Influence of the Gender of Reporters, News Topics, and Circulation Size on Framing of Public Relations

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This study explored how external news factors influenced media framing of public relations by analyzing daily newspapers' news content dedicated to depictions of public relations. The gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size of newspapers significantly predicted how the newspapers framed public relations. In line with prior research, a neutral frame was dominant. When negative and positive frames were compared, male reporters took more negative approaches than female reporters, and female reporters took favorable stances toward public relations. Both negative and positive frames of public relations were more frequently present in hard news than in soft news. Large newspapers emphasized a negative frame toward public relations, and small newspapers highlighted a positive frame.

Introduction

The relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners is symbiotic. Because of limited resources and time constraints, journalists rely on public relations practitioners as a major information source to the extent that a substantial amount of news stories originate from this source (Cameron, Sallot & Curtin, 1997). In exchange for providing story ideas and news items, public relations practitioners obtain free channels for securing media coverage for their clients.

Information provided by public relations practitioners, however, go through the news-making process by which journalists cull out some items and reframe items that meet journalistic objectivity (Gans, 1980; Tuchman, 1977) under the existing space and time limits (McCombs, 2004). Indeed, journalists select news stories on the basis of news value such as timeliness, proximity, deviance, or social significance (Gant & Dimmick, 2000; Morton & Warren, 1992b; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006). That is why journalists often prefer public relations releases containing local orientations to general releases (Morton & Warren, 1992b).

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Along with the selection criteria, the tendency of individual journalists to view public relations is important. Journalists do not entirely trust public relations as a legitimate source (Cameron et al., 1997), and they often display negative attitudes toward public relations practitioners (Callison, 2001). As a result, when journalists cover public relations, the coverage could reflect their negative perspectives or a mixture of negative and neutral perspectives toward public relations.

Such valence-laden perceptions and attitudes can be formed by external news factors that surround the news-making process. The factors include the gender of reporters, newsroom routines, or organizational constraints (Berkowitz, 1987; McCombs, 2004; Morton & Warren, 1992a; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). For example, when compared with female reporters, male reporters could have frequent encounters with bad public relations practitioners who spin off information and promote it. This may lead, in turn , to male reporters having negative perceptions toward public relations, often leading to negative coverage. In a similar vein, if news organizations had stereotyped perceptions toward the role of public relations in the news-making process, the perceptions could influence journalists' attitudes toward public relations.

Although many researchers focused on media framing of public relations and its implications for the role of public relations (Hallahan, 1999; Keenan, 1996; Spicer, 1993), directional relationships between multiple external news factors and media framing patterns of public relations are unclear. This study empirically explores the question of how the gender of reporters, newsroom routines, and organizational constraints as external news factors influence media representations of public relations. This study expects that those news factors will make news media portray public relations in negative or neutral manners.

Theoretical Framework

Because this study examines the question of how external news factors influence news media's framing of public relations, two conceptual perspectives are necessary. The first is the definition of a media frame and its relevance to framing of public relations. The second is the nature of external news factors and their implications for the news-making process.

Media Frame and Public Relations' Attributes

A media frame refers to how news media organize and highlight news stories. Entman (1991) defined a media frame as "attributes of the news itself" (p. 7) and suggested that frames are identified by particular words, symbols, and concepts in a news story. He argued that by repeating those specific words or symbols, frames make aspects or ideas more salient in a news story. Similarly, Gamson and Modigliani (1987) characterized a media frame as "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them" (p. 143). Entman (1993) further emphasized two aspects that a frame entails: "selection and

salience" (p. 52), which indicates that frames provide problem definition, causal explanation, ethical evaluation, and solutions for the object.

McCombs and Ghanem (2001) also concurred with the notion of the organizing idea by defining a frame as an organizing principle that integrates and emphasizes a lower level of attributes. McCombs (2004) further specified a frame as a dominant perspective that organizes news presentations and personal thoughts about objects. He articulated that central themes and aspects as attributes emerge from sentences and paragraphs of a news story. As such, a dominant perspective, a frame "governs events—at least social ones--and our subjective involvement in them" (Goffman, 1974, p.10). In other words, a frame organizes issues or social events through a cognitive process.

Therefore, assuming that news media are likely to select some aspects or attributes of public relations and make them more salient than others in a news story when they describe public relations activities and practitioners is reasonable. These frames are identified by such framing devices as phrases, symbols, and sources appearing in paragraphs of a news story.

