

Learning about Public Relations from Television: How is the profession portrayed?

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This qualitative study examined how public relations is portrayed in prime time television programming in the United States. As a first look at public relations portrayals in television dramas and sit-coms, results confirm many of the conclusions from other studies of entertainment media: (1) public relations as a field is still portrayed negatively; (2) the field is not well-defined, mostly as publicity and party planning; and (3) the field looks “easy” and “glamorous.” New insights were gained into the portrayal of public relations on television including: (1) the association of the term “public relations” with negative and “silly” actions; (2) society’s expectation of immoral behaviors from PR practitioners; (3) the portrayal of gender barriers; and (4) a tendency to focus only on practice areas dealing with the rich and powerful elements of society.

Keywords: Public relations, television programming portrayal, television dramas, sit-coms

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1. Introduction

“On TV, the PR person is always pretty, well-dressed, usually a female, in front of everyone, in the spotlight...it seems really glamorous and exciting” (Bowen, 2003, p. 206). Many who teach public relations in college may have heard similar comments from their students at one point or another. Most college students newly majoring in public relations, according to Bowen, think that public relations involves mainly media relations and “fun” activities such as special events and party planning (p. 204). As the source of their impressions, most of these students point to the mass media, in particular, television. The present study began with our curiosity to find out specifically how United States television programming is generating impressions of public relations and how it is defining the field.

McCombs and Bell (1996) say ordinary people view the world through the filter of the mass media. Given that most people may have a limited direct contact with public relations professionals, it is safe to assume that most Americans form their images of public relations based on the media portrayals (Miller, 1999). According to Pfau and colleagues, the public tends to develop perceptions of professions from television images. They found that network prime-time depictions influence public perceptions of physicians (Pfau, Mullen, & Garrow, 1995) and of attorneys (Pfau, Mullen, Deidrich, & Garrow, 1995). In cases where television depictions of professions are inaccurate, Pfau and colleagues argue that the public is likely to develop a distorted view of certain professions, which in the long run may erode public confidence in those professionals.

To date, a limited number of studies have investigated depictions of public relations and its practitioners in both print and broadcast news stories, film and novel (Jo, 2003; Keenan, 1996; Lee, 2001; Miller,

1999; Spicer, 1993; Tavcar, 1993; Tilson, 2003). However, no study has examined public relations portrayals in television dramas and situation comedies. Given the fact that television provides a learning environment for most people (Signorielli & Morgan, 1996) and that television dramas and situation comedies are a popular and accessible form of media entertainment for the majority of people in the United States (Campbell, 2002), it is important to understand the way and the context in which these programs depict public relations and its practitioners. This is likely to provide additional insight into the root of the public perceptions of the field and its professionals.

2. Literature Review

1) Public Relations Portrayals in the News Media

A few studies investigated the use and definition of the term public relations and the tone (negative or positive) of the references to the field in the news media. In a content analysis of three newspapers for a one-month period, Bishop (1988) discovered not one article mentioned the term public relations. Instead, there was far more frequent use of the term publicity. He concluded that for reporters, public relations seems to be equated solely with publicity. Additionally, his study disclosed that the majority of news references to publicity and public relations were relatively positive in tone.

Spicer (1993) used a convenience sample of 81 newspaper and magazine articles containing the words public relations or PR, to identify seven themes—distraction, disaster, challenge, hype, merely, war, and schmooze. All themes except for the “challenge” category indicate negative or unfavorable connotations of public relations. Like Bishop

(1988), Spicer found that the majority of articles depict public relations as the press agency/publicity model, the historically dominant view of public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Unlike Bishop (1988) and Spicer (1993) who examined print news media, Keenan (1996) investigated all evening newscasts on the three major television networks from 1980 through 1995, containing the keywords public relations or PR. His findings were similar to those of earlier studies. The press agency/publicity model was by far the most common type of public relations referenced in television news stories in terms of how public relations works and what the profession involves. While over half of the stories about public relations were neutral in tone, in the rest of the stories, a negative tone overwhelmed a positive tone.

