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# Did you get my message? Transferring public relations messages to broadcast media discourse

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## **Abstract**

*How well do public relations practitioners place their dominant frames in media discourse? This research is an exploratory examination of this issue through a comparison of public relations and broadcast frames during a televised sport event. The research confirms that practitioners do influence media discourse; however, their influence is qualified predominately by receiver needs. This analysis found that dominant public relations frames do not automatically transfer to broadcast frames, and if transferred, public relations frames are often modified in the process. Based on these findings, a refined conceptualization of power in frames is presented that suggests practitioners should develop frames from a receiver-based perspective in order to better guide and control a frame's transfer into media discourse.*

## **Did you get my message? Transferring public relations messages to broadcast media discourse**

Advancements in communication technology have led to a cultural transformation in many aspects of life. The growth of media has changed the way people communicate and understand the world around them. The result has been increased media reliance by a mediated community, a community that obtains the majority of its information from media sources in order to understand, interpret, and evaluate the world. This community is particularly apparent in the sport arena. Today's sports fan primarily receives sports information and sports entertainment through media-filtered frames (Nichols, Moynahan, Hall & Taylor, 2002). With the advent of satellite service providers, sports fans can view an entire season of their favorite sport from the comfort of their own living room through media broadcast. An important concern

is the type of information broadcast media provides game viewers. For a public relations practitioner, a more important question is how much of broadcast content originates from public relations material? Are the messages broadcast media disseminate consistent with the messages advocated by sports public relations practitioners?

This research provides an exploratory comparison of public relations messages and broadcast messages during a televised sport event to determine the message similarities and differences between sports public relations practitioners and broadcast media. These findings can then assist practitioners in developing messages that may be utilized more by broadcast media.

## **Theoretical rationale**

In today's society, everyone seems to have a particular message for an audience that the audience can choose to accept, modify, reject, or ignore. For example, a political candidate disseminates a message on policy to solicit audience support; yet, for each message, an opposing message exists. Communication research describes these messages as frames, textual themes that highlight certain facets of an event or issue and advance a particular interpretation and evaluation (Entman, 2004). Frame research often examines the presence of frames, particularly in media text, and the dissemination of media frames to the public (Goffman, 1974). Frame research has considered media frames on a variety of issues, including health (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Powers, 1999), politics (Entman, 2004, De Vreese, 2004; Miller, Andsager & Riechert, 1998; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997), and education (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Knight, 1999). Sport communication research has also examined media

frames, particularly through a gendered lens (Billings, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Billings, Halone & Denham, 2002; Capranica, Minganti, Billat, Hanghoj, Piacentini, Cumps & Meeusen, 2005; Eastman & Billings, 2000). Certainly the knowledge of media frames is important to the practice of public relations, as media are often the intervening public used to reach a target audience. But a more engaging question for practitioners is the influence public relations frames have on media discourse.

This study is certainly not the first to consider public relations' influence on the media. Several researchers in the framing and sport communication literature have issued a call to consider who sets the media's agenda (Billings, 2007; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; De Vreese, 2004; Scheufele, 1999). Previous research suggests that public relations practitioners may influence media discourse due to the techniques practitioners employ and the information access that practitioners provide. Public relations techniques are effective in securing organizational messages or frames in news discourse (Andsager 2000; Andsager & Powers, 1999; Miller, et. al., 1998; Zock & Turk, 1998). For example, Andsager (2000) found that when interest groups used public relations methods, they were successful in placing their frames in the news. Public relations practitioners are also one of the most common official sources used by news media, particularly in fields of high technicality or with minimal contact with an organization. The sports field fits this description. Sports public relations practitioners often limit fan and media access to players and coaches, and distribute information through controlled techniques such as news conferences and news releases. For example, the women's college basketball Final Four provided 423 credentialed print media and 204 broadcast media access to the participating players and coaches of the tournament. However, player and coach access was relegated to news conferences and controlled interviews. Thus sports public relations practitioners resemble elite sources because of their controlled dissemination of information to the media. Yet media rely on these elite sources for much of their news content (Brown, Bybee, Wearden & Straughan, 1986; Gandy, 1982). Andsager and Powers (1999) found that as ac-

cess becomes more controlled and the message becomes more technical, media tend to over-rely on these elite sources. Sport media are no exception. Sport media that cover major sport events rely on sports public relations practitioners to provide information about the teams, athletes, and coaches (Hardin & McClung, 2002). But are sports public relations practitioners able to transfer their key messages to media discourse? This analysis relies on the framing research to identify and compare the key messages of sports practitioners and broadcast media in order to establish the similarities and differences between their frames. It moves beyond a description of public relations and broadcast media frame content and considers the transfer of frames between public relations and broadcast news media.

Scheufele (1999) developed a frame process model primarily to describe the transfer of media frames to individual frames. To do so, he first differentiated between media frames and individual frames. Media frames are message strategies media use to present information to their audience. These frames follow Entman's (2004) definition by including only select pieces of information in the frame. Individual frames represent how individuals in a public accept and/or modify news frames (Scheufele, 1999). Both media and individual frames are identified through frame mechanisms, a collection of key terms or phrases that represents a particular theme or idea. This analysis uses frame mechanisms to identify the frames present in broadcast media and public relations text. However, rather than considering individual frames, this analysis will consider news source frames i.e. public relations materials. By doing so, it considers the antecedent to media frame development and examines the dissemination of source frames to the news media, conceptualizing framing as a process.