Because a media frame focuses on attributes of public relations, news media's framing patterns of public relations' attributes are directly related to valence, such as positive, negative, or neutral perspectives. For example, when the goals of public relations are contrary to the interests of the general public, news media likely emphasize negative attributes about public relations because they need to reduce the harmful effects of those public relations activities on society. Conversely, if public relations promoted positive campaigns for society, news media would focus on positive or favorable attributes about public relations. However, given the objectivity of news reporting (Tuchman, 1977), in most cases, news media would take a neutral approach to covering public relations' attributes.

These framing patterns are called framing of attributes, which creates positive, negative, or neutral associations with people's beliefs and values (Hallahan, 1999). Specific attributes of public relations in the print media include "distraction," "disaster," "challenge," "hype," "merely," "war," and "schmooze," indicating mostly negative nuance (Spicer, 1993). However, major television networks framed public relations practitioners and activities in a neutral manner (Keenan, 1996). These previous findings show that there are no clear-cut answers to the question of how frequently news media employ negative framing or neutral framing to cover public relations. In other words, there has been mixed results for media framing of public relations activities and practitioners. Given this consideration, the following research question was advanced.

> **RQ1:** To what extent is a neutral frame present in stories containing the term of public relations?

External News Factors for News Selection

External news factors hierarchically surround journalists so that each factor affects how journalists produce news. In other words, external news factors are a nested structure that consists of news norms, other news media, and news sources around journalists (McCombs, 2004). Dominant ideology and news organizations' economic, legal, or social needs are major external factors that influence journalists' news production (Berkowitz, 1987).

These considerations lead to multilevel news factors (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). First, an individual-level factor includes journalists' education, gender, or personal values and beliefs. Second, a media-routine-level factor includes newsroom routines, frequently sought information sources, and interests of the audiences. The newsroom routines also include news topics for developing story ideas and assigning news stories because such predetermined categorization saves news production time (Tuchman, 1977). Third, an organizational-level factor represents occupational positions of journalists and news organizations' economic restraints. The economic restraints include a newspaper's circulation size because circulation size is related to a newspaper's financial stability.

Indeed, journalists' individual perceptions of news events explained the media gatekeeping process (Grunig, 1983). Editors having a college-level education maintained more positive perceptions toward public relations than those having less than a college education (Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield & Cropp, 1993). Reporters' gender differences are a major factor to determine diverse media coverage patterns of issues. For instance, female editors were more likely than male editors to cover a political candidate's extramarital affair (Splichal & Garrison, 2000). When a newspaper had few female editors, male reporters focused on politics and female reporters frequently covered education stories. By contrast, male and female reporters covered similar stories when their newspaper had many female editors (Craft & Wanta, 2004). Female reporters were more likely than male reporters to cover many positive news stories and few negative stories (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). In framing the issue of the embargo on Haiti, female reporters highlighted its impact on the Haitian citizens whereas male reporters focused on its impact on the Haitian military leaders (Sutcliffe, Lee & Soderlund, 2005).

In this light, gender differences in coverage patterns and female journalists' preference for positive coverage lead to the following prediction.

H1: Female reporters are more likely than male reporters to frame public relations in a favorable manner.

In addition to the individual-level factor, journalists rely on a series of pegs, referring to "a recent event or a public official's statement which is used as a handle on which to hang their stories" (Gans, 1980, p. 168). These pegs are part of newsroom routines, which influence how journalists develop news stories. That is why local topics and local photographs are more frequently covered by newspapers (Morton & Warren, 1992a; 1992b). Predetermined news topic categories also belong to media routines,

and the distinction between hard news and soft news is a typical example. A labor division in the newsroom explains that female reporters predominantly covered soft news, such as culture and legal, and that male reporters mainly covered hard news, such as politics and business (Turley, 2006). More specifically, hard news stories cover important issues or events involving political leaders that significantly disrupt daily life, and soft news stories contain personal, sensational, or human-interest topics (Patterson, 2000). Most hard news stories are more likely than soft news stories to carry more negative portrayals of political candidates or Congress members than positive ones (Patterson, 2000). Accordingly, given such a different labor division and more negativity in hard news than in soft news, the topical distinction between hard news and soft news predicts the second hypothesis.

> **H2:** Hard news stories are more likely than soft news stories to frame public relations in a negative manner.