Jo (2003) examined the use of public relations terms in the evening news on the three major television networks and two newspapers—*the New York Times* and *the Wall Street Journal*. The findings suggest that public relations terms in news stories primarily refer to publicity, image building, and persuasion efforts. Although the neutral meaning was most frequent in the findings, the negative connotation of public relations was much larger than the positive connotation.

2) Public Relations Portrayals in the Entertainment Media

Limited research on the portrayals of the public relations field in the entertainment media generally shows that media relations is the predominant form of public relations activity portrayed (Lee, 2001; Miller, 1999; Tavcar, 1993). Most of the characters in films and novels are press agents, publicists or spokespersons although their titles often are different. Overall, these characters have “[t]he more glamorous jobs in PR” rather than leadership roles (Miller, 1999, p. 8). These studies also show that public relations characters usually have the minor roles in

films and don't receive the screen time of lawyers, journalists, teachers, and advertising executives (Lee, 2001; Miller, 1999).

While Lee (2001) discovered both positive and negative depictions of public relations experts in 20 films, Miller (1999) found consistently negative characterizations of practitioners in both films and novels over six decades. Often, practitioners were depicted as ditzy, obsequious, cynical, manipulative, money-minded, isolated, and unfulfilled. The only positive archetypal characteristic she found was "accomplished." While the negative representations may make storylines interesting, Miller says that the antisocial behavior of these characters such as promiscuity, lying, and alcohol abuse are so prevalent and regularly related with the practice of PR that they seemed even normal within the practice.

Miller (1999) also notes that films and novels present inadequate views of public relations, often omitting its process--strategies and tactics, and highlighting only its inexplicable power. She says, "Sometimes, PR is magic, which only a magician with secret knowledge can perform" and in other times, "it is almost embarrassingly easy--a phone call or a cocktail with a reporter is all it takes" (p. 23).

The present study attempts to examine the portrayals of public relations and its practitioners in television dramas and situation comedies. Based on this literature and given the descriptive and exploratory nature of this study, the following research question is proposed to govern this study:

RQ: How do television dramas and situation comedies in the United States portray the public relations profession and its practitioners?

3. Method

Just as Miller (1999) found for film, in television there were no applicable lists of public relations characters compiled and available through directories or databases. A list of public relations characters appearing in recently airing television dramas and situation comedies was created in spring 2006 by polling communication faculty members and 80 undergraduate communications students at two United States universities, one in Northeast and the other in Southeast. Using the criteria established by Miller's study, characters were considered public relations practitioners if they identified themselves as such, if other characters identified them as such, or if their job contained duties often assigned to public relations professionals, such as media relations, publicity, political campaigning, political polling, communications management, or speechwriting.

By creating the sample of shows and characters identified by the students and professors polled, the focus was on relatively recent representations of public relations characters in shows. This convenience sample did not include all the fictional characters and shows ever aired on television in the United States, but those that were currently airing either in first-run or re-run or were available on DVD as identified through TV Tracker.com, TV Guide, and Netflix databases. Thus this sample cannot be considered representative of all public relations portrayals ever aired on television in the United States. For every program currently accessible, all available episodes were studied. For some shows, this meant coding up to 6 seasons. A total of 16 different public relations characters that played a major role or had sufficient screen time necessary for analysis were selected (See <Table 1>). They appeared in 384 episodes in a total of 10 shows in a variety of genres

ranging from comedy to drama, and formats from series to serial, half hour to hour, airing on a variety of networks on air and cable.

