Communication Research

Legitimacy, Public Relations, and Media Access: Proposing and Testing a Media Access Model
Youngmin Yoon
Communication Research 2005; 32; 762
DOI: 10.1177/0093650205281081

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://crx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/32/6/762

Additional services and information for *Communication Research* can be found at:

Email Alerts: http://crx.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://crx.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

Citations (this article cites 49 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
http://crx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/32/6/762

YOUNGMIN YOON

Legitimacy, Public Relations, and Media Access: Proposing and Testing a Media Access Model

This study examines how an organization's access to the media reflects two sets of influences—its public relations (PR) expertise and legitimacy. A context of stem cell and the cloning debate is used to test the relationships. Two surveys and a content analysis show that the legitimacy of sources perceived by journalists has an impact on the regularity and valence of those sources' media coverage, whereas the PR expertise of sources does not have an impact on any of the media access indicators. Public relations expertise, however, shows some impact on the legitimacy of sources as perceived by journalists, indicating that legitimacy operates as an intervening variable between PR expertise and media access of sources.

Keywords: *media access; legitimacy; public relations; stem cell; cloning*

Organizations that actively try to exert influence on a policy-decision process tend to seek access to the news media, with an assumption that greater and sympathetic media coverage of their stance will result in public opinion and policy making favorable to them (Danielian, 1992; Kennamer, 1992; Paletz & Entman, 1981). As media space is limited, those who seek media attention inevitably engage in the intense processes of competition (Anderson, 1993; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994).

Many suggest that if organizations (news sources) are to attract favorable media coverage, journalists must view them as legitimate (Anderson, 1993; Berkowitz, 1992; Danielian, 1992; Goldenberg, 1975). Journalists rely on their own "judgments" when selecting sources (Powers & Fico, 1994). They treat sources differently "according to the degree of respect" with which they regard those sources (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 55). They may view

762

regular and accurate sources as more reliable and thus more legitimate (K. Hansen, 1991). They may evaluate sources that can command more resources as more important and thus more legitimate (Anderson, 1991). They may consider a large pressure group with a separate public relations (PR) staff as a legitimate news source (Corbett, 1998). The size of the membership base of a social movement group may enhance the legitimacy of the organization in the eye of journalists (Goldenberg, 1975; Wolfson, 1995). Legitimacy may also depend on whether journalists like and agree with sources or whether they perceive sources "as prominent, knowledgeable and credible" (Powers & Fico, 1994, p. 88).

Theorists argue that journalists view certain sources as more legitimate, thereby allowing those sources to preempt media access and dominate the news in a public debate. Journalists tend to confer "a de facto legitimacy" on certain sources although it is "something that has to be gained by other sources" (Goldsmiths Media Group, 2000, p. 36). Institutional sources, for example, receive privileged access to media and become the "primary definers" of news agendas by virtue of their power, representativeness, and expertise (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978, p. 58). Journalists tend to assume that certain sources are entitled to know certain things by virtue of their social structural position and routinely rely on these authoritative sources, as it is the most efficient way of gathering news (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973; Tiffen, 1989). Journalists also frequently use sources with superior economic power, as these sources provide information at something less than the cost the journalists would face in the absence of the information subsidy (Gandy, 1982; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Studies of media-source interaction offer alternative perspectives (Davis, 2000a; Miller, 1994; Miller & Williams, 1993). They argued that some sources may play a key role regularly in the news output; however, they still must engage in strategic actions to achieve access even though their status as legitimate authorities is already accepted (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). In the meantime, alternative sources with limited resources—whether material or symbolic—also can make a significant impact by adopting effective PR strategies. This suggests that PR could be a key strategic choice that "already legitimate" and alternative sources should pursue, either to consolidate their superior media access or to make frequent interventions as they contend for media space (Davis, 2000b; Schlesinger, 1990). Public relations in some cases helps sources bypass the commonly cited obstacles such as lack of economic resources and legitimacy gaps (Davis, 2000a). As Shoemaker (1989) suggested, PR sometimes may be the only realistic strategy for groups off the "beaten" path and without institutional legitimacy, to achieve media access.
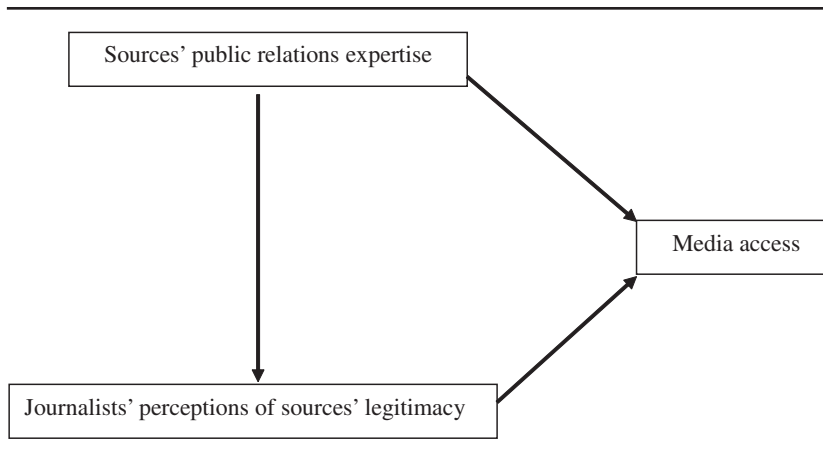
763

Figure 1. Model of Media Access

The current study examined how media access of a given source (organization) reflects two sets of influences—its legitimacy in journalists' perceptions and its PR expertise. Although differences in access to the mass media among news sources have been documented (Berkowitz, 1987; Brown, Bybee, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987; Lasorsa & Reese, 1990; Liebler, 1993; S. Martin, 1988; Sigal, 1973; Smith, 1993; Soloski, 1989; Whitney, Fritzler, Jones, Mazzarella, & Rakow, 1989), few systematic attempts have been made to specify and test "the range of factors that could account for the varying treatment that diverse sources enjoy or suffer at the hands of news workers" (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p. 46). Instead, different experts tend to focus on single mechanisms, thereby ignoring other potential influences. The current study, then, fills a gap in the literature by investigating how legitimacy and PR expertise are related to each other in the sources' battle for media access—whether they operate as competing alternatives or as mutually complementary forces.

Theory

Media Access Model

Figure 1 depicts this theoretical statement as a simple causal model. It proposes sources' PR expertise and journalists' perceptions of those sources' legitimacy to be the predictors in gaining access to the media. Journalists consider some sources more legitimate than others and then treat the more legitimate sources favorably, granting them more media access. In the

764

meantime, sources are engaged in PR to obtain media access. The varying degree of PR expertise results in the varying degree of media access. In short, the extent of sources' media access is influenced by either their PR expertise or journalists' perceptions of their legitimacy, or often by both. It is noteworthy that PR continuously influences and reinforces journalists' perceptions of legitimacy as sources try to gain media access.[1]

Dimensions of Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined in a number of ways, suggesting multiple dimensions. The present literature search closely reflects the four dimensions of legitimacy Shoemaker (1982a, 1982b) identified—legality, evaluation, viability, and stability—and a new dimension—credibility.

Legitimacy may be based on an organization's legality—"the readiness to conform to rules"—according to Weber (1947, p. 131). It may reflect the congruence of the organization's goals and means with social norms (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Elsbach, 1994; Michener & Burt, 1974; Perrow, 1970) and thus its right to exist (Maurer, 1971; Metzler, 2001a, 2001b). Others view legitimacy as the perceived rightfulness of the power and authority the organization exercises (Barker, 1990; Easton, 1975; Kelman, 1976; Simmons, 2001; Tyler, 1990). Overall, this legality dimension reflects the organization's position within the social and political system and is a measure of how the organization obeys rules and norms, how typical and acceptable its behaviors are, and its right to exist.

Legitimacy may also be a matter of sentiment and affective status (evaluation dimension). Emotional feelings and commitment toward an organization (Moreno, 1974; Weber, 1947), beliefs and attitudes (Schaar, 1984; Taylor, 1994), and general affective orientation toward it (Easton, 1965; Tyler, 1990) fall under this dimension. Similarly, legitimacy may be measured by tapping into confidence in and support for the organization (Seligson, 2002; see also Klingemann, 1999; Norris, 1999), approval of and agreement with (Dennis & Chaffee, 1978; Mondak, 1992), and endorsement of it (Elsbach, 1994; Michener & Burt, 1974).

Legitimacy may be a reflection of whether an organization has the competence and resources necessary for achieving its goals. Terreberry (1971) viewed legitimacy as mediated by the exchange of resources, suggesting that economic viability is essential in assessing legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). In addition to the financial resources, this viability dimension is an assessment of an organization's expertise, political influence, and ability to find allies among diverse groups.

