

PR in the News: How a Sample of Network Newscasts Framed Public Relations

Emily Kinsky and Coy Callison

Content analysis was conducted on a random sample of news stories using PR-related terms on ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news broadcasts from 1997 to 2005. A Lexis-Nexis keyword search resulted in 530 transcripts using common references to public relations. Of the 530 stories resulting from the search, 36% were randomly selected for coding. Out of the list of 12 referencing terms, the most common was "public relations." Overall, the terms were used properly more often than improperly, but the most common type of reference was a cliché. Terms were used negatively more often than positively or neutrally. Politics/government stories had the most negative framing of PR.

Introduction

Public relations practitioners want their clients discussed positively in the news. When a product or event is discussed by journalists, that third-party endorsement lends credibility to the information and to some extent the organization or product (Callison, 2001; Lamons, 2002; Murphy, 2001). For some, a positive mention on the network news is the epitome of a successful placement. It is important to know what happens, though, when network news anchors and reporters throw around phrases like "public relations battle," "PR nightmare," or "PR war," and say that a company's positive actions amount to "*just* public relations." Through content analysis, this study seeks to systematically examine the use of the term "public relations" and related terms on network evening news broadcasts from 1997 to 2005.

Literature Review

Five earlier studies directly relate to the current research focus: the examination of the use of the term "public relations" and/or related euphemisms by the news media. Previous researchers focused on print, broadcast, or both. Related articles have examined the portrayal of public relations practitioners and other communications professionals in fictional television programming, films, or novels, while others have

Emily Kinsky, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Division at Pepperdine University, emily.kinsky@pepperdine.edu.

Coy Callison, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University, coy.callison@ttu.edu.

investigated the perceptions of public relations practitioners by journalists and the public at large. Considering the recent research revealing the negative public opinion held against public relations and its practitioners (Callison, 2001; Callison, 2004; Callison & Zillmann, 2002; Jo, 2003; Sallot, 2002;), how the media present the PR industry and its professionals is of key importance and may help explain the poor perception. An investigation of media portrayal and its influence on audience attitude and opinion necessarily is grounded in research conducted in priming and framing.

Theoretical Basis: Priming & Framing

Priming is often studied in relation to politics with the basic idea being that viewers are prepared, or primed, to think about certain topics (Dillard & Pfau, 2002; Pan & Kosicki, 1997; Sears, 1993). Generally, studies focus on the top news stories of the day and how their presentation in the media prompts people to mentally process the information. While political issues are often investigated in priming studies (see Druckman, 2004; Mendelsohn, 1996; Miller & Krosnick, 1997), there is no reason to believe the influences of coverage are limited to the political arena. Desire for certain products, changes in attitude toward healthcare, and encouragement or discouragement of racial prejudice have all been discussed when it comes to priming abilities of the media (Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996; Yi, 1993; Zhao, Sayeed, & Capella, 2006).

Sears (1993) states that viewing television news coverage of certain issues primes "the individual's attitudes toward that issue, making them more accessible and more influential" (p. 138). Iyengar and Kinder (1987) tested the priming hypothesis with 14 experiments and concluded "that television news powerfully influences which problems viewers regard as the nation's most serious" (p. 4). One of their sequential experiments showed news content to three groups: one group observed news about shortcomings in defense preparedness; a second group watched news focused on economic problems; and a third group viewed news about pollution. Participants answered a questionnaire prior to the six days of news viewing and another questionnaire following exposure. Both questionnaires asked respondents about the most important problems facing the nation and the president's performance. Results revealed that when primed on defense (or inflation or pollution), subjects judged the president by his performance in relation to the nation's defense (or economy or environment).

Mendelsohn (1996) stated that since Iyengar and Kinder's introduction of the idea of priming into the world of political science, many other studies have confirmed their findings. The media "can provoke opinion or behavior change not because individuals alter their beliefs or evaluations of objects, but because they alter the relative weight they give to various considerations that make up the ultimate evaluation" (Mendelsohn, 1996, p. 113). Mendelsohn examined an election in Canada and found

that voter sophistication does not thwart priming and concluded that involvement in political conversations does prime issues.