<Table 1> Public Relations Characters in Television

Character	Show (original network/cable)	Job title	Number of episodes coded (year)	Seasons on air
Jessie Bowers	<i>Arrested Development</i> (Fox)	Publicist	22 (2003)	2003-2006
Kelly Ludlow	<i>Commander in Chief</i> (ABC)	Press Secretary to the White House	18 (2005-2006)	2005-2006
Richard “Dickie” McDonald		Media Consultant to the President		
Nick Pierce	<i>The District</i> (CBS)	Press Secretary to the D.C. Police Department	23 (2000-2001)	2000-2004
Shauna	<i>Entourage</i> (HBO)	Publicist	8 (2004)	2004-present
Naomi Clark	<i>Jake in Progress</i> (ABC)	Publicist	13 (2005)	2005
Jake Phillips				
Mary Connell	<i>Las Vegas</i> (NBC)	Director of Special Events	23 (2003-2004)	2003-present
Jamie Buchman	<i>Mad about You</i> (NBC)	Co-owner of an agency	15 (Unknown: Favorites)	1992-1997
Samantha Jones	<i>Sex and the City</i> (HBO)	Publicist	94 (1998-2004)	1998-2004
Mike Flaherty	<i>Spin City</i> (ABC)	Deputy Mayor	11 (Unknown: Michael J. Fox: All time favorites)	1996-2002
Paul Lassiter		Press Secretary to the Mayor		
CJ Craig	<i>The West Wing</i> (NBC)	Press secretary to the White House	157 (1999-2006)	1999-2006
Josh Lyman		Deputy Chief of Staff to the White House		
Sam Seaborn		Deputy Communications Director to the White House		
Toby Zeigler		Communications Director to the White House		
16 characters	10 shows		384 episodes	

An in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted for all 16 characters across all 384 episodes by two researchers. Extensive notes were taken on the plot lines and characterizations, which allowed the identification of common themes among the public relations characters and their practice. For each character, notes were also taken on the definitions of public relations shown, strategies and tactics used by the practitioner, the types of work shown, and the two misconceptions that Miller (1999) found – PR being easy and magic. Two researchers compared their notes and discussed identified themes. When there were major disagreements in their interpretations, they went back to the respective characters and shows to reanalyze. The purpose of this repetitive exercise was not to reach the complete agreement between researchers but to come to mutual understanding of the themes identified and interpretations.

4. Results

1) Demographic Characteristics of PR Practitioners

All 16 fictional public relations characters analyzed in United States television dramas and situation comedies were relatively young and attractive. They were all in their early 30s and late 40s and financially secure. All of them appeared to be physically fit and most of them were well groomed and stylish. All but Jamie Buchman in *Mad about You* were single. While eight of the 16 characters were women, PR was not portrayed as a racially diverse field. All the characters were Caucasian. No African Americans or Hispanic Americans or Asian Americans were included. Two characters identified themselves as Jewish.

Practitioners worked mainly for the government and in publicity and special events. Nine practitioners worked for the White House or city

governments and had titles such as a “press secretary,” “communications director,” “deputy communications director,” and “media consultant.” The remaining seven practitioners were mostly referred to as “publicists.” The publicists’ work mainly involved dealing with the media, organizing promotions or opening parties of restaurants and clubs and booking their clients for talk shows. A clear difference was present in the areas of public relations that male and female practitioners practiced. Male practitioners mainly worked for the government sector, whereas female practitioners worked in agencies specializing in entertainment and conducting special events. Of nine practitioners working for the government sector, only two were female, both of whom were press secretaries. Of the seven practitioners working in publicity and special events, only one was male. Regardless of gender and the area of specialty, the majority of characters worked closely with the media.

2) Major Themes of PR Practice and Practitioners in Television

(1) The Moral Life of the Practitioner: Lies, Rumors and Sex

Many practitioner characters are engaged in morally problematic acts to a degree. One example is Samantha Jones of *Sex and the City* who uses her job to get whatever she wants. When she signs an actress Lucy Liu for publicity job, she uses it to get a Birkin bag that she was not able to get because of a long waiting list. She lies to the store manager, “I’m her (Lucy Liu’s) press rep and I would love for her to carry this bag to a premiere next week. It would be photographed to death. Does that make a difference?” The bag is never intended for the actress. Mike Flaherty in *Spin City* also easily bends the truth to save his mayor from embarrassment. He is so good at lying that his journalist girlfriend

marvels, “You actually believe what you’re saying!”