765

The stability dimension comprises an organization's endurance (Pollock, Robinson, & Murray, 1978) and members' commitment (O'Neill, 1977). It contains elements for the organization's ability to exist over time, the consistency of the organization's policies over time, and the degree to which the workers support the organization and its decisions.

Finally, credibility may be considered as a dimension of legitimacy (Mondak, 1992). The credibility of an organization, in essence, refers to the credibility of the organization as a source of information (for an overview of the concept, see Self, 1996). Hovland and associates defined *credibility* as trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). More recent studies, however, adopt a multidimensional approach to measuring credibility (Bucy, 2003; Flynn, 2002; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Johnson & Kaye, 2000; McComas & Trumbo, 2001; Meyer, 1988; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987). Dimensions used to measure the concept typically include believability, trust, fairness, bias, accuracy, and completeness of information, among others.

PR Expertise[2]

Public relations encompasses various functions, from issues management to public affairs, advertising, lobbying, and investor relations (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000). Although all these functions, to an extent, influence an organization's media access, the current study's focus is on the organization's efforts directed at the media. It should be noted, however, that not all actors in the public arena pursue media access. Rather, some corporations want to stay out of any news (Ericson, Baranek, & Chan, 1989). Some groups pursue strategies of avoidance and secrecy (Goldenberg, 1975). Others concentrate on their involvement in legal, political, or education areas, rather than on obtaining media coverage (Corbett, 1998). Thus, it is possible that such organizations may use their PR departments to minimize rather than increase media attention. Yet the construct of PR expertise in the current study was based on the assumption that the actors engaged in the dynamic competition process for defining and policy making of issues will seek access to the media.

Studies of how PR influences news content to date have generally assumed a rather narrow view of PR efforts. Much of the literature focuses on how news media utilize sources' information subsidies, such as news releases, and why some subsidies are accepted whereas others are rejected (Abbott & Brassfield, 1989; Aronoff, 1976; Berkowitz & Adams, 1990; Curtin, 1999; W. Martin & Singletary, 1981; Morton, 1986; Morton & Ramsey, 1994; Morton & Warren, 1992a, 1992b; Sachsman, 1976; Turk, 1985; Walters & Walters, 1992). Other studies highlight journalists' perceptions of PR

766

practitioners and the information subsidies they provide and the potential and actual effect of those perceptions on news coverage of the practitioners' clients (Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; Kopenhaver, 1985; Kopenhaver, Martinson, & Ryan, 1984; Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993).

A new perspective guides the current study: Professional PR involves more than supplying information subsidies and developing favorable images of PR among journalists. To effectively achieve access to the media, sources should have great knowledge of journalists' work habits and news values and adopt sophisticated strategies and well-planned, timely actions in relation to the media (Blumler, 1990; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). Thus, PR in the current study covers sources' broader expertise directed at media—that is, knowledge, action, and strategy.

The knowledge aspect of PR expertise includes the degree to which the PR team understands news values and routines of journalists, such as journalists' deadlines, their favorite types of stories and formats, and their pursuit of objectivity (Barker-Plummer, 2002; Berkowitz, 1987; Butler, 1999; Davis, 2000a; Dunn, 1969; Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986; Ryan, 1991). It also reflects a PR team's overall training and experience in media relations and systematic and constant monitoring of media, which helps practitioners identify their target journalists, those journalists' news values, and their organizations' standing in the eye of the journalists (Anderson, 1991, 1993; Hess, 1984; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994).

The action dimension touches on whether the PR team endeavors to meet journalists' needs. Sources that can provide journalists with constant and usable story ideas are likely to become regular and favorable sources (Barker-Plummer, 2002; Butler, 1999; Gandy, 1982). As a result, journalists and the sources can establish relationships, and the journalists may become dependent on the sources for news (Aronoff, 1976; Danielian, 1992; Goldenberg, 1975; Roshco, 1975). Working under deadlines and the competitive risk of being scooped, journalists also would consider responsiveness—the speed with which requested information is delivered to journalists—as the prime quality in practitioners (Hess, 1984).

For their information to become news, practitioners must supply the information to the media by using the methods that coincide with the techniques journalists use to gather news (Dunn, 1969). Although many accept press releases as the most ubiquitous information supply tool, other techniques include press conferences, press interviews, background briefings, phone calls, and staged events (Hess, 1984; Nimmo, 1964; Ryan, 1991; Sandman, 1982; Walters & Walters, 1992).

The strategy dimension indicates the degree to which the PR team addresses public concerns rather than promotes its private interest. Studies

767

report journalists prefer information from sources that they perceive have no obvious self-serving economic interests (Cameron et al., 1997; Curtin, 1999; Pincus et al., 1993; Smith, 1993; Turk, 1985). This "public interest appeal" strategy has proven particularly advantageous for nongovernmental groups, often operating in unfriendly political and media environments (Anderson, 1991; Davis, 2000b; A. Hansen, 1993).

The strategic alliance in the form of third-party endorsement can also provide opportunities for organizations (Barker-Plummer, 2002; Goldenberg, 1975; Ryan, 1991; Wolfson, 1995). Third parties with authority can put potential pressure on media on behalf of an organization, thereby enabling it to bypass "the need for institutional legitimacy and direct access" to the media (Davis, 2000a, p. 182). Another form of strategic alliance is to participate in collective actions. Groups with similar interests often compete against one another to achieve the salience of their stance on issues. Yet at times when political goals coincide, several groups may negotiate with each other in developing media strategies and combine their resources (Anderson, 1993; Miller & Williams, 1993; Ryan, 1991; Schlesinger, 1990; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Staggenborg, 1986). Such activities may not show up in media coverage; however, groups in the coalitions are able to strengthen and reinforce one another's messages in addition to spreading the arguments (Davis, 2000b; Miller & Williams, 1993).

PR Influence on Legitimacy

Efficacy of PR in the news production process may be not only in its ability to achieve media access but also in its contribution to accumulating institutional legitimacy for organizations, particularly noninstitutional and resource-poor ones (Davis, 2000a). According to Miller (1994), PR is a central part of the legitimizing strategies of those organizations. Although a wide array of PR efforts—for example, issue advertising, direct mail, and interactions with publics via Web sites—can help build legitimacy independent of media relations, many studies point to media strategies as the key to acquiring legitimacy for sources that lack it (Miller & Williams, 1993; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). They contended that legitimacy is not static but dynamic—something that can be enhanced or damaged by PR (Miller, 1994; Schlesinger, 1990).

There are reports that some interest groups with limited financial means established themselves as legitimate sources through a steady supply of information subsidies (Anderson, 1991; Barker-Plummer, 2002; Davis, 2000b; Miller & Williams, 1993; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). Consequently,

768

to an extent, they were able to overcome institutional advantages that other organizations traditionally enjoy (Davis, 2000b).

Media Access

Access to news making is a critical political resource in that it provides organizations the opportunity for their voices to be heard and to have an influence in public debate (Barker-Plummer, 2002; Paletz & Entman, 1981). That access, however, is not equally but hierarchically distributed in social structures (Gans, 1979). There are consistent findings in U.S. news that most news sources are politically, economically, and socially powerful institutions or individuals affiliated with them (Berkowitz, 1987; Brown et al., 1987; Lasorsa & Reese, 1990; Liebler, 1993; S. Martin, 1988; Sigal, 1973; Smith, 1993; Soloski, 1989; Whitney et al., 1989). Exceptions exist, however. Recent studies show that nonmainstream organizations increasingly achieve and maintain an authoritative and legitimate source status through their media strategies (Anderson, 1991; Barker-Plummer, 2002; A. Hansen, 1993).

Although media access and coverage are commonly used interchangeably, Ericson et al. (1989) distinguished access from coverage. By *access*, they meant "the news space, time, and context to reasonably represent the authority of their office," whereas *coverage* entailed "some news space and time but not the context for favourable representations" (p. 5).

Many sources may achieve coverage; however, as the Students for a Democratic Society movement exemplified, most of them fall short of access status (Gitlin, 1980). They may be given coverage too sporadic to make any impact, given coverage only in deviant contexts, such as a public demonstration, and given coverage in other contexts that simply underscore their status as marginal (Ericson et al., 1989). Gaining coverage once may not be hard; however, gaining and sustaining regular access is extremely difficult (Goldenberg, 1975). Access to news making thus may mean achieving a routine status or, as Roshco (1975) put it, "a permanently newsworthy status" (p. 101). Achieving access can give organizations a significant advantage in public debate; their definitions and frames of issues are more likely to prevail.

Access can be considered to have three dimensions—prominence, dominance, and valence. Prominence is an assessment of the quantity of coverage (Sheafer, 2001; Stempel & Culbertson, 1984). Dominance is an assessment of "the stature with which one is viewed by the press as an important source or verifier of information" (Stempel & Culbertson, 1984, p. 676). Finally, valence is an evaluation of how positive or negative the coverage is.

769

Hypotheses

This section proposes hypotheses to test and summarizes the theoretical linkage for each.

