of Bernays' contributions to the public relations field and practice, other authorities maintain that Ivy Lee was "the first practitioner of a modern-style public relations practice" (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 31). Lee was an ex-reporter, which was common for many of the first generation public relations specialists. He was hired by coal companies when they were under attack in the early 1900s "to sell...the public on the virtues of industrial 'harmony'" (Olasky, 1987, p. 9). According to Beder (1999),

press releases were invented by...Lee in the early years of the twentieth century in an effort to control media coverage of railway accidents for his client, Pennsylvania Railway. He decided that if the press was going to report the accidents it would be better to make sure they reported them from the company point of view. The strategy was so successful that by the late 1940s almost half the news was based on press releases from public-relations [*sic*] departments and firms. (p. 30)

Some scholars hold that "Lee's first press release...is the birth of the public relations industry as we know it today" ("The Birth of an Industry," 2006). In 1904, Lee and George F. Parker joined forces to operate a publicity bureau that survived for four years. In 1906, "their famous 'Declaration of Principles' [was]...sent to newspaper editors to promise accurate information to the press and public" (Penning, 2008, p. 349). Even though the firm was short-lived, it was the starting point for Lee's career. Lee "called himself a publicist until the 1920s...[and] took on the designation 'public relations advisor'...[but] he was unable in his lifetime to put into words exactly what he did" (Gower, 2008, p. 307). Compared to Bernays, "much of Lee's activities

involved publicity, or...media relations, rather than the broader business policy of public relations” (p. 307).

Public Relations 1917-1929

By 1917, many colleges’ faculty included public relations practitioners (Newsom et al., 2000). In the same year, the United States entered the three-year-old World War I, the propaganda for which demonstrated the effectiveness of persuasion and how it worked to the Europeans’ benefit (Newsom et al., 2000). According to Newsom et al. (2000),

The British, in particular, directed a “hands across the sea” propaganda campaign at the United States government and people, urging them to join the fight. They publicized the Allies’ view of the *Lusitania* incident, for example, characterizing the Germans (whose submarine had sunk the ocean liner) as vicious “Huns.” When President Wilson finally gave up his policy of peace-making and neutrality, the United States entered the war with money, military might and a massive public relations effort. (p. 43)

At this time, the Committee on Public Information was a new group created to bring innovative change and President Woodrow Wilson appointed George Creel as the committee’s chairman. Creel emphasized loyalty to the United States and allies, rather than attacks on Germany. Bernays and Carl Byoir were also part of the committee and later practiced public relations during non-wartime. Advertising experienced rapid growth during the early twentieth century due to the use of new mediums, like skywriting and film, and its psychological underpinnings (Newsom et al., 2000).

Furthermore, in the 1920s, public relations saw an increase in field-related books and course offerings (Newsom et al., 2000). One of the most well-known books from this decade is

Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (Newsom et al., 2000). According to Woo (2000), referencing *Public Opinion*,

Walter Lippmann distinguished truth from journalism...The function of truth, Lippmann said, was to bring hidden facts to light and set them in relation to one another to produce "a picture of reality upon which men can act."...The function of journalism, Lippmann went on, was that of "signalizing events." (p. 16)

"From the 1920s onward Bernays consistently wrote of an American society headed toward chaos unless public relations counselors worked behind the scenes to 'manipulate public opinion' (his words, used positively) into harmonious patterns" (Olasky, 1985, p. 10). His predictions were partially fulfilled by the stock market crash of 1929, which challenged the field's endurance and ability to influence public opinion. U.S. citizens were untrusting, dissatisfied with their jobs and displeased with harsh regulations enacted by the Roosevelt administration. Public relations professionals were tasked with determining how to help Americans have a positive outlook regardless of their fear and confusion (Newsom et al., 2000).

Public Relations 1930-1940

From 1930 to 1940, the public relations field continued to flourish and expand its reach. In 1936, the National Association of Accredited Publicity Directors was founded. The American Association of Industrial Editors was established in 1938 and the American Council on Public Relations one year later (Newsom et al., 2000).