Often other characters expect practitioners to lie, concoct a story or spin facts. In *Arrested Development*, the Bluth family’s new publicist, Jessie Bowers, tells every member of the family to get a job. Lindsay, the money-wasting daughter of the family responds, “Instead of us getting jobs, why don’t you do your job and tell everyone that we’ve got jobs?” In the same episode, when Gob Bluth, a not-so-successful magician in the family, cannot find a guy who he put in his magic Aztec Tomb, he tells his brother that he needs Jessie to “spin” murder for him. Sometimes practitioners themselves imply that it is the nature of public relations practice to lie and withhold information. Paul Lassiter, press secretary of *Spin City* professes to his colleague, “Rule number 1—you never tell the press more than you have to.”

Practitioners sometimes engage in cover-ups, although it may be unintentional. CJ Craig, the press secretary in *The West Wing*, denies troop movements in India in a press briefing because she was kept in the dark by senior White House staff. For the same reason, she does not reveal important matters such as the President’s health crisis and the US marines’ assassination of a foreign leader to the press. She quickly suspects that the staff members are hiding information from her and, in her frustration, tries to leak a story to a journalist who has been courting her. He won’t let her do it and says if there is a story he will find it. She responds, “No you won’t. We’ve gotten very good at this.”

Rumors are another major theme in the moral lives of public relations practitioners portrayed on television. In television, practitioners use, make up and spread rumors to accomplish their goals. Kelly Ludlow, a press secretary of *Commander in Chief* uses a rumor about herself to preempt the controversy about President Allen’s rise to presidency. She negotiates with the media for a story on the President’s first 50

days in exchange for her confession about being intimate with actor George Clooney—a rumor. In *Sex and the City*, “two young PR girls” are described as the city’s “hottest rumor mill” and used by other people when they need to spread rumors.

Sometimes sex is a tool that practitioners employ to get what they want. Samantha Jones in *Sex and the City* believes “sex is power” and uses it to raise money for a cause and to receive expensive jewelry. For her, PR expertise can also be useful to get more sex. To sleep with a priest, she suggests organizing a charity event for his church. Undoubtedly, she equates public relations with sex when she lectures her friend Charlotte York on how to handle a man, “Hon, it doesn’t matter what you say or do. It’s how you say it. For example, *I’m in PR*. Translation: I give great head.”

Although other PR characters may not be as promiscuous as Samantha Jones, some of them have relationships and sex with reporters and clients. CJ Craig in *The West Wing* has a relationship with a White House correspondent; in *Spin City* Mike Flaherty has a live-in girlfriend who is a city hall correspondent; Jessie Bowers sleeps with her client in *Arrested Development*; Nick Pierce in *The District* sleeps with a journalist; and Jake Phillips in *Jake in Progress* has had sexual relationships with celebrity clients in the past.

(2) The Unbearable Lightness of Public Relations Practice

Although most practitioners, with an exception of Paul Lassiter in *Spin City*, are presented as good at their jobs, some things they succeed in are so trivial and nonessential to public relations practice that they are almost embarrassing. In *Las Vegas*, Mary Connell successfully achieves round-girl duty in a boxing match when a scheduled round-girl cancels on her. She also calms down customers who are upset because all the

shrimp at the hotel's buffet restaurant has been eaten by a group of contestants from an eating contest. In *Entourage*, Shauna, a publicist is asked to get a pair of boots for her actor client Vince Chase's girlfriend. She delivers.