This study uses Scheufele's (1999) frame process model as a foundation for its examination. His frame process model included four processes: frame building, frame setting, individual level effects of framing, and journalists as audiences. Frame building considers the organizational expectations and structural factors that develop media frames. A key question in frame building is who might influence media

frames. External sources who operate as official or elite sources are potential influencers in the frame building stage (Andsager & Powers, 1999; Brown, et. al., 1986; Gandy, 1982; Gans, 1979). The frame setting stage is the dissemination of media frames to individual frames and considers a frame's salience and perceived importance. Frame salience aligns with McCombs & Shaw's (1993) agenda setting theory and the transmission of object and attribute salience from media frames to individual frames. It is the accessibility of a frame in a person's mind, making it easier for a particular frame to be remembered (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Perceived importance, the second component in frame setting, is the specific values and facts considered when processing a frame (Nelson, et. al., 1997). Together, frame salience and perceived importance determine how an audience will accept and/or alter a frame that, in this case, is sent by the media. The third process, individual level of effects framing, considers how the accepted or altered media frame affects individual attitude and behavior. The final process, journalists as audiences, completes the circle and questions if journalists are susceptible to and use existing frames to build media frames.

This analysis centers on the frame setting stage, considering the influence of source frames on media frames. However, frame setting will be conceptualized beyond a description of frames and also consider the transfer process. For example, a public relations practitioner often develops a frame for transfer to media discourse; however, one rarely does so uncontested. Tankard (2003) suggested that a single event or issue could be framed differently, containing different attributes. Several practitioners, then, may send conflicting frames of the same issue/event to media for consideration. Carragee and Roefs (2004) describe this submission and transfer of frames as frame sponsorship. This characterizes Scheufele's (1999) frame setting stage as a competition where several source frames compete for inclusion into media discourse. Frame sponsorship is considered successful when a sponsor's frame is placed in media discourse (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). It suggests that frames have differing levels of power and that a frame with the

most power wins and achieves placement in news text (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Entman, 2004).

The 2004 Women's Final Four offers an optimum arena to examine frame sponsorship between source frames and media frames because the core facts of the event are fairly indisputable. As noted earlier, frame research has typically considered issues where opposing views often disagree on the core facts. This sporting event, however, is different. Despite the myriad of competing frames, the core facts, team and individual records, game scores, statistics, etc., remain the same, allowing closer examination of the message. Chyi and McCombs (2004) used a similar venue for examination, focusing on the Columbine shooting, in order to trace the development of a frame in news media. They termed the basic elements of the issue as the core frame and found that this frame, or the basic facts, remained stable throughout coverage of the issue. This stability allowed the researchers to track the extension of the original frame over time. Their research suggests that the core frame of the 2004 Women's Final Four should also remain consistent, allowing a closer examination of the frame message and how it transfers from public relations to broadcast media.

The winning component of frame sponsorship brings a consideration of power to framing. While research has documented the broad transfer of public relations frames, the dominance level or power of transferred frames has received less consideration. Do frame have differing levels of power in a text? Frame research suggests that frames do vary in power based on a frame's salience and perceived importance (De Vreese, 2004; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Nelson, et. al., 1997; Sheaffer, 2007; Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond & Vig, 2000). Power has been operationalized in frame research as a frame's magnitude and cultural resonance (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Powers, 1999; Miller, 1997; Miller, et. al., 1998). Magnitude suggests a frame's salience and is determined by a frame term's amount of usage in text. Cultural resonance suggests a frame's perceived importance and is determined by a frame term's or group of terms' agreement with accepted societal meaning. Together, magni-

tude and cultural resonance determine how much a frame dominates a particular text. Several frame studies have considered the salience of a frame and found that the more magnitude or salience of a frame in news, the greater the impact on audience frames (De Vreese, 2004; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Shearer, 2007; Tewksbury, et. al., 2000). Cultural resonance has received less research attention, but is recognized as an accompanying component in a frame's power. Together magnitude and cultural resonance are considered to represent a frame's power in text (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Powers, 1999; Miller, 1997; Miller, et. al., 1998). Two questions emerge from a practical discussion of frame power. First, do frames that demonstrate more power transfer more easily to another's discourse than frames with less power? It is important for practitioners to know if a frame's level of dominance or power heightens the possibility of its transfer. Second, how well do practitioners place their dominant frames into media discourse? Dominant frames are dominant due to their repetition and cultural resonance, and they typically convey the strategic public relations message of an organization. Practitioners, then, need to know how these frames transfer to media discourse.

These questions are important on a theoretical level as well. Framing research seeks to move beyond description of news frames and consider the influence of its source frames in frame sponsorship. Thus, this analysis considers these two guiding questions by examining the similarities and differences of the dominant frames in public relations and broadcast text in order to determine what frames transfer and how frames transfer from public relations to broadcast media. The examination is guided by three research questions:

*RQ1:* What frames are present in public relations and broadcast text of the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four national basketball tournament?