Furthermore, organizational constraints influence television journalists' news-making process (Berkowitz, 1987). As an example, journalists' positions in the newsroom affect how to cover public relations. That is why business news editors had harsh perceptions toward public relations, and sports news editors had favorable perceptions toward it (Pincus et al., 1993). More importantly, a newspaper's circulation size influenced sources that journalists used in news stories (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003), and newspapers with the medium circulations were more likely than newspapers with large or small circulations to cover local photographs and graphics (Morton & Warren, 1992a). News media's size further affected the reporting style of small news media so that the latter reference the former's reporting (Altheide, 1976). Because of regional or national readerships, newspapers with large circulation size will have diverse contact with public relations companies and practitioners and often experience negative public relations activities. By contrast, small newspapers will face a different situation because of their limited readership and close correspondence with local public relations agencies. Thus, circulation size predicts the following hypothesis.

> **H3:** Large newspapers are more likely than small newspapers to frame public relations in a negative manner.

Method

Sampling Procedure

The sample frame was Bacon's Newspaper Directory (2004). To collect daily newspapers, this study used the U.S. daily newspapers' four circulation categories developed by Newspaper Association of America (2004) because of a focus on circulation size. In other words, the selected daily newspapers should capture the smallest to the largest circulation size. The four circulation categories included below 50,000 (the first category); 50,000-100,000 (the second category); 100,001-250,000 (the third category); and over 250,000 (the fourth category). A stratified random

sampling procedure for selecting newspapers was used, and each stratum was the circulation category.

Given these considerations, the first category included *Lancaster New Era*, PA and *Daily Review*, CA; the second category had *Topeka Capital-Journal*, KS and *Oakland Tribune*, CA; the third category contained *San Antonio Express-news*, TX and *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, NV; and the fourth category included *Seattle Times*, WA and *Denver Post*, CO. The selected eight newspapers allowed this study to examine the effects of circulation size on media framing of public relations, although the sample hardly captured a representative sample from the population of all U.S. daily newspapers. The time frame was one year from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004. Because this study explored the relationship between external news factors and media framing of public relations, the time frame was acceptable.

During the time frame, to collect a large pool of stories containing portrayals or descriptions of public relations, this study used two general search terms: "Public relations" and "PR." These two search terms were reliably used in prior research (Jo, 2003; Keenan, 1996; Spicer, 1993). Specifically, this study identified each of the selected eight newspapers from the news source list of the LexisNexis Academic and searched stories containing the two terms. In social science, the LexisNexis has been widely used as a valid resource for selecting representative news stories regarding a specific research topic (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Cecil, 2002; Lawrence, 2004). Next, this study chose the options "OR" and "Full Text" in the search box of the LexisNexis and entered "Public relations," and "PR" in the search box.

The validity of the two search terms was verified by an examination of a sentence containing the terms. For instance, when "public relations" or "PR" in a specific sentence was not directly related to public relations, the terms were excluded. In some cases, the initials "PR" had a different meaning, such as "personal record" in football. Those stories were eliminated. Wire service stories, readers' letters, news summaries, obituaries, and advertisements were also excluded because they did not contain any cues for the newspapers' framing of public relations. Editorials and opinions were also excluded because they did not contain any information on the gender of reporters. Through these procedures, the search terms produced a total of 889 news stories consisting of 80 stories for the first category; 90 stories for the second category; 333 stories for the third category; and 386 stories for the fourth category. This sample size achieved comparable accuracy for examining the research question and the hypotheses because a research design with categorical variables requires a large sample size (Loehlin, 2004).

Measures of Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variables were external news factors, which included the gender of reporters as an individual-level factor; topics of news stories as a media-routine-level factor; and circulation size as an organizational-level factor.

The gender of reporters was determined on the basis of bylines from stories. To verify the gender, the authors visited each newspaper' Web site and double-checked the gender of the reporters in every byline. Specifically, the gender was coded (1) a male reporter and (0) a female reporter. The topics of the news stories were measured as (1) politics, (2) economics, (3) culture, (4) sports, (5) international, (6) general news, including national and local, and (7) others. These topic categories were based on prior research (Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Lacy, Sohn, & Stephens, 1989; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006) that showed that politics, culture, sports, national news, international, and business were major news topics. Politics, economy, and international were defined as hard news, and culture, sports and general news were defined as soft news (Patterson, 2000; Turley, 2006).

The circulation size of newspapers was measured by the daily newspapers' four circulation categories provided by Newspaper Association of America (2004). The first category, the second category, the third category, and the fourth category indicated "below 50,000," "50,000-100,000," "100,001-250,000," and "over 250,000," respectively. Large newspapers were defined as newspapers falling into either the third category or the fourth category. Small newspapers were defined as newspapers falling into either the first category or the second category.