> *Hypothesis 1:* Legitimacy perceived by journalists will have a positive impact on media access (*Hypothesis 1a*: on prominence of media coverage, *Hypothesis 1b*: on dominance of media coverage, and *Hypothesis 1c*: on valence of media coverage).

Journalists must evaluate sources before they use them in stories. They would prefer more legitimate sources as these sources are more likely to be authoritative and their accounts are less likely to require further verification. Thus, journalists will grant greater media access to more legitimate sources; that is, legitimacy of sources is likely to be influential in sources getting more media coverage, their accounts receiving more weight, and the nature of the coverage being more positive.

> *Hypothesis 2:* The PR expertise of sources will have a positive impact on media access (*Hypothesis 2a*: on prominence of media coverage, Hypothesis 2b: on dominance of media coverage, and *Hypothesis 2c*: on valence of media coverage).

Journalists are exposed to a large amount of information everyday. Sources that implement sophisticated media strategies and adapt better to the way journalists work are likely to gain greater media access; that is, PR expertise is likely to be influential in sources getting more media coverage, their accounts receiving more weight, and their coverage being more positive.

> *Hypothesis 3:* Legitimacy perceived by journalists will have more of a positive impact than PR expertise of sources on media access (*Hypothesis 3a*: on prominent coverage, *Hypothesis 3b*: on dominant coverage, and *Hypothesis 3c*: on positive coverage).

Although PR efforts of sources may encourage journalists to pay more attention to issues and angles that sources try to promote, journalists' decision making about the use of sources is more likely to be based on their overall evaluation of sources' legitimacy than on PR. Therefore, the impact of legitimacy will be greater than the impact of PR expertise on how much coverage sources receive and how importantly and positively sources are covered.

Hypothesis 4: PR expertise of sources will have a positive impact on legitimacy perceived by journalists.

Journalists evaluate sources' legitimacy based on their experiences—direct and indirect—with the sources. Public relations provides opportunities for interactions between journalists and sources. Therefore, sources' PR expertise is likely to have an influence on journalists' perceptions of the sources' legitimacy; that is, the greater PR expertise of sources, the more legitimate the sources are perceived by journalists.

Context of Study

To test the relationships proposed above, the current study needed a context that met several requirements. First, it should involve an issue in which many different groups and organizations have a critical interest and become actively involved in the debate. A particular issue or debate is necessary because different organizations need to be compared on their relative media access within the same context. Second, the issue should be important and interesting enough for the media nationwide to pay substantial attention to it. Next, the debate participants presumably should vary in their PR expertise, perceived legitimacy, and media access.

After considering several prominent issues, the stem cell and/or cloning debate was selected as it met all these requirements fairly well. Although the origin of the debate may date back to the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision, more recent developments in U.S. public policy include President George W. Bush's address in 2001 to permit National Institutes of Health funds for research with existing stem cell lines, the total cloning ban that passed the House in 2001, and the impasse about the ban in the Senate in 2002 (Nelkin, 1995; Stolberg, 2002; Wertz, 2002). These developments in the public policy arena, the ethical debate over whether the U.S. government should allow federal funding for stem cell research, and the ongoing reports of new research developments from the scientific community continue to engage diverse groups and organizations in the stem cell and/or cloning debate.

The current study employed three data collection processes. The first was a survey of organizations to determine their PR expertise. The second part involved a survey of newspaper and news magazine journalists to learn their assessment of the relative legitimacy of those organizations. The third part of the current study was a content analysis of newspapers and news magazines to assess the media access of those same organizations. The time frame for the study was 2002.

771

Survey 1

Procedure

A purposive sample of 76 organizations involved in the stem cell and/or cloning debate was selected through a search of the related Web sites and news articles in the year 2002, on the assumption that they varied in PR expertise, perceived legitimacy, and media access.[3] Public relations expertise was measured by asking heads of PR teams to evaluate media-directed efforts on behalf of their organizations. A survey instrument reflecting the knowledge, action, and strategy dimensions of PR expertise was developed.[4] Whereas most of the questions used 5-point Likert scales of disagreement-agreement, some questions asked respondents to provide the number of initiatives their PR teams originated. As there was a possibility that the respondents were unable or unwilling to answer these questions, questions that reflect the same items but use Likert scales were provided as well.

Pretests were conducted by interviewing practitioners who were not part of the sample. The main data-collecting method was mailing, supplemented by e-mails for three organizations for which no other contact information was available. Two mailings followed within 6 weeks after the initial questionnaire distribution.

Results and Analysis

Of 76 organizations, 39 returned the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 51%. However, only 30 organizations were included in the subsequent analyses as the other 9 organizations either received ratings from fewer than three journalists in the later journalist survey or received news coverage in fewer than three articles during the year 2002.[5] The final organization list comprised 2 government agencies, 1 member of Congress, 6 academic research institutes, 5 professional associations, 9 advocacy organizations and groups (including prochoice and prolife groups), 5 corporations, and 2 not-for-profit research institutes.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for 25 key PR expertise variables (six minor variables with missing values were dropped). An exploratory factor analysis (varimax rotation) performed on the standardized measures of these variables yielded three factors, as predicted. However, one variable loaded on a factor other than the one that theory expected, two loaded on two factors simultaneously, and one did not load on any factors. The variable that did not load was dropped from further analysis.

772

Table 1

Factor Loadings (Varimax Rotated) and Unstandardized Means and Standard Deviations for Public Relations Expertise Variables (N = 30)

Variables	Factor 1 Action	Factor 2 Knowledge	Factor 3 Networking	M	SD
Initiating many press interviews[a]	**.83**	.12	.09	3.60	1.22
Initiating many press releases[a]	**.78**	.23	.19	3.03	1.22
Journalists' dependence on our team[b]	**.74**	−.26	.13	3.43	1.10
Initiating many briefings[a]	**.73**	−.04	.12	3.10	1.35
Initiating many press conferences[a]	**.73**	.11	.26	2.27	1.28
Regular supply of information[a]	**.72**	.15	.00	3.73	1.05
Number of press conferences[c]	**.71**	.06	−.07	0.83	1.18
Number of press releases[c]	**.70**	.22	−.07	4.03	3.32
Getting endorsements[a,f]	**.59**	.02	**.44**	2.97	1.33
Number of press interviews[c]	**.55**	.16	−.29	29.70	46.81
Initiating many phone calls[a]	**.41**	.10	.29	2.83	1.32
Media monitoring[a]	.38	.25	.18	4.60	0.50
Knowing how to reach[a]	−.02	**.92**	−.02	4.47	0.68
Knowing whom to contact[a]	.06	**.89**	.08	4.13	0.97
Experienced in media relations[a]	.15	**.84**	−.10	4.40	0.72
Well trained for media relations[a]	.32	**.79**	−.03	4.13	0.94
Well established relationships[b]	.03	**.72**	−.25	4.33	0.71
Responding quickly to journalists[a]	.12	**.72**	.11	4.70	0.53
Clear idea of the deadlines[a]	.25	**.51**	−.01	4.17	0.79
Understanding of stories to appeal[b]	−.10	.51	−.04	4.07	1.11
Number of joint press releases[d]	.04	−.01	**.88**	2.03	3.61
Number of joint statements[d]	−.08	−.01	**.88**	2.20	4.12
Joining with other orgs.[e]	.04	−.05	**.60**	0.67	0.48
Initiating many letters[a,g]	.42	−.06	**.54**	2.20	1.10
Number of joint appearances[d]	.39	−.02	**.47**	2.67	3.71
Eigenvalues	6.94	4.41	2.48		
% of total variance accounted for	23.76	19.36	12.19		

Note: Cut-point for loading was .40.

a. Responses were coded 1 = *strongly disagree,* 2 = *disagree,* 3 = *neutral,* 4 = *agree,* 5 = *strongly agree.*

b. Reponses were coded 5 = *strongly disagree,* 4 = *disagree,* 3 = *neutral,* 2 = *agree,* 1 = *strongly agree.*

c. Responses were open-ended: press releases ranging from 0 to 12, press conferences ranging from 0 to 5, press interviews ranging from 0 to 200.

d. Responses were open ended: joint issue of statements ranging from 0 to 20, joint issue of press releases ranging from 0 to 13, joint appearances in activities ranging from 0 to 10.

e. Responses were coded 1 = yes, 0 = no.

f. This variable loaded on two factors was theoretically assigned to networking factor for index creation.

g. This variable loaded on two factors was theoretically assigned to action factor for index creation.