*RQ2:* What are the similarities between dominant public relations and broadcast frames of the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four national basketball tournament?

*RQ3:* What are the differences between dominant public relations and broadcast frames of

the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four national basketball tournament?

## Methodology

This analysis examined the public relations and broadcast coverage of the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four. Typical frame analyses analyze frame content through a focus on news frames; however, this study also considers the source of news frames, and following Knight (1999), includes the writing of public relations practitioners. Computer-assisted textual analysis of sports public relations materials and broadcast transcripts of the Final Four facilitated the examination. Public relations materials included the interview transcripts, the news conference transcripts, and the news releases related to the Women's Final Four and disseminated by participating university sports information personnel between March 29 – April 6. Public relations material was gathered from each participating university from the media portion of the athletic web site and the media center of the NCAA web site. This information was disseminated directly from participant universities in order to ensure that the frame analysis was of the sponsors' own words and phrases (Knight, 1999). The sports public relations text resulted in a total of 55 public relations items, consisting of 72,740 words.

The 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four basketball tournament was broadcast on ESPN. The two semifinal games were broadcast on Sunday, April 4, and the championship game was broadcast on Tuesday, April 6. Each game was videotaped from pre-game commentary to post-game commentary, and word-for-word transcripts of broadcast commentary were produced for text analysis. Transcription of broadcast commentary was defined as discourse employed among game commentators, and a word or phrase of broadcast commentary served as the unit of analysis (Billings, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Billings, et. al., 2002). Following Eastman and Billings (2000) and Billings, Halone and Denham (2002), broadcast commentary was analyzed from the beginning of the game, starting tip-off, to the end of the game, where the second-half clock strikes 00:00. This method ensured the greatest amount of public relations influence on broadcast

communication text. For example, commentators traditionally utilize game notes and news releases from sports information personnel for game commentary; however, public relations personnel have substantially less influence over the impromptu sideline post-game interviews. The ESPN broadcast commentary was the only communication text in this portion of the frame analysis to allow a more equitable comparison between sports information frames and broadcast media frames. This selection of broadcast commentary is similar to sport studies that analyze network discourse to determine media descriptors of race and gender (Billings, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Billings, et. al., 2002; Eastman, Brown & Kovatch, 1996). Eight individuals occupied the commentator role in the 2004 Women's Final Four tournament. Broadcasters included Mike Patrick, play-by-play action, Fran Meyers, color commentary, Doris Burke and Mark Jones, floor reporting, and Reece Davis, Al Fortner, Stacie Del Shoeman and Nell Forter, halftime commentary. The broadcast commentary transcript for the entire 2004 Women's Final Four tournament resulted in 100 pages and 39,799 words suitable for analysis.

Computer-assisted content analysis was used to identify textual frames. Content analysis is a descriptive method used to "identify the content of a text" (Knight, 1999, p. 6); yet, it has been faulted for its inability to indicate how certain issues are included in the media agenda. This analysis provides an initial step by considering how frames transfer from journalism sources i.e. public relations to media discourse. To do so, computer-assisted content analysis was used to first generate a frequency word count in print media text. From this list, 98 frame terms were chosen based on their magnitude and their cultural resonance. Computer-assisted frame analysis allowed frame terms to emerge from text rather than imposing researcher frame terms on the text and also adhered to the statistical requirements of hierarchical cluster analysis (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Powers, 1999; Miller, et. al., 1998; Miller & Riechert, 2001). The identified frame terms were then submitted to Ward's method of hierarchical cluster analysis in order to obtain tightly clustered term sets that represent textual

frames. A dendrogram was then used to visually represent the textual frames (Andsager & Powers, 1999; Miller & Riechert, 2001). Frame terms that cluster together in the dendrogram represent the frames of a particular text (Miller, 1997; Miller, et. al., 1998; Miller & Riechert, 2001). Each frame was given a frame identifier based on a rhetorical theme apparent in the frame terms that comprise the cluster. Because this method identifies several frames in a single body of text, a frame's power or dominance in text was also calculated.

Frame power identifies the collective magnitude and cultural resonance of a frame's terms. A standardized mean occurrence of the frame terms in each frame numerically represents a frame's dominance or power in the text (Andsager, 2000; Miller & Riechert, 2001). The standardized mean occurrence is the sum of the mean frequency of occurrence of each term in a single frame. The higher the standardized mean score in each cluster, the higher the probability that the terms in the cluster or the frame dominated the text. In this manner, several frames in a text are rank-ordered by frame dominance or power. Andsager and Powers (1999) note that frame analysis is also a reflexive process; thus, a secondary textual analysis of this data was performed to provide insight into the context of each frame.