The dependent variable was framing patterns of the newspapers for public relations. On the basis of prior research (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; McCombs, 2004; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001), the dependent variable was defined as a dominant journalistic perspective on public relations, which consisted of three frames: (1) a negative frame, (2) a positive frame, and (3) a neutral frame. Prior research (Hallahan, 1999) also located similar frames, such as a negative frame and a positive frame in public relations campaign.

Negative, positive, and neutral frames were identified by reading an entire story with a special focus on specific words, phrases, and symbols in a news story. This approach is a reliable measure because words and a phrase contain frames (Entman, 1991), and symbols signify the viewpoints of newspapers (Chang, 1988; Kim, 2000). In this respect, symbols, words and phrases capture a frame developer's standpoints on issues (Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber & Fan, 1998).

On the basis of prior research (Bennett, 1980), symbols were defined as terms or phrases in a news story that represented other objects or meanings. Examples of symbols included "PR center," "Public relations guru," "The uphill battle of public relations," and "Public relations hit." Multiple frames could be present in a news story. For example, if the lead of a story contained a negative frame and other parts of a story had neutral and positive frames, the story was coded into the one containing a negative frame because the lead identifies the most important attributes or facts given a story's inverted pyramid structure (Ytreberg, 2001). This coding was consistent with the definition of the dependent variable as a dominant journalistic perspective on public relations.

A positive frame was signified by such words, phrases, or symbols as "Power of public relations and good will," "Be wonderful PR," or "Citing public relations' importance." This frame meant that newspapers described public relations activities and practitioners in terms of favorable, supportive, or positive perspectives. A negative frame was indicated by such words, phrases, or symbols as "PR damage," "Public relations disaster," or "A PR blackeye." This frame explained that newspapers identified problems about public relations activities and practitioners and expressed unfavorable, oppositional, or negative viewpoints about them. A neutral frame was signified by such words, phrases, or symbols as "Launch a public relations campaign," "Millions more on lobbying and public relations activities," or "Public relations manager." This frame indicated that newspapers expressed neutral viewpoints on public relations activities and practitioners or did not clarify their positions about them.

The unit of analysis was a news story that contained the independent and dependent variables. To detect how the three independent variables influenced the three frames, this study used a multinomial logistic regression technique. The technique efficiently illustrates influential relationships between independent variables and dependent variables when independent variables are not continuous and dependent variables have more than two levels and their relationship is not linear. In this study, the three frames constituted three levels of a public relations frame. Furthermore, the technique does not assume the normal distribution of dependent variables (Schwab, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

This study adopted a two-step process to accomplish the intercoder reliability. First, two authors tested coding schemes and performed the intercoder reliability on the randomly selected 10 % of 889 news stories. Cohen kappa was used because news topics had large coding values ranging from one to seven. Cohen kappa was .80 with regard to all the independent and dependent variables. After the agreement reached a satisfactory level, each of the authors coded approximately the half of the remaining news stories.

Results

First, according to prior guidelines (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), this study checked any high correlations among the independent variables because high correlations indicate some of the independent variables are virtually redundant. The presence of any extreme cases was also examined. Accordingly, no high correlations and extreme cases were found. The multinomial logistic regression in SPSS 13.0 shows that goodness-of-fit statistics with the gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size in the model demonstrated an excellent fit because two fit indicators, Pearson criterion and Deviance criterion, were significant (p =.006 and p = .047, respectively). In addition, the gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size significantly improved the model (a maximum likelihood for gender: p <.001, news topics: p = .047, circulation size: p <.001). Therefore, the gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size significantly predicted how the eight newspapers framed public relations. To locate conclusive evidence for media framing of public relations, this study further performed a

crosstabs analysis that produced meaningful relationships between the three external news factors and the three public relations frames.

The research question asked to what extent a neutral frame was found in stories containing the term of public relations. A neutral frame was dominant (82.8%), followed by a negative frame (9.9%) and a positive frame (7.3%).

Table 1: *Relationship Between a Reporter's Gender and Three Public Relations Frames*

Frame	Male reporter	Female reporter
Neutral frame	480(82.1%)	256(84.2%)
Negative frame	72(12.3)	16(5.3)
Positive frame	33(5.6)	32(10.5)
Total	585(100)	304(100)

χ^2 (1, *df* = 2) = 16.671, *p* <.001

The first hypothesis predicted that female reporters were more likely than male reporters to cover public relations in a favorable manner. As presented in Table 1, there was a significant relationship between the gender of reporters and the three public relations frames (χ^2 (1, *df* = 2) = 16.671, *p* <.001). Both male and female reporters used a neutral frame most frequently. However, female reporters used a positive frame (10.5%) more frequently than a negative frame (5.3%). By contrast, male reporters used a negative frame (12.3%) more often than a positive frame (5.6%). Thus, the first hypothesis was partially supported.