According to Iyengar and Simon (1993), framing, like priming, is related to agenda-setting. Framing involves the presentation of information by the media, but it appears to have more levels of complexity than priming. Bateson (1972) first offered the illustration of a picture frame. Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991) further explained that the frame determines what is included, what is excluded, and it gives a tone to the issue. Tankard et al. (1991) stated that frames include the topic, its presentation, and both cognitive and affective attributes. Goffman (1974) described frames as more of a schematic set-up in the brain that allowed people to organize new information through symbols and stereotypes.

Iyengar and Simon (1993) specified two types of frames: episodic (specific occurrences) and thematic (general topics). Ghanem (1997) stated that framing, as opposed to priming, involves the media trying to tell citizens *how* to think about a topic. Chyi and McCombs (2004) discussed how journalists often change the frame to keep a continuing story interesting. They suggested “thinking of frames as attributes of an object” (p. 24). Subsequently, it becomes increasingly important to investigate not only what topics the news media choose to air but also the manner in which the media present the topics.

Portrayals of Public Relations Practitioners by the Media

Researchers have examined the depiction of various occupations in the media. Specifically, prime-time television has been a popular analysis area for occupation portrayals (see DeFleur, 1964; Gerbner, 1966; Gersh, 1991; Good, 1986; Mahon, 1994; Signorielli, 1993; Spaulding & Beasley, 2003; Stone & Lee, 1990; Tavcar, 1993). Focusing on news media portrayals of public relations, Keenan (1996) performed a census of the terms “public relations” and “PR” mentioned in network news broadcasts from 1980 to 1995 using the Vanderbilt archive of television news abstracts. The most commonly mentioned benefactors of public relations were politicians or foreign governments, and the most popular story themes included war (either literal or metaphorical) or disaster (including disaster clichés). The presentation of practitioners was generally in the role of press agent. Keenan found an increase in the mention of the public relations terms over that 16-year period. Keenan also coded the stories as positive, negative, or neutral in tone. While his results showed a majority of these 79 news stories used a neutral tone when discussing public relations, negative stories outnumbered positive ones.

Jo (2003) examined both print and broadcast news and the use of the term public relations from October 1998 to October 2001. Jo coded the type of organization mentioned (business, government, non-profit, citizen group, or politician/celebrity), the news story type (straight, feature, opinion column, or editorial), the purpose of PR

portrayed (persuasion, advocacy, public information, cause-related, image-reputation, or relationship management), and the treatment of public relations within the story (positive, negative, or neutral). He found that public relations most commonly had a negative connotation when used in business or government-based stories, as opposed to the positive portrayal public relations received in stories about non-profit organizations. Additionally, Jo found that stories mentioning public relations generally referred to publicity campaigns, image-making efforts, persuasion, or marketing.

Bishop's (1988) examination of public relations mentions in the media entailed a study of one month's editions of three different newspapers. His sample included more than 16,000 articles, but only three were found to use "PR," and none were found using the terms public relations or public information. On the other hand, 121 articles used the term "publicity."

In other research, Tankard and Sumpter (1993) performed a content analysis of articles using the term "spin doctor" from 1982 to 1992. The researchers wanted "to look at how the spin doctors, who are attempting to set the news frames for other issues, are themselves framed by the mass media" (1993, n.p.). They recorded the frequency of use, the source using the term, and the tone – whether the term was used disparagingly or not. The number of times "spin doctor" was used increased over time ending with 1,553 in the final year of their study. Their results show the term was more often used by reporters (85%) than interview subjects. The term was used pejoratively in 46% of the mentions. Interestingly, this pejorative use decreased over time, from 70% in 1989 to 25% in 1992. According to Tankard and Sumpter (1993), "Rather than pointing the finger at media manipulation, as the term did when it was first used, the effect has become one of trivializing media manipulation" (n.p.). The authors concluded that journalists have come to accept spin doctors and no longer always use the term as a subtle jab.

Spicer (1993) used convenience sampling to collect stories, cartoons, and editorials that used the terms "public relations" or "PR" in the print media. He analyzed 84 items, 88.9% of which were from newspapers. He performed inductive thematic analysis allowing themes to emerge as his study progressed. Spicer's ultimate categories of how "public relations and PR are given subjective meaning in the print media" were titled: distraction, disaster, challenge, hype, merely, war, and schmooze. Spicer determined that "clearly there is not simply one meaning, either positive or negative, attributable to the terms" (p. 58). In his analysis, 83% of the sample used the terms in a negative or unfavorable way. According to Spicer, "Reporters, editors, headline writers, and cartoonists subjectively embed and reinforce negative connotations about public relations through their use of the terms public relations and PR" (p. 58).