## Research findings

### *RQ1: What frames are present in public relations and broadcast text of the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four national basketball tournament?*

Public relations and broadcast texts were divided into a semifinal games group and a final game group. The semifinal games group included the two semifinal games between the University of Connecticut (Connecticut) and the University of Minnesota (Minnesota), and the University of Tennessee (Tennessee) and Louisiana State University (LSU). The final game group consisted of the championship game between Connecticut and Tennessee. Public relations text disseminated between March 30 and April 6 were grouped according to subject, semifinal games or final game. The three most dominant frames for each text were

chosen for comparison. In public relations text, the top three frames for the semifinal games were a Minnesota/Connecticut frame, LSU/Tennessee frame and an Excellence frame. The most dominant frame was the Minnesota/Connecticut frame (.305 standard mean occurrence), which focused on the semifinal game between these two teams. This frame had a strong team focus and a success focus for both Minnesota and Connecticut. The LSU/Tennessee frame (.176 standard mean occurrence) was the second dominant frame and focused on the players of these teams, LSU's loss, and a comparison of Tennessee to Connecticut. The last dominant frame, the Excellence frame (.085 standard mean occurrence), represented only a small focus in public relations text and emphasized Connecticut's opportunity to tie Tennessee with consecutive national championship titles.

For the final game, public relations frames included a Connecticut National Champions frame, a Tennessee frame, and a Semifinal Teams frame. The Connecticut frame (.444 standard mean occurrence) focused on Connecticut achieving history with their consecutive championship titles and the first co-national titles of Connecticut's men's and women's basketball teams. The Tennessee frame (.106 standard mean occurrence) demonstrated considerably lower power than the Connecticut frame and focused on the game mechanics of Tennessee. The Semifinal Teams frame (.053 standard mean occurrence) was a very weak frame on the quality of play throughout the tournament. An underlying theme in this frame was the growth of women's basketball, illustrated by the inclusion of Final Four newcomers Minnesota and LSU in the frame terms.

In broadcast text, the semifinal frames included the match-ups between the semifinal teams as demonstrated by the two top frames Minnesota/Connecticut (.412 standard mean occurrence) and LSU/Tennessee (.217 standard mean occurrence). The third frame, the Game frame (.094 standard mean occurrence) was very small, including only four frame terms and did not demonstrate substantial meaning. The Game frame was omitted from future analysis. Only two frames emerged in the final game

broadcast text, a Tennessee/Connecticut Rivalry frame and a Semifinal Teams frame. The Tennessee/Connecticut Rivalry frame (.602 standard mean occurrence) had a strong rivalry theme in the match-up between Tennessee and Connecticut, and the tournament's athletic stars. The Semifinal Teams frame (.053 standard mean occurrence) provided a slight emphasis on LSU's and Minnesota's first appearance in the Final Four.

Tables 1 and 2 (below) list the dominant frames for public relations and broadcast text, the terms that comprised the frames, and the dominance level of each frame. Table 1 focuses on semifinal games, and Table 2 focuses on the final.

*RQ2: What are the similarities between dominant public relations and broadcast frames of the 2004 NCAA Women's Final Four national basketball tournament?*

A comparative analysis of public relations and broadcast texts revealed similarities between their dominant frames. The Minnesota/Connecticut frame and the LSU/Tennessee frame in the semifinal games of public relations text transferred in the same dominant order to the semifinal broadcast frames. Both texts illustrated a stronger dominance of the Minnesota/Connecticut game than the LSU/Tennessee game. In the final game texts, the top two dominant frames in public relations text, the Connecticut National Champions frame and the Tennessee frame, transferred to broadcast text, but these two frames were combined into the dominant broadcast frame Tennessee/Connecticut Rivalry.

A theme about the final game's significance illustrated a more subtle transfer from public relations text to broadcast text. The public relations Excellence frame in semifinal game text and the Growth of women's basketball frame in the final game text transferred to broadcast final game text. However, this public relations emphasis did not emerge as a separate frame. Rather, this theme emerged within the dominant Tennessee/Connecticut Rivalry frame as a secondary emphasis.

**Table 1: Public Relations and Broadcast Frames: Semifinal Games**

Frame Identifier	Frame Terms	Level of Dominance
<b>Semi-final Public Relations Frames</b>		
Minnesota/Connecticut	<i>We, team, always, basketball, right, big, coach, Minnesota, great, people, teams, good, win, play, UConn, season, Gophers</i>	.305 standard mean occurrence
LSU/Tennessee	<i>Feel, players, shots, little, defense, ball, better, championship, tournament, double, Tennessee, run, played, won, hard, lost Diana, LSU, hand, points, national</i>	.176 standard mean occurrence
Excellence	<i>Connecticut, women's, scored, Taurasi, Huskies, consecutive, close, history, foul, shot, basket, tigers, Lady, Pat, Davis, Geno, Robinson, Auriemma, Summitt, thought, Zolman</i>	.085 standard mean occurrence
<b>Semifinal Broadcast Frames</b>		
Minnesota/Connecticut	<i>Ann, Conlin, Connecticut, Minnesota, Whalen, UConn, McCarville, Strother, Taurasi, Turner, Geno, battle, win, Barbara, Maria, Huskies, Jessica, Auriemma, Crockett, try, Jones, best, mother, relationship, lucky, girls, Sue, women, Summitt, Pokey, father, Shyra, Lindsay</i>	.412 standard mean occurrence
LSU/Tennessee	<i>Augustus, Simone, Butts, Johnson, LSU, Pat, LaToya, Tasha, Vols, Robinson, Hodges, Fluker, Jackson, Tigers, Chatman, Ely, Davis, Tameeka, Lady</i>	.217 standard mean occurrence
Game	<i>Good, team, mean, great</i>	.094 standard mean occurrence