Table 2: *Relationship between News Topics and Three Public Relations Frames*

Frame	Politics[a]	Economy[a]	International[a]	Culture[b]	Sports[b]	General news[b]
Neutral frame	49(75.4%)	99(83.2%)	9(60.0%)	159(91.4%)	98(81.0%)	322(81.5%)
Negative frame	9(13.8)	10(8.4)	2(13.3)	7(4.0)	15(12.4)	45(11.4)
Positive frame	7(10.8)	10(8.4)	4(26.7)	8(4.6)	8(6.6)	28(7.1)
Total	65(100)	119(100)	15(100)	174(100)	121(100)	395(100)

χ^2 (1, *df* = 10) = 23.044, *p* =.011
[a] hard news [b] soft news

The second hypothesis predicted that hard news stories were more likely than soft news stories to cover public relations in a negative manner. Table 2 shows that news topics was significantly related with the three public relations frames (χ^2 (1, *df* = 10) = 23.044, *p* =.011). Hard news stories used negative and positive frames more frequently than soft news stories did. A neutral frame of public relations was the most

frequently used in both hard and soft news stories. The second hypothesis was partially supported.

Table 3: *Relationship between Circulation Size and Three Public Relations Frames*

Frame	under 50,000	50,001 to 100,000	100,001 to 250,000	over 250,001
Neutral frame	65(81.3%)	69(76.7%)	292(87.7%)	310(80.3%)
Negative frame	3(3.8)	8(8.9)	24(7.2)	53(13.7)
Positive frame	12(15)	13(14.4)	17(5.1)	23(6.0)
Total	80(100)	90(100)	333(100)	386(100)

χ^2 (1, *df* = 6) = 28.907, *p* <.001

The third hypothesis predicted that large newspapers were more likely than small newspapers to cover public relations in a negative manner. Table 3 indicates that there was a significant relationship between circulation size and the three public relations frames (χ^2 (1, *df* = 6) = 28.907, *p* <.001). Both large and small newspapers framed public relations mostly in a neutral manner. Yet, interesting differences emerged when negative and positive frames were compared. Large newspapers used a negative frame more frequently than a positive frame, whereas small newspapers used a positive frame more frequently than a negative frame. Therefore, the third hypothesis was partially supported.

Discussion

A multinomial logistic regression analysis identifies three significant external news factors that predict media framing of public relations: the gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size of newspapers. A neutral frame is dominant, and given a comparison of negative and positive frames, female reporters are more likely than male reporters to be favorable toward public relations. Large newspapers are likely to be negative toward public relations, and small newspapers are likely to be favorable toward it. Negative and positive frames are more present in hard news than in soft news.

Four possible explanations emerge regarding these findings. First, in most cases, journalists take a neutral approach to framing public relations, which supports prior research (Keenan, 1996). Given the consideration that journalists hardly disregard the principle of objectivity in covering news events, the present study's finding is expected. Journalists are unlikely to be critical or supportive of public relations without any trustworthy, reliable facts or sources.

Second, there are significant gender differences in media framing of public relations. Male reporters are more critical of public relations than female reporters when negative and positive frames are compared. Female reporters take more favorable approaches to framing public relations than male reporters. This favorable tendency of

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female reporters supports prior research (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003), which found that female reporters were more likely than male reporters to cover positive news. The gender differences in news coverage can be explained by a gender model (Aven, Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Dodd-McCue & Wright, 1996). The model assumes that female workers have a different level of commitment toward organizations than male workers because female workers establish their identity on the basis of family roles (Aven, Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Dodd-McCue & Wright, 1996). Accordingly, in the present study, reporters' gender as an individual-level factor influences media framing of public relations.

Given the fact that male reporters are dominant in the newsroom (Turley, 2006), the gender differences in framing public relations further demonstrate the role of framing setters for covering public relations. If male reporters are likely to apply a negative frame to covering public relations more frequently than female reporters, the public's perceptions toward public relations would reflect the negative frame. By contrast, female reporters' positive framing of public relations may lead the public to take favorable stances toward public relations. This influence of media framing patterns on the public's perceptions toward public relations activities has been implicated in prior research (Keenan, 1996).