The types of work tasks that non-governmental practitioner characters perform are usually limited to special events, especially party planning. In *Mad about You*, Jamie Buchman is portrayed as an intelligent business woman who is a Yale graduate and very good at her job. Although her work is rarely shown, when it is, she mainly handles party planning—her sister's wedding and parents-in-law's anniversary. Samantha Jones in *Sex and the City* handles parties for clubs, restaurants, and even a new coffee table book. She successfully checks the guest list at the door of a club and contacts designers to get suits and sunglasses for her actor boyfriend's appearance on an MTV show *Total Request Live*. One of her love interests, Richard Wright, calls all her work “fluff.”

Practitioners in the government sector are not free from trivial work. In *The West Wing*, CJ Craig briefs reporters about what the first lady is wearing to the state dinner. She laments that all her 22 years of school are going to waste answering questions about what people are wearing. She says, “A hurricane has picked up speed and power and is heading for Georgia... Amazingly you know what I'll get asked most often today?” Then she sees a reporter come into the room. “Sandra, black suede and velvet Manolo Blonic slides with a rhinestone and mother of pearl toe buckle.”

(3) Planning Parties vs. Planning Media Strategy: Extreme Divisions in PR Definitions and Practice

In television dramas and sit-coms public relations is shown as narrow in scope, with recent programming focusing only on two dimensions:

publicity/special events and the government sector. Beyond these two dimensions, few definitions of the public relations field are explicitly given; shows rely instead on the characters' impressions of their field. Public relations tasks within the field are also not shown in great detail. When they are shown, there is a disparity between the types of tasks shown in publicity/special events and the government sector.

Characters in publicity and special events coordinate parties and social events; organize fund-raising, wet T-shirt contests and cheerleading competitions; and arrange clients' clothes and accessories for premieres and TV appearances. A lot of their work is also related to the media. They monitor and respond to the media, negotiate with the media for stories and appearances, and prepare clients for media interviews. They work hard to present positive stories and prevent negative media coverage of their clients. Naomi Clark in *Jake in Progress* monitors the media to see how the media cover her celebrity clients. Mary Connell in *Las Vegas* promotes group weddings for a weekend to reporters for coverage, and when things go wrong, she worries what "if the reporters find out."

Practitioners in the government sector are shown coordinating political campaigns, press briefings and interviews, and photo shoots; writing speeches and creating communication strategies; preparing their employers and clients for interviews and debates; referring to opinion polls; and attending senior-level meetings. They tend to use the public information and two-way communication models of public relations to achieve their communication goals. Toby Zeigler, communications director in *The West Wing* sees public relations as a powerful tool in the political process to get information to the public. By getting information to the public, he believes that public relations contributes to democracy. Dickie McDonald in *Commander in Chief* and Sam Seaborn in *The*

West Wing often base their opinions on public polls and other types of research. Sam Seaborn writes the State of the Union address based on the opinions and memos he received from all kinds of people.

Some television characters are self-defining the field. Interestingly, CJ Craig, the press secretary of *The West Wing* does not seem to think press secretary is a “PR” function. She sometimes gets annoyed when she has to do “silly PR things” like have the President pardon a turkey on Thanksgiving or lead children in song at Christmas. While she feels her press secretary job is “noble,” she feels these “PR things” are beneath her. In fact, although communication characters in the show regularly discuss communication strategies, relationship-building, and two-way communications, they never acknowledge that they are in public relations, thereby offering no explicit definitions of public relations. This is in a stark contrast with characters practicing mainly publicity and press agency who openly profess they are “in PR” and regularly provide their job descriptions. Shauna in *Entourage* yells at her actor client Vince Chase because he arranged himself to be on Jimmy Kimmel Show, “If you want to do Kimmel, come to me. I’m your publicist. That’s what I’m here for.” Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* frequently describes her friend Samantha Jones as “a publicist” and illustrates what Samantha does as doing “the PR” for her client’s upcoming party and “Samantha’s PR firm was hired to do the opening party” for a club.