The three factors identified were action, knowledge, and networking dimensions. The action dimension represented information distribution to journalists using a range of initiatives such as press releases, press conferences, press interviews, and background briefings; a regular supply of

information to journalists; and journalists' dependence on the organizations for news. The knowledge dimension represented understanding of which journalists to contact and how to reach them, understanding of the media deadlines and what kind of stories would appeal to target journalists, understanding of the importance of a quick response to their requests and inquiries, experience and training in media relations, and well-established relationships with journalists. The networking dimension involved making alliances with other organizations and getting endorsements from them to achieve common goals and joint efforts to provide information subsidies via a range of initiatives. This dimension was originally conceptualized as a broader "strategy" dimension that included a networking element; however, the factor analysis clearly showed "networking" with other organizations as a separate factor. Thus, in the discussions to follow, *networking* is used instead of *strategy* as a dimension.

Variance accounted for by the factors was (a) action: 23.76%, (b) knowledge: 19.36%, and (c) networking: 12.19%. The total variance accounted for was 55.31%. Cronbach's alpha was .89 for action and knowledge items and .80 for the networking items. As these showed a high reliability, additive indices were constructed. Pearson correlation tests on the indices showed the dimensions were independent of each other and, therefore, represented different aspects of PR expertise.[6] Finally, an organization's PR expertise score was computed by adding the action, knowledge, and networking scores.

Survey 2

Procedure

Legitimacy of organizations was measured by interviewing journalists from daily newspapers and news magazines. The current study included only the editors and reporters who covered medical, science, or health news because they were more likely to have direct experiences with the organizations being studied and were also more likely to have actually written about them. As newspapers with smaller circulations may not have journalists who specifically cover medical and science stories because of the cost constraint, newspapers with a circulation of more than 50,000 were selected (Nelkin, 1995).

After excluding foreign language dailies, duplicate names, and newspapers without relevant journalists, *Bacon's Newspaper Directory* (2003 edition) identified 215 newspapers in the United States. Examinations of the Web sites and subsequent phone calls confirmed that 443 journalists in the

774

directory were still working for respective newspapers. In addition, the same procedure using *Bacon's Magazine Directory* (2003 edition) identified 18 journalists from the top three news magazines—*Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. This yielded a purposive sample of 461 journalists.

The journalists were asked to rate the organizations that participated in the first survey on 20 statements, which are thought to measure five dimensions of legitimacy.[7] This became a concern when as many as 30 organizations responded to the initial survey. Pretests showed that if journalists were asked to rate all the organizations, the survey questionnaire would become too long and thus was likely to discourage journalists from participating in the survey.

To handle this potential problem, the organizations and journalists were randomly assigned to four groups; that is, Journalist Group 1 (115 journalists) was asked to rate Organization Group 1 (8 organizations). Journalist Group 2 (109 journalists) was asked to rate Organization Group 2 (8 organizations). Journalist Group 3 (116 journalists) was asked to rate Organization Group 3 (7 organizations), and Journalist Group 4 (121 journalists) to rate Organization Group 4 (7 organizations).

The survey questionnaire adapted 10 statements from Shoemaker's (1982a) study of political groups and three statements from Elsbach's (1994) study of organizational legitimacy, into legality, evaluation, viability, and stability dimensions. In addition, three new statements were developed to fully tap the dimensions. For the credibility dimension, an index refined by Meyer (1988) was used. Although the index originated from media credibility studies, recently it has performed well measuring the credibility of nonmedia organizations (Flynn, 2002; McComas & Trumbo, 2001). To be consistent with other dimensions, one item from the credibility index was dropped.

The initial survey distribution used e-mails, soliciting journalists to the Web sites featuring the survey questionnaires. Follow-ups used two waves of mailings and one wave of phone calls.

Results and Analysis

The survey elicited 129 usable responses, or a response rate of 28%. Of the respondents, 124 were newspaper journalists representing 98 newspapers, and 5 were news magazine journalists representing 3 news magazines. The survey returns represented the sampling frame of newspapers medical, health, or science journalists relatively well on newspaper circulation.[8] Whereas Journalist Groups 2 and 4 had the same response rates as the overall response rate (28%), Journalist Group 1 yielded slightly higher questionnaire returns (35%). Journalist Group 3 produced lower returns (22%).

775

Overall, journalists who returned the questionnaire have worked at their current publications for about 13 years and covered medical, health, or the science field for about 10 years. They wrote or covered stories about stem cell and/or cloning not often ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.38$, measured on a scale from 1 [*not at all*] to 5 [*very often*]). A series of one-way ANOVAs[9] revealed that there were no significant differences among the four groups in these employment and experience variables, indicating that the four groups were fairly homogeneous.

Not all journalists were familiar with all the organizations in their group. Each journalist rated a different number of organizations. Some rated only one and others up to eight. As a result, there was some gap among organizations in terms of the number of ratings they received from the journalists. The highest was 29 and the lowest 8. In general, government agencies received ratings from the most journalists. This was somewhat expected as journalists should be, to an extent, familiar with the government agencies that oversee the respective fields in the United States. They at least might have heard the names of the agencies. Three advocacy groups, two corporations, and two not-for-profit research institutes received ratings from fewer than 10 journalists. Many journalists marked "don't know this organization" in the questionnaires for these organizations.

The ratings each organization received on each variable were aggregated and averaged before statistical analyses, as the unit of analysis for the current study was the organization.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the legitimacy variables and illustrates the result of a factor analysis (varimax rotation) performed on the 20 legitimacy measures. Although the proposed theory predicted five factors, the factor analysis identified two factors. Most of the variables expected to respectively fall under evaluation, credibility, and legality dimensions loaded on a factor together. Most of the variables expected to respectively fall under viability and stability dimensions loaded on another factor together.

The two factors identified were attitude and viability (internal and external) dimensions. The attitude dimension represented the respondents' feelings about an organization such as respecting, agreeing with, confidence in, and estimation of social value. It also involves judgment of the organization's authority in the field, of its means used to achieve its goals, and of the credibility of the information it provides. The viability dimension represented the organization's internal and external capability and resources necessary to achieve its goals. Internal viability involved the consistency of the

776

Table 2

*Factor Loadings (Varimax Rotated) and Means and Standard Deviations for Legitimacy Variables (*N = *30)*

Variables	Factor 1 Attitude	Factor 2 Viability	*M*	*SD*
Trust[a]	**.95**	.24	3.49	0.77
Agreeing[b]	**.95**	.06	3.25	0.47
Fairness[a]	**.95**	.19	3.26	0.57
Accuracy[a]	**.94**	.16	3.53	0.66
Authority[c]	**.94**	.17	3.61	0.77
Expertise[c]	**.93**	.12	3.72	0.69
Respecting[c]	**.93**	.27	3.34	0.66
Bias[a]	**.92**	.13	2.70	0.73
Confidence[c]	**.90**	.15	3.02	0.61
Using reasonable means[b]	**.88**	.26	3.14	0.62
Value to the debate[b]	**.81**	−.01	3.78	0.51
Working within the law[c,d]	**.75**	**.54**	3.78	0.51
Existing for long[b,d]	**.72**	**.49**	3.83	0.56
Capability for alliances[b,d]	**.66**	**.47**	3.44	0.38
Workers' loyalty[c]	**.54**	.34	3.25	0.20
Political influence[c]	.01	**.85**	3.25	0.63
Sufficient money[b]	.09	**.78**	3.40	0.36
One voice by workers[c]	.01	**.65**	3.01	0.29
Right to exist[c,d]	**.51**	**.53**	4.19	0.40
Sameness of policies[b]	.38	**.43**	3.28	0.26
Eigenvalues	11.5	3.4		
% of total variance accounted for	57.3	17.2		

Note: Cut-point for loading was .40.
a. Bipolar scales ranging from 1 (*negative*) to 5 (*positive*) were used.
b. Responses were coded 5 = *strongly disagree,* 4 = *disagree,* 3 = *neutral,* 2 = *agree,* 1 = *strongly agree.*
c. Reponses were coded 1 = *strongly disagree,* 2 = *disagree,* 3 = *neutral,* 4 = *agree,* 5 = *strongly agree.*
d. These variables loaded on both factors were theoretically assigned to the viability factor for index creation.

organization's policies over time, its ability to endure over time, its financial security, and the sameness of its workers' voices. External viability concerned the organization's political influence, its ability to find allies among diverse groups, its compliance with the rules of the society, and its right to exist.

Variance accounted for by the factors was (a) attitude: 57.3% and (b) viability: 17.2%. The total variance accounted for was 74.4%. The Cronbach's alpha was .98 for the attitude items and .86 for the viability items. A Pearson correlation test on the constructed indices ($r = -.06$) showed the two dimensions were independent of each other and, therefore, represented different aspects of legitimacy.[10] By adding the attitude and viability scores, an organization's legitimacy score was computed.

777

Content Analysis

Procedure

Media access was measured through a content analysis of daily newspaper and weekly news magazine articles about the 30 organizations. A Lexis-Nexis Academic database and ABI/Inform Global database search[11] using the phrases *stem cell OR cloning AND [the name of each organization]* produced a sampling frame for each of the organizations for the year 2002. The sampling frame included editorials and letters to the editor as they were believed to reflect organizations' media access. The same articles in different newspapers were treated as separate articles because although they carried the same content, the respective publications must exercise their own gatekeeping in publishing the article.