Henderson (1998) followed the lead of Bishop and Spicer in her focus on the use of the terms "public relations" and "PR" by print media. She analyzed 100 articles

published from January 1995 to December 1996. Henderson created “a taxonomy of the connotative meanings of the term ‘public relations’ as used in the popular print media” (p. 48). She placed each story in one of eight categories: “public relations used correctly,” “public relations as a corrupter of the channels of communication,” “public relations as a corrupter of democracy,” “public relations as sleight of hand,” “public relations and winners and losers,” “public relations as disaster,” “public relations misused as synonym,” and “miscellaneous” (p. 48-50). She found that “public relations” was used accurately only 5% of the time. Her conclusion was that “apparently only a minority of the people who are writing for the mass media understand the phrase and the profession, at least well enough to use them correctly” (p. 51). Her findings include a low positive rating for the use of the term public relations (7.4 %). According to Henderson, “consistent with surveys of journalists, the implication is that they have a negative impression of the profession” (p. 53).

The study of the portrayal of the field of public relations and its practitioners in the media has spanned almost two decades, but much is left to uncover. The studies of Bishop (1988), Henderson (1998), Jo (2003), Keenan (1996), and Spicer (1993) offer baseline examinations of the presentation of public relations and its practitioners in the news. These portrayals of public relations in the media may be affecting how viewers perceive PR practitioners and the industry, in general. Building upon the foundational research efforts by scholars, research is still needed that employs scientific, random sampling of stories in the news that use the terms “public relations” and “PR,” among others. Besides the non-probability samples conducted by earlier researchers, several of the previous studies are weakened by their use of abstracts or summaries rather than complete transcripts. The current study seeks to fill this gap.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The main purpose of this study is to determine how “PR” and other public relations euphemisms are used by the network news media. Several hypotheses and research questions guide the study.

It is likely that there are differences between the handling of public relations terms by different networks and their personnel. Specifically the authors wondered whether anchor people, reporters, or interview subjects are more likely to use PR-related terms and in what context the terms are used. Perhaps some members of the media are using PR terms more accurately and framing the industry more positively than others. The authors wanted to search for patterns of usage by certain networks, anchors, and reporters. Finally, the researchers wondered how often public relations is simply thrown in as an unrelated cliché.

RQ1: How are public relations terms used on the network evening news (1997-2005) based on story topic, manner of use, and speakers using the terms?

Based on Henderson (1998), the researchers expect to see an inaccurate use of terminology, thus it is postulated that:

H1: Public relations terms will be used inaccurately more than they will be used accurately.

Based on Henderson (1998), Keenan (1996), Spicer (1993), and Tankard and Sumpter (1993), the researchers expect to see a large number of stories that negatively frame public relations.

H2: Public relations terms will be used negatively more often than they will be used positively.

While the researchers expect the terms to be used negatively, the authors are interested to know which story topics have more negative framing of public relations. Therefore, the question is asked:

RQ2: What types of stories are more likely to use public relations terms in a negative sense?

Method

Content analysis was employed to analyze the use of 12 public relations-related terms on the network evening news broadcasts from ABC, CBS, and NBC aired between January 1997 and December 2005. The search for the transcripts was conducted via Lexis-Nexis, a content analysis tool applauded for its ease of access and thoroughness (Tankard, Hendrickson, & Lee, 1994). A keyword search resulted in 530 stories using the following terms: community relations, corporate communications, corporate marketing, flack, media relations, public affairs, public information, public relations, PR, publicist, press agent, and spin doctor. The keywords were chosen based upon their acceptance as common references for public relations (Wilcox & Cameron, 2006). Of the 530 stories resulting from the search, 193 (36%) were randomly selected for coding.

The authors noted basic facts about each story including the day of the week, the month, date, and year, the story's title, the length of the story (number of words), and the network. Also recorded were the names of the anchor and reporter associated with each story, the main focus of every story, the organization supposedly using public relations, whether public relations was central to the story, the overall impression on the PR industry, the type of PR reference, each term's valence (positive, negative, or neutral), and whether it was a proper use of the term.

Operational Definitions

A term was deemed properly used if it followed the explanation of public relations given by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (as cited in Wilcox & Cameron, 2006): “public relations is the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 5). If the term did not follow this definition, it was determined to be an improper use. Often, improper uses of terms involved clichés such as “PR nightmare.”