"Many trends in the development of public relations during the 1930s are reflected in the history of General Motors [GM]" (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 45). Paul Garrett was the only employee of GM's public relations department when he was hired in 1931. GM's Board of Directors had in mind for him to construct the company's image as that of a small business, but

Garrett argued that conducting good public relations involves using authenticity and starting from the inside of a business when trying to change its image. Garrett's plan was to focus on customers and ensure that company decisions were based on consumers' needs. Even though GM was not the victor in a 1937 Congress of Industrial Organizations' controversy that produced a labor dispute lasting longer than a month, Garrett did not stop practicing good public relations (Newsom et al., 2000).

Public Relations 1941-1960

After Pearl Harbor was bombed December 7, 1941, and the U.S. entered World War II, many public relations firms seized the opportunity to contribute to the cause. According to Charles Steinberg, as quoted by Newsom et al. (2000), "World War II caused public relations to develop into a 'full-fledged profession'" (p. 47). World War II spurred this development because women were able to enter jobs previously occupied by men who, at the time, were engaged in battle overseas. The public relations field experienced a growth spurt in the 1950s as the production of consumer goods multiplied, more people obtained quality educations, an increased number of people became part of the white-collar workforce, and technology advanced in several areas, including television and the mainframe computer (Newsom et al., 2000).

By the time the decade came to an end, a number of women had joined the public relations workforce because they were able to enter jobs that were previously occupied by men. According to Horsley (2009), "between 1950 and 1960, the number of women in the profession increased more than 200 percent" (p. 102). The amount of men in the profession grew, as well, but not to the same extent as the number of women (Horsley, 2009). Another factor contributing to the sudden rise in female interest in the public relations field, in addition to World War II, is the fact that

in 1956, ninety-two colleges and universities were offering public relations classes; in 1957, there were 3,500 academic journal articles about public relations and sixteen countries with professional public relations groups; and in 1958, PRSA [Public Relations Society of America] had thirty-nine chapters and 2,600 members. (Lamme, 2007, p. 96)

The appointment of Anne Williams Wheaton as President Dwight D. Eisenhower's associate press secretary in 1957 likewise "[drew] nationwide attention to PR as a potential career for women" (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 49). Several other women, like Lorena Hickock and Doris Fleischman, started their careers during this time period and became key players in the continued development of the field.

Lorena Hickock.

Hickok "was a pioneering woman journalist, press agent, and public relations advisor closely tied to the [Franklin] Roosevelt presidency" (Martinelli & Bowen, 2009, p. 132). She was assigned feature stories when hired by the Associated Press in 1928 because, as Maurine Beasley is quoted by Martinelli and Bowen (2009), "...women were regarded as unable to handle 'hard news' stories" (p. 133). But, Hickok was able to join the many men who reported on politics when she became the only female appointed to cover Roosevelt during the 1932 presidential campaign (Martinelli & Bowen, 2009). Hickock "convinced her editors to assign her to Eleanor Roosevelt during the campaign...in 1933, [Hickok] became the first reporter to ever conduct an on-the-record interview with a president's wife in the White House" (p. 133).

In 1936, she began working as a children's and youth promotions coordinator for the World's Fair. In 1940, Hickok was employed by the Democratic National Committee (Martinelli

& Bowen, 2009). It is notable that “when...the DNC...[was] downsized in 1942, Hickok was one of only six employees to be retained” (p. 137). According to Martinelli and Bowen (2009),

although it seems clear that Hickok believed her talents lay in reporting and that she preferred that work to any other, she never returned to it. Yet the evidence indicates she also was an astute early practitioner of modern managerial public relations. (p. 137)

Doris Fleischman.