The search identified 1,705 articles. Systematic sampling was used for organizations that received coverage of more than 50 articles. All of the articles for an organization were numbered and sampled according to a sampling interval until 50 articles were selected. Organizations that received fewer than 50 articles were able to keep all the articles for analyses. The final sample was 883. On average, government agencies received more coverage than any other types of organizations, whereas advocacy groups received the least coverage. It is not surprising to note, this is somewhat consistent with the number of ratings each organization received from journalists. Journalists did not know, or at least were unfamiliar with, some of the organizations; therefore, those organizations got less coverage and fewer ratings in the legitimacy survey.

Media access was measured through three dimensions—prominence, dominance, and valence. Prominence represents the extent of media exposure, and many researchers believe it is a basic measure of media access (Barker-Plummer, 2002; Sheafer, 2001; Stempel & Culbertson, 1984). Indicators of prominence included the number of mentions;[12] the number of sentences;[13] and the number of articles.[14]

Indicators of dominance included position within the article, direct quote tendency, and regular coverage. Position was coded as the organization being discussed throughout the article (3 points), only in the first one half of the article (2 points), or only in the last one half of the article (1 point) (Shoemaker, 1982b). The direct quote tendency was coded as the number of direct quotations from the organization (range was from zero to infinity; Stempel & Culbertson, 1984; see also A. Hansen, 1993). Regular coverage was coded as

778

the number of months in a year the organization received media coverage (range was from 1 to 12).

Valence was the nature of the reference to the organization. A 3-point system was used to code each sentence that was devoted to an organization. A sentence that discussed the organization in positive valence received 3 points, neutral valence 2 points, or negative valence 1 point.[15]

The researcher and a trained second coder conducted pretests until the agreement between the coders was satisfactory, each time analyzing five articles that were not included in the final sample according to coding instructions. When the pretests were satisfactory, the coders randomly selected and analyzed 10% of the sample. The intercoder reliability using Holsti's coefficient of reliability (CR) and Scott's pi produced sufficiently high scores for reliability.[16] The researcher proceeded to code the remaining units using the same definitions and techniques.

Although a total of 883 newspaper and news magazine articles were coded for the current study, the data were aggregated and averaged for each organization before further analyses, as the unit of analysis for the current study was the organization.

Results and Analysis

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for the media access variables. A reliability test on three prominence variables yielded an unsatisfactory Cronbach's alpha of .58. When the total number of articles variable was dropped, the alpha became .94. Thus, number of mentions and number of sentences devoted to an organization were added to construct a prominence index after being standardized. The total number of articles variable was used separately in hypothesis tests.

A reliability test of the dominance variables demonstrated that these three variables might be measuring different things (Cronbach's alpha = −.32). Unable to create a dominance index, these variables were used on their own.

Testing the Model

Two surveys and a content analysis generated organizations' PR expertise scores (action, knowledge, and networking), legitimacy scores (attitude and viability), and media access scores (prominence, total number of articles, position, direct quote tendency, regular coverage, and valence). The following hypothesis tests used these scores.

779

Table 3
*Unstandardized Means and Standard Deviations for
Media Access Variables (*N *= 30)*

Variables	M	SD
Number of mentions per article[a]	6.48	6.03
Number of sentences devoted to an organization per article[a]	5.93	5.28
Total number of articles per organization[a]	56.80	62.37
Position within the article (position)[b]	2.00	0.40
Direct quote tendency per article (direct quote tendency)[a]	1.89	2.75
Regular coverage[c]	7.30	3.36
Valence per sentence (valence)[d]	2.12	0.20

Note: a. These variables were coded from zero to infinity.
b. Position was coded 3 = discussed throughout the article, 2 = discussed only in the first half of the article, 1 = discussed only in the second half of the article.
c. Regular coverage was coded from 1 to 12.
d. Valence was coded 3 = positive, 2 = neutral, 1 = negative.

Table 4
*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Legitimacy Indices and
Media Access Indicators (*N *= 30)*

	Attitude	Viability	Legitimacy (Attitude + Viability)
Prominence (P) (Number of mentions + number of sentences)	−.22	−.09	−.23
Total number of articles (T)	.09	−.11	.01
Position (PO)	−.14	−.10	−.18
Direct quote tendency (D)	−.13	.08	−.06
Regular coverage (R)	.33	.15	.37*
Valence (V)	.36	.24	.45*
Media access (P + T + PO + D + R + V)	.03	.03	.04

Note: p < .05.

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1 posited that a source's legitimacy, as perceived by journalists, will have a positive impact on its media access. Specifically, the hypothesis predicted a positive impact of legitimacy on prominence (Hypothesis 1a), dominance (Hypothesis 1b), and valence (Hypothesis 1c) of the media coverage. The data, shown in Table 4, did not support Hypothesis 1a. Legitimacy and its dimensions showed no statistically significant relationships with prominence and total number of articles. However, partial support was found for Hypothesis 1b. Legitimacy was significantly related to regular coverage.

780

Table 5
*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Public Relations Expertise Indices and
Media Access Indicators (N = 30)*

	Action (A)	Knowledge (K)	Networking (N)	Public Relations Expertise (A + K + N)
Prominence (P)	.16	−.01	−.30	.02
Total number of articles (T)	.29	.11	−.14	.19
Position (PO)	.15	−.06	−.24	−.04
Direct quote tendency (D)	.18	.01	−.15	.06
Regular coverage (R)	−.01	.04	−.10	−.02
Valence (V)	−.30	−.09	.31	−.12
Media access (P + T + PO + D + R + V)	.18	.00	−.25	.01

In other words, the more that the organizations were viewed as legitimate by journalists, the more consistently throughout the year (more months of a year) they received coverage. Legitimacy accounted for 13% of the variance in organizations' regular coverage (not shown in table). Support also was found for Hypothesis 1c: Legitimacy was positively related to valence. This suggests the more that organizations were assessed as legitimate by journalists, the more positively they were portrayed in news coverage. Legitimacy accounted for 20% of the variance in the valence of organizations' coverage (not shown in table). Overall, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that a source's PR expertise will have a positive impact on its media access, specifically its prominence (Hypothesis 2a), dominance (Hypothesis 2b), and valence (Hypothesis 2c) of media coverage. The data showed no support for these hypotheses (Table 5). None of the PR expertise dimensions significantly correlated with media access indicators.

Hypothesis 3 posited that overall, legitimacy perceived by journalists will have more of a positive impact than PR expertise on media access. Hypothesis 3a, Hypothesis 3b, and Hypothesis 3c expected that legitimacy will have more of a positive impact than PR expertise on prominence, dominance, and valence of media coverage respectively.

Whereas the results of Hypothesis 1 and 2 make it evident that legitimacy will have more of a relationship with media access than PR, multiple regression analysis (table not shown) validated no support for Hypothesis 3a, a partial support for Hypothesis 3b (regular coverage), and a support for Hypothesis 3c. This confirms that an organization's legitimacy is a better predictor than its PR expertise on its regular media coverage throughout the year and its positive portrayal in the media.

781

Table 6

*Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Dimensions of Legitimacy and Public Relations Expertise (*N = *30)*

|	Attitude	Viability	Legitimacy (Attitude + Viability)
Action	−.15	.02	−.11
Knowledge	.44*	−.07	.31
Networking	.01	.23	.15
PR expertise (action + knowledge + networking)	.19	.06	.19

Note: p < .05.

Hypothesis 4 stated that PR expertise would positively affect legitimacy. The knowledge dimension of PR expertise showed a significant positive relationship with the attitude dimension of legitimacy (Table 6). In other words, the more knowledgeable organizational sources were of journalists' news-gathering practices and routines, the more favorably they were perceived by journalists. The knowledge dimension accounted for 19% of the variance in journalists' attitude toward sources (not shown in table). However, no other PR dimensions were significantly related to legitimacy dimensions. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

Post hoc analyses were conducted using the content analysis sample (560 articles) of only the news organizations whose journalists returned the questionnaire in the survey. The data generated media access scores similar to the original scores except for the total number of articles, whose mean in this new data was 18.67 (SD = 11.97) compared to the mean of 56.80 (SD = 62.37) in the original data. Hypothesis tests using these new scores yielded the same results as did the initial hypothesis tests, producing almost identical correlation coefficients in most analyses. It is noteworthy that the majority (63%) of the national sample of news stories came from the news publications whose journalists participated in the survey. This indicates that some news publications and their journalists may have paid more attention to the stem cell and/or cloning issue in the first place, thereby more actively writing about it and participating in the survey.