**Table 2: Public Relations and Broadcast Frames: Final Game**

Frame Identifier	Frame Terms	Level of Dominance
<b>Final Game Public Relations Frames</b>		
Connecticut National Champions	<i>Big, Auriemma, Connecticut, tournament, team, Taurasi, season, player, won, shot, last, Tennessee, players, Huskies, record, points, wins, best, championship, UConn, national, consecutive, play, lost, women's, teams, coach, title, history, Geno, good, never, hard, people, right, basketball</i>	.444 standard mean occurrence
Tennessee	<i>Pat, little, Diana, Summitt, great, chance, thought, ball, beat, plays, shots, close, Robinson, run, trying, Butts, Davis, scored, Lady, Zolman, Vols</i>	.106 standard mean occurrence
Growth of women's basketball	<i>Always, athletic, basket, body, foul, Whalen, women, Lindsay, hand, called, star, Gunter, Chatman, watch, hit, men, work rebounds, can't, fans, better, LSU, men's, lead, victory, feel</i>	.048 standard mean occurrence
Semifinal teams	<i>Knocked, Minnesota, try, battle, Tasha, LaToya, Fluker, LSU, coach</i>	.053 standard mean occurrence
<b>Final Game Broadcast Frames</b>		
Tennessee/Connecticut Rivalry	<i>Championship, Diana, they, UConn, great, Taurasi, Connecticut, players, good, Geno, Tennessee, Pat, pretty, Turner, Huskies, best, Moore, Barbara, little, Vols, trying, Davis, hit, Lindsay</i>	.602 standard mean occurrence
Semifinal teams	<i>Knocked, Minnesota, try, battle, Tasha, LaToya, Fluker, LSU, coach</i>	.053 standard mean occurrence

A secondary textual analysis revealed the usage of historical significance in both public relations and broadcast text. The frame term “history” emerged in the Excellence semifinal game frame. In Connecticut public relations text, Connecticut player Diana Taurasi spoke on the historical significance of the championship game. “It’s history. I think being from the University of Connecticut, we always think of ourselves as a basketball school, and this year I think we made a definite impact nationwide of how prominent our programs are and the school.” Another Connecticut player in Connecticut public relations text equated history with domination, as noted in the cluster analysis with the linkage of terms “Huskies,” “Connecticut,” “history,” and “best.” “There is no way we are going to miss the opportunity to make history. I think Diana [Taurasi] said it best, ‘Domination!’ If you want to play basketball, come to the state of Connecticut. With the standard we have set here, Connecticut is the place to be - men or women. When you come to the University of Connecticut, you are molded into a winner.”

In broadcast text, the viewer was continuously reminded by broadcast commentary of the historical significance of the championship game. Broadcast examples included, “You know Auriemma’s trying to pick up another piece of history tonight with three in a row;” “Men and women in the Final Four, the teams that have done this before without any success at all; however, Connecticut trying to change all that; the men win last night, the women could make it a first-time moment in Division I basketball, if they can win tonight;” “The UConn men and women trying to be the first Division I program ever to win national championships together;” and “Trying to pull the ultimate double, men and women champions in the same season, it’s never been done in Division I” (Miller, *championship game*, 2004 April 5)..”

Of notable interest, a very small frame that did not emerge in the cluster analysis was transferred verbatim from public relations to broadcast text. Tennessee public relations text included a story about Tennessee coach Pat Summitt and her team waiting for a trophy at an international tournament they had attended only

to realize that the tournament directors had engraved the name of the wrong team on the trophy. This same story was reiterated in broadcast text. “I love the story about the tournament. They won it and were waiting on getting the trophy, and they found out that it had already been inscribed in the name of the team who was expected to win. Pat was just sitting there waiting for . . . well, where’s our trophy. She got a bottle of wine” (Miller, *semifinal UT v LSU*, 2004 April 4). This minor frame was the only frame found to be identical in both public relations and broadcast texts.

*RQ3: What are the differences between dominant public relations and broadcast frames of the 2004 NCAA Women’s Final Four national basketball tournament?*

The public relations and broadcast comparative frame analysis revealed three main differences between the frames. First, in public relations, both the semifinal and final texts included a theme on developing excellence of women’s basketball, as noted by the Excellence frame in the semifinal text and the Growth of women’s basketball frame in the final game text. Despite the reiteration in both semifinal and final public relations texts, a corresponding frame was not found in broadcast text. In contrast, broadcast text included a focus on “luck” in its coverage of the tournament. The frame term “luck” emerged in the Minnesota/Connecticut frame of semifinal broadcast text when broadcast commentators speculated on a final game match up between Connecticut and Tennessee. Tennessee was termed a “team of destiny.” “If you believe in destiny, it may be Tennessee’s year. All throughout the tournament against Baylor in the regional semifinals, Tasha Butts put in the winning bucket against LSU. LaToya Davis forced the steal and then made the winning basket. Maybe this year, destiny wears orange and plays Rocky Top” (Miller, *semifinal UT v LSU*, 2004 April 4)..” A focus on luck rather than excellence seemed to contradict a public relations text focus. The frame term “luck” did not emerge in the public relations cluster analysis.