With regard to the valence of the individual PR-related terms, the researchers coded the use of each term in the stories as positive, negative, or neutral. The definitions for those levels were pulled from Jo’s (2003) study:

A positive meaning displays the positive role of public relations, suggesting the accurate meaning of public relations and a beneficial outcome to an organization. *A negative* meaning involves a dilemma of image, or failure of reputation management toward the organization. In this case, public relations was portrayed in a derogatory manner. *A neutral* meaning denoted a general adjectival use of public relations as in the phrases public relations strategy and public relations campaign. (italics added, p. 402-403)

Using Hosti’s (1969) method, intercoder reliability was tested on a random selection of 30% of the stories. Intercoder reliability was found to be 83%. The remainder of the stories were divided randomly and coded separately by the researchers.

Results

Term Usage Research Question

In an initial investigation of the data, analyses revealed 530 stories that used public relations-related terms between 1997 and 2005 on ABC, CBS, and NBC network evening news. RQ1 asked about differences between the use of the terms based on topic, manner of use, and the speaker using those terms. In the current sample of approximately one third (193) of the total number of news stories, public relations-related terms were found 226 times. The term used most often was public relations (59.3%). The second most common term, PR, was used less than half as often (27.4%). The other terms used within this sample were community relations (0.4%), corporate communications (0.4%), public affairs (6.2%), public information (1.3%), publicist (2.7%), and spin doctor (2.2%). The terms corporate marketing, flack, media relations, and press agent were also searched on Lexis-Nexis, but they were not found in this sample of stories.

Story topic. In investigations of topics of stories in which public relations terms are used, the most common story topic involved politics/government (34.1%). The second most common story type was war/military (18.1%). Other types of stories included a focus on business (14.6%), celebrity/entertainment (10.2%), trial/crime (9.3%), non-profit organization/event (4.4%), health (2.7%), teasers to open the news (1.3%), and sports (0.4%). Eleven stories did not fit one of the categories (4.9%).

Manner of use. The type of PR reference within the story tended to fall into the cliché category most often (45.1%), followed by descriptions of actual PR efforts (31.9%). The terms were also used as job titles (13.7%), business names (0.9%), and “other” (8.4%). The other category included the mention of someone’s job description and general references to a business or firm.

Speakers using terms. Out of 16 anchors involved in stories using PR terms during this time period, the anchors most commonly connected with the stories were Tom Brokaw of NBC (20.8%), Peter Jennings of ABC (23.5%), and Dan Rather of CBS (23.9%). Ninety-one reporters were involved in these 193 stories. The most commonly associated reporters included: Andrea Mitchell (4.4%), John Roberts (4.4%), Sharyl Attkisson (3.5%), Bill Whitaker (2.7%), Bob Faw (2.2%), George Lewis (2.2%), and Jackie Judd (2.2%). The frequency of term usage by networks showed CBS as the leader with 35% of the mentions, followed closely by ABC with 34.5%, and NBC with 30.5%.

Of those who actually *used* the term in the news story, reporters were the most common (60.2%). Besides reporters, those using public relations terms included anchors (18.1%) and interview subjects (11.9%). Reporters also sometimes quoted other sources as using PR-related terms (1.3%). There were also times when a public relations term was not spoken but was visible on the screen as someone’s title (7.5%). The frequency of use of public relations terms by the top three anchors showed Jennings saying the terms more (6.6%) than Rather (3.1%) and Brokaw (4.0%).

Significant differences were found using crosstabs analysis based on the individuals using the term and the type of stories (χ^2 (4, N = 225) = 10.61, $p < .05$). When comparing reporters’ use of public relations terms and the story topics they covered, the data suggest that reporters use public relations-related terms more in war or government-related stories (59.9%) than in business (9.5%), entertainment (8.8%), trial/crime (9.5%), or other topics (12.4%). This is likely due to the world events occurring during the final five years of this study, including 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, and the beginning of the war in Iraq. There was a jump from one war story using a PR term in 2000 to seven in 2001, which continued to a peak of 10 in 2003 with U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq.

In business stories, other sources, including anchor people and interview subjects, tended to use public relations euphemisms more than reporters (59.4%). An

equal number of reporters (12) and other sources (12) used public relations-related terms in entertainment stories.