Media Access Model

The hypothesis tests revealed the relationships among legitimacy, PR expertise, and media access as somewhat different from the proposed model (Figure 2). Public relations expertise of organizational sources did not exhibit a relationship with the media access of those sources; that is, sources'

782
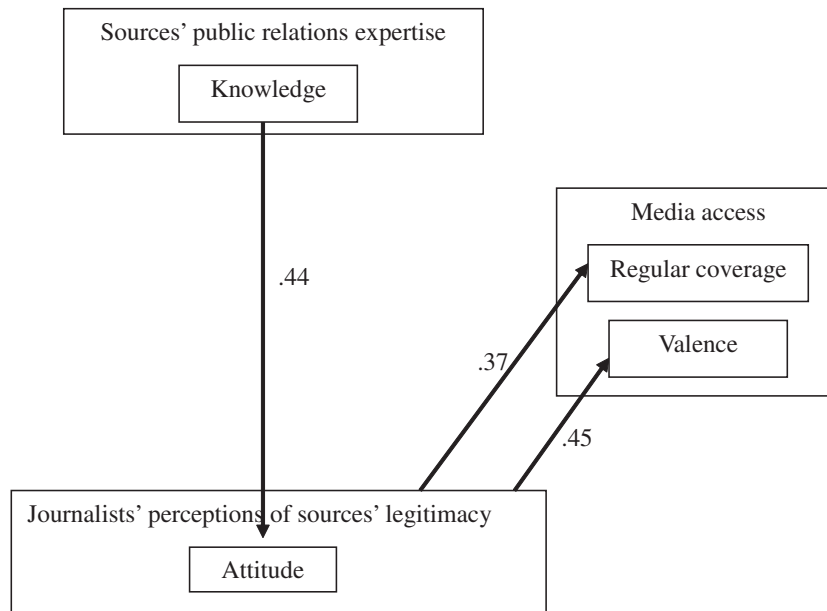
Note: The numbers next to arrows are correlation coefficients.

Figure 2.   Model of Media Access (Revised)
Note: The numbers next to arrows are correlation coefficients.

understanding of how journalists operate, their providing information subsidies to journalists, and their networking with other organizations with similar goals, affected neither the quantity nor the quality of their media coverage. Public relations expertise of sources, however, had some impact on legitimacy: The more knowledge and experience the sources had in terms of journalists' news-gathering practices and routines, the more favorably the sources were perceived by journalists.

The hypothesis tests also disclosed that journalists' perceptions of sources' legitimacy had some impact on media access of those sources. Sources perceived as being more legitimate were treated more positively and written about more regularly.

It should be noted that in the newly revised media access model, the influence of PR on sources' media access is via journalists' perceptions of the sources. In other words, journalists' perceptions of the sources' legitimacy operate as an intervening variable between PR expertise and media access of sources.

783

Discussion

The current study compared survey data of organizations and journalists with coverage of the stem cell and/or cloning debate to identify the predictors of media access. Results provide empirical evidence of an association between news sources' legitimacy and their media access. News sources perceived by journalists as being more legitimate tend to receive news coverage throughout the year, perhaps because journalists regularly seek information and opinions from those sources and routinely include them in their stories. Therefore, as previous studies (Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986; Roshco, 1975) suggest, those sources' access to news making becomes consistent, whereas the coverage of less legitimate sources may be limited to a few months of the year when they are probably involved in newsworthy events. More legitimate sources also enjoyed more positive coverage. They may not receive more news space than less legitimate sources, as nonsignificant relationships between legitimacy and prominence and total number of articles indicate. Yet when they receive coverage, they are put in a more favorable, positive context, which arguably represents the central meaning of *media access* (Ericson et al., 1989). These are consistent with previous claims that to attract favorable media coverage, sources must be viewed as legitimate by journalists (Anderson, 1993; Berkowitz, 1992; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Danielian, 1992; Goldenberg, 1975).

The lack of a significant relationship between news sources' legitimacy and total number of their news stories and prominence of coverage suggests that legitimacy may not be a good predictor for the amount of news coverage. A post hoc ANOVA test also revealed no significant difference in those variables among low-, medium-, and high-legitimacy organizations. This suggests that journalists may use variables other than legitimacy to determine who and what gets covered. One possible explanation is that even the less legitimate sources may be given chances to tell their sides of the story to fulfill the journalistic requirement for balanced reports. Another explanation is that if news sources are involved in newsworthy events, journalists may not have much choice but to cover their newsworthy activities regardless of sources' perceived legitimacy. The same reasoning may apply to the lack of a significant relationship between sources' legitimacy and their position within articles and their direct quote tendency. Once again, no matter how legitimate the sources were perceived, if they were involved in newsworthy activities, they may appear in the important position and be quoted more within articles.

784

The results also surprisingly reveal that no aspect of PR expertise—such as sources' knowledge of journalists' practices and routines, supply of information subsidies, and networking with other organizations—was related to any of the media access indicators. It may be argued that this lack of a relationship is because of the small sample size, given that some of the correlation coefficients were close to a significant level. However, although some of the relationships were in the expected positive direction, others were negative contrary to expectations. Overall, this result somewhat qualifies the suggestions that PR enables sources even without institutional legitimacy to achieve media access (Davis, 2000b; Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986; Schlesinger, 1990; Shoemaker, 1989).

Yet, at the same time, the current study confirmed a premise of previous studies that PR contributes to accumulating legitimacy for organizational sources (Anderson, 1991; Barker-Plummer, 2002; Davis, 2000a, 2000b; Miller, 1994; Miller & Williams, 1993; Schlesinger, 1990; Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994). Although the previous studies indicate some interest groups accumulate legitimacy by providing a steady supply of information subsidies, the current study suggests knowledge of journalists' practices and routines are the key in legitimacy accumulation.

A central question resulting from the findings of the current study may be why PR is not related to media access. Critics may say the results of the current study are abnormal, as numerous previous studies have consistently demonstrated the link between a source's information subsidies and media coverage (Abbott & Brassfield, 1989; Aronoff, 1976; Berkowitz & Adams, 1990; Curtin, 1999; W. Martin & Singletary, 1981; Morton, 1986; Morton & Ramsey, 1994; Morton & Warren, 1992a, 1992b; Sachsman, 1976; Turk, 1985; Walters & Walters, 1992).

Several explanations are possible. First, the somewhat unique nature of the current study's context may have yielded somewhat unusual results. Or, the findings may just confirm the gatekeeping function of journalists. After all, sources do not have the power to print what they want in the media but need to go through hierarchical levels of gatekeepers before their messages get transmitted via mass media (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Another explanation concerns the difference in the level of analysis between the current study and the previous studies. Whereas this study investigated PR expertise and media access at the organizational level, most of the previous studies employed microlevel analysis. They used individual releases, stories, or journalists as the unit of analysis. If the current study examined sources' media coverage, for example, in terms of the individual information subsidies, it might have found results similar to the previous studies.

785

This speculation receives some confirmation from Stocking's (1985) study on the effect of sources' PR efforts and prestige on their media visibility. This study performed at the organizational level found a statistically significant relationship between the medical school prestige and media visibility, but no relationship between PR efforts and media visibility. Although more studies are necessary to validate these findings, these suggest that when media access is examined at the organizational level, PR may not have an impact on it.

The current study has practical implications for organizations and their PR specialists. It shows that providing information subsidies should not be their main media strategies, as those actions are unrelated to media access. As Butler (1999) suggested, relying on sending out information subsidies without knowledge of journalists' news-gathering practices may negatively influence journalists' perceptions of the organizations. Thus, PR practitioners should focus more on learning about how the media and journalists operate and use that knowledge to build, change, or maintain journalists' perceptions of their organizations.

The conclusions drawn from the current study are limited by the small sample size of organizational sources. The sample consisted of different categories of organizations, and every effort was made to be as comprehensive as possible. However, it remains merely a purposive sample; and, therefore, the findings should be described as tentative. The low response rate of the journalist survey and the rather particular nature of the current study's context—the stem cell and/or cloning debate—limited external validity of the current study's results. Only replication of the current study in other contexts will determine if the media access model the current study presents is generalizable. Furthermore, although it was practically necessary, the subdivision of the journalist sample into four groups was not ideal. Future studies should attempt to refine a rather bulky legitimacy scale into a reliable, yet economical scale so that the entire journalist sample can evaluate all organizations on the legitimacy statements. Future endeavors also should consider qualitative analyses to shed light on the questions raised by the results of the current study, such as why journalists write about less legitimate sources as much as they write about more legitimate sources.

Overall, the current study introduces a media access model involving legitimacy and PR expertise of organizational sources. It provides a tentative, initial conclusion that legitimacy operates as an intervening variable between PR and media access.

786

Notes

1. Although this model presents only one time period, the time sequence may be thought of as continuous, with the media access achieved, in turn, influencing sources' public relations (PR) and journalists' perceptions of sources' legitimacy.