A secondary textual analysis of the usage of each frame in text revealed differences as well. For example, although the Minne-

sota/Connecticut public relations frame transferred successfully to broadcast text, the Minnesota/Connecticut broadcast frame revealed internal differences from its public relations counterpart. As noted earlier, the public relations Minnesota/Connecticut frame focused on the teams and the game of basketball. The corresponding broadcast frame reiterated these foci, but also expanded the frame to include issues external to basketball as noted by the frame term “relationships.” The relationship between Connecticut player Diana Taurasi, her parents, and coach Geno Auriemma was a focal point in broadcast text.

Diana Taurasi is the daughter of immigrant parents, Lilly and Mario Taurasi, reside in Chino, California, and when Geno Auriemma was recruiting Diana Taurasi, Lilly was the toughest sell. She wanted no part of her daughter going 3,000 miles away, leaving sunny California for remote Storrs. When Geno Auriemma was recruiting on the visit, they took her to the Orient House for dinner, and Lilly said, I don't like Connecticut, it's too dark here. Geno's response, it's 9 o'clock at night Lilly, it's dark everywhere. He also told her two things, he said, your daughter will go down as one of the all-time greatest players in college basketball. She deserves to be seen by as many people as possible, and with all of Connecticut's games, either on local cable or national television, she has certainly been fun to watch . . . One of the things that helped was that he was able to speak Italian to her (Miller, *championship game*, 2004, April 5).

A second relationship focus was found in the Minnesota/Connecticut broadcast frame with the connection between Minnesota coach Borton and player McCarville. “Well I tell you, this is a great story, this Minnesota team, during the last four years, they've had three different coaches. Pam Borton came in, and McCarville and her did not see eye to eye, and she didn't really give in until they got to the NCAA

tournament” (Miller, *semifinal Minnesota v Connecticut*, 2004 April 4)..” The expanded focus on relationships was not evident in public relations frames.

A second difference between public relations and broadcast frames was the match-up of Tennessee and Connecticut in the final game. In public relations text, a Connecticut and Tennessee focus was identified in separate frames. Each frame focused on the attributes of that particular team. When these two frames transferred, however, broadcast combined the frames and portrayed the teams as rivals. The teams were paired and compared as adversaries.

A third frame difference was the emphasis on team in public relations frames and the emphasis on individual players in broadcast frames. The frame term “team” emerged in the most dominant frame of both public relations semifinal and final game text. In broadcast, “team” emerged in the weak Game frame that lacked substantive meaning and was discarded from the analysis. “Team” did not emerge at all in the final game broadcast frames. Interestingly, in the dominant public relations frames, two unique names emerged in the semifinal games text, and none emerged in the final game text. However, in broadcast text, seven unique names emerged in semifinal games text, and 12 unique names emerged in the final game text.

The differing emphasis of team and individual player was illustrated in a textual analysis. In Connecticut public relations text, Connecticut player Diana Taurasi illustrated a team focus. “What we learned from this year is in situations like that we have to rely on each other. And I tell you, I think our character came out the most when they cut it to two. They were making their runs and every time we needed a big play from someone, you know, we got it.” Coach Summitt also illustrated this team focus in Tennessee public relations text by describing her team as doing things “by committee.” She said,

I think it's brought accountability to each member of our team. Certainly with the leadership we have had from our seniors, I think they have held their teammates accountable for stepping up and making plays, whether it's a defensive play or get-

ting a board. They're the type of team that they call each other out and they address what needs to be addressed, whether it's in practice or in games. I think as a team they have been very receptive to each other. And they understand how much they need each other . . . The first thing I want to address is obviously the great season that we have had. The great run. And just give this team all credit for putting themselves into a national championship game again. And also for being or staying with a competitive, never give up attitude . . . I'm proud of this team. I told them, I hope that they will remember the great season and the great team and the great run.

Broadcast text followed an individual focus, particularly with Connecticut player Taurasi. Broadcast termed Connecticut "Taurasi's team," and included numerous accolades of Taurasi's ability and athletic success.

If Diana Taurasi is on the winning side, she would have three national championships to her credit. She's already the two-time national player of the year, leads Connecticut all-time in assists, third all time in points, she's sixth all time in blocks, she's the only collegiate player invited to try-out for the national team. You could go on and on about Diana Taurasi and you'd still have plenty left you haven't said . . . I tell you if the USA is smart, they better put her on the [Olympic] team . . . What's really significant to me is the fact that you've got the best player, perhaps in all of college history in the women's game, and her teammates adore her. They love her; they respect her; and they play for her (Miller, *semifinal Minnesota v Connecticut*, 2004 April 4).