Overall, the details of public relations work are frequently not shown or discussed in television dramas and situation comedies. However, government practitioners are at least regularly seen holding intense strategy sessions. Practitioners in *The West Wing*, *Commander in Chief* and *Spin City* frequently have staff meetings and discussions to develop communication strategies. Then their strategies are reflected in the Presidents’ and the mayor’s speeches and policies. On the other

hand, practitioners in publicity and special events are rarely seen doing any work. As Miller (1999) noted, this “lack of information on the groundwork of public relations” may insinuate two misconceptions that PR is “almost supernatural” and PR is “easy” (p. 13). After she becomes a publicist for the Bluth family, Jessie Bowers in *Arrested Development* is able to get a job for its daughter overnight, set up a hearing for her husband Tobias to get his medical license back, and book the eldest son of the family—a magician—a gig at a nursing home. She’s also made “some serious progress” in getting the family’s youngest member George Michael into a prestigious high school. Samantha Jones in *Sex and the City* also has a “magical power.” She arranges a positive review in a New York newspaper about her boyfriend, and unknown theater actor, and elevates him to a sex symbol overnight. She draws so many people to her friend’s book party that even, “*Vanity Fair* doesn’t have a table.” She guarantees that “Donald Trump and Marlo Thomas” will come to a benefit that she offers to organize for a church. A rare glimpse of how she wields her “magic” is seen at a party in Hampton that her former assistant Nina G organizes. When Nina G gets into a trouble at the party—fireworks start too early while people are still inside—she desperately asks Samantha for help. All Samantha needs to do is to yell for everybody to go outside and the problem is solved. In these shows, public relations is absurdly easy.

5. Discussion, Implications and Future Studies

The present study began with a curiosity to investigate the root of our students’ perceptions of the public relations and its practitioners. By analyzing fictional public relations characters in prime-time television

programming, we confirmed some of the negative characterizations and imprecise views of the field and its professionals as identified in the work of Spicer (1993), Keenan (1996), Jo (2003), and Miller (1999). However, new concerns arose from the present study.

First, a dichotomy is present between male and female practitioners in their areas of public relations. Only two of the nine practitioners working for the governments are female, whereas only one of the seven practitioners in publicity and special events is male. Biased representations like this may lead to the stereotypes that serious, strategic, or powerful areas of the field, such as government public relations, are for men, while lighter, more “fluffy” areas that are often portrayed as “easy” in television, such as publicity, special events, managing the media and “looking good” are for women. Additionally, the fact that both women in government public relations are the White House press secretaries may imply that certain jobs are for men and certain jobs are for women, even within a specific area of public relations. Public relations on television also is not shown to be a racially diverse field. It is dominated by white, Caucasians and other races are fairly invisible.

Second, while it does not seem that television dramas and situation comedies portray the public relations field overall as “bad” and “silly,” they do describe the “bad” and “silly” things that practitioners sometimes do as actions representing the public relations field. Often, the term “public relations” is brought up only when characters engage in uncomplimentary actions. When they do something good and noble, the term “public relations” is not used. For instance, the PR characters in *The West Wing* are accomplished and loyal and do their best for the President and the country, but they never acknowledge that their work is the public relations function. When they mention public relations, it

is only in the context of “silly PR things” such as having the President pardon turkeys for Thanksgiving. The implication here is that gimmicks and fluff *are* public relations, but serious and noble things *are not*.

Third, while the field of public relations claims to encompass a variety of areas from investor relations to community relations, and to government relations (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000), only three areas of public relations are visible in this study of television programming: publicity, special events and government. This misrepresentation may lead new PR majors to expect to learn about “more fun” jobs such as planning parties and social events, and to have the rich and famous at their fingertips. When those students discover that public relations requires knowledge of management, research, and relationships, they may feel dismayed and even betrayed. A student’s quote from a focus group in Bowen’s (2003, p. 203) study seems to sum it up: “I don’t have the same feelings for it [public relations] now, I thought it would be more glamorous.”