Fleischman established her profession in public relations in 1919 when she began working for Bernays. Her career expanded after she and Bernays married; they began their business partnership in 1922. One of Fleischman’s first publicity efforts was promoting a fundraising pageant play (Lamme, 2007). According to Lamme,

Fleischman’s media savvy is evident in the ways she positioned the story to meet the needs and interests of key publications and their respective editors...As a former journalist, Fleischman would have been sensitive to the importance of providing editors with material appropriate to their sections. But as a public relations counselor in progress, Fleischman was employing a strategic concept now considered fundamental to effective public relations: targeting publics.

(p. 89)

In the early 1920s, Fleischman crafted *Contact*, “a client newsletter designed to educate clients and selected publics about public relations and to promote the work of the Bernays firm” (Lamme, p. 90). She also used *Contact* to feature “a number of unattributed columns, presumably written by [herself],...that defined and discussed the purpose and contributions of public relations to business and society” (p. 92). Fleischman and Bernays later crafted a “four-

step process of public relations planning that appeared in Fleischman's 1928 chapter on public relations," found in *An Outline of Careers for Women: A Practical Guide to Achievement*, and several of the couple's other works (p. 94). Fleischman's success in the public relations field helped pave the way for how public relations is currently practiced, and encourages females to enter the field despite the views of women and their abilities.

Public Relations 1960-1980

Brody (2005) claims that "through much of the 1960s, public relations followed an information paradigm. The traditionally secretive ways of most organizations were supplanted by a new philosophy of openness" (p. 32). During this decade, "bosses...turned to public relations experts for advice on how to say...the message" (Burson, 1990, p. 159). But as the 1960s winded down, "business began to ask, 'What shall I say?' That's because the message was coming under close scrutiny" (p. 159). Even though

...[PRSA] created a new standard of professionalism when the organization established an accreditation program for its members in 1964, female members of the organization did not believe they were being treated equally as men...articles recommended that women receive secretarial training and began to make references to the dual roles of women as professionals as well as wives and mothers...the 1960s [were characterized] as a time of marginalization of women within their chosen profession punctuated by their responsibilities as housewives and classification as secretaries by their male colleagues. (Horsley, 2009, p. 103)

Roach (2008) argues that "more effective uses of communication came in the 1970s and 1980s when customers and employees were kept informed and allowed to provide input to management" (p. 8). He claims that these technological changes produced "the [simple] lesson

[that]...public relations people can be more effective pulling down barriers than trying to pull rabbits out of hats” (p. 8).

Public Relations 1980-2000

The momentum of the public relations field increased beginning in 1980 as “technology connected the world as never before, and this emphasized the need for and use of communication” (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 58). The “economic climate” set by the 1970s caused “business and industry [to begin]...a sometimes painful process of modernizing and downsizing” (Guth & Marsh, 2000, p. 74). This reduction process largely impacted the public relations field. Because the public relations departments in businesses and organizations were condensed or even obliterated, public relations agencies had the chance to obtain new clients. It is ironic that in-house public relations departments downsized even though this was the time when public relations practitioners were needed the most, particularly to help those who were fired to understand why they did not have a job despite record sales and the increasing salaries of management.

Public relations practitioners of this time period who remained employed increased their productivity due to the introduction of silicon microprocessing chips, desktop publishing and other technological advances. An additional influential development that occurred during the 1980s was a change in the public relations field’s demographic. This change included a large influx of women and opportunities for minority workers, like African Americans, created by civil rights legislation (Guth & Marsh, 2000). Despite the “continued stream of women into the field...while male PR practitioners moved into CEO slots, women did not. Most women in public relations held lower-status positions and earned considerably less than men in similar positions” (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 63-64).