Taurasi was often credited for the success of the Connecticut team in broadcast text. "For four years, Geno Auriemma has said the differ-

ence between UConn and everybody else is that we have Diana and you don't, and he's been right for four years" (Miller, *championship game*, 2004 April 5). An individual player emphasis was not evident in public relations text.

## Discussion

Who sets the media's agenda has been a well-recited question in framing literature (Billings, 2007; Brown, et. al., 1986; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; De Vreese, 2004; Scheufele, 1999). This study drew from Scheufele's (1999) frame process model to examine how frames transfer from one entity to another, but did so from a public relations perspective. Public relations and broadcast media frames were compared to determine if public relations frames influence media frames. In essence, do public relations practitioners set the media agenda? Although this study cannot establish a causal connection, its findings suggest that public relations frames do influence media frames. When public relations practitioners serve as elite sources, they influence the media's agenda. This finding suggests an extension to Scheufele's (1999) frame process model, particularly in the frame building stage. Current conceptualization of the frame building process suggests source frames and organizational routines come together to develop a media frame. This study, however, suggests a much more complex process. Frame building includes a subprocess of frame setting, where public relations practitioners submit their frame for potential inclusion in media discourse. The frame setting subprocess is a competition where multiple public relations frames are submitted, and the media choose to either accept, reject, or modify these frames. Thus, Scheufele's (1999) broad frame building stage incorporates an antecedent frame setting process between source frames i.e. public relations practitioners and media that the media then use to build their own frames.

This study, also considers how a frame's power influences the frame transfer process. More specifically, do frames that demonstrate more power transfer more easily to another's discourse than frames with less power? Not necessarily. In this analysis, the two most dominant frames in public relations semifinal

text transferred to the two most dominant frames in broadcast semifinal text. A theme on the final game's significance also transferred from public relations to broadcast text. Thus, sports practitioners do influence media discourse. However, the public relations frames Excellence and the Growth of women's basketball did not transfer as equally dominant broadcast frames. Of notable interest, this analysis found that frames with low power or dominance in text also transferred to news discourse. For example, broadcast's use of Tennessee's international tournament story demonstrates that frames with little power can transfer successfully to broadcast text. Interestingly, this broadcast frame was a verbatim extract from public relations text. This finding contradicts previous frame studies (De Vreese, 2004; McLeod & Detenber, 1999; Tewksbury, et. al., 2000) and indicates that a frame's magnitude does not necessarily determine its probability of transfer. A frame with little magnitude can and does transfer as successfully as a frame with large magnitude. In this case, the international tournament story in broadcast text had the highest transfer success because it transferred verbatim. No other frame illustrated this characteristic. Yet, this frame was considered weak by the historic reliance on magnitude as the major influencer of a frame.

The second question that emerged from the literature review was how well do practitioners place their dominant frames into media discourse? This research provided varied results. Sponsored public relations frames in this analysis did not maintain the same level of power when placed in news discourse. The top dominant frames in public relations final game text transferred as dominant frames, but the broadcast frame combined the two dominant public relations frames and significantly modified the frames' foci. This analysis suggests then that a frame's power level is not integrated into the transfer process – a dominant frame in public relations text will not automatically dominate broadcast text. This analysis also found that dominant transferred frames were often modified when they appeared in news discourse. For example, the team emphasis in public relations text was adapted to an individual player emphasis in broadcast text. Although

practitioners seek to promote the entire program of a university, media tend to identify one or two individual players and focus on him or her. This traditional individual media focus aligns with the heroic myth that is pervasive in sport reporting (Lule, 2001). Broadcast text illustrated this myth with its portrayal of Diana Taurasi as the reason for Connecticut's success.

If a frame's magnitude in public relations text does not facilitate frame transfer, what does? This analysis provides an initial step to this answer with a reconceptualization of power. Although power is conceptualized as the combination of magnitude and cultural resonance, the influence of cultural resonance has been marginalized. As noted earlier, previous frame studies have considered magnitude or salience as the most probable influencer in framing; however, this study suggests that cultural resonance plays an equal if not more dominant role in a frame's transfer. This finding confirms Nelson et. al.'s (1997) study that suggested perceived importance plays a major role in the influence of a frame. Extending their study, this analysis suggests that cultural resonance does play a pivotal role in the frame transfer process, but a role that should be clarified. While cultural resonance has been defined at the frame originator level, this examination suggests that cultural resonance would be a better predictor for frame transfer if considered from the receiver's perspective. Thus, frame sponsorship is guided by the receiver's needs. For example, the international tournament frame, although weak in magnitude or salience, fulfilled color commentary needs to supplement play-by-play action with human-interest snapshots. The depiction of Connecticut and Tennessee in broadcast as rivals also differed from public relations frames, but aligned with the adversarial conflict common in sport. Research suggests that this adversarial portrayal is inherent and actually expected by fans to be part of the sport experience (Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1981; Sullivan, 1991). The identification of heroes rather than teams is also consistent with sport communication literature that a sport hero is often identified and described in mythic proportion in media discourse (Hardin, 2001; Lule, 2001). Nelson et al.'s (1997) finding is then extended to include a broader cultural

resonance that includes not only perceived importance, but the needs, wants, and interests of the target audience.