Fourth, similar to Miller’s (1999) study, antisocial characteristics such as lying, cover-ups and promiscuity are depicted to be a part of public relations practice in television. Although television practitioners themselves may not actually engage in these morally problematic acts, people around the practitioners tend to expect this kind of behaviors from the practitioners “as to seem normal” (p. 23).

Finally, television does not define the field thoroughly or explain the public relations process properly. Like in novel and film (Miller, 1999), practitioners in television exercise almost magical power and somehow achieve their tasks and goals easily, without much hard work. This kind of depiction may give public relations unwanted status of a myth: if a person has the secret knowledge of public relations, she can bring about almost anything easily. A misconception like this puts public relations

in a tricky position: it is considered something with a huge impact but whose process nobody knows and understands. If unaddressed, these inaccurate impressions may limit the field to only certain characteristics in the minds of employers, the media and the public. Moreover, they may influence the types of students entering the profession and even inhibit public relations practitioners from being taken seriously in their jobs, in some cases. Ultimately this study suggests that public relations may need some serious re-definition in television.

While the present study adds a new insight to our understanding of public relations field and its practitioners as interpreted via television, it certainly has several limitations. Because there was no complete list available for television shows containing public relations characters, a convenience sample was used, which limits generalizability of this study's findings. Also due to the limited availability, shows prior to the past 15 years were not included in the analysis. So, it is fair to say that this study provides a limited first look at the picture of public relations and its practitioners in television. Because this study was only able to examine recent television programming showing 16 PR characters, it was not possible to obtain the volume of rich data about the definitions of public relations, strategies and tactics used by the practitioners as the researchers had initially hoped.

As a first look at the portrayal of public relations characters on television, the present study suggests at least four future studies. First, additional historical studies of more characters through the years should be conducted by those who can get access to past television programming. This would enable an understanding of the "evolution" over time of portrayals and establish when public relations was first portrayed on television. Second, now that we have some indications that both news media and entertainment media representations of

public relations are not positive, a linkage between audience exposure to these media portrayals and their perceptions of the profession should be established. Third, a study could be conducted investigating other influences on new college public relations majors' perceptions of public relations and practitioners, such as high school guidance counselors, and where their perceptions are formed. Finally, this study was conducted in the United States and limited to television programming airing in the United States. Studies should be replicated in other countries around the world to compare the portrayal of public relations characters internationally.

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〈국문초록〉

텔레비전을 통해 PR에 대하여 배우기: 홍보 전문가가 어떻게 묘사되는가?

윤영민

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해더 블랙

베리에 어소시에이츠

본 질적 연구는 홍보가 미국 프라임 시간대 텔레비전 프로그램 편성 특히, 텔레비전 드라마와 시트콤에서 홍보가 어떻게 묘사되고 있는지를 다룬 첫번째 시도이다. 연구 결과는 엔터테인먼트 미디어를 다룬 기존 연구 결과를 재확인하고 있다. 첫째, 홍보 분야가 여전히 부정적으로 묘사되고 있다. 둘째, 홍보 분야에 대한 정의가 불명확하며 주로 퍼블리시티와 파티 플래닝으로 비춰지고 있다. 셋째, 홍보는 “쉽고”, “화려하다”는 이미지로 묘사된다. 본 연구를 통한 새로운 시사점은 다음과 같다. 첫째, “홍보”라는 말은 부정적이고 “우스꽝스러운” 행동과 연관되어 있다. 둘째, 사회는 홍보 업계 종사자에 대해 부도덕적인 행동을 예상한다. 셋째, 성적 장벽이 있는 것으로 비추어진다. 마지막으로 사회의 부유층 또는 권력층과 연관되는 홍보 분야에 더 초점을 맞추는 경향이 있다.

키워드: 홍보, 텔레비전 프로그램 묘사, 텔레비전 드라마, 시트콤