

Editor's Corner: Winter 2009 *Public Relations Journal*

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Five research articles, authored by some of the world's leading public relations scholars, have been selected for inclusion in the Winter 2009 edition of *Public Relations Journal*, an open-access, peer-reviewed, electronic research journal published by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and available at www.prsa.org/prjournal.

The articles are:

- "Examining The Role of Women in the Development of Public Relations," authored by Suzannah Patterson, Ph.D., APR, Assistant Professor at Valdosta State University.
- "Cognitive Processing of Crisis Communication: Effects of CSR and Crisis Response Strategies on Stakeholder Perceptions of a Racial Crisis Dynamics," authored by Hye Kyung Kim, graduate student in S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, and Sung-Un Yang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Relations at S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.
- "Learning from Past Crises- Do Iconic Cases Help or Hinder?" authored by Tony Jaques, Ph.D., Sessional Lecturer in the School of Applied Communication at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia.
- "Influence of the Gender of Reporters, News Topics, and Circulation Size on Framing of Public Relations," authored by Jeongsub Lim, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Austin Peay State University, and Jiyang Bae, Ph.D., instructor in School of Journalism and Advertising at Catholic University of Daegu in South Korea.
- "PR in the News: How a Sample of Network Newscasts Framed Public Relations," authored by Emily Kinsky, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Communication Division at Pepperdine University, and Coy Callison, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University.

The Patterson article documents the contributions of women to the history of public relations. It discusses the work of 27 noteworthy women who actively used public relations strategies, tactics, and tools to evoke significant social change. Women were selected on the basis of their effective or innovative use of public relations, their contributions to society through the use of public relations, and the inspiration they engendered through public relations. Though severely limited by the social norms of their times, these women made creative use of numerous public relations strategies, tactics, and tools including symbolism, public debate, positioning, printed material, the media tour, and oratory.

Kim and Yang identified crisis dynamic variables from existing literature (e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2002) and connected these links in a model. The cognitive processing model of crisis communication investigates how pre-crisis corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice and different crisis-response strategies affect stakeholders' attributions of organizational responsibility, emotional response, organizational reputation, and supportive intention in the time of a crisis. They conducted an experiment as the primary research method. The significant findings include: 1) direct effects of both positive CSR history and accommodative crisis-response on organizational reputation, which are mediated to stakeholders' supportive intentions, 2) interaction between CSR history and crisis-response on organizational responsibility, and 3) mediation of emotional response aroused by a crisis. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

The Jacques article reports studying past crises is accepted as important for managerial and organizational learning, yet experience suggests there has been little improvement over time in overall crisis response. This paper considers the reasons for this failure and revisits some iconic organizational crises – including Tylenol and Exxon Valdez – to question if they merit the attention they receive. The paper also explores the way in which misleading or inappropriate lessons can easily be drawn from such cases and asks how relevant they are today. Moreover, does a persistent focus on a very limited number of historic cases help or hinder improving management best practice and should we instead identify and analyze 'new icons' from more recent experience.

The Lim and Bae study explores 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.

Kinsky and Callison conducted a content analysis 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.

Public Relations Journal is edited by Donald K. Wright, Ph.D., APR, Fellow PRSA, Professor of Public Relations in the College of Communication at Boston University, with assistance from Maria Lorenzo, a Boston University graduate student who is received her undergraduate studies at the University of Missouri. The major intention of the Journal is to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the educational to practitioner communities.

Additional information about the publication can be found at www.prsa.org/prjournal or by e-mailing Dr. Wright at don.wright@prsa.org.