2. This study uses the term *public relations expertise* (or *PR expertise*) instead of *media relations expertise* because *media relations* tends to suggest mainly tactical aspects in building and maintaining relationships with the media. The current study considers an organization's media-related efforts as involving strategic planning as well as tactics.

3. Of the sample, 3 were government agencies, 18 members of Congress, 12 academic stem cell research institutes, 9 professional associations, 23 advocacy organizations and groups (including prochoice and prolife groups as well as religious groups), 8 corporations, and 3 not-for-profit research institutes.

4. For the survey questionnaire, contact the author at ymeeyoon_2000@yahoo.com.

5. More than one half of the organizations across type returned the questionnaire except for the members of Congress: Only two offices of 18 U.S. legislators returned the questionnaire, and only one of them was included in the analyses.

6. Pearson's r was .07 between knowledge and action, –.004 between knowledge and networking, and –.02 between action and networking.

7. For the survey questionnaire, contact the author at ymeeyoon_2000@yahoo.com.

8. The sampling frame represented 34.1% of journalists from newspapers with circulation of 50,001 to 100,000, 20.1% from newspapers with 100,001 to 200,000, 14% from newspapers with 200,001 to 300,000, and 32.8% from newspapers with 300,001 plus. The survey returns represented 32.3%, 22.6%, 15.3%, and 29.8%, respectively.

9. The results of one-way ANOVAs were as follows: $F(3, 125) = 1.81$, $p = .15$, for the number of years the journalists worked at their current publications; $F(3, 125) = 1.65$, $p = .18$, for the number of years they have covered the medical, health, and science fields; and $F(3, 125) = .30$, $p = .83$, for the self-ratings of how often they wrote or covered stories about stem cell and/or cloning.

10. Index creation helped overcome the multicollinearity problem detected in Pearson correlation tests of legitimacy items.

11. ABI/Global database search was for *Newsweek* magazine.

12. The number of mentions was coded as the number of times that an organization or its members were mentioned in each article (range was from zero to infinity). The coded scores were added and averaged by the number of articles coded, which produced an overall organization score for number of mentions.

13. The number of sentences was coded as the number of sentences devoted to the organization with or without the mention of the organization name (range was from zero to infinity). Sentences describing the organization, its positions, its members, its possessions, its products, and its activities were counted. This coding also included reactions to the organization's positions, members, possessions, products, and activities from people and organizations that were not related to the respective organization. The coded scores were added and averaged by the number of articles coded, which produced an overall organization score for number of sentences.

14. The number of articles was the total number of articles in which the organization appeared.

15. In general, a sentence was coded positive if it presented an organization or its members as (a) a leader, an expert in, or a contributor to, stem cell and cloning research or debate; (b) a contributor to society because of its or its employees' innovative, professional, and responsible acts; (c) having positive characteristics (see Sheafer, 2001).

787

More specifically, for example, if a sentence included positive expressions, such as *pioneer in stem cell research, set up a research lab successfully*, and *a Nobel laureate*, it was coded positive. A sentence was coded negative if the opposite was true. Specifically, if a sentence included disapproving phrases, such as *a religious sect*, *operated a secret lab*, and *received a lot of criticism*, it was coded negative. If a sentence highlighted difficulties of the organization, such as *low success rate* and *struggled financially*, it was coded negative as well. If a sentence was neither positive nor negative, it was coded neutral. If a sentence conveyed no opinion, it was also coded as neutral. To arrive at an overall score for each organization, the valence scores of all sentences were added and then averaged by the number of sentences coded.

16. Results were as follows: number of mentions CR = .91, number of sentences CR = .90, direct quote tendency CR = .96, position CR = .93, Scott's pi = .91, valence CR = .86, Scott's pi = .75.

References

Abbott, E. A., & Brassfield, L. T. (1989). Comparing decisions on releases by TV and newspaper gatekeepers. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*(4), 853-856.

Anderson, A. (1991). Source strategies and the communication of environmental affairs. *Media, Culture and Society*, *13*(4), 459-476.

Anderson, A. (1993). Source-media relations: The production of the environmental agenda. In A. Hansen (Ed.), *The mass media and environmental issues* (pp. 51-68). Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press.

Aronoff, C. (1976). Predictors of success in placing releases in newspapers. *Public Relations Review*, *2*(4), 43-57.

Ashforth, B. E., & Gibbs, B. W. (1990). The double-edge of organizational legitimation. *Organization Science*, *1*(2), 177-194.

Barker, R. (1990). *Political legitimacy and the state*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.

Barker-Plummer, B. (2002). Producing public voice: Resource mobilization and media access in the national organization for women. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *79*(1), 188-205.

Berkowitz, D. (1987). TV news sources and news channels: A study in agenda-building. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *64*(2/3), 508-513.

Berkowitz, D. (1992). Who sets the media agenda? The ability of policymakers to determine news decisions. In J. D. Kennamer (Ed.), *Public opinion, the press, and public policy* (pp. 81-102). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Berkowitz, D., & Adams, D. B. (1990). Information subsidy and agenda-building in local television news. *Journalism Quarterly*, *67*(4), 723-731.

Blumler, J. G. (1990). Elections, the media and the modern publicity process. In M. Ferguson (Ed.), *Public communication: The new imperatives* (pp. 100-113). London: Sage.

Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1995). *The crisis of public communication*. London: Routledge.

Brown, J. D., Bybee, C. R., Wearden, S. T., & Straughan, D. M. (1987). Invisible power: Newspaper news sources and the limits of diversity. *Journalism Quarterly*, *64*(1), 45-54.

Bucy, E. P. (2003). Media credibility reconsidered: Synergy effects between on-air and online news. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *80*(2), 247-264.

Butler, B. (1999). Source strategies, subsidies, and subterfuge: Building the prime-time campaign news agenda during the 1998 federal election. *Australian Journal of Communication*, *26*(3), 111-126.

Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L., & Curtin, P. A. (1997). Public relations and the production of news: A critical review and a theoretical framework. In B. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 20, pp. 111-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Corbett, J. B. (1998). Media, bureaucracy, and the success of social protest: Newspaper coverage of environmental movement groups. *Mass Communication and Society*, *1*(1/2), 41-61.

Curtin, P. A. (1999). Reevaluating public relations information subsidies: Market-driven journalism and agenda-building theory and practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *11*(1), 53-90.

Cutlip, S. M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). *Effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Danielian, L. (1992). Interest groups in the news. In J. D. Kennamer (Ed.), *Public opinion, the press, and public policy* (pp. 81-102). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Davis, A. (2000a). Public relations campaigning and news production: The case of "new unionism" in Britain. In J. Curran (Ed.), *Media organizations in society* (pp. 173-192). London: Arnold.

Davis, A. (2000b). Public relations, news production and changing patterns of source access in the British national media. *Media, Culture and Society*, *22*(1), 39-59.

Dennis, J., & Chaffee, S. (1978). Legitimation in the 1976 U.S. election campaign. *Communication Research*, *5*(4), 371-394.

Dowling, J., & Pfeffer, J. (1975). Organizational legitimacy: Social values and organizational behavior. *Pacific Sociological Review*, *18*(1), 122-136.

Dunn, D. D. (1969). *Public officials and the press*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Easton, D. (1965). *A systems analysis of political life*. New York: John Wiley.

Easton, D. (1975). A re-assessment of the concept of political support. *British Journal of Political Science*, *5*, 435-457.

Elsbach, K. D. (1994). Managing organizational legitimacy in the California cattle industry: The construction and effectiveness of verbal accounts. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *39*, 57-88.

Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P. M., & Chan, J. B. L. (1989). *Negotiating control: A study of news sources*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Fishman, M. (1980). *Manufacturing the news*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Flynn, T. (2002, August). *Source credibility and global warming: A content analysis of environmental groups*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Miami, FL.

Gandy, O. H., Jr. (1982). *Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*. New York: Pantheon.

Gaziano, C., & McGrath, K. (1986). Measuring the concept of credibility. *Journalism Quarterly*, *63*, 451-462.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media and the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley: University of California press.

Goldenberg, E. N. (1975). *Making the papers: The access of resource-poor groups to the metropolitan press*. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.

Goldsmiths Media Group. (2000). Media organizations in society: Central issues. In J. Curran (Ed.), *Media organizations in society* (pp. 19-65). London: Arnold.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order*. New York: Holmes & Meier.

Hansen, A. (1993). Greenpeace and press coverage of environmental issues. In A. Hansen (Ed.), *The mass media and environmental issues* (pp. 150-178). Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press.

Hansen, K. (1991). Source diversity and newspaper enterprise journalism. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *68*(3), 474-482.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. New York: Pantheon.

Hess, S. (1984). *The government/press connection*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *15*, 635-650.

Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2000). Using is believing: The influence of reliance on the credibility of online political information among politically interested Internet users. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *77*(4), 865-879.

Kelman, H. C. (1976). Some reflections on authority, corruption, and punishment: The social-psychological context of Watergate. *Psychiatry*, *39*(4), 303-317.