Not only did the face of public relations change, but the public's view of practitioners did as well. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, practitioners were viewed in a negative light, especially those who practiced in the political and governmental arenas (Guth & Marsh, 2000). "Media coverage of public relations in the 1980s and 1990s was extensive and often hostile—usually because of the perceived manipulation of public attitudes by sophisticated PR campaigns" (Newsom et al., 2000, p. 64). According to Guth and Marsh,

following Bill Clinton's use of rapid-response tactics to defeat incumbent George Bush in the 1992 presidential election, public awareness of political counselors—so called "spin doctors"—increased dramatically. Some of these counselors, such as James Carville and George Stephanopoulos, later became network political pundits, a role once exclusively held by reporters. Others, such as Dick Morris, a Clinton political adviser caught in a sex scandal in 1996, discovered that fame can be a double-edged sword. (p. 75)

Public Relations 2000-Present

Guth and Marsh (2000) predicted that "public relations professionals [would]...be among the first to embrace the new digital communications technologies of the 21st century" (p. 77) and there is no doubt that this conjecture came to fruition with the turn of the century. Roach (2008) claimed that public relations practitioners were responsible for monitoring public opinion, developing Web sites and writing press releases, which required the use of more technologically advanced tools.

A PR Week Opinion Survey conducted in 2002 found that 69% of practitioners who participated in the survey were women (Andsager & Hust, 2005). In 2005, the percentage of men in the field was found to be approximately 30%, a considerable drop from the 70% of 1970

(Horsley, 2009). In 2010, female practitioners were paid 78 cents for each dollar earned by male practitioners (Dozier, Sha & Shen, 2012).

There is not a considerable amount of scholarly information written about the public relations field during these thirteen years. What has been published regarding this time period mainly focuses on statistics regarding demographics and salaries, like those found earlier in this section. There is no doubt, however, that within the next decade, more will be published on what current female public relations practitioners are experiencing since they constitute a majority of the field and continue to grow in number.

Chapter 3: Why Women are drawn to Public Relations

In 2002, the “public relations profession...[consisted of] almost 70% women” and the number of female practitioners has since risen (Aldoory & Toth, 2002, p. 103). Feminization of the field is largely responsible for this change in public relations’ demographic. As the American workforce changed due to World War II, women had the chance to occupy jobs that were formerly filled by men. But what drew so many of them to public relations?

One theory is that females are interested in the field because it offers them opportunities to complete tasks they enjoy. According to Creedon (1991), women are mainly drawn to public relations jobs because they offer the chance to be creative and write. On the other hand, some researchers contend that it is women’s inherent traits that lure them toward a public relations career. Froehlich (2004) argues

that having good communication skills is a particular...biologically determined trait that women possess....which makes them especially suited for a communication profession such as public relations. With these ideal qualities, it is said, women can rise to challenges typically found in these professions.

Obviously, these qualities cannot simply be *learned* during academic education or training on the job like writing skills or special PR-techniques. (p. 5)

All the while, researchers like Rea (2002) hold that it is women’s learned abilities that causes female practitioners to choose public relations over another profession. Rea claims that significant, but not usually consciously articulated by...women, is that public relations is...attractive because traditionally feminine skills...in networking and multi-tasking are encouraged and valued. However, women’s competence in these areas is also taken for granted and exploited. Feminist analysts argue that

this is typical of gender ideologies operating in the workplace. Women are expected to perform the “emotional labour” of listening, counseling, serving, dealing with difficult people and even cleaning up literal and figurative messes. (p. 2)

Whether it is their interests, the traits they are born with, or the skills they have gained over time and through experience that draw women to public relations, it seems that, either way, what females have to offer is essential to a successful career in the field. However, as shown in the next chapter, their characteristics and traits have not been and still are not valued by male practitioners and the field as a whole.

