

# PR AND SOCIETY: THE GENERATIVE POWER OF HISTORY IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

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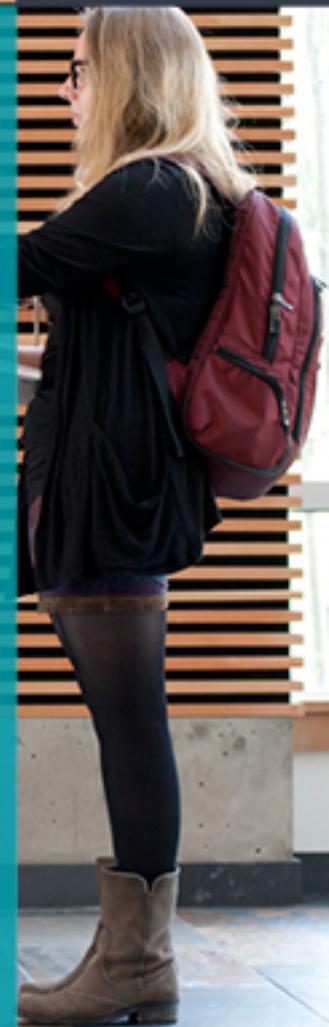
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# OVERVIEW

- Description of the pilot study
- Thesis > the generative power of PR history
- Insights from the data
- Future directions



# PILOT RESEARCH STUDY

## Literatures

- critical feminist PR research
- critical PR historiography
- Canadian PR histories
- Theoretical
  - critical feminist theory (how gender operates in and on identities, institutions)
  - Bourdieu's field theory + notion of "cultural intermediaries"
  - R. Williams' cultural materialism > professional structures of feeling, process of selective tradition

## Methods

- qualitative
- phenomenological interviews
- site: Victoria, BC, Canada
- sample: 6 senior PR women
- data explication

## Aims

- explore how gender matters to Canadian PR
- "field analysis" of distinctive Canadian PR practice communities
- bring a cultural lens to PR excellence



# THESIS

Histories are generative, productive and reproductive of distinctive PR cultures, productive of distinctive professional identities, practice & knowledge; as historical actors, PR women are generative of (PR) histories, both constrained and empowered by their historical context

-  Histories generate distinctive PR cultures
-  In the present, PR actors (shaped by past) generate futures
-  PR cultures generate distinct problems and knowledge

# HISTORICAL PROCESS GENERATES DISTINCTIVE PR CULTURES ■

PR practice communities are unique to their place, each with its own culture(s) forged from historical processes and the generative actions of human and non-human actors.

In Victoria, the provincial capital, the work was in government and higher education, “masculine” organizational cultures, but, due to the times (1980s/90s), relatively welcoming to women seeking to learn about all sectors and a range of specializations, including senior leadership and lucrative consulting opportunities.

# PR CULTURES GENERATE DISTINCTIVE CHALLENGES, AVENUES OF AGENCY ■

Participant stories reflected how contemporary realities—world events, legal frameworks, social movements, economic cycles, family responsibilities—generated certain kinds of agency, and also shaped personal/professional identity.

Faced with an unknown regional or workplace culture or lack of knowledge, women created and participated in networks, generating leadership opportunities and professional and ethical standards in their workplaces.

# PR CULTURES GENERATE DISTINCT PROBLEMS AND UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE ■

Each labour market women encountered featured a distinctive set of clients, employers, and concerns. Victoria's PR culture formed itself around the concerns of practitioners working in government, education, and non-profits, which inflected formal PR education and accreditation pathways and processes.

These pioneering PR women responded to their own need for more professionalized PR by co-creating curriculum relevant to the concerns of a government town. Drawing on their own experience, working together, they taught the next generation of (largely) female practitioners in their own organizations.

# FUTURE PLANS

- conduct phenomenological interviews across Canada
  - chronicle women's PR career experience and contributions
  - understand diverse embodied identities in Canadian PR
  - develop greater knowledge of Canada's distinctive PR cultures
- connect findings to curriculum, professional development
- develop national and international collaborations, website

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# THANK YOU



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