The transfer and transformation of public relations frames to broadcast frames points to a reconsideration of power in the frame transfer process. Magnitude is not the sole predictor of a frame's power to transfer. Cultural resonance is also an important component to determine a frame's power, but not from the viewpoint of the frame originator. Rather, a frame's cultural resonance is receiver-based. The level of frame resonance is determined from the viewpoint of the receiver. Based on this revised definition, a frame that slightly dominates public relations content may have stronger power in broadcast due to the medium's identification of cultural resonance. As a result, frame power does not originate from its source, but is negotiated by the receiver. Public relations practitioners must be familiar with the receiver's wants, needs, and interests in order to facilitate successful frame sponsorship.

This analysis also suggests a linkage between event salience and frame sponsorship. Study findings suggest that as an event gains salience, media extend public relations frames. Although frame sponsorship was evident for both semifinal and final games, the final game broadcast frames exhibited greater modification of public relations frames than the semifinal broadcast frames. Public relations dominant frames were modified into a rivalry emphasis in broadcast frames. The Excellence and Growth of women's basketball public relations frames were presented as a historical significance emphasis in broadcast frames, and the team focus in public relations frames was exchanged for a heroic focus in broadcast frames. In an analysis of media coverage of Columbine, Chyi and McCombs (2004) found that media extended core frames or basic news facts in an effort to develop a news story over time. Broadcast media in this analysis seemed to employ a similar tactic, extending public relations frames throughout the tournament. Yet, the elemental differences between semifinal and final frames may reiterate a receiver-based cultural resonance. Broadcast media seemed to extend public relations frames to better meet their own needs rather than to extend a news story. More

research is necessary to further define and correlate the relationship between event salience, cultural resonance, and frame extension in frame sponsorship.

Although public relations does influence media coverage, the influence is qualified predominately by receiver needs. The practicalities of this research return practitioners to the core of public relations writing – to know and meet the needs of the key public. It also reminds practitioners to remove the blinders and remember that news media receive frames from a variety of sources. Public relations frames do not transfer in isolation, but, as Carragee and Roefs (2004) suggest, compete for placement in news discourse. Rather than ignore the competition of frames, practitioners may be able to address opposing frames and include them in their own in order to better meet the receiver's needs. In this study, the Connecticut and Tennessee frames sponsored by their particular institution were combined in broadcast text. A sports public relations practitioner may find it necessary to expand beyond his or her team and include frames on the competition in his or her own discourse in order to provide a more receiver-based frame. Sports practitioners may be able to better control the essence of broadcast frames by including the opposition in their frame(s).

This research also emphasizes the importance for sports practitioners to highlight a hero. From the broadcast perspective, the individual is enlarged, and the team is minimized. This focus contradicts a sports practitioner's charge to support the entire team rather than a single player. Sports practitioners, however, can better facilitate a hero focus if they include a hero in their frames as well. By so doing, the practitioner may be able to instill a strong team component to this heroic frame. Because the overall frame meets the receiver's needs, the team component may also transfer to broadcast discourse.

On a broader perspective, media's reliance on public relations frames implies an invisible power in the frame process. Parenti (1970) defined power as the ability to determine which messages ever reach a target audience (p. 54). Public relations practitioners, particularly in sport, often relegate what messages

will be sent to the media, when they will be sent, and how they will be sent. As the primary news source, these practitioners are able to “define decision-making options and ultimately to control the decision-making process” (Brown, et. al., 1986, p. 46). This power is heightened by the relative invisible nature of most practitioners and their frames. Public relations practitioners often serve as anonymous sources in news discourse, rendering them invisible to the target audience (Andsager & Powers, 1999, Brown et. al., 1986; De Vreese, 2004; Knight, 1999). Often, anonymity brings a perceived lack of accountability. Thus, this study’s finding that practitioners influence media frames brings an associated responsibility, particularly in sport. For example, sport media have been criticized for disseminating negative gender frames that devalue women and lead to the perpetuation of marginalization of women in sport (Billings, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Billings, et. al., 2002; Capranica, et. al., 2005; Eastman & Billings, 2000). Because public relations frames influence media frames, one might wonder what type of gender frames public relations practitioners sponsor to the media. From an ethical perspective, future research should examine the type of frames public relations practitioners submit to media discourse.

In conclusion, this analysis found that public relations frames transferred successfully to media discourse, suggesting that public relations practitioners are often successful in setting the media’s agenda. However, this analysis suggests refining our understanding of frame power. A dominant public relations frame does not automatically transfer to a broadcast frame, and, when transferred, the frame is often modified to better meet the receiver’s needs. This analysis suggests that public relations frames would transfer more intact if developed from the receiver’s perspective. Finally, this study suggests future research in two main areas. First, more research is necessary to clarify the transfer process, enabling practitioners to be more strategic in controlling the presentation of their frames in the media. Second, future research should examine how public relations practitioners use their invisible power in the frame process to influence news discourse.

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