Chapter 4: The Effects of the Feminization of Public Relations on Female Practitioners

It may seem as though the feminization of public relations has only worked in the favor of women, providing them with the freedom to express their interests in constructive ways and use their abilities to produce amiable relationships between themselves, publics, businesses, and organizations. However, “the increase in the number of women in public relations has led to a fierce debate over the feminization of the profession. This debate has led researchers to investigate the [negative] effects and consequences of the feminization of public relations” (Kridler & Ross, 1997, p. 438). These adverse repercussions include gender discrepancies, such as unequal salary and unfavorable work environments. Since the majority of practitioners are women, it is hard for researchers and professionals to understand why gender discrepancies occur (Aldoory & Toth, 2002, p. 103-104). Regardless of researchers’ understanding, or lack thereof, as to the reasoning behind why, despite feminization, female practitioners experience gender inequalities, these women still face a number of social, professional and economic issues.

Social Issues

According to Tsetsura (2011), public relations is considered work that women are supposed to do. “Stereotypical representations of public relations as an enjoyable, easy, and dependent profession [can characterize female practitioners] as ditzy, obsequious, unfulfilled, and useful only in times of crises” (p. 4). These stereotypes regarding women practitioners cause those who work outside of public relations to dispraise the field and show prejudice toward public relations professionals. In the eyes of many outsiders, a job in public relations does not constitute a real career.

Besides experiencing scrutiny of their positions and professions, female practitioners are also subject to sexual harassment. Charlotte Klein, as cited by Bovet (1993), claims that sexual

harassment is a significant issue for the field of public relations. Several anonymous reports from female practitioners regarding how they have been sexually harassed include cases of inappropriate touching and attempted assault by a male superior. Female public relations graduate students are not exempt from encountering sexual harassment on college campuses (Bovet, 1993). A public relations professor admitted to being told more than thirty years ago by a member of her graduate thesis committee that she would “have to sleep with [him if she expected] to finish... [her] master’s degree” (p. 26). Bovet claims that

sexual harassment is not a new phenomenon. It’s been happening in public relations ever since women entered the field. But, now, it is illegal; it has a name; and it is recognizable. And there are specific ways to fight it. (p. 26)

Serini, Toth, Wright and Emig (1998) argue that

at the heart of the sexual harassment issue is power: personal power, organizational power, and the power of the public relations practitioners in the organization...“issues of power lie at the heart of women’s repression in organizations”...recent research...has shown that sexual harassment has little to do with libidinal impulses and everything to do with using various forms of sexual harassment to keep women in their place. That “place” has been in the organization’s lower prestige, lower influence, and lower paid positions. (p.194)

The lower position and pay mentioned by Serini et al. will be discussed later in this study.

Professional Issues

Dozier, Sha and Shen (2012) assert that

for decades, researchers have distinguished between public relations managers and public relations technicians...professional experience is related to manager

role enactment in that technicians represent the entry-level public relations function, whereas public relations managers usually attain those positions after several years of work experience. (p. 7)

Regardless of the amount and type of experience and education female practitioners attain, Dozier (1988) argues that “public relations has become hierarchically segregated by sex as it becomes a female-majority occupation. Typically, women...play the technician role...whereas men play the manager role...” (p. 7). According to Choi and Hon (2002), “female public relations practitioners...have faced the invisible barrier that limits promotion into powerful positions [and has caused] few women...[to ascend] to the top management level” (p. 230). Even though “the roles of public relations technicians and managers...are not static,” (Napoli, Taylor & Powers, 1999, p. 370). men in managerial roles feel that women are incapable of fulfilling managerial duties According to Choi and Hon (2002),

researchers have argued that women are perceived as inappropriate for management roles because the normative managerial image is constructed on a stereotype that traditionally favors male traits such as aggression, dominance, and competitiveness...female traits such as dependence, emotionality, and passivity are seen as negative and unsuited for management. (p. 234)

Thus, women in public relations are bound to technical roles, never having the opportunity to use their talents and abilities to create successful relations with the media and various publics. Krider and Ross argue that even if female practitioners manage to move beyond the glass ceiling or acquire managerial positions, they still earn less than male practitioners (1997).