Third, negative and positive perspectives of public relations are more frequently found in hard news such as politics, economy, and international news than in soft news such as culture, sports, and general news. Negative and positive perspectives in hard news are equally found. Prior research (Turley, 2006) points out a labor division where coverage of soft news goes to female reporters and coverage of hard news goes to male reporters. However, in the eight newspapers in this study, there may not be such a distinct labor division that facilitates any directional associations between the gender of reporters and news topics. Given the finding that there are 3.5 times as many soft news stories (690 stories) as hard news stories (199 stories), the implications of a labor division for distinction between hard news and soft news covering public relations activities need to be further examined.

Fourth, although a neutral frame is dominant in both large and small newspapers, this dominance does not negate marked differences in patterns of negative and positive frames in large and small newspapers. Large newspapers take more critical and skeptical approaches to public relations, whereas small newspapers take relatively favorable stances toward public relations. This combination of neutral and negative frames is in part consistent with prior research (Cameron et al., 1997; Shin & Cameron, 2005), which suggests that journalists have negative perceptions and attitudes toward public relations. To this individual-level explanation, this study adds one more important factor, which is circulation size as an organizational constraint.

Furthermore, the influence of circulation size on media framing of public relations indicates that media framing of public relations is related not only to a psychological process, but also to a social or macro-level mechanism, such as contact environments of journalists with public relations. Although the present findings do not permit this study

to explain why large newspapers tend to be more negative than small newspapers, such a macro-level mechanism allows the following speculative notions.

Unlike small newspapers, large newspapers are likely to have the chance to frequently contact diverse public relations companies and practitioners because of their large readership across regions. This frequent exposure to public relations will often lead to encounters with bad public relations. Accordingly, while maintaining neutral journalistic perspectives, large newspapers focus on negative attributes of public relations in a story. The relationship between local public relations practitioners and small newspapers may be different. If competition among public relations companies in a local community were not as intense as those in a metropolitan area, small newspapers would have a symbiotic, close relationship with a limited number of local public relations practitioners. Budget constraints may limit their contact with diverse public relations agencies in other regional or metropolitan areas. This particular local setting might lead small newspapers to often produce supportive or favorable coverage of public relations. These two speculations need to be examined by future research.

Disparities in news judgments determined by organizational constraints may also explain different coverage patterns of public relations between small and large newspapers. For instance, in covering issues or events about public relations, newspapers based in large cities and those based in small cities would rely on inherently different news judgment that is influenced by their organizational constraints. As evidence for this argument, suburban daily newspapers displayed different coverage patterns regarding topics and geographic areas, but Metropolitan daily newspapers were similar in their emphasis and coverage patterns (Lacy et al., 1989).

Because media framing patterns of public relations differ with the gender of reporters, news topics, and the circulation size of newspapers, some practical implications need to be clarified. From the viewpoint of public relations practitioners, if the practitioners are not satisfied with neutral coverage of public relations, they need to take strategic approaches to male and female reporters by considering the size of newspapers that they work for and news topics that they cover. For the public, different framing patterns of public relations according to the gender of reporters, news topics, and circulation size require the public to examine critically coverage of public relations. Before reading a news story about public relations, they need to ask themselves "Who covers the story? "What topic does it deal with?" and "Is it published in a large newspaper or a small newspaper?" This self-screening process will lead to the public's critical evaluation of media framing patterns of public relations.

Some other variables are not examined, such as political affiliation of each newspaper such as conservative, liberal, or independent. Ownership type, such as publicly or privately held newspapers, and local newspapers versus national newspapers need to be considered for follow-up studies. Interviews with journalists who have had experience of covering public relations activities and practitioners would be necessary. Finally, this study was based on the year of 2004. This focus could draw attention from critical readers. The relationship between news media and public

relations are likely to change over time, and thus framing patterns are likely to vary. Therefore, a comparison of data over time would be informative, such as a comparison of the data in 2004 and those in 2007.

Conclusion

      This study confirms the notion that external news factors matter, specifically, in framing public relations. Specifically, the gender of reporters, news topics, and the circulation size of newspapers are significant predictors of media framing of public relations. This predictive relationship between the external news factors and media framing of public relations indicates the need for cross-level research in the news-making process. News content is nested within various levels of influential factors, which include journalists' characteristics, media routines, organization constraints, environment outside news media, and ideological values of a society. Follow-up studies on the topical areas are necessary.

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