Proper Use Hypothesis

Overall, the public relations terms were used properly (58.4%) more often than improperly (41.6%). This contradicts H1, which proposed that public relations terms would be used inaccurately more than they would be accurately; however, investigation of the top two most commonly occurring terms revealed a difference in usage. According to crosstabs data analysis, the most common PR-related terms used in these stories were not used in the same manner ($\chi^2 (1, N = 196) = 4.37, p < .05$). A review of the data suggests that the term "PR" is used properly on the evening network news 64.5% of the time; however, the term "public relations" is used properly only 48.5%.

The accuracy of term usage by networks was examined as well. According to crosstabs data analysis, there was no difference in the treatment of the terms by network in a proper versus improper manner ($\chi^2 (2, N = 226) = 4.38, p > .05$).

Valence of Terms Hypothesis

With regard to the stories' portrayal of the overall industry of public relations, the majority of stories were neutral (64.2%). Thirty percent were negative and approximately five percent were positive in their portrayal of the industry in general. While negative stories did not comprise the majority, these results still suggest that the public relations industry as a whole receives a serious amount of negative coverage in the nightly broadcast news.

The valence of the use of each term was also rated as positive, negative, or neutral. The most common valence rating was negative (48.7%), followed by neutral (46.9%), and lastly, by positive (4.4%). There were so few positive stories that to perform statistical analysis on the valence of the most common terms used (PR and public relations), positive and neutral were combined into a "non-harmful" category. According to crosstabs analysis, there was no difference in the treatment of the top terms (PR and public relations) with regard to the individual terms' valence as harmful or non-harmful ($\chi^2 (1, N = 196) = .42, p > .05$). The same combination of positive and neutral into a non-harmful category was also required to compare the valence of the overall story and the most common terms used. According to crosstabs data analysis, there was also no difference in the use of "PR" and "public relations" and the overall impression on the public relations industry ($\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 1.43, p > .05$).

An examination of the valence of public relations terms based on the network airing each story shows a significant difference according to crosstabs analysis ($\chi^2 (2, N = 226) = 8.68, p < .05$). Further investigation of the data suggests that ABC had the biggest share of non-harmful (positive/neutral) framing (39.7%) compared to NBC

(34.5%) and CBS (25.9%). While ABC's and NBC's use of PR-related terms were more often non-harmful (59% and 58%, respectively), CBS's stories were more often potentially harmful (62%). According to crosstabs analysis, there were no differences between the network and the *overall* impression on the PR industry ($\chi^2 (2, N = 225) = 2.82, p > .05$).

The top three anchors were also examined for their connection with PR-related terms in a harmful (negative) or non-harmful (positive and neutral combined) manner. This included their actual use of the terms and their interactions with reporters or other sources using the terms. Based on frequency, the results seemed to point toward Dan Rather as a more negative framer of public relations. Unlike the other two anchors, a majority of the stories he was involved with framed PR terms negatively (61.1%); however, crosstabs failed to show that the difference was significant ($\chi^2 (2, N = 154) = 5.21, p = .07$). Therefore, there were no significant differences found based on the top three anchors (Brokaw, Jennings, and Rather) when investigating the valence of the individual terms. There were also no significant differences based on these anchors' involvement with the proper use of the terms ($\chi^2 (2, N = 154) = 4.31, p > .05$) or their overall impression on the industry ($\chi^2 (2, N = 154) = .53, p > .05$).

Story Topic and Valence Research Question

With regard to the focus of the story, crosstabs analysis reveals a difference in the valence of the public relations-related terms based on the story topic ($\chi^2 (5, N = 226) = 11.90, p < .05$). The data suggests that celebrity/entertainment stories tended to frame public relations terms more positively or neutrally (70.8%) than negatively, while trial/crime stories and stories about politics/government were more negative (71.4% and 54.5%, respectively) than positive/neutral. The most common focus for non-harmful (positive/neutral) stories was politics/government (30.2%). Additionally, the most common focus for harmful (negative) stories was also politics/government (38.2%). This data answers RQ2, which asked what story topics would be more likely to use PR-related terms in a negative manner.

Discussion

Numerous references using PR euphemisms were found on network evening newscasts between 1997 and 2005. The most common term found in this sample was "public relations," followed by "PR." The reason these are so commonly found may be tied directly to the frequent use of them within trite sayings like "public relations disaster," "public relations war," or "public relations nightmare." The number of clichés is disheartening. To have more than 45% of the PR references come in the form of a platitude is likely to send a message that the industry itself is stale.