Economic Issues

One of the most pervading problems facing women in public relations today is salary discrepancies. More than twenty years ago, it was predicted that salary discrepancies between male and female public relations practitioners would become a reality (Taff, 2003, p. 10). According to Andsager and Hust (2005), “although salaries overall have not declined... women’s earnings remain below men’s” (p. 86). This is a problem that plagues other professions, as well. The 1986 *Velvet Ghetto* study reported that “women are paid substantially less than men—even when other variables are controlled for—and other professions have diminished in salary and status as they moved from male to female dominance” (Grunig, Hon & Dozier, 1992, p. 422). According to Parent (1990), “even when salaries are adjusted to take age and experience into account, men still make significantly more than women” (p. 1B). Terri Johnson, head of Journalism at the University of Indianapolis, was quoted in Parent that

“most recent studies confirm that entry-level men and women begin at equal salaries, but men, in climbing the career ladder more quickly and in bargaining more adroitly, soon outpace women in earnings...women are closing the wage gap at the rate of .7 percent per year; at that rate, they will achieve pay equity in 2025...” (p. 1B)

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

The public relations field has dramatically evolved since the first use of its basic principles, especially in its approaches to and means for completing good public relations. Feminization played, and is playing, an influential role in the field's development. Female public relations practitioners have gained more respect and have been presented with greater professional opportunities, but there is still room for improvement in the way female practitioners are viewed and treated. It is undeniable that female practitioners are largely responsible for the success of today's public relations field and they comprise a majority of public relations' professionals. Therefore, it is essential that male and female practitioners alike work toward equality, and further research is conducted on the issues female practitioners still face.

What Can Be Done to Achieve Gender Equality within Public Relations

There are several ways male and female practitioners can work toward the achievement of a level playing field in public relations. One specific area that needs to be targeted is male practitioners' attitudes toward female practitioners and the role women should play in the field. Male practitioners need to be more open to and supportive of the idea of female practitioners in managerial and upper-level positions. It is likely that more female practitioners would pursue higher positions, like CEO and president, if both female and male practitioners encouraged them in their work and to move beyond the technical role.

This leads to another way gender equality can be accomplished: promoting female practitioners when they are deserving. There is no doubt that many female practitioners who are in technical roles have the skills and abilities necessary to perform the duties of managerial

positions. However, some of their superiors may be males who desire to keep women in “their place” and refuse to admit that they are not the only ones capable of fulfilling managerial duties.

The next generation of public relations practitioners is currently college students. If gender equality is to be ascertained within the next decade, public relations professors must educate students on female practitioners’ role in the history, development and current state of the field. It is imperative that educators are also transparent and informative regarding the gender inequalities that are present within public relations.

It is likely that sexual harassment courses could help improve female practitioners’ work environment, as it could for professionals in other fields as well. It is possible that if male practitioners are aware of the types of sexual harassment and their consequences that the chances that female practitioners are sexual harassed will decrease. However, awareness alone is not sufficient for eliminating sexual harassment. Because male practitioners may still sexually harass their female coworkers after learning about the possible repercussions, female practitioners need more channels to report sexual harassment incidents and there is a need for a greater enforcement of the consequences of sexual harassment.

It is essential that female practitioners learn to stand up for themselves and defend their rights to equal opportunities. Just as they should report sexual harassment incidents, female practitioners should report to their human resources department or local job union professional situations in which they felt like they were being treated unfairly. They must be their own and advocate in the work place.

Another way female practitioners can attempt to level the playing field is to pursue higher education. It is more likely that they will acquire managerial and higher-up positions if they have achieved the same level of education as others who seek the same jobs. Practitioners, in and out

of the field, are also more predisposed to respect female practitioners if they have graduated from a higher level degree program.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study is not all encompassing. Areas of further research include:

- The persistence of gender inequalities across male and female-managed public relations firms and departments.
- How gender inequalities change during the next decade and identify what factors influence that.
- How gender equality within public relations can be actualized.
- How the role of female practitioners and the gender inequalities they are faced with have evolved since the year 2000.

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