Kennamer, J. D. (1992). Public opinion, the press, and public policy: An introduction. In J. D. Kennamer (Ed.), *Public opinion, the press, and public policy* (pp. 1-18). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Kielbowicz, R. B., & Scherer, C. (1986). The role of the press in the dynamics of social movements. *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, *9*, 71-96.

Klingemann, H. (1999). Mapping political support in the 1990s: A global analysis. In P. Norris (Ed.), *Critical citizens: Global support for democratic governance* (pp. 31-56). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kopenhaver, L. L. (1985). Aligning values of practitioners and journalists. *Public Relations Review*, *11*(2), 34-42.

790

Kopenhaver, L. L., Martinson, D. L., & Ryan, M. (1984). How public relations practitioners and editors in Florida view each other. *Journalism Quarterly*, *61*, 860-865, 884.

Lasorsa, D. L., & Reese, S. (1990). News source use in the crash of 1987: A study of four national media. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *67*(1), 60-71.

Liebler, C. M. (1993). News sources and the Civil Rights Act of 1990. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *4*(3), 183-194.

Martin, S. (1988). Proximity of event as factor in selection of news sources. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *65*(4), 986-989, 1043.

Martin, W., & Singletary, M. W. (1981). Newspaper treatment of state government releases. *Journalism Quarterly*, *58*(1), 93-96.

Maurer, J. G. (1971). *Readings in organization theory: Open-system approaches*. New York: Random House.

McComas, K. A., & Trumbo, C. W. (2001). Source credibility in environmental health-risk controversies: Application of Meyer's credibility index. *Risk Analysis*, *21*(3), 467-480.

Metzler, M. S. (2001a). The centrality of organizational legitimacy to public relations practice. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 321-333). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Metzler, M. S. (2001b). Responding to the legitimacy problems of big tobacco: An analysis of the "People of Philip Morris" image advertising campaign. *Communication Quarterly*, *49*(4), 366-381.

Meyer, P. (1988). Defining and measuring credibility of newspapers: Developing an index. *Journalism Quarterly*, *65*(3), 567-574, 588.

Michener, H. A., & Burt, M. R. (1974). Legitimacy as a base of social influence. In J. T. Tedeschi (Ed.), *Perspectives on social power* (pp. 310-348). Chicago: Aldine.

Miller, D. (1994). *Don't mention the war: Northern Ireland, propaganda and the media*. London: Pluto.

Miller, D., & Williams, K. (1993). Negotiating HIV/AIDS information: Agendas, media strategies and the news. In J. Eldridge (Ed.), *Getting the message* (pp. 126-142). London: Routledge.

Mondak, J. (1992). Institutional legitimacy, policy legitimacy, and the Supreme Court. *American Politics Quarterly*, *20*(4), 457-477.

Moreno, F. J. (1974). Legitimacy and violence. *Sociologia Internationalis*, *12*(1/2), 93-103.

Morton, L. P. (1986). How newspapers choose the releases they use. *Public Relations Review*, *12*(3), 22-27.

Morton, L. P., & Ramsey, S. (1994). A benchmark study of the pr news wire. *Public Relations Review*, *20*(2), 171-182.

Morton, L. P., & Warren, J. (1992a). News elements and editors' choices. *Public Relations Review*, *18*(1), 47-52.

Morton, L. P., & Warren, J. (1992b). Acceptance characteristics of hometown press releases. *Public Relations Review*, *18*(4), 385-390.

Nelkin, D. (1995). *Selling science*. New York: Freeman.

Nimmo, D. D. (1964). *Newsgathering in Washington*. New York: Prentice Hall.

791

Norris, P. (1999). Institutional explanations for political support. In P. Norris (Ed.), *Critical citizens: Global support for democratic governance* (pp. 217-235). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

O'Neill, J. (1977). Language and the legitimation problem. *Sociology*, *11*, 351-358.

Paletz, D. L., & Entman, R. M. (1981). *Media power politics*. New York: Free Press.

Perrow, C. (1970). *Organizational analysis: A sociological view*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Pincus, J. D., Rimmer, T., Rayfield, R. E., & Cropp, F. (1993). Newspaper editors' perceptions of public relations: How business, news, and sports editors differ. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *5*(1), 27-45.

Pollock, J. C., Robinson, J. L., Jr., & Murray, M. C. (1978). Media agendas and human rights: The Supreme Court decision on abortion. *Journalism Quarterly*, *55*(3), 544-548.

Powers, A., & Fico, F. (1994). Influences on use of sources at large U.S. newspapers. *Newspaper Research Journal*, *15*(4), 87-97.

Rimmer, T., & Weaver, D. (1987). Different questions, different answers? Media use and media credibility. *Journalism Quarterly*, *64*, 28-36, 44.

Roshco, B. (1975). *Newsmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ryan, C. (1991). *Prime time activism: Media strategies for grassroots organizing*. Boston: South End.

Sachsman, D. B. (1976). Public relations influence on coverage of environment in San Francisco area. *Journalism Quarterly*, *53*(1), 54-60.

Sandman, P. M. (1982). *Media: An introductory analysis of American mass communications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Schaar, J. H. (1984). Legitimacy in the modern state. In W. Connolly (Ed.), *Legitimacy and the state* (pp. 104-133). New York: New York University Press.

Schlesinger, P. (1990). Rethinking the sociology of journalism: Source strategies and the limits of media-centrism. In M. Ferguson (Ed.), *Public communication: The new imperatives* (pp. 61-83). London: Sage.

Schlesinger, P., & Tumber, H. (1994). *Reporting crime: The media politics of criminal justice*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.

Self, C. C. (1996). Credibility. In M. B. Salwen & D. W. Stacks (Eds.), *An integrated approach to communication theory and research* (pp. 421-441). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Seligson, M. A. (2002). The impact of corruption on regime legitimacy: A comparative study of four Latin American countries. *Journal of Politics*, *64*(2), 408-433.

Sheafer, T. (2001). Charismatic skill and media legitimacy: An actor-centered approach to understanding the political communication competition. *Communication Research*, *28*(6), 711-736.

Shoemaker, P. J. (1982a). The perceived legitimacy of deviant political groups: Two experiments on media effects. *Communication Research*, *9*(2), 249-286.

Shoemaker, P. J. (1982b). *Political deviance, the media, and legitimacy*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Shoemaker, P. J. (1989). Public relations versus journalism? Comments on Turow. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *33*(2), 213-215.

Shoemaker, P. J. (1991). *Gatekeeping*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Sigal, L. V. (1973). *Reporters and officials: The organization and politics of newsmaking*. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath.

Simmons, A. J. (2001). *Justification and legitimacy: Essays on rights and obligations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, C. (1993). News sources and power elites in news coverage of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. *Journalism Quarterly*, *70*(2), 393-403.

Soloski, J. (1989). Sources and channels of local news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *66*(4), 864-870.

Staggenborg, S. (1986). Coalition work in the pro-choice movement: Organizational and environmental opportunities and obstacles. *Social Problems*, *33*(5), 374-390.

Stempel, G. H. III, & Culbertson, H. M. (1984). The prominence and dominance of news sources in newspaper medical coverage. *Journalism Quarterly*, *61*(3), 671-676.

Stocking, S. H. (1985). Effect of public relations efforts on media visibility of organizations. *Journalism Quarterly*, *62*(2), 358-366, 450.

Stolberg, S. G. (2002, June 14). Total ban on cloning research appears dead. *The Washington Post*, p. A31.

Taylor, C. (1994). The modern identity. In M. Daly (Ed.), *Communitarianism: A new public ethics* (pp. 55-71). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Terreberry, S. (1971). The evolution of organizational environments. In J. G. Maurer (Ed.), *Readings in organization theory: Open-system approaches* (pp. 58-73). New York: Random House.

Tiffen, R. (1989). *News and power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Turk, J. V. (1985). Information subsidies and influence. *Public Relations Review*, *11*(3), 10-25.

Tyler, T. R. (1990). *Why people obey the law*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Walters, L. M., & Walters, T. N. (1992). Environment of confidence: Daily newspaper use of press releases. *Public Relations Review*, *18*(1), 31-46.

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: Free Press.

Wertz, D. C. (2002). Embryo and stem cell research in the United States: History and politics. *Gene Therapy*, *9*, 674-678.

Whitney, D. C., Fritzler, M., Jones, S., Mazzarella, S., & Rakow, L. (1989). Geographic and source biases in network television news 1982-1984. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *33*(2), 159-174.

Wolfson, M. (1995). The legislative impact of social movement organizations: The anti-drunken-driving movement and the 21-year-old drinking age. *Social Science Quarterly*, *76*(2), 311-327.

Youngmin Yoon *(Ph.D., Syracuse University) is an assistant professor in the Nicholson School of Communication at the University of Central Florida.*

793