Other terms used in the news reports in this sample included community relations, corporate communications, public affairs, public information, publicist, and

spin doctor. The terms flack, corporate marketing, media relations, and press agent were not used in these stories. It was encouraging not to see the disparaging term flack used in any descriptions of public relations efforts.

Politics/government was the most common focus of news stories using PR-related terms, followed by war/military. The prevalent number of stories in these categories is likely connected to world events. With regard to the news teams using these terms, 17 anchors and 91 reporters were involved in the 193 stories in this sample. Reporters were the most likely speakers to use a PR-related term. The PR references found in this study tended to be clichés. Surprisingly, actual PR efforts were also described in a number of stories. Other terms were shown on the screen as a source's job title or place of work or mentioned as someone's job was described.

The four main significant findings from this study involve the proper/improper use of the top two terms (PR and public relations); who said the term and the focus of the story; the network airing the term and whether its use was deemed harmful or not harmful; and, finally, the valence compared with the story topic.

Significant differences were found for the proper versus improper usage of the two most common terms, PR and public relations. This finding offered some support for H1. The term "PR" was more likely to be used accurately than inaccurately, while "public relations" was more likely to be used inaccurately, perhaps because of more clichés using the latter term.

Significant differences were apparent based on who used the term and the type of story involved. Reporters tended to use PR-related terms more in war or government-related stories than any of the other topics. The large number of war-related stories is likely because of the events of the last five years of this study (2001-2005). For business stories, the speaker using a PR-related term was more likely to be the anchor or an outside source. The "other" category also included PR terms on the screen, so perhaps there were more public relations practitioners asked to serve as experts in interviews about business topics.

With regard to the valence of each term's use by the three major networks, CBS had significantly more negatively framed terms than ABC or NBC. Perhaps a network's use of PR-related terms is connected to the leadership of the anchor. It would be interesting to test for any changes in the valence of these terms since the recent turnover of anchor people at each network.

Significant differences were found for the valence of the terms based on the topic of the stories. Trial/crime stories were more likely to use PR-related terms negatively, and celebrity/entertainment stories were more likely to use the terms positively. This seems logical in that most trial/crime stories would be negative in their focus anyway.

These results helped answer RQ2, which asked what story topics were more likely to use public relations terms negatively.

Overall, more stories presented PR-related terms negatively than positively or neutrally. Therefore, H2 was supported. This fits in with the findings of previous studies in that public relations is generally portrayed negatively. This negative framing of public relations is likely to have an impact on how viewers of the news think of the PR profession. While the terms were deemed negative more often than positive or neutral, when examining the stories' overall portrayal of the PR *industry*, more stories were found to be neutral. This may be the case because public relations was not generally the central focus of the news stories.

There was no difference between the valence of "PR" and "public relations." Most likely this is because they are both used in an equally negative manner. There was also no difference between these two terms and their overall impression on the industry. Again, it appears that the negative use of both terms equally frames the industry in a negative light.

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature on the treatment of public relations by the news media. It will benefit academe by offering an updated, systematic, longitudinal examination of the use of public relations-related terms on the network evening news. It builds upon previous research by expanding the list of terms studied. It also confirms previous findings about the prodigious use of PR-related terms, which are most often framed in a negative manner.

This research offers an overall impression of the presentation of public relations on the network evening news including a more specific breakdown of who is using the terms, which terms are used most often, what story topics are covered, whether they are used properly/improperly or positively/negatively, and how this reflects on the PR industry as a whole. There were very few positively framed stories; however, the fact that non-harmful (positive/neutral) stories outnumbered the potentially harmful (negative) stories was surprising and encouraging. Also, it appears that the negative framing of individual terms may not have as much of an effect on the impression of the industry overall, which is also good news.

The reason "PR" is more often used accurately than inaccurately while the opposite is true for "public relations" remains a mystery. Perhaps there are more clichés spelling out "public relations" than those using "PR." This seems to be the case with the repetition of the hackneyed descriptions of public relations battles, disasters, and nightmares.

The investigation of the expanded list of terms offers a baseline of frequencies that should be useful for future studies. Future researchers could update these numbers every 10 years to compare the use of these 12 terms over time. To discover how the negatively framed terms and rampant clichés impact viewers, experiments could also be conducted to test for any actual media effects from watching news stories that mention